

Fully Qualified, Forcing or Not Forcing

Responder's Reverse and 4th Suit Forcing, Episode 5

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This is the continuation of a series of articles on forcing bids. In modern bidding one must know which bids—made either by you or your partner, as a response or a rebid—are forcing or can be passed. This is the foundation of good bidding.

PREREQUISITES

Please refer to my first article in this series, episode 1, for a consideration of bids that fully qualify the opener's hand. Refer to episode 2 for an in-depth discussion of the essential elements that indicate a Reverse bid by opener. Refer to Episode 3 for a simple and efficient method for responding to the Reverse. Refer to Episode 4 to consider the ramifications of the opener's jump Shift. Since this is a series, each episode builds on the concepts and theory presented in previous articles. I may even use terms presented in those episodes.

RESPONDER'S REVERSE

Consider the following hand when your partner has opened 1♣:

Since there is no Two Over One response available, you are playing Standard American. How do you respond?

♠ AJxx

♥ QJxxx

♣ AQ

♦ AJ

Most people would respond 1♥ with this hand. What will you do if opener rebids 2♣? It is clear that you, (responder), are responsible for getting this partnership to game or to slam. Refer to episode 2 for a discussion on opener's reverse. We said that opener's reverse had to comply with three important elements:

- Opener's second bid was a bid implicitly or explicitly denied by the responding partner
- Opener's second bid was higher ranked than their first bid
- Opener's second bid was bid at a higher level than their first bid

There are occasions where responder also has the opportunity to reverse. While responder's reverse does not necessarily promise 17+ HCP, it does promise an opening hand and is forcing to game. What then are the requirements for making a responder's reverse and what does it look like.

- Responder's second bid must be ranked higher than their first
- Responder's second bid must have been denied by opener

• Responder's second bid must not be at the one level as in: 1♣, 1♥, 1♠, 1NT; here 1NT is clearly to play with no interest in game.

Let's take another look at the first responding hand we looked at:

- ♠ AJxx
- ♥ QJxxx
- ♣ AQ
- ♦ AJ

Partner opened 1♣, responder bid 1♥, opener rebid 2♣, what should responder do now and what does it mean? What would 2♠ mean?

The Bidding			
Opener	Resp	Opener	Resp
♠ Qxx	AJxx	1♣	1♥
♥ AK	QJxxx	2♣	2♠ (?)
♣ Kxxxxx	AQ		
♦ Qx	AJ		

• Is 2♠ a responder's reverse?

Absolutely

• Is 2♠ higher ranked than responder's first bid?

Yes

• Were Spades denied by opener?

Yes, if opener had 4♠ they would have bid 1♠ over 1♥.

• Is responder's bid of 2♠ forcing?

Yes, it is forcing to game.

• Why didn't responder just bid 3NT?

Because they have slam interest.

• How should the bidding continue?

Since 2♠ is forcing, opener should rebid 3♣ because ♦Qx should not be seen as a stopper. Having no fit, responder asks for Controls with 4NT. Opener shows 2 controls having the ♣K and the ♥A. Responder settles for 6NT.

The Bidding			
Opener	Resp	Opener	Resp
♠ Qxx	AJxx	1♣	1♥
♥ AK	QJxxx	2♣	2♠
♣ Kxxxxx	AQ	3♣	4NT
♦ Qx	AJ	5♥	6NT

Consider this hand for a moment. Partner has opened 1♦ and you hold the following hand:

- ♠ A9x

♥ AKJxx

♣ 7

♦ AJxx

Of course, you bid 1♥. Opener rebids 2♣. You could bid 3NT but that eliminates any discovery of a possible Diamond slam as opener's response is limited. This is a perfect opportunity to make a reverse bid of 2♠. This is not a suggestion to play the hand in Spades as opener has already denied having 4 Spades. Responder's reverse is forcing to game so you have bought time! A very precious commodity. If opener bids 3♣ or 2NT you can now bid 3♦ without fear of being dropped as you are on a game force. Let's look at the actual hand.

				The Bidding	
Opener	Resp	Opener		Resp	
♠ Qxx		A9x	1♦	1♥	
♥ x	AKJxx	2♣	2♠		
♣ AKxx		x	2NT	3♦	
♦ KQxxx		AJxx	4NT	5♦	
			6♦		

There are other ways for responder to force game. We will explore those bids in coming episodes. Next episode will focus on 4th suit forcing.

STAY TUNED! 🎧