BEGINNING BRIDGE - SPRING 2018 - WEEK 4

SUIT CONTRACTS - PART 2 (Minor Suit Bidding Conversations)

LAST REVISED ON MARCH 12, 2018 COPYRIGHT © 2010-2018 BY DAVID L. MARCH

BIDDING

If opener with a medium strength hand does not have the high card points and shape to open 1NT or a five-card major to open 1 \lozenge or 1 \lozenge , opener will open a three-card or longer minor suit. The partnerships minor suit bidding conversations should be based on the strength point ranges and general approach that was described for the major suit bidding conversations. But there are some important differences:

Bidding Priorities

Because is takes eleven tricks to make a minor suit game, the bidding conversation should begin with a search for an eight-card major suit fit. If a major suit fit is not found, a no trump contract is usually better than a minor suit contract if the partnership has a balanced shape.

• Support for Minor Suits

After a major suit opening bid, responder only needs three cards in the major to guarantee an eight-card major suit fit. Because opener can open a minor suit with as few as three cards, responder should have five-card support in the minor to **guarantee** an eight-card minor suit fit.

OPEN	PERCENT OF OPENED HANDS		
BID	3 CARDS	4+ CARDS	
1♣	10.7 %	89.3 %	
1 *	3.5 %	96.5 %	

As the table on the right shows, it is much more likely that a minor suit opener has at least four cards in the suit so responder should not hesitate to raise opener's minor with four-card support if there is no better alternative response.

RESPONDER'S RESPONSE BIDS

After an opening bid of $1 \clubsuit$ or $1 \diamondsuit$, responder's choices, **in priority order**, are:

- ✓ Bid a four-card or longer major suit (*forcing*).
- ✓ Bid no trump with a balanced hand and stoppers in two unbid suits (*invitational*).
- ✓ Show five-card or longer support for opener's minor (*invitational*).
- ✓ Bid a new four-card or longer minor suit (*forcing*).
- ✓ Pass.

Responder's bidding choices in priority order, are:

Dummy Points	RESPONDER'S RESPONSE TO A MINOR SUIT OPENING BID	Bid Type
0-5	Pass	
	Respond a new 4+ card major at the 1-level. • Plan to pass or make a limiting invitational rebid on next turn.	Unlimited Forcing
6-9	Raise opener's minor to 2-level with 5+ card (usually) support.	Limiting Invitational
Weak	Respond a new 4+ card minor at 1-level (1 ♦ over 1♣). • Plan to pass or make a limiting invitational rebid on next turn.	Unlimited Forcing
	Respond 1NT with a balanced hand.	Limiting Invitational
	Respond a new 4+ card major at the 1-level. • Plan to make a limiting invitational rebid on next turn.	Unlimited Forcing
10-12	Respond 2NT with a balanced hand, stoppers in two unbid suits.	Limiting Invitational
Medium	<i>Limit raise</i> opener's minor to 3-level with 5+ card support.	Limiting Invitational
	Respond a new 4+ card minor at cheapest level. • Plan to make a limiting invitational rebid on next turn.	Unlimited Forcing
	Respond a new 4+ card major at the 1-level. • Plan to drive to game on next turn.	Unlimited Forcing
13-16	Respond 3NT with a balanced hand, stoppers in two unbid suits.	Limiting Sign-off
Strong	Raise opener's minor to game with 5+ card support.	Limiting Sign-off
	Respond a new 4+ card minor suit at cheapest level. • Plan to drive to game on next turn.	Unlimited Forcing

• Attributes:

- ✓ All of the new suit responses are unlimited forcing bids and opener must rebid.

 New suit responses are not forcing if responder already limited the hand to 0-12 points by passing a chance to open the bidding.
- ✓ All of the other responses are limited invitational bids and opener can pass.

• Strength:

- ✓ A new suit response at the one level requires at least six dummy points.
- ✓ A new suit response at the two level requires at least ten dummy points.

• Shape:

✓ All of the new suit responses show at least a four-card suit.

