



Protective Bidding

Previously in this series you have seen how you have had to pass in the hand immediately after an opponent has opened the bidding when your side could well have the majority of points, and in some cases when your side could have sufficient points for game. You would have to pass a 1♦ opening bid with any of these hands.

Hand A	Hand B
♠ 10 8 7 6 4	♠ A Q
♥ A Q 2	♥ A Q 7 5
♦ 8 6 5	♦ 8 2
♣ A J	♣ 10 8 7 6 5

Hand C	Hand D
♠ 8 4 3	♠ K 8 7
♥ K 3 2	♥ K J 2
♦ A 6 5	♦ 7 4 3
♣ A J 8 7	♣ A K 4 3

With Hand A you would have sufficient values for a 1♠ overcall, but your suit is weak and you don't want a spade lead.

With Hand B you certainly cannot justify a 2♣ overcall. Not only is your club suit weak, but a 2♣ overcall suppresses the best feature of your hand, the hearts. Partner would expect five or more hearts for a 1♥ overcall.

With Hand C you would have opened 1NT but a 1NT overcall shows 15-18 points.

With Hand D not only is your hand too weak for a 1NT overcall, but you also lack the necessary diamond stopper.

If you pass 1♦ all is not lost because your partner will have a chance. However if partner also passes with similar hands you could easily end up missing a part score, or even game.

Partner is called the 'protective hand' because he has to try to protect you if you have passed with hands similar to A to D.

The rules for a protective hand to enter the bidding are much less strict. If some of what I advocate in this article seems kamikaze, remember that with many of the hands you know that partner has some points, otherwise why are opponents passing out 1♦? Bidding in the protective position is often much safer than in the position immediately over the opening bidder.

General principles of protective bidding

To decide whether to bid in the protective position, add a useful hypothetical king to your hand and make the bid your hand would have been worth in the immediate position.

So here is a rough summary:

In Second			
West	North	East	South
1♦	?		

- 1♠ = 8-16 HCP (one-level overcall)
- 2♣ = 10-18 HCP (two-level overcall)
- 2♠ = 13-16: sixspades (two-level jump overcall)
- Double = 11+ HCP (take-out)
- 1NT = 15-18 HCP

In Fourth (Protective)			
West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	?

- 1♠ = 5-14 HCP (one-level overcall)

- 2♣ = 7-15 HCP (two-level overcall)
- 2♠ = 10-13 (two-level jump overcall)
- Double = 8+ HCP (take-out)
- 1NT = 11-14 HCP (or 11-16: see below)

The protective suit overcall

Auction E			
West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	?

Hand F	Hand G	Hand H
♠ A J 10 5 4	♠ 10 7 6 5 3	♠ K 5
♥ 8 6 3	♥ A 4 3	♥ 8 5 3
♦ 9 5 4	♦ 8 6	♦ 8 7
♣ 8 6	♣ K Q 2	♣ A J 9 5 3 2

Hand F1	Hand G1	Hand H1
♠ A J 10 5 4	♠ 10 7 6 5 3	♠ K 5
♥ K 8 6	♥ A K 4	♥ K 8 5
♦ 9 5 4	♦ 8 6	♦ 8 7
♣ 8 6	♣ K Q 2	♣ A J 9 5 3 2

Replace the ♥3 with the ♥K in Hands F, G and H. In each case you would be worth an overcall in the immediate position. Overcall a protective 1♠ with Hands F and G, and 2♣ with Hand H.

Hand J	Hand K
♠ A J 10 5 4	♠ A Q 8 7 5 4
♥ A J 9	♥ K Q 2
♦ 8 6	♦ 8 6
♣ K Q 2	♣ A 10

If you add a king to Hands J and K then J becomes too strong for an immediate 1♠ overcall and K becomes too strong

Difficult hands

I hope I have demonstrated the desirability of competing in the protective position, but it would be wrong to conceal the fact that there are some hands with no perfect bid. Consider your choice with Hands V, W and X if your left hand opponent's 1♦ is passed round to you.

Hand V	Hand W
♠ A Q J 9	♠ A Q
♥ 7 6	♥ A Q 7 5
♦ 6 4 3 2	♦ 8 2
♣ J 10 6	♣ 10 8 7 6 5

Hand X
♠ 5
♥ K 8 7
♦ A Q J 7 6
♣ Q J 4 3

I can only give you my choice.

With Hand V I would overcall 1♠. Of course partner will expect five spades, but that is balanced by the fact that I want a spade lead if partner is on lead.

With Hand W I prefer 1♥ to 2♣.

Hand X is the exception. This might seem surprising bearing in mind that I have an opening bid and partner might also have felt constrained to pass with equal values. However there is another factor at work here. I have so much strength in the opponent's suit, that I suspect they are in the wrong contract and that any action by me would push them into a better contract. The fact that partner did not overcall 1♠ also increases the likelihood that they have a spade fit. This is not conclusive, but it demonstrates that **the time when you should be reluctant to protect is when you have great strength in their suit.**

Bidding opposite partner's protective bid

When deciding on whether to take protective action, a player should be conscious of the need to mentally add a useful king to his hand. Clearly it

would not be helpful if both partners bid the same king. Therefore if your partner protects you need to subtract a king before deciding how to proceed.

