

Part 6: To Game Or Not To Game, That Is The Question

Last week, we learned that a reverse by opener is FORCING. It's not forcing to game, but it's forcing for one round, which means that responder MUST bid again. We also learned that responder's bid after the reverse is also forcing, unless it's a game bid. Responder's bid after the reverse isn't necessarily forcing to game, but it's forcing for at least one round.

You and your partner should have an agreement about which of responder's bids over the reverse are forcing to game, and which are forcing for just one round. You need to have such an agreement because:

- It's important for both partners to know which bids are forcing to game and which bids are not. Otherwise, chaos and disaster can ensue.
- This agreement to some extent determines what responder should bid over the reverse.

So what should responder bid over the reverse? In general terms:

- If responder knows that they belong in game, then he can just bid game, of course. Or he can choose a bid that is forcing to game. If responder makes a game-forcing bid, then responder and opener MUST keep bidding until they reach game. They can go slowly, describe their hands, and make sure that they reach the best contract.
- If responder thinks that they may not belong in game (or if he knows for a fact that they don't belong in game) then he should choose a bid that is forcing for just one round. This tells partner that they will likely play in a part score rather than in game. Opener must bid again, of course, because responder's bid over the reverse is forcing. But if responder's bid is forcing for just one round, then that is the last forcing bid in the auction. Responder may, in fact, pass opener's next bid. If responder bids again, then his bid is not forcing and opener should probably just pass.

Examples:

Opener bids 1C, responder bids 1S, and then opener bids 2H, which is a reverse. In general terms, what type of bid should responder make over the reverse with each of the following hands:

1. S: A742
H: K83
D: 7
C: AJ982

2. S: AQ103
H: J6
D: QJ109
C: 832

3. S: Q763
H: 986
D: K52
C: J95

1. You definitely belong in game with this hand. You may even have a Club slam – after all, you know that you have a 10-card fit (or better). So take it slow: Make a bid that is forcing to game, and take your time trying to determine if slam is an option.

2. You definitely belong in game, but with a flat 10-count you probably don't have a slam. It looks like you want to play in No Trump, so you can just bid 3NT. Choosing a bid that is forcing to game isn't wrong, but it's not necessary to go slowly if you're sure about where you're going.

3. You barely had enough to respond, and your hand didn't improve with partner's reverse. It looks like this hand belongs in a part score. So make a bid that is forcing for just one round, intending to get out as cheaply as possible.