Bidding Auction: $1 \clubsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow ??$

Pass with: ♠J 7 6 3 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ J 7 3 2 ♣9 3

2 HCPs. Too weak to respond.

Pass with: ♠93 ♥9763 ♦75 ♣Q8732

4 DumPs (2H+2S). Have 5-card club support but too weak to respond.

Respond 1♠ with: ♠KQ92 ♥87 ◆84 ♣KQT53

10 HCPs. Have 5-card club support but priority is search for major fit.

Respond 2NT with: ♠Q92 ♥K87 ♦QJ4 ♣KT95

11 HCPs. Balanced. Have 4-card club support but with stoppers in all four suits invite partner to bid a **3NT** game.

Bidding Auction: $1 \diamond \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow ??$

Respond 3♦ with: ♠K3 ♥95 ♦KQ875 ♣Q954

11 DecPs (10H+1L). Unbalanced. Have 5-card diamond support.

Respond 1NT with: \blacktriangle T 5 3 \blacktriangledown J 8 2 \blacklozenge Q 7 5 \clubsuit K Q 4 3

8 HCPs. Balanced. Too weak to bid clubs at two level.

Respond 3NT with: ♠Q83 ♥K85 ♠AQ87 ♣K83

14 HCPs. Balanced. Have 4-card diamond support but **3NT** (9 tricks) is better then **5** ♦ (11 tricks) with same or higher score.

Respond 5♦ *with:* ♠Q8 ♥85 ♦AQ8754 ♣KQ5

15 DecPs (13H+2L). Will be master hand with 9+ diamond fit.

When making a forcing new suit response, bid the longest suit. With a choice of equal length suits:

- ✓ Bid the highest ranking five-card or longer suit.
- ✓ Bid the cheapest four-card contract.

Bidding Auction: $1 \clubsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow ??$

Respond 1♥ *with:* ♠KT87 ♥AQ953 ♦72 ♣Q4

12 DecPs (11H+1L). Unbalanced. Can not support clubs. Longest new suit is hearts.

Respond 1♠ with: ♠Q 9 7 6 4 ♥ 9 ♠ A Q 6 5 3 ♣Q 6

12 DecPs (10H+2L). Unbalanced. Can not support clubs. Highest ranking new five-card suit is spades.

Respond 1♥ *with*: ♠KQ62 ♥QJ94 ♠A32 ♣53

12 HCPs. Balanced. Can not support clubs. Cheapest four-card bid is hearts.

Some partnerships prefer to bypass a four-card diamond suit when there is also a four-card major suit to give the major priority. One approach is to normally bid up the line and bypass diamonds only if the hand is weak and most of the strength is in the major.

Bidding Auction:
$$1 \clubsuit \rightarrow P_{ass} \rightarrow ??$$

Respond 1♠ with: ♠AKJ9 ♥64 ♦T853 ♣862

8 HCPs. Can not support clubs. Bypass diamonds because all the strength is in spades.

Respond 1♦ with: ♠Q972 ♥64 ♦KQT9 ♣862

7 HCPs. Can not support clubs. Cheapest four-card bid is diamonds.

OPENER'S FORCED REBID

With some minor differences, opener's forced rebids are similar to those that were described for the major suit conversations. Opener's choice of rebids, **in priority order**, depends on the strength of the hand:

• Minimal Strength (13-16 points)

Rebid as cheaply as possible.

- ✓ Raise partner's new suit one level with at least four cards.
- ✓ Bid a new four-card or longer suit.
- ✓ Rebid no trump to show a balanced hand
- ✓ Rebid your suit at the cheapest level with extra length in your suit.
- Medium Strength (17-18 points)

Jump a level to show extra strength. If responder bid a new suit at the two level, opener can jump directly to game.

• Maximum Strength (19-21 points)

Jump directly to game.

Note that all of these rebids are limiting invitational bids.

Bidding Auction:
$$1 \diamondsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow 1 \spadesuit \rightarrow Pass$$
??

14 **DumPs** (13H+1S) (*minimum strength*). Balanced. Your 4-card support makes 8-card spade fit. Cheap raise responder's suit to show minimum strength.

18 **DumPs** (**15H+3S**) *(medium strength)*. Unbalanced. Your 4-card support makes 8-card spade fit. Jump raise responder's suit to show the medium strength.

13 DecPs (12H+1L) (minimum strength). Unbalanced. Can not support spades. Cheap rebid new suit to show minimum strength.

Bidding Auction:
$$1 \diamondsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow 1 \heartsuit \rightarrow Pass$$
??

13 DecPs (12H+1L) (minimum strength). Balanced. Can not support hearts. Cheap rebid no trump to show balanced minimum strength without four spades.

13 **DecPs** (13H+0L) (*minimum strength*). Balanced. Can not support hearts. Cheap rebid spades to show minimum strength.

OPENER'S INVITED REBID

If responder makes a limiting invitational response, opener becomes the bidding captain because opener has the most information about the partnership's minimum **and** maximum strength.

Because responder did not make a new suit forcing $1 \vee 0$ or $1 \wedge 0$ response, opener knows that responder does not have a four-card major. This means the partnership has no chance for an eight-card major suit fit and opener's goal should be a part score or game in no trump or a minor suit.

