

OVERTHINKING

Beware Your Blind Spots!

A few months ago I was asked to fill in with a player whose partner became ill and we had practically no time to talk about systems. Things have been going along pretty well until late in the session when I pick up:

K7 K9 J87 KQT632

Not a particularly exciting 12 count, but it's a good 6-card suit. An easy 1C opening. Partner bids 1H. Now, there's a real issue about whether you show the 6-card suit by rebidding 2C or bid 1NT to get the point count and general shape off your chest. Three features make me want to choose one over the other:

- 1) The range for a 1NT rebid is more limited (12-14) than a simple rebid of your suit (12-16ish);
- 2) I like to play that a rebid of 1NT promises at least a doubleton in every suit;
- 3) The two doubleton Ks really make me want to be the NT bidder to protect them in the event we end up in NT.

I bid 1NT. Partner now bids 2S – a reverse. And this, ladies and gentlemen, is when I enter my blind spot. A new suit by an unpassed hand is usually forcing (with some exceptions), but to what degree? As helpful as conventions can be, they can also be your enemy. Most players I think would play partner's reverse as game forcing and not even question it. But with the use of New Minor Forcing (and indeed, I prefer 2-way NMF), I have gotten incredibly use to the idea that all forward going hands go through NMF. In that case, partner's 2S bid, in my mind, is a weak, distributional hand (probably 5-6) that strongly wants to play in a major. So what's my rebid? Well, I'm at the bottom of my point range, so I need to find some way of discouraging partner without saying out loud, "Do I HAVE to bid again?" And this is where I make the first bidding mistake. Let's go through the options:

- a) If I had 3 hearts, I'd rebid 3H. I don't, so...
- b) Since my 1NT bid denied 4 spades, I think it would now be reasonable to raise to 3S with 3-card support. I don't have that either, so...
- c) With a 6-card club suit, I think that should be rebid here, locking in my distribution as 2-2-3-6 (see below for explanation). This is what I SHOULD have bid, but I didn't. I chose the below bid, 2NT.
- d) I wanted to take up as little of the auction as I could, which is often the right thing to do, but you have to describe your hand, and I think 3C shows it perfectly. I think a 2NT rebid in this exact auction should show 2-2-4-5. The 1NT rebid promised doubletons in all suits and the failure to raise one of their majors denied 3-card support, so I must have doubletons in both. If I had a 6-card club suit, I should rebid that (oops). So my inability to make any of those bids makes this my only logical distribution. LEARNING POINT: Your inability to take certain bids says as much if not more than the bid you actually made!

So far, the auction has been: 1C-1H; 1NT-2S; 2NT.

Partner now rebids 3H. If you took 2S as GF, this is now just showing a longer heart suit and has slam interest, and you'd probably be right, but stupid me and my blind spot, my process went as follows: "Partner knows I have a minimum hand and two hearts. If partner had game values, they would just bid 4H. If they wanted to force the auction and double check on the diamond stopper at the same time, they could have bid 3D. 3H must reinforce my

original notion of a weak, distributional hand, and partner is just correcting back to a 6-card heart suit. Even with two working Ks, the rest of my hand doesn't seem to be of much use, so I see no need to punish partner, so I PASS! Partner made 4. Every other table is in 3NT, making 4, so we get a big fat 0.

LESSON: Unless you've had detailed conversations about certain sequences, don't just assume that everyone plays a convention or bid the same way you do. Fall back on common bridge knowledge and play that their bid (in this case, responder's reverse) has its traditional meaning and bid accordingly. If I'd managed to do that, we too would have ended up in 3NT and at least gotten an average.