

Some Little Known Bridgisms

I have no idea what the word “bridgism” means. I have coined it to cover a multitude of things that come up in the ordinary course of a bridge session, but mostly generally they are consensus agreements, many of which are little known to the average bridge player. So in this article, “bridgisms” and agreements are synonymous. These bridgisms are not to be confused with principles of bridge....the principles are a whole lot more important.

In this article I will try to cover bidding at the five level in both competitive and non-competitive auctions and the “bridgisms” that apply.

Bridge Principles for Five Level Bidding Basically, the principles of bidding at the five level are: (1) Never risk a double game swing, and (2) The five level belongs to the opponents. Naturally, the first principle has priority. Five level bridgisms (and all other agreements) apply to situations that are not in conflict with bridge principles. In the case of five level bridgisms, the determinant factor is that your side knows (at least you think you know) you are entitled to a plus score.

Competitive Auctions I. Vulnerable verses non-vulnerable agreements that apply at the five level to the partner in the immediate seat. Unfortunately, five level agreements are vaguely defined. But the most important situation is this one because: (a) the hand belongs to your side.....your side is entitled to a plus score, (b) you are vulnerable, the opponents are not so they tend to do lots of sacrificing, (c) the opponents have ostensibly taken a save at the five level, (d) you are in the immediate seat.

Bridgism 1: If you voluntarily bid game in a power auction, the opponents cannot play the hand undoubled. If you pass, that is a forcing pass.

Bridgism 2: An immediate double shows a minimum and says nothing about length in their suit. However, I don't know about you but I am reluctant to double with a void in their suit.

Bridgism 3: If you immediately bid a new suit below your trump suit, that is a long suit slam try.

Bridgism 4: If you immediately bid the trump suit, that is signoff, not invitational

to a slam. Your bid shows extra length in your trump suit, presumed shortness in their trump suit, and no desire to bid a slam. If partner has undisclosed values and unusual distribution, he may overrule you and bid on.

Bridgism 5: If you pass, partner doubles, and you pull the double, that always denies two losers in their suit, and it is always a slam try. After you pull the double, partner is encouraged to bid a slam if he likes his hand. The assumption is that if partner had not doubled but had bid on himself, you were going to bid a slam.

A: If you pass, partner doubles, and you pull the double back to your trump suit, that is a general purpose slam try asking partner how well they like their hand based on the auction, etc.

B: If you pass, partner doubles, and you pull the double to a new suit, that is an ambiguous slam try. Since any pass and pull is a slam try, and since you didn't bid a new suit immediately to make a long suit slam try, this is unclear, but it is some sort of slam try.

Bridgism 6: If partner is known to be short in their suit (and he knows that you know that), double by you is a strong suggestion to defend. It shows useless high cards in their suit, and indicates that the rest of your hand is a minimum.

The primary reason for many of these bridgisms (agreements) is to avoid ethical problems. If partner makes a slow double and you pull, the opponents might legitimately complain that you pulled the double because your partner hesitated. But because of the vulnerability and since the pull of the double is always invitational to slam, there should be no ethical problems involved.

Non-Competitive Auctions I. The Meaning Of Constructive Five Level Major Suit Jumps.

Bridgism 1. If there is one unbid suit, the jump asks for a control in that suit.

A. If you have no control in the unbid suit, you are required to pass.

B. If you have first round control in the unbid suit, you are required to cuebid the suit. Partner may now be able to bid a grand slam.

C. If you have the king of the unbid suit, you are required to bid 5NT, so that partner may bid 6NT if he desires. Otherwise, the lead may be the queen of the unbid suit through your king, and you lose the first two tricks. Also, the opponents may be able to get a ruff in the unbid suit.

D. If you have a singleton in the unbid suit just bid a slam.

Bridgism 2. If there are two unbid suits, the jump asks you to bid six if there are not two fast losers in the two suits.

A. You need a first round control and a second round control in the two unbid suits to bid slam.

B. With first round control in both unbid suits, you are required to cuebid, to show first round control in both suits. Occasionally, you can forget about cuebidding and just bid a grand slam yourself.

Bridgism 3. If the jump is in response to a preempt, the jump asks about trump quality. Partner will have not have much trump support, but will be solid otherwise.

Bridgism 4. If there are three unbid suits, the jump asks you to make a decision as to how well you like your hand for slam. The criteria you use to determine whether to bid six are aces (controls), trump quality, and the value of your hand based on the auction.

II. The Grand Slam Force (GSF). If you play RKC (Roman Keycard Blackwood), a jump to the GSF (usually 5NT) is necessary only when you have a void. Sometimes the GSF is used without a jump, because it is only after cuebidding beyond 4NT that all the information is known except trump quality.

III. Slam Sequences In Which You Do Not Bid Blackwood or RKC. The reasons you cuebid towards slam rather than just blast into Blackwood or RKC include:

Bridgism 1. To force partner to make the final decision. In some situations partner is better able to make the final decision because:

A. Partner is better able to determine the degree of fit.

B. Partner knows if he has undisclosed extra values.

Bridgism 2. To force partner to cuebid if he is able to do so, whether or not he has extra values. (Maybe you hold two small cards in some side suit)

Bridgism 3. To force partner to bid Blackwood. Reasons for this include:

A. If you bid Blackwood, the response(s) are not going to give you enough information to make an intelligent decision.

B. If you bid Blackwood, the response may get you too high.

C. If partner bids Blackwood, you will be able to show all your values.

(My thanks to Grant Baze, who wrote about these agreements long before I thought much about them.)

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