Auction Y			
West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	?		

Hand Z	Hand A
♠ Q 8 6 5	♠ Q 5 4
♥ K 4 3	♥ Q 6 2
♦ 9 7 5 4	♦ A K 7 6
♣ A J	♣ 10 9 6

Hand B
♠ K 3 2
♥ 6 5
♦ A Q 9 7 4
♣ 9 7 6

With Hand Z 1♠ is quite enough. Equally with Hand A 1NT is correct. Of course 11 points would be too much to bid 1NT opposite an immediate double, but partner's protective double could be as weak as eight points.

With Hand B it would be reasonable to pass, particularly if opponents were vulnerable. Of course you wouldn't want to pass an immediate take-out double, but the difference here is that your broken diamond suit is sitting over declarer.

Other protective auctions

Auction C			
West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	?		

Auction D			
West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
Pass	?		

The auction starts as in Auction C. North passes with a barely suppressed yawn. I don't need to look at North's hand. He is guilty of a cop out. Opponents have found a fit, yet they have passed the hand out at the two level. If East/West have a fit, it is very

likely that North/South also have a fit. North should be looking for reasons to bid.

If North thinks long and hard and then decides that he can only pass, then so be it. At least he has tried.

Hand E	Hand F
♠ A Q 3 2	♠ A Q 3 2
♥ 7 5 4	♥ 7 5
♦ 7 6	♦ K 8 7 4 2
♣ K 8 7 4	♣ 8 4

Hand G	Hand H
♠ A 3	♠ A 7
♥ 7 5	♥ K Q J 10 9
♦ Q 10 4 3 2	♦ 6 4 3
♣ Q J 7 6	♣ J 10 2

In Auction C North protects with 2♠ with Hand E. Partner will realise that either North has a weak spade suit or only four spades because North passed over 1♥.

North could bid 2♠ with Hand F as well, but he has another choice. He should double, for take-out. If South bids 3♣ then North retreats to 3♦. But don't try this if your partner is likely to have not noticed that you passed over 1♥.

With Hand G North bids 2NT, an unusual no trump showing the minors. Admittedly 2NT isn't a jump bid, but it cannot be natural after North's original pass.

Finally, with Hand H North would love to make a penalty double of 2♥, but that is not an option because double is for take-out. North has to pass out 2♥.

I will end this article by contrasting Auctions C and D. In D there is no evidence that East/West have a fit. That in turn reduces the prospect of North/South having a fit. North should be rather more cautious about protecting here. ■

Protective Bidding Quiz

by Andrew Kambites

1 At game all how should South introduce these hands after Auctions (i) and (ii)?

Auction (i)				
West	North	East	South	
		1♦	?	

Auction (ii)				
West	North	East	South	
1♦	Pass	Pass	?	

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ K Q 7 6	♠ A Q 7	♠ A 5
♥ 8 7 3	♥ A Q 7	♥ A Q 9 5 4
♦ A J 6	♦ 8 3 2	♦ Q 4 3
♣ 9 4 2	♣ 10 9 6 5	♣ 10 6 4

3 At game all how should North bid these hands after Auctions (i) and (ii)? If you choose to bid 2♣ in Auction (ii) what is your next bid if partner responds 2♦ or 2♠?

Auction (i)				
West	North	East	South	
		1♦	1NT	
Pass	?			

Auction (ii)				
West	North	East	South	
1♦	Pass	Pass	1NT	
Pass	?			

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ J 8 5 4 3	♠ A J 5 4 3	♠ A K J 4 3
♥ A J 6	♥ A J 6	♥ A J 6
♦ 4	♦ 4	♦ 4
♣ K 8 7 5	♣ K 8 7 5	♣ K 8 7 5

Hand D	Hand E	Hand F
♠ K 10 7 6	♠ K 10 7 6	♠ A 7 5
♥ A Q 8 6	♥ 8	♥ K 10 5
♦ 9 7	♦ A Q 7 4	♦ 8 7
♣ 10 9 7	♣ A K Q 4	♣ Q 6 5 3 2

Hand G	Hand H	Hand J
♠ A K 5	♠ K Q 10 6	♠ Q 6
♥ A Q 2	♥ 7 5 4 2	♥ J 4 3
♦ K J 7 6	♦ 6 3 2	♦ A 7 6
♣ K 10 9	♣ A 8	♣ K Q 5 3 2

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ K 7 2	♠ K 7	♠ K Q 5
♥ Q 10 7	♥ J 10 7 2	♥ J 10 6 5
♦ A 6 5	♦ A 6	♦ 6 5
♣ Q 10 3 2	♣ K 10 7 5 3	♣ A 10 8 4

2 With East/West vulnerable how should North bid these hands after Auctions (i) and (ii)?

Auction (i)				
West	North	East	South	
		1♥	Dbl	
Pass	?			

