

Thinking about Partner's Actions

Among other things bridge is a game of analysis and logic.....with lots of opportunities for creativity. It is certainly not a game to be played by rote by any means. So why do we spend so much time on rules?

So I have made a New Year's resolution in March (I'm always a little slow and behind times). From now on I'm going to spend more time on how one should be thinking rather than putting the emphasis on things like the Rule of 11 or 'eight ever, nine never'. Although such axioms are very helpful and not to be ignored I want both my partner and I to get into the habit of thinking about the hands of the other players at the table, and in particular, each other's. More importantly why is partner bidding this way and/or defending the way he/she is? After all you already know your hand...you are looking at it! So why not use a little brain power to envision partner's hand and anticipate or recognize his present problem and/or potential problems.

So with that in mind this hand comes up at matchpoints:
You hold: Void AQJxxx Jx Q98xx

The bidding starts with partner and it goes as follows:

<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Us</u>	<u>LHO</u>
Pass	Pass	1H (1)	1S
1NT	Dbl(2)	2H	2S
Dbl (3)	Pass	???	

(1) This wouldn't particular be my choice (I'd prefer a weak two-bid) but it's the bid that was made at the table so we are stuck with it. The US person is in third position so partner ought to give them a little extra room!

(2) Penalty?!

(3) Penalty.

How are we feeling about our actions so far? A little on the sick side perhaps? What do we have to offer for defense? What do we think partner's hand looks like? If we pass how many tricks do we expect to take in our hand?

If we ask yourselves these questions and then think about the answers I am sure you would not pass 2Sx. The most partner can have is about 11 HCP with two or three spades tricks and no fit in hearts. If partner has values in clubs he/she won't be happy to find they are almost worthless. So it must be right to bid those clubs. (Partner's hand was actually KJxx x Qxx AJxxx.)

Ok, another example:

This time you hold Qx Qxxxx K J109xx and the auction goes as follows:

<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>US</u>
1NT	Pass	Pass	2C (*)
2D	Dbl (?)	Pass	?

(*) You play DONT

I hope you are asking yourself the following questions? (and perhaps a few more)

- (1) What is partner doing?
- (2) Have you ever discussed this sort of auction with partner?
- (3) How well do you know all the aspects of playing DONT?
- (4) Is this double 100% penalty or do we have some options?
- (5) What would other choices by partner (2H, 2S, 2N, 3D) mean?

So many partners hear the word "double" and, if it's not conventional such as negative or responsive, they just pass. Sometimes you or partner will need to use a double to show values and thereby expressing some doubt as to the validity of the opponents' action. So, my advice is to once again think about what's going on before you automatically pass.

In the above situation, your partner's hand was KJxx Kxx Qxx Axx. How else can he get into the auction in order to show some really good values?

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