

REVERSES with LEBENSOHL

What is a "Reverses" and does it always show extra values? And how does a responder rebid after the opening bidder has "reversed.?" The sequences which follow an opener's reverse can be confusing and frustrating unless the partnership has developed a logical solution to possible ambiguities in the strength of responder's rebids. Many players have found the use of the Lebensohl convention to be helpful in this dilemma.

A "reverse" is perhaps best defined as a bidding sequence in which the opening bidder shows two suits in such a manner that the responder must bid at the three level in order to show a preference to the opener's original suit. For example, the following sequences are "reverses" (and should show extra values):

(a)Opener	Responder	(b)Opener	Responder	(c)Opener	Responder
1♣	1♠	1♣	1♥	1♥	2♦
2♥	?	2♦	?	3♣	?

In each of the above sequences the opening bidder has "reversed". In each instance the opener has a strong hand with a minimum of about 16-18 points (HCP). It also means that the opener has five or more cards in his first bid suit and four or more cards (usually exactly four) in his second suit; in other words, the first bid suit is longer than the rebid suit. The two suits are NOT the same length. A "reverse" is also forcing... responder must bid at least one more time.

One of the first things you were taught about bridge bidding was to plan your rebid before you opened. Thus a reverse should be planned in advance. As reverses show specific distributional patterns with strength, the opener needs to be extremely careful not to overstate his hand. Examples:

(a)♠-AJx	(b) ♠-AKJxx	(c) ♠-x	(d) ♠-KJxx
♥-AKxx	♥-x	♥-AJxx	♥-AKQxx
♦-AQxxx	♦-AKJxxx	♦-AKQxxx	♦-Axx
♣-x	♣-x	♣-Kx	♣-x
Open 1♦, then 2♥.	Open 1♦, then 2♠.	Open 1♦, then 2♥.	Open 1♥, then 2♠

After your partner has reversed, you, as responder, should insist upon game with 8 or more points and think about going higher with anything as good as an opening hand. Usually, though, you will have less.....something in the 5-7 point raise is common. If the opening bidder has a minimum reverse and there is no fit to be found, it should be possible to sign off below game. For fairly simple reasons the responder is often better able to determine the level of the contract unless the opening bidder overrules responder's decision because he has additional values for his reverse.

This is where a Lebensohl type application comes in. With a weak hand and no good fit the responder has two rebids available that potentially show weakness:

- (1) Two of the major previously bid at the one level - Shows a five-card or longer suit.
- (2) 2NT - denies having a five-card or longer major, but is completely artificial. (Although often responder will have a NT type hand)

It is worth noting, however, that just because responder makes one of these weakness-sounding bids, it may be entirely natural and thus not weak. It could be only temporizing while waiting for the opener to further show his hand. This will be clarified later as the weakness-sounding bid is 100% forcing.

After responder has made either of the potentially weak rebids, the opening bidder must bid again. With less than game-forcing strength opener may make one of the following three rebids each of which is non-forcing:

- (1) 2NT - shows a stopper in the fourth suit with minimum values for a reverse. (After responder has rebid his major suit).
- (2) 3NT - shows good stoppers in the fourth suit with maximum values for a reverse.
- (3) Three of opener's original suit - shows a minimum reverse with at least a six-card suit if responder has rebid his major suit but may be a five-card suit if responder has bid 2NT. (Responder can pass.)
- (4) Raise to the three level of responder's suit - shows a minimum reverse with three-card support and is invitational to game.

Although the above sequences are not forcing, responder may "correct" the final contract to a more playable one. For example, after opening bidder's 2NT rebid, responder can go back to opener's original suit with a really weak hand or raise to game in NT if at the top of his weakness sounding bid.

As it is when Lebensohl is used after interference over an opening NT, the greatest advantage of using this approach with reverses is when the potential weakness showing bids are NOT used. In fact it is probably best to play that the failure to make a weakness bid guarantees that the partnership is in a game-forcing auction. It also suggests that slam may be a possibility. Therefore, the following rebids show values:

- (1) Three of partner's first bid suit - shows at least three-card support with game going values.....essentially unlimited.
- (2) Raise of partner's second bid suit - shows four-card support with game going values and unlimited strength.
- (3) Jump to 3NT - shows 11-13 HCP's but is not forcing since it is limited.
- (4) Jump in your suit - shows at least good six-card suit with game going values, game forcing values and again essentially unlimited.
- (5) Bid of the fourth suit - shows game-forcing strength with no obvious rebid. This tends to be a waiting bid denying three-card support for opener's first bid suit and no clear action. In fact, it is usually natural.

A reverse after responder has limited his hand with a 1NT response is unlimited and forcing and still shows that the first bid suit is longer than the second suit. The rebids by responder that are considered weak are bidding any new suit (shows a long weak suit and a bad hand) and bidding 2NT (shows that first NT bid was minimum). Showing a preference to opener's first bid suit if it was a minor should be somewhat forward going.

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