REBIDS AFTER A NO TRUMP RESPONSE

With a balanced hand, opener should direct the partnership to a no trump contract at the appropriate level. With an unbalanced hand opener can show a second suit or rebid the original suit.

Bidding Auction:
$$1 \clubsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow 1NT \rightarrow Pass$$
??

Pass with: ♠K86 ♥QJ7 ♦A75 ♣K983

13 HCPs. (minimal strength). Balanced. Partnership 19-22 (13+6 to 13+9). No chance for a game.

13 HCPs. (minimal strength). Balanced. Partnership 19-22 (13+6 to 13+9). No chance for a game. No reason to bid hearts because responder does not have a four-card major.

Bidding Auction:
$$1 \diamondsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow 1NT \rightarrow Pass$$
??

15 DecPs (13H+2L) (minimal strength). Unbalanced. Partnership 21-24 (15+6 to 15+9). Suggest clubs and let partner choose the trump suit.

18 HCPs. (medium strength). Partnership 24-27 (18+6 to 18+9). Invite partner with 8-9 HCPs to bid the game.

REBIDS AFTER A MINOR SUIT RAISE

If responder raised opener's minor, opener can pass, invite game, or bid the game depending on the strength of the hand. If opener has good stoppers in the three unbid suits, opener can suggest or bid a no trump game.

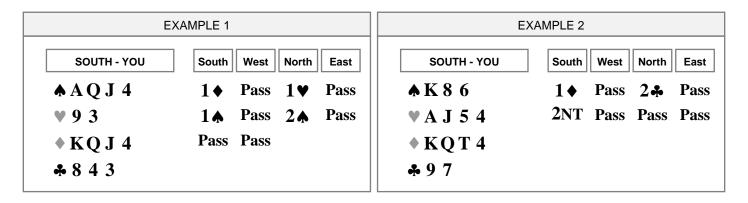
Bidding Auction:
$$1 \clubsuit \rightarrow Pass \rightarrow 2 \clubsuit \rightarrow Pass$$
??

13 HCPs. (minimal strength). Balanced but no diamond stopper. Partnership 19-22 (13+6 to 13+9). No chance for a game. Good chance for an eight-card club fit.

17 **DecPs** (**16H+1L**). (*medium strength*). Unbalanced. Partnership 23-26 (17+6 to 17+9). At least 9-card and probably 10-card club fit has extra value. Invite responder with 8-9 points to bid again.

19 **DecPs** (18H+1L). *(medium strength)*. Unbalanced with stoppers in unbid suits. Partnership 25-28 (19+6 to 19+9). At least 9-card and probably 10-card club fit has extra value. Jump to the game.

EXAMPLE BIDDING CONVERSATIONS

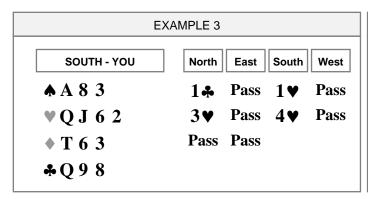


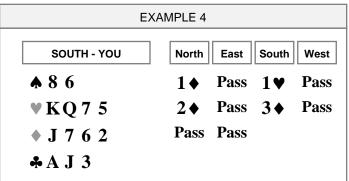
EXAMPLE 1

- South: Has 13 declarer points (13 HCPs) and opens 1 ♦ to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points, no five card or longer major (or six or more diamonds) and usually at least four (97%) but it may only be three (3%) diamonds. This limiting invitational bid makes North the bidding captain.
- *North:* Responds a new suit forcing **1** ♥ to describe a hand with at least 6 points and at least four hearts. *This unlimited bid forces South to rebid and North continues to be the bidding captain.*
- *South:* Rebids a cheap new suit **1** to limit the hand to a minimum strength 13-16 points with at least four spades.
- *North:* Rebids **2** to limit the hand to 10-12 dummy points with four spades in addition to the four hearts. *This invitational bid makes South the bidding captain and South can pass or make another rebid.*
- *South:* Knows the partnership only has 23-25 points (13+10 to 13+12) with a 4-4 spade trump fit, a little shy of game strength. South decides to pass.

EXAMPLE 2

- *South:* Has 13 declarer points (13 HCPs) and opens 1 ♦ to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points, no five card or longer major (or six or more diamonds) and usually at least four (97%) but it may only be three (3%) diamonds. *This limiting invitational bid makes North the bidding captain.*
- *North:* Responds a new suit forcing **2** to describe a hand with at least 10 points and at least four clubs. *This unlimited bid forces South to rebid and North continues to be the bidding captain.*
- *South:* Because North did not respond a major suit, South knows that the partnership does not have an eight-card major suit trump fit. But South has a balanced hand with stoppers in the unbid suits. South rebids **2NT** to limit the hand to 13-14 high card points. *This limiting invitational rebid invites North to bid a game.*
 - If South had 15+ high card points, South would have rebid **3NT** because South would know the partnership has at least 25 (15+10) high card points.
- North: Passes which must mean that North is limited to 10-11 points.





