



## ***March 2006 BridgeHands Newsletter***

**Reverse Bidding - breaking the barrier**

**March 2006**

**Dear BridgeHands Reader,**

In prior issues, we explored forcing bids and the forcing pass. This month we will revisit a sometimes misused old friend of ours, the reverse bid – known as the “barrier” bid in some circles. Most players are comfortable with the criteria for the opener’s basic reverse, but rebid agreements are occasionally glossed over without solid partnership agreements or how to deal with out-of-the-ordinary situations. Even basic system agreements affect what is and is not a reverse. Is it right to reverse with a minimum opening hand and 5=6=1=1 shape? Would you ever reverse with a 3=2=3=5, 1=4=4=4, 3=4=4=2, or 3=4=2=4 shape? Hopefully you’ll be ready for these challenging hands before you pick one up at the table.

Also in this issue, we will kibitz a tough opening lead at the Bermuda Bowl. And if you've ever been suspicious of computer dealt hands in ACBL tournaments, we will take a look at what goes on "behind the curtain". Note: Viewing the hands below requires your EMAIL reader to use "fixed fonts" (not proportional). If you have problems reading this document, please view our [online web-based copy](#) or [Adobe Acrobat PDF file](#) suitable for printing.

If a friend forwarded you this BridgeHands newsletter, you can [signup here for your own free subscription](#).

## Reverse Bidding - full steam ahead

**Reverse** - While partnership agreements vary, a widely accepted meaning of the reverse bid refers to a player's rebid of a higher ranking suit than their bid at the prior bidding level. Since doing so often puts pressure on responder to scramble for a bid, the reverse bid is reserved for hands with at least a King or Ace more than an opening hand. The responder must make a 3 level bid to support opener, so opener ought to have a powerful hand making such a forceful bid. Some players consider these "barrier bids", a fitting description when the opener initiates a 2 level rebid in a suit strain higher than their 1 level bid. This month we will focus on reverses from the opener's perspective. Next month we will dig deeper into responder's rebids, including methods as Lebensohl over reverses.

While reverse bids are not played as absolutely forcing by some partnerships, most play the opener's reverse generally shows 16-17+ points. The reverse is typically forcing one round with 5+ cards in the first suit and 4+ cards in the second suit. The rebid suit is almost never as long as the first bid suit, except as discussed later in this article.

By the way, while we have no problem opening a Notrump hand with a worthless doubleton, strongly rebidding 2 or 3 Notrump can lead to serious problems when responder has a minimum. Opening Notrump, the responder can use transfers or simply pass, but when opener jump rebids Notrump, the responder assumes opener has unbid suits stopped. In our discussion, we will see how reverse bids address this problematic area.

Most players have the following opener reverse bidding agreements (examples below):

1. By definition, opener's second suit has a higher rank than the first suit bid
2. By definition, responder's 1 level bid is a higher rank than opener's 2 level rebid; if opener's rebid suit is a higher ranking suit, see Strong Jump Shift
3. Usually guarantees a longer first suit than the second suit bid (5+/4+ length), 5-5 suits should not be reversed
4. Promises 16-17 or more high-card points (up to 21 - 22, perhaps less with strong distributional hands)

5. Opener's reverse is generally one round forcing (responder's reverse is game forcing)

Examples of opener reverses:

1D - 1S;  
2H

1C - 1H;  
2D

1D - 1N;  
2H

1C - (1H) - 1S - (P);  
2D

P - 1D;  
1S - 2H;      Reverse by responder

1D - 1H;  
2S              See Strong Jump Shift (19-21 HCP)

1C - 1D;  
1S - 2H;      Responder reverse, game forcing

1H - 2C;  
2S              While responder broke 2 level "barrier",  
some still play as a reverse; others simply  
play as shape showing bid without extras

1S - 2D;  
3C              A similar situation here, some consider  
opener's 3 level rebid a "high reverse"  
showing extras, while others prefer a  
shape-showing description where  
opener's hand is not suitable for Notrump.  
Regardless, all would agree the auction is  
indeed game forcing.

Let's walk through some reverse rebids by opener with big hands; additional bids are included to contrast similar bids sometimes confused by players:

**1C - 1H;**  
**2D**

17+ HCP, 5+ Clubs and 4+ Diamonds (Clubs longer), reverse suit is **above** opener's first bid but below responder's bid

**1C - 1S;**  
**2D/H**

17+ HCP, 5+ Clubs and 4+ Diamonds/Hearts (Clubs longer), reverse suit is **above** opener's first bid but below responder's bid

**1D - 1S;**  
**2H**

17+ HCP, 5+ Diamonds and 4+ Hearts (Diamonds longer), reverse suit is **above** opener's first bid but below responder's bid

**1H - 1N;**  
**2S**

17+ HCP, 5+ Hearts and 4+ Spades (Hearts longer), reverse suit is above opener's first bid but below responder's bid

**1H - 2C/D;**  
**2S**

If playing Standard American, 16+ HCP, 5+ Hearts and 4+ Spades (Hearts longer), reverse suit is **above** opener's first bid but **below** responder's bid.

