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(25) Bidding Slam After Partner Opens 1N

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Level: Intermediate

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General

Trying to decide whether or not to bid a slam opposite partner's 1N opening bid is an enormous topic and we will not cover everything in this introduction. We will examine some of Responder's general tools for investigating slam and finally discuss the way the Opener cooperates or tries to reject Responder's invitations.

Quantitative Bidding

These are bids that ask Opener how they feel about their hand for slam. These are cooperative bidding processes to see if our side should or should not bid a slam.

Quantitative: Basic Examples

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 1N | 4N | Pass with a minimum hand, bid 6N with a maximum hand. |
| 1N | 5N | Bid 6N with a minimum hand, bid 7N with a maximum hand. |

Quantitative: More Advanced Examples

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|----|----|---|
| 1N | 2♦ | |
| 2♥ | 4N | Pass or bid 5♥ with a minimum hand, bid 6♥ or 6N with a maximum hand. |
| 1N | 2♥ | |
| 2♠ | 4N | Pass or bid 5♠ with a minimum hand, bid 6♠ or 6N with a maximum hand. |

Note: Over 4N a bid of 5N is "choice of slams." It says I have a maximum and 3-card support. Responder can choose between 6♥/♠ or 6N.

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 1N | 2♣ | |
| 2♥ | 3♣ | |
| 3N | 4N | Responder shows 5+♣ and 4♠ (usually – since they bid Stayman)
Opener's 3N bid shows ♦ stoppers and no interest in a ♣ or ♠ slam. 4N by Responder shows further invites slam - showing a good hand and wanting partner to make the final decision about slam. |



Quantitative: Single Suited Slam Tries

1N 2♦
2♥ 4♥ Slam try with 6+♥ and no shortness (since no Texas Transfers.)

1N 2♥
2♠ 4♠ Slam try with 6+♠ and no shortness (since no Texas Transfers.)

Shortness-Showing Slam Tries (Splinters)

The most important types of auctions for bidding good slams (and staying out of bad ones) are *Splinter* auctions (shortness showing auctions.) These auctions allow the Notrump Opener to re-evaluate their hand. If they have lots of points opposite partner's shortness (wasted values) then they will decline the slam invite – try to put the brakes on the auction. If they have little wasted values (good fitting cards) then they will bid slam aggressively. This kind of bidding is far more effective than quantitative bidding – it puts the focus more on “which points does partner have” instead of just “how many points does partner have.”

Splinters: Single-Suited Hand Slam Tries

1N 2♦*
2♥ 3♠/4♣/4♦ 6+♥, 0-1 in ♠/♣/♦. Slam Interest!

1N 2♥*
2♠ 4♣/4♦/4♥ 6+♠, 0-1 in ♣/♦/♥. Slam Interest!

With lots of wasted values opposite Responders shortness the 1N Opener signs off in 4M (alerting partner to dangerous misfitting points.) With a hand that fits well (no wasted values) Opener can cuebid their aces or bid Keycard (4N) themselves.

Comment on Ace Asking Bids

After Partner opens 1N we use 4N as keycard when we know we have a fit and we use 4♣ (Gerber) as ace asking when we have not found a fit (and if 4♣ is not being used as a natural bid or as a Splinter.)

Splinters: 2-Suited Hand Slam Tries

The other kind of slam bidding we should discuss is when Responder has two suits (at least 5-4.) In these auctions Responder shows both their suits by

- Transferring to their first suit and then bidding their side suit OR
- Bidding Stayman followed by bidding their side suit OR

Note: Smolen with 5-4 in the Majors – but this discussion if for another time.

Notice in both cases Responder shows their Major suit interest first and their minor suits later (see previous article *on Responding to 1N with Unbalanced Hand.*) Let us examine one of these auctions in detail – so that we can see how Opener cooperates or rejects (discourages) Responder's Slam Try.



Example

1N 2♥*

2♠ 3♣

With a ♠ fit Opener must show their support. Since 3♣ was a Game Forcing bid then the principle of fast arrival applies. So 4♠ shows a hand that is not interested in slam and 3♠ shows a hand that is interested in slam – either with good fitting cards or a decent maximum.

Without a ♠ fit Opener describes their hand the best they can.

- With a big ♣ fits and a good hand Opener bids 4♣ - a natural slam try.
- With a 5-card ♥ suit Opener can bid 3♥ (natural) – trying to find a 5-3♥ fit.
- 3N is Opener's bid to slow down the auction – showing a lack of interest in slam.

This auction is a classic example of two fighting tensions in trying to search for a fit and trying to determine the right level. Fits (especially Majors) are what we search for first and then we determine the level (and the possibility of slam.)

Note: We did not discuss 3-suited hands. They are similar to 2-suited hands but may require some additional conventions to allow us to show our hand types.

Conclusion

Exploring slam after partner opens 1N does not lead to simple auctions. Having good agreements and discussions with partner will help you explore slam without getting too high and allow you to bid slam when you each hold the right cards.