

2)Response to 1NT with majors 5-4 and competitive, inviting or forcing hand.

We define a hand as competitive, when its strength is based mainly on its shape. We are therefore talking about an unbalanced hand with 0-6 HCP.

A hand is defined as inviting when, having found a fit, it has a limit strength that could justify game if partner is maximum for his bid.

We finally define a hand as forcing when due to fit and/or HCP, the hand can reasonably bid at least at game level.

The following hand can certainly be labelled as competitive:

S

♠K 9 6 5

♥Q 10 9 7 3

♦5

♣763

Over North 1NT opening, South can bring a meagre contribution to a NT contract, above all if North has a bare ♦ doubleton. Instead of passing, South could bid 2♦ as transfer to ♥. Such bid would certainly be better than passing but is far from being the best choice. In fact the NS side could end up in a 2♥ contract with a 5-2 fit, while , perhaps, there is a 4-4 fit in♠.

The best way to handle this hand is for South to bid the ambiguous 2♣: in case North would re-bid 2♥ or 2♠, South would be more than happy to pass, playing at 2 level in a 4-4 or 5-4 fit. If instead North re-bid would be 2♦, then South shall bid his 5 cards major, that is♥, thus showing to partner 5♥ and 4♠+ with 0-6 HCP.

Let us now see how to handle an inviting hand:

S

♠K Q 6 5 3

♥Q 10 9 7

♦5

♣763

Here it is quite intuitive that a contract in either major would be better than a NT contract. South could bid ♥ as a transfer to 2♠ but, as seen in the previous example he might miss a 4-4 fit in♥. South will then bid, once again, the ambiguous 2♣. In case North re-bid would be 2♥ o 2♠, South should “invite” partner to game by bidding 3♥ or 3♠, over which North would go to game or pass, depending on his hand strength.

Example of a forcing hand:

S

♠K Q J 6 5

♥Q 10 9 7

♦5

♣A63

With such a hand, South wants no doubt to go at least to game. He bids first the ambiguous 2♣ and over North 2♥ or 2♠, South either concludes the bidding at 4 in the fitted major or, better, bids 4♣ as a relay asking for controls (see later) If instead North

bids 2♦, showing no 4 cards major, South would use the modified Smolen convention that works as follows:

N S

1NT 2♣

2♦ 3♦ = 5♥ and 4+♠ G.F

 3♥ = 5♠ and 4+♥ G.F

In other words, over North 2♦, South makes a transfer bid at 3 level for his 5 cards major, thus showing 5-4 in majors and G.F The transfer technique used in the modified Smolen convention presents 2 advantages when compared with the original Smolen. In the first place opener will become declarer in 100% of cases. Moreover with the transfer technique opener can choose between the 2 majors at 3 level: this is very important because it allows responder to use the 4♣ relay to ask for controls.

The 4♣ relay is by far more economical than RKCB 4NT, as far as bidding space is concerned, allowing responder to comfortably stop in game in case of unsatisfying response. The 4♣ relay gives also more information than RKCB 4NT, because it relates the possession of Aces as well as Kings. (*for details on 4 ♣ relay see specific chapter*).

It is clear that if in all the 3 above mentioned cases, the 1NT opener, over responder 2♣, would re-bid 2NT = I have both majors, bidding developments shone above could not be used.