Auction (ii)				
West	North	East	South	
1♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl	
Pass	?			

4 At game all how should North bid these hands?

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	?		

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ K 7 5 4	♠ A Q J 9	♠ K 8
♥ 8 4	♥ 8 5 4 3	♥ 3
♦ K 7 5 2	♦ K 5	♦ Q 8 7 6 3
♣ Q 7 2	♣ J 10 8	♣ K 10 8 7 2

Answers to Protective Bidding Quiz

- 1 At game all how should South introduce these hands after Auctions (i) and (ii)?

Auction (i)			
West	North	East	South
		1♦	?

Auction (ii)			
West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	?

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ J 8 5 4 3	♠ A J 5 4 3	♠ A K J 4 3
♥ A J 6	♥ A J 6	♥ A J 6
♦ 4	♦ 4	♦ 4
♣ K 8 7 5	♣ K 8 7 5	♣ K 8 7 5

Hand D	Hand E	Hand F
♠ K 10 7 6	♠ K 10 7 6	♠ A 7 5
♥ A Q 8 6	♥ 8	♥ K 10 5
♦ 9 7	♦ A Q 7 4	♦ 8 7
♣ 10 9 7	♣ A K Q 4	♣ Q 6 5 3 2

Hand G	Hand H	Hand J
♠ A K 5	♠ K Q 10 6	♠ Q 6
♥ A Q 2	♥ 7 5 4 2	♥ J 4 3
♦ K J 7 6	♦ 6 3 2	♦ A 7 6
♣ K 10 9	♣ A 8	♣ K Q 5 3 2

In Auction (i) normal principles apply. In Auction (ii) South needs to add a king to his assets before deciding what to do.

Hand A (i) Pass.

(ii) 1♠.

Hand B (i) 1♠.

(ii) 1♠.

Hand C (i) 1♠.

(ii) Dbl, then spades.

Too strong for 1♠.

Hand D (i) Pass.

(ii) Dbl.

Hand E (i) Dbl.

(ii) Dbl.

Hand F (i) Pass.

(ii) Dbl.

Hand G (i) Dbl.

(ii) 2NT. 20-21 points.

Hand H (i) Pass.

(ii) Dbl. You will have to pass a 2♣ response. Or possibly 1♠.

Hand J (i) Pass.

(ii) 1NT. (11-16)

- 2 With East/West vulnerable how should North bid these hands after Auctions (i) and (ii)?

Auction (i)			
West	North	East	South
		1♥	Dbl
Pass	?		

Auction (ii)			
West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	?		

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ K Q 7 6	♠ A Q 7	♠ A 5
♥ 8 7 3	♥ A Q 7	♥ A Q 9 5 4
♦ A J 6	♦ 8 3 2	♦ Q 4 3
♣ 9 4 2	♣ 10 9 6 5	♣ 10 6 4

In Auction (ii) South has added a king so North must subtract a king.

Hand A (i) 2♣.

(ii) 1♠.

Hand B (i) 2NT.

(ii) 1NT.

Hand C (i) 2NT.

(ii) Pass. North's hearts are sitting over West's hearts.

- 3 At game all how should North bid these hands after Auctions (i) and (ii)? If you choose to bid 2♣ in Auction (ii) what is your next bid if partner responds 2♦ or 2♠?

Auction (i)			
West	North	East	South
		1♦	1NT
Pass	?		

Auction (ii)			
West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	?		

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ K 7 2	♠ K 7	♠ K Q 5
♥ Q 10 7	♥ J 10 7 2	♥ J 10 6 5
♦ A 6 5	♦ A 6	♦ 6 5
♣ Q 10 3 2	♣ K 10 7 5 3	♣ A 10 8 4

In Auction (i) South has 15-18 points. In Auction (ii) South has 11-16 points. 2♣ is a range enquiry as well as Stayman. Hand A (i) 3NT.

(ii) 2NT.

Hand B (i) 2♣. Stayman.

(ii) 2♣. Continue with 2NT over 2♦ or 2♠. Both replies show 11-13 points.

Hand C (i) 2♣.

(ii) 2♣. Continue with 2NT over 2♦ or pass 2♠, accepting the 4-3 fit. Either 2♦ or 2♠ show 11-13 points.

- 4 At game all how should North bid these hands?

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	?		

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C
♠ K 7 5 4	♠ A Q J 9	♠ K 8
♥ 8 4	♥ 8 5 4 3	♥ 3
♦ K 7 5 2	♦ K 5	♦ Q 8 7 6 3
♣ Q 7 2	♣ J 10 8	♣ K 10 8 7 2

East/West have a fit so you will probably have a fit. Partner must have some points, otherwise why are they not looking for game?

Hand A Dbl.

Hand B 2♠. Partner will be short of hearts so hopefully you can ruff hearts in the hand with short trumps if you are in a 4-3 fit.

Hand C 2NT. A rare example of 2NT without a jump being an unusual no trump. It cannot be natural because you passed over 1♥. ■