Many also play the 2/1 system with the same reverse agreement. Others do not, advocating opener's rebids are shape-showing; using that agreement, a suit rebid tends to show 6 trump and a 2 Notrump bid shows a balanced hand with stoppers.

More details about reverses:

While most play a reverse shows 17+ points with 5-4 in the bid suits, some play 15+ working points with a 6-4 distribution and as low as 14+ points with a 6-5 pattern and honors in the long suits. With 16+ point hands, reverses are reasonable with working honors in a long suit as:

1. A J 10 x x
2. A Q x x x
3. K Q x x x
4. K J 10 x x

Reverses may also be extended to 15 HCP with a 6-4 distribution, as:

S	A	Open 1D, rebidding 2H
H	A K x x	
D	K J 9 x x x	
C	x x	

In a pinch, reverses may be necessary with 3=4=4=2 or 3=4=2=4 distribution and a worthless doubleton. But do not reverse with doubleton holding Q x or better, instead balance in Notrump.

S	A Q x	Open 1D, rebidding 2H
H	A K x x	
D	A Q x x	
C	x x	

S	A Q x	Open 1C, rebidding 2H
H	A K x x	
D	x x	
C	A Q x x	

With a difficult hand, some prefer to reverse with a 1=4=4=4 distribution

S	x	Open 1D, rebidding 2H
H	A K Q x	
D	A 10 x x	
C	A Q x x	

Reversing with a 6-5 in touching suits may be an option with great working values holding 13-14+ points:

S	A Q x x x	Open 1H, rebidding 2S
H	A K x x x x	
D	x	
C	x	

Occasionally opener holds a worthless doubleton and may be pressed to reverse with 3 cards in the reverse suit, as:

S	A	K	x		Open 1C, rebidding 2D
H	x	x			
D	A	x	x		
C	A	K	9	x	x

In our next *BridgeHands* eMag newsletter, we will examine a multitude of responder rebids, including the following permutations:

1. Four card support of opener's rebid suit
2. Three or four card support of opener's first suit
3. Two-suited hands
4. One-suited hands
5. Balanced hands

To complicate matters, these hand types may be:

- A. Minimum, seeking immediate signoff
- B. Game going, looking for the best contract
- C. Full opener, with strong interest in slam

Okay, let's take a peek at some of responder's possible rebids. After opener's reverse, the responder's first obligation is to rebid a 5 card major. When responder does not have a 5 card major:

- a. With a minimum, make the cheapest rebid of a new 4 card major (alertable) or 2N:

1C - 1S;	S	Q	J	x	x	x
2D - 2H;	H	Q	x	x	x	
2S/3C - P;	D	x	x	x		
	C	x				

b. With support, rebid partner's suit:

1C - 1S;	S J x x x
2D - 3C;	H Q x x
	D K x
	C Q x x x

1C - 1S;	S K Q x x x
2D - 3D;	H x x x
	D Q 10 x x
	C x

1C - 1S;	S K J x x
2D - 4C;	H A x
	D K Q x
	C K J x x

c. With 5-5, force game:

1C - 1S;	S A Q x x x
2D - 3H;	H K J 10 x x
	D x x
	C x

d. With a nice 6+ card suit, jump rebid:

1C - 1S;	S A Q J 9 x x
2D - 3S;	H Q x x
	D x x
	C 10 x

While our space is limited, here's a quick overview of two bids occasionally confused with reverses: strong jump shift and mini-splinters.

Opener's Strong Jump Shift is defined as a single jump bid in a rank higher than both responder's and opener's initial suit rank, promising 19-21 distribution points:

1C - 1H;  
2S

1H - 1S;  
3C

1S - 1N;  
3D

Finally, let's review the arcane mini-splinters bid. Mini-splinters are the "younger brother" to the full splinter, with opener making a 3 level jump rebid. The mini-splinter promises 4 trump support in responder's suit, shortage (singleton or void) in the bid suit, and 16+ distributional points. By definition, opener's mini-splinter suit must be beneath responder's suit, allowing responder to signoff in 3H/S with a minimum hand (6-8 bad points):

1C - 1S;      1D - 1S;      1C - 1H;      1D - 1S;  
 3D              3C              3D              3H

Now you should be equipped with a good foundation to bid both "garden variety" reverses as well as those found in the wild. Next month we will delve into responder's rebids to complete our understanding of reverses.

### Leading between a rock and a hard place:

Let's check out an inspired lead of a doubled suit contract at the [Bermuda Bowl](#). Last month we discussed a variety of conventional leads over opponents' 3 Notrump doubled contract. But sometimes leads are lonely, leaving us between a rock and a hard place.

