

Do You Know Where You Are?

If there's one thing that less experienced bridge players tend to forget it's their position at the bridge table. I am not referring to North, South, East or West but rather to 1st position, 2nd position, 3rd position or 4th position? It is important to keep in mind your position as well as that of partner though out the auction.

Most of you know what to open when in 1st or 2nd position. I won't dwell on that except to say that most partners expect you to have your bid if you do choose to open before they have had a chance to speak. They will respond accordingly. However, the whole scenario changes when you open the bidding in 3rd or 4th position after partner has passed.

There is at least one convention that applies only to passed hand bidding. Mr. Doug Drury supposedly devised the Drury conversion because he was grew irritated by his partner's frequently light opening bids in 3rd or 4th position. The partnership would constantly get too high; hence, a convention was born in order to put some checks and balances in place.

Using Drury, or its more modern version, Reverse Drury, 2♣ by a passed hand in response to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid shows a limit raise and asks whether the opening bid was genuine or shaded. The major difference in the two versions is in the responses....in Drury 2♦ shows a non-opener while in Reverse Drury a rebid of the suit opened shows a minimum or sub minimum hand. I think that Reverse Drury is a convention worth learning if you like to open a little on the light side. (Drury is now pretty much passé.) But read about it before you start to use it as there's always more to a new convention than first meets the eye.

For example some would open 1♥ in third position on ♠KJx ♥AQxxx ♦xxx ♣xx whereas they wouldn't consider opening the bidding in 1st or 2nd position. Thus you can understand the need for a convention such as Reverse Drury. I hasten to add that, if you open light, you'd best be prepared to handle partner's response as you just can't keep on bidding with suspect values without getting way too high!

Another problem associated with being a passed hand has to do with making a forcing bid after partner does opens the bidding in 3rd or 4th. It's virtually impossible to make a forcing bid. Whereas a new suit at the two level is forcing if you're not a passed hand, when you become a passed hand it's no longer forcing.

In deciding how to bid in 3rd and 4th positions consider the following:

- (1) An important factor is the presence or absence of the spade suit. My suggestion would be to open light (9-11 HCP's) if you hold a decent spade suit or even a decent heart suit with good tolerance for spades. Pass almost any hand that is short in the majors as well as short in points...even 11-12 HCP's if it's minors.
- (2) It's OK to open a fairly strong four-card major.
- (3) When you have opened and know that game is remote, pass as soon as you can.
- (4) When partner is a passed hand, forget about slam unless you have a 2♣ opening.
- (5) Extra thought should be given before opening light, particularly in a minor suit, as that often makes it easier for the opponents to overcall whereas they would not have bid had you passed.
- (6) In 4th position the meaning of 2♥ or 2♠ should not be that of a weak-two bid. Since there is no longer the need to preempt anyone these bids should show a seriously invitational hand for the major suit bid.

When responding to 3rd or 4th major suit openings keep the following in mind:

- (1) Show some kind of raise for partner's major suit opening if you have it. Don't mess around with new suits, just raise or use Reverse Drury.
- (2) Perhaps incorporate 'fit-showing jumps' into your bidding repertoire. As a passed hand they PROMISE support for partner's opening bid. An example would be: P P 1♠ P 3♣ showing five or more clubs to go with your limit raise in spades.
- (3) Hopefully if you have passed in 1st or 2nd position, your partner will keep this in mind if he opens the bidding. Since your hand has already been limited to no more than 11 HCP's it's now important for you to indicate whether you're at the high end or the low end of that range. But whatever you do AVOID jumping to 2NT to show the 11 point hand. Nothing is so irritating to a partner who has opened a little on the light side as to be stuck at the 2NT level.

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