



Pat Harrington

# Play & Learn

## Moving forward after opener reverses — part 1

Consider this auction:

West	East
1♣	1♠
2♥	?

Opener's 2♥ is a reverse because he rebid beyond two of his original suit (see February 2011 column). A reverse shows 17 or more points and unbalanced distribution with more cards in opener's first-bid suit than in his second suit. West might have either of these:

♠54	♥A Q J 6	♦A 2	♣K Q J 9 6
♠A 2	♥A Q J 9	♦7	♣A K J 9 7 6

Lesley Green, who I met at the Orlando NABC, told me about a problem she had getting a player to understand that a reverse is forcing. When the light dawned, the player's comment was, "They named it wrong — it's not a reverse. It should be called a forward." Opener's reverse forces the auction to move forward for one more round of bidding, but it is not forcing to game. It wouldn't make sense for a 17-point opener and a 6-point responder to insist on game.

Let's take a look at some possible hands that East might hold in the auction above. What is your next bid with

each East hand?

1. ♠A 9 6 3 ♥5 2 ♦J 7 4 ♣J 7 5 3
2. ♠K J 6 3 ♥Q 2 ♦7 4 3 ♣A 7 5 3
3. ♠Q J 6 5 4 ♥Q 5 3 2 ♦J 6 ♣5 3
4. ♠K Q 6 5 4 ♥K J 5 3 ♦A 6 ♣5 3

Hand No. 1 isn't strong enough to be certain of game opposite a partner who might have only 17 points. You want to support clubs, but how?

Hand No. 2 also has club support, but with 10 points, there should be game opposite 17 points. Is there a way to explore for the best contract or do you have to guess?

You want to play in hearts with hands Nos. 3 and 4, but No. 3 isn't strong enough to insist on game while hand No. 4 is. How can you differentiate between these two?

What you really need is a warning bid that you can make with a weak responding hand — a bid that says you are not interested in game unless opener has a maximum hand. The ACBL Bridge Series text, *Commonly Used Conventions*, suggests that responder use 2NT as an artificial negative warning rebid. Bid 2NT with hands No. 1 and No. 3. Use it as a prelude to signing off in one of opener's suits. Responder's 2NT rebid is forcing because one more bid is needed to describe opener's exact strength.

You may someday want to look further into conventions called Ingberman and lebensohl over reverses. For now, let's keep it simple. After responder rebids 2NT, the denial bid, opener rebids his first suit — 3♣ in

this auction — to show a minimum 17- or 18-point reverse. With a better hand, opener makes any other rebid. If opener rebids 3♣, pass with hand No. 1 but correct to 3♥ with No. 3. Opener is expected to pass.

Using 2NT as a weak denial bid allows responder to show a game-going hand by raising one of opener's suits without going through 2NT. Continuing the auction shown in the first paragraph, responder can rebid 3♣ with hand No. 2 and 3♥ with No. 4. The auction cannot stop until game is reached because responder didn't use the weak denial bid (2NT).

Even though responder has rebid 2NT, an attempt to sign off in a partscore, a maximum opener can still insist on game. Over 2NT, opener can force to game by making any rebid other than rebidding his first suit. What bids by West would be game-forcing in this auction?

West	East
1♣	1♠
2♥	2NT
?	

West will rebid 3♣ with a minimum reverse. Any other rebid, such as 3♦, 3♥ or 3♠, would be game-forcing. A maximum opener can also bid 3NT with a stopper in diamonds. There is one more rebid that responder can make with a weak hand — two of his major. We'll look at that rebid when we continue our discussion of bidding after opener's reverse next month. Meanwhile, ask your regular partners how they would interpret the bids discussed in this article. □