



Pat Harrington

Play & Learn

Using new minor forcing

Consider responder's second bid in this auction:

Opener	Responder
1♦	1♠
1NT	

Standard bidding treats responder's rebid of 2♣ or 2♥ as non-forcing in the above auction. When opener's first rebid is 1NT, a new suit by responder is *not* forcing unless it is a jump shift or a reverse. Consider, however:

1. ♠K752 ♥6 ♦72 ♣QJ9875.

This hand might rebid 2♣ as signoff in the above auction. Note that responder could not bid that long club suit first. We usually expect responder's first suit to be longer than his second suit, but that is not the case when a minimum hand could not afford to show the second suit earlier. Responder's 2♣ rebid is intended as signoff. Opener should *not* go back to 2♠.

When responder's new suit bid is not forcing, it can be difficult to determine which bids are invitational and which bids are forcing. Most players would agree that if responder bids 3♠ in the above auction, it is invitational, showing 11–12 high-card points and six spades.

But what about a jump to 3♣? The

key to accurate bidding is to know which bids are signoffs, which are invitational and which are forcing. To show hands of various strengths, you need some bidding tools.

That brings up this month's topic: New minor forcing (NMF). The convention is used in uncontested auctions when opener's first rebid is 1NT. The name is descriptive. In the prior auction, the unbid minor is clubs. A 2♣ bid by responder would be NMF. It doesn't necessarily show clubs, so it is Alertable. Let's see how using NMF in the prior auction can help responder.

2. ♠AQ972 ♥76 ♦Q53 ♣K42.

Use of NMF allows you to invite game and look for a 5–3 spade fit. Clubs is the unbid (new) minor. Bid 2♣. If opener doesn't show three-card spade support, you belong in notrump.

3. ♠KQ972 ♥K6 ♦J1053 ♣A42.

You would definitely prefer playing your game in spades if opener has three-card support. Start by bidding the new minor, 2♣. If opener bids 2♠ to show three spades, bid 4♠. If opener bids anything else, settle for 3NT.

4. ♠KQ742 ♥Q963 ♦53 ♣A4.

With this 12-point invitational hand, you want to find any major suit fit. Start with NMF, 2♣. If opener shows three-card spade support, bid 3♠. If opener shows a four-card heart suit, raise. If opener has neither major, play in notrump.

5. ♠KJ972 ♥KQ96 ♦43 ♣A4.

A game-going hand also uses NMF. Your next bid will be some game,

raising either major or bidding 3NT if opener does not show a major.

Use of NMF on these hands keeps you from having to jump to the three level in a five-card suit and removes any question of whether a bid is forcing. Bidding the new minor is 100% forcing. To use NMF after opener's 1NT rebid, responder must have at least invitational strength as well as prior agreement on using this convention with partner.

The downside of NMF is that you need a new way to bid hand 1. Players who use NMF can agree that a jump rebid in the new minor is signoff. You could jump to 3♣, expecting partner to pass. Partner should recognize that you could have rebid 2♣ with a good hand.

Opener's first priority when you employ NMF is to show a major. If your response was 1♠, you and partner should decide whether opener, holding four hearts and three spades, will show the heart suit or support for responder's spades first. It will be less complicated for you if partner's first priority is to show support for your major.

NMF does not always uncover a major suit fit. If opener cannot show a major, he can rebid in notrump with stoppers in all unbid suits. Because there is limited room left to communicate, opener should jump to 3NT with a 14-point hand that would accept a game invitation. If opener lacks a stopper and is uncomfortable about notrump, he may rebid a five-card minor. □