EXAMPLE 3

- *North:* Opens **1** to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer points, no five card major and usually at least four (89%) but it may only be three (11%) clubs. *This limiting invitational bid makes South the bidding captain.*
- *South:* Only has 9 points (9 HCP) and responds 1♥ to describe a hand with at least 6 points and at least four hearts. *This unlimited new suit forcing response means South continues to be the bidding captain.*
- *North:* Jumps to **3** ♥ to describe a medium strength hand with 17-18 points and at least four hearts. *This limiting invitational rebid invites partner to bid a game*.
- *South:* Knows the partnership has an eight-card heart fit with 26-27 (9+17 to 9+18) total points, enough to bid a $4 \vee$ game *a sign-off bid*).

EXAMPLE 4

- *North:* Opens 1 ♦ to describe a hand with 13-21 declarer point, no five card major (or six or more diamonds), and usually at least four (97%) but it may only be three (3%) diamonds. *This limiting invitational bid makes South the bidding captain*.
- *South:* Has 11 points (11 HCP) and responds a new suit forcing **1** ♥ to describe a hand with at least 6 points and at least four hearts. *This unlimited forcing responses means South continues to be the bidding captain.*
- *North:* Rebids a cheap 2 ♦ to limit the hand to 13-16 declarer points with at least five diamonds. This rebid also denies having four spades.
- *South:* Revalues the hand to 12 dummy points (11 HCP + 1 ♠ SSP) and knows the partnership has 25-28 (12+13 to 12+16) total points with a nine-card trump fit so a game is possible. South rebids 3 ♦ to confirm a trump fit and invite partner to bid a game in diamonds.
- *North:* Passes which implies North only has 13-14 declarer points, not enough to ensure a minor suit game.

DECLARER PLAY

RUFFING LOSERS

When you are playing a suit contract and you are void in the suit that was led, you can *ruff* the trick by playing a trump card. One way to eliminate a loser is to ruff the loser.

Because you count the losers in the master hand, a ruff that uses a trump in the master hand does not eliminate any of the losers in that hand. This is illustrated in the example on the right. Assume that the trump suit is spades. The master hand, South, has one heart loser and three diamond losers. If opponents try to take tricks in hearts, you can ruff the second heart but that does not eliminate the heart loser. On the other hand, if you lose a diamond trick early, you can use the trump in the support hand to ruff two of the diamond losers.

RUFFING	
48432	
* 7 6 5 2	
* 5	
SUPPORT HAND	
MASTER HAND	
♠ A K Q J T	
♥ 3	
♦ T 9 4	

Now you know why *declarer points* do not include short suit distribution points but *dummy points* do include short suit distribution points if the dummy has trump!

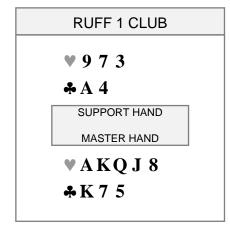
Ruffing by using trump in the master hand should only be used when you must:

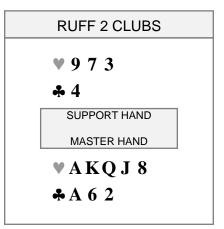
- stop opponents from running their long suit
- gain entry into the master hand by leading a loser in the dummy

To successfully ruff losers from the master hand by using trump in the support hand:

- ✓ the master hand must have more cards in the suit with losers than the support hand.
- ✓ the support hand must have enough trumps to ruff the losers.
- ✓ the master hand must have entries in other suits to get back to the master hand to lead the losers.

Suppose that hearts are trump. All of the following examples satisfy the first two conditions for a successful ruff:







In the example on the left you can cash the $\clubsuit A$, lead low to the $\clubsuit K$ and then lead the losing club for a ruff in the support hand. There is always the possibility that one of your winners will be ruffed or that East will be able to overruff with the $\blacktriangledown T$. But with the most likely club split being 5-3 (47%) or 4-4 (33%), the odds are in your favor. Since you only need one trump in the support hand, you could improve your odds by drawing two rounds of trump before playing the clubs.

In the middle example, you can cash the $\clubsuit A$ and lead one of the losing clubs for a ruff in the support hand. Now you can lead a heart to draw one round of trump and gain an entry back into the master hand. Then you can repeat the ruff. Once again, the odds are in your favor because the missing clubs should be split 5-4 (59%) or 6-3 (31%).

