

HAVING A FIT

by Barbara Seagram barbaraseagram@gmail.com www.barbaraseagram.com

Since the dawn of civilization, superstars have dreamt up conventions that help us locate a major-suit fit: Stayman, Michaels Cuebids, and Negative Doubles among many others.

With this in mind, what will you bid when partner opens 1C and RHO (right-hand opponent) overcalls 1D?

KJ542

Q876

3

976

Answer: You should make a negative double, since if you bid 1S, your potential heart fit may get lost forever. In other words, if you bid 1S and LHO now bids 3D, you are not strong enough to bid 3H if the next two players pass. However, if your hand were stronger (10 or more points), you *should* bid 1S first, since you could afford to bid hearts later.

Now take a look at this treasure: Partner opens 1D, RHO overcalls 1S and you have:

32

5432

AK1052

K2

Don't bid 3D, a non-forcing limit raise, promising 10-12 points. To show partner that you have four hearts, you must instead make a negative double -- maybe she started life with four hearts also. If partner now bids 2C (your double suggests that you also have clubs), then your next bid should be 3D.

Hang in there, we aren't through yet!

You open 1D on these cards:

A32

32

AK762

Q87

Your partner responds 1S (opponents cooperate at last by passing). What is your rebid? Since 1S is forcing, you must bid again if you wish to live through the day.

The correct rebid is 2S. It is a myth that you must have four-card support to raise responder's major. True, you would prefer to rebid 1NT but, because you have no heart stopper, you cannot. It is seldom right to rebid a 5-card minor, (there is practically always something better to do in life!) so since you have a useless doubleton in hearts (a 'ruffing value'), raise to 2S. **Partner should not bid her spades again with only four of them.**

e.g. The auction has gone

| | |
|------|-----------------------------|
| You | Partner (her hand to right) |
| West | East |
| 1D | 1S |
| 2S | 3NT |
| ? | |

KQ65

K6

Q108

A942

Her 3NT bid here shows a 4 card spade suit only and 13-15 HCP. IF West had FOUR card support for spades, he would now bid 4S. This way you will hardly ever get to game on a 4-3 major suit fit.

Give East 3 fewer HCP.

| | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| You | Partner (her hand on right) |
| West | East |
| 1D | 1S |
| 2S | 2NT (showing 11-12 HCP) |

| |
|------|
| K865 |
| K6 |
| Q108 |
| K942 |

| |
|--|
| Her 2NT bid here shows a 4 card spade suit only and 11-12 HCP. IF West had FOUR card support for spades, he would now bid 3S with a minimum (13) opening bid or 4S with a maximum (14 or 15) opening bid. 2NT invited the opener to go further in either NT or in Spades. If opener only had 3 cards support and a minimum, he would pass 2NT or bid 3NT with 14 HCP and only 3 card support for Spades. |
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Here's another reason why the opener had to raise with only three card support (IF he had no other good bid)

Suppose you are East and have these cards

KQxxx
xx
Qxx
AQx

Your partner opens 1D. You bid 1S. Opener now bids 2D (because he did not know he was allowed to raise with 3 card support)... What are you supposed to bid now?

| | |
|------|--------------|
| WEST | YOU ARE EAST |
|------|--------------|

A32
32
AK762
Q87

| |
|-------|
| KQxxx |
| xx |
| Qxx |
| AJx |

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| WEST | EAST |
| 1D | 1S |
| 2D (the wrong bid) | Now what???? |

IF East now bids 2S, it is not forcing and shows 6-9 points. 3S is invitational and shows 11-12 points and 4S, while it will get you to game may mean that you are playing opposite a singleton in opener's hand since he has not shown support. East has a very real problem now and certainly cannot bid NT because of his lack of stoppers in Hearts.

It is FOR THIS reason that opener should have supported with three card support in the first place (on his rebid) and then East could happily bid 4S.

And now for one different situation: Partner opens 1 C:

AK98
A987
K985
4

Well? I would strongly recommend responding 1D with this hand. When you are responding with 10 or more points, always bid your four-card suits up the line (with a weaker hand, 6-9 points, bypass the diamond suit and bid 1H as you'll only get one bid).

Bidding 1D prepares you perfectly for every eventuality: if partner now bids hearts or spades, you can raise to game. But what if partner bids 1NT instead? Do you bother to mention your spade suit? No, partner does *not* have four hearts or four spades: she has specifically denied this by bidding 1NT. Raise to 3NT immediately in this scenario.

Playing in an eight-card major-suit fit contract is always safer than playing in notrump. Whenever you miss one, take the time to go over the hand later and determine where you went wrong.