You are playing in the finals of the Bermuda Bowl, sitting West and holding:

K 4  
 A Q 8 4 2  
 A J 10  
 J 6 5

It's vigorous bidding between the Italians and the Americans, all Vulnerable (hand rotated).

W	N	E	S
	P	P	2S
X	3C	3H	3S
4H	4S	P	P
X			

What is your lead? FYI – this one has nothing to do with last month's 3 Notrump doubled examples. And this time you're both the doubler and on lead. Good luck!



If you led the **HA** as Giorgio Duboin did on board 4 of the last round, congratulations, you've found the only killing lead! At the other table the bidding was a less-telling **(2S) – X – 4S** without the **3C** call, so Eric Rodwell made the natural Club lead.

	J 8 5 2	
	6 5	
	8 2	
	A K 10 4 3	
K 4		Q
A Q 8 4 2		J 10 9 7 3
A J 10		Q 9 4
J 6 5		Q 9 7 2
	A 10 9 7 6 3	
	K	
	K 7 6 5 3	
	8	

Was North a busy bidder making a gratuitous **3C** call instead of jumping right to **4S**? While the Italian's **2S** opener is constructive in their system, we all know "anything goes" with preemptive **2S** bids in third seat. At any rate, when lefty bid **3C**, sitting West Bocchi correctly led the Heart Ace from his tenaces, before playing a Club. Any other line allows declarer to pitch the **HK** on a Club winner to make the contract; so Bocchi's perceptive lead wins 1 Heart, 1 Spade and 2 Diamonds, a 13 IMP swing to Italy – touché.

You can always view daily bulletins from WBF Bermuda Bowl Team Championships and Olympiads at [BridgeHands archive](#).

## Computer dealt hands - "Looking behind the curtain"

**Computer Deals** - Since the mid 1990's, the ACBL has prohibited tourney Directors from "tweaking" hands. Here is an overview of the ACBL process to generate and distribute tournament hands.

Rumors circulate about how computer dealt hands are more distributional than seen at a Club game. To begin, neither the ACBL Director In Charge nor anyone else involved with making boards are allowed to pick and choose hands based on certain characteristics. The master ACBL computer that "deals" hands for all tourneys in North America is based on random numbers to ensure the hands are truly random. So the ACBL files sent to the Director are deals that closely represent hand patterns you would find at bridge tables. This may seem surprising since some Club players seem to encounter flatter hands, as opposed to wilder

distribution with computer-generated hands. Why is this true?

It turns out humans often do not shuffle hands enough to ensure random distributional patterns. As you may have heard, mathematicians (Aldous and Diaconis) have demonstrated that the dealer should make seven good interleaved riffle shuffles (also called the faro shuffle) to ensure the pack is randomized between deals. Actually, four good faro shuffles do a fairly good job to randomize the pack.

But in reality, bridge dealers often make fewer shuffles. Some human dealers make few interleaves, less riffles, or worse yet, use sub-standard methods such as an over-handed shuffle which does practically nothing to shuffle the deck. You get the picture - poor shuffles generates in flatter hands.

1. ACBL programmer Jim Lopushinsky wrote a program that ensures each hand is truly random. Rather than using a simple internal pseudo random number, Jim requires the ACBL hand administrator (Martha Walls) to shuffle a pack of cards at least seven times and manually enter the first hand into the computer. Thereafter, the computer uses this data to "seed" subsequent hands along with the computer's internal clock to ensure randomness. Jim ran numerous simulations to ensure the hands generated matched statistical averages in nature.

2. The ACBL hand administrator, who generated over 10,000 sessions of 36 hands each year, prints out hand records in two formats: one to make boards, one for player hand records. These sheets are sealed and sent to the Director.

Thus, the Director does not have the opportunity to "pick and choose" one hand or exclude another hand - if the Director skips certain boards, get suspicious! Some years ago Directors actually did tweak the hands, believing it would enhance the game. Of course, doing so would lead to skewed results and cause the players to make guesses based on the characteristics of each Director.

Also see the [ACBL website](#) for further details

## ***BridgeHands Archive***

If you missed a back issue of a ***BridgeHands*** Intermediate-Advanced eMag newsletters, here are the links:

[Issue 0 - Finesses](#)

[Issue 1 - Forcing Pass](#)

[Issue 2 - Leads on Notrump Doubled contracts](#)

We hope you are enjoying the BridgeHands website and eMag Newsletters. In the coming months, we have some exciting Bridge lessons planned using unique state of the art technology - stay tuned.

Sincerely,

***BridgeHands***



BridgeHands

---

email: [support@bridgehands.com](mailto:support@bridgehands.com)

phone: 707-769-4499

web: <http://www.bridgehands.com>