The right hand example is more complicated because:

- You must lose a club trick to setup the ruff. If you have too many fast losers, you may not be able to afford the loss.
- A smart defender will cash the club and then lead a heart to reduce the support hand ruffing power. But, that will leave you with two hearts in the support hand.
- Because you need to preserve the trump in the support hand, you need an entry in another suit to get back to your hand. If your only entry is in hearts, then you may not be able to repeat the ruff.

COUNTING LOSERS • RUFFING LOSERS

OPENING LEAD: ♠Q

Listen: The bidding is no help.

Observe: The $\triangle Q$ is probably top of connecting honors. East should have the $\triangle J$ and West should have the $\triangle K$.

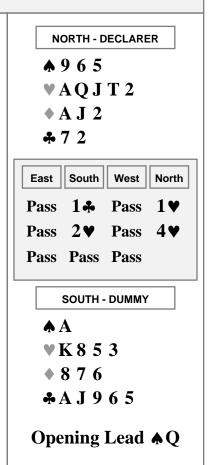
Pick: North should be the master hand because it has the longest and strongest heart suit. South, the dummy, should be the support hand.

Pause: Declarer can afford 3 North (master hand) losers.

Look: Declarer has 5 North (master hand) losers $(2 \text{ slow } \spadesuit + 0 \heartsuit + 2 \text{ slow } \spadesuit + 1 \text{ slow } \clubsuit).$

Analyze: Declarer can ruff the two slow spade losers in the master hand using trump in the dummy.

Execute: After cashing the $\triangle A$, lead a low heart to the master hand to draw trump and lead a spade to ruff in the dummy. Lead another low heart to the master hand to draw trump and lead the last spade to ruff in the dummy. Cash the $\triangle A$ and lead a low club to lose. When regain the lead, finish drawing trump and cash the $\triangle A$ to make the contract.



DISCARDING LOSERS

Sometimes you can eliminate a loser in the master hand by discarding it on an extra winner in the support hand. If the support hand does not have an extra winner, you may be able to develop one through promotion or by establishing a long suit. But care must be taken to ensure that defenders do not destroy your plan with a ruff.

Consider the example on the right where the trump suit is spades. The master hand, South, has three diamond losers. But, the support hand has two extra heart winners. If you draw trump and play the hearts, you can discard two of the diamond losers on the extra heart winners. You should also be able to ruff the third diamond loser in the support hand.

DISCARDING

♣ 8 4 3 2

♣ A K Q

♣ 5 3 2

SUPPORT HAND

MASTER HAND

♣ A K Q J T

♣ 3

♣ A T 9 4

To discard losers from the master hand you must:

- ✓ have a side suit with more cards in the supporting hand than in the master hand
- ✓ have or must be able to develop extra winners in the side suit
- ✓ ensure opponents can not ruff your plan

If you can not afford to draw trump before you discard your losers, be sure that any missing card splits are in your favor.

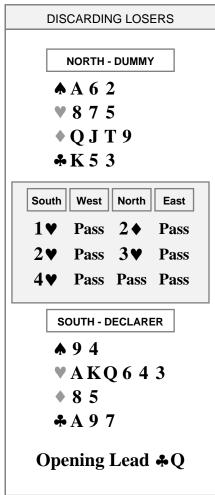
Consider the example on the right. You can afford three losers. But you have one slow loser in spades, two fast losers in diamonds, and one slow loser in clubs. If the missing trump is split 4-0 you will also have a slow loser in hearts but the probability is only 9%.

You need to eliminate at least one loser. You can not ruff any of the losers using trump in the dummy. But, if you lose the two fast diamonds, you can promote two diamonds in the dummy into extra winners. You can then discard the spade loser or the club loser on a diamond in the dummy. But, good defenders will not give you the chance to discard both of them.

Care must be taken to draw trump first to prevent defenders from ruffing your plan. You must also preserve an entry in the dummy so that you can get to the extra winners.

Take the first trick with the $\clubsuit A$ and draw trump. Then lead a diamond to start the promotion. If the defense leads another club, take it with the $\clubsuit K$ and lead another diamond. The defense will now win a club trick. But the $\spadesuit A$ gives you an entry to the dummy so that you can lead a diamond for the discard of the losing spade.

If defenders switch to spades after taking the first diamond, cash the $\triangle A$. Then lead a diamond to finish the promotion.



You will lose the second spade but the ♣K gives you an entry to the dummy so that you can lead a diamond and discard the losing club.

WEEK 4 • PAGE 11

