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Ask Jerry

Dear Jerry,
My partner and I had the following auction in our local club game:

| | |
|----|-------|
| 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 1♠ | 2NT |
| 3♥ | Pass! |

I was under the impression that my 3♥ bid was forcing and partner had to bid again. Partner thought that when I raised her original suit to the cheapest level, it was simply a preference to play in hearts instead of 2NT. So is my 3♥ rebid forcing or not?

Andy

Hi Andy,

For starters, I have long been on record suggesting that you should strive to define your bids to reach the best game or slam, rather than trying to stop on a dime in a perfect partscore. So the answer is ... your bid was forcing.

Let's take each bid and define its meaning at the time it occurred, to logically reach a conclusion as to why responder should bid again.

1♦: Usually four or more diamonds (97.2% of the time – we can discuss that in another article). It shows about 12–20 points, not forcing.

1♥: Four or more hearts, usually 6 or more points, forcing.

1♠: This one-level rebid defines values somewhere from a bad 12 points up to and including 18 points. Typically, it shows exactly four spades (rarely five). Not forcing, however responder should strain to find another bid.

2NT: Responder's rebid suggests 11–12 points, constructive and invitational. Four or five hearts with a stopper in the unbid suit.

At this point, opener has become the captain, because responder has made a rebid that limits the hand to a narrow range of strength.

Opener's second rebid: forcing?

From here, which rebids by opener are forcing and which are not? It's apparent your partnership was not on firm ground here.

Nonforcing actions:

- Pass. That's the easy way to settle for partscore.
- Rebid his original suit, showing 6+ diamonds, four spades and minimum values.

Forcing actions:

- A new suit. A distributional hand short in hearts, with extra values.
- Raise opener's first suit.

Let's consider a possible hand for opener in this auction:

♠A K x x ♥A x x ♦A J 10 x x ♣x.

With 16 gilt-edged HCP, opposite 10–12, game values exist, but which game to play is in question. Responder could hold any of the following:

① ♠J 4 ♥K 9 7 5 2 ♦K 5 4 ♣A 7 2

② ♠Q 4 ♥K J 7 5 ♦Q 5 4 ♣K J 10 9

③ ♠9 7 4 ♥K Q J 5 ♦K 5 4 ♣Q 7 2

① 4♥.

② 3NT.

③ 5♦? 4♥? On a club lead, either of these contracts look better than 3NT.

If opener holds a weak hand with three-card heart support, *pass*. It is illogical for opener to bid to the three level in hearts with three-card support and minimum values, when responder could hold four lousy hearts.

Despite the obvious lack of agree-

ment, partner should have applied ASBAF: All Strange Bids Are Forcing. If at any point your partner makes a bid and you are unsure what it means, the answer is ASBAF! 🤖

Let me ask you how would you play this hand?

IMPs scoring. As South, you are declaring 3NT in an uncontested auction. The opening lead is the ♥J, which you cover with the ♥Q and that holds the trick. What is the best line of play?

♠ K 7 6
♥ Q 2
♦ A K 7 6 3
♣ J 8 7

N
W E
S

♠ A Q 5
♥ K 4 3
♦ 9 8 4
♣ A 6 5 4



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