



BY KEN MONZINGO

A little tip: it is *usually much* better to play in a major suit contract rather than notrump if your side owns at least *eight* of the 13 cards in the trump suit. Therefore, the major goal of the partnership during the bidding auction should be to find the correct suit for trumps, and the correct level in which to play the contract ... part score, game, or slam.

- *Priority One is always to find a major suit fit and play the contract there.*
- *Priority Two is to play the hand in notrump.*
- *Priority Three is to play in your best minor suit fit.*
- *Priority Four is not get too high in part scores, or to get high enough if game is available.*

Finding the “Golden Fit,” the 8-card Major Suit fit

1. The easiest way to find an eight card fit in a major suit is to open 5-card majors. This allows your partner, with only limited values, to raise you with as few as 3-card support.
2. In the absence of a 5-card major suit opening, you must open a minor suit, and both sides should then strain to find a 4-4 major suit fit, or a 3-5 fit if *responder* holds a 5-card major.
3. Following an opening notrump bid, the Stayman convention is used to find a 4-4 major suit fit. Natural bidding, or the Jacoby Transfer bid is used to play in *responder's* 5-card major.

Defining the Opening Suit Bid (13-15) (16-18) (19-21)

Just as the notrump openings (1NT, 2NT, & 3NT) have distinct point ranges, so does the opening bid of one of a suit. The difference here is that the opening notrump bid tells *two* stories (size & shape) in *one* bid, which the opening bid of a suit requires at least *two* bids to describe.

To illustrate, take the problem of computing strength - HCP plus distributional values.

1. Minimum hands, 13-15 points including distribution, are opened one of a suit, and *minimum* rebids are made on opener's subsequent bids. Minimum rebids are:

- A. A raise of partner's suit at the cheapest level (shows four card support)
- B. A rebid of opener's suit at the cheapest level (shows six cards long)
- C. A rebid of 1NT (or 2NT if partner's first response is at the two level)
- D. New suits at the 1-level or new suits of lower rank at the two level.

2. *Unbalanced* hands, 16-18 points including distribution, are opened one of a suit, and are described by a jump in partner's suit, a jump rebid in opener's suit, or in raising 1NT to 2NT.

Sometimes a temporizing bid of a new suit is made in the absence of the ability to jump in a suit.

- Ex:
- A. 1♥ - Pass - 1NT - Pass - 3♥ shows 16-18 points *including* distribution
 - B. 1♥ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass - 3♠ also shows 16-18 points *including* distribution
 - C. 1♥ - Pass - 1NT - Pass - 2NT shows 16-18 HCP but unable to open 1NT

3. With very good hands, 19-21 points, open one of a suit and then jump to game in partner's suit, jump to 3NT, *jump shift* in a new suit, or jump to game in your own suit.

- Ex:
- A. 1♥ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass - 4♠ shows 19-21 points including distribution
 - B. 1♥ - Pass - 1NT - Pass - 3NT shows 19-21 hcp
 - C. 1♥ - Pass - 1♠ - Pass - 4♥ also shows 19-21 points including distribution
 - D. 1♥ - Pass - 1NT - Pass - 2♠/3♣/3♦ shows the 19-20 points including distribution.

Who's in Charge?

Just as in the systemic notrump bidding, in suit bidding the opener's responsibility is to describe his hand at the earliest opportunity, usually his second bid. The responder now becomes *Captain* and now controls the auction towards the final contract. *Trust Partner!*