



Bidding Partner's Values

By Sue Himel

How many times have you heard someone say, "Bid your own hand, and I will bid my hand," ? Well, there is one situation in which you should bid on partner's values.

1H - P - P - ? Bidding in this position is called balancing. It is not the same as an overcall. When you make an overcall, you promise a certain amount of strength. That is because the opponents' have opened the bidding and they have already advertised some cards and exchanged some information. You must be certain to have some values since your partner may have none. However, in the balancing chair, partner is usually marked with some values. How do we know that?

Your LHO opens with 1H and there are 2 passes to you. You hold QTxxx, xx, Kxx, QJx. LHO did not open with a 2C bid, so he should have less than 22 points. Your RHO passed, so RHO should have less than 6 points. $21 + 5 = 26$. You have 8 points and $26 + 8 = 34$. Your partner must have at least 6 points, and probably has considerably more. So, you are allowed to bid with less than you should have to overcall because partner is marked with some values. You "borrow" some of partner's values and make a bid of 1S.

Why didn't partner bid? Partner may have a problem hand. Suppose your RHO opens with 1H and you hold: Ax, KTxx, QJxx, Kxx. With this balanced hand and no 5 card suit, you have no call except a Pass. It is not right to make a Take Out Double without spade support, and you have no 5 card suit to overcall. You must pass.

Now in the balancing chair, when you hold less than you should have for an overcall, it is important to reopen the bidding in order to protect your partner. Partner made a disciplined pass in the direct seat; protect him by bidding if you can. How much of partner's hand should you "borrow"? I suggest you borrow a King. That will allow you to make a one level bid with as few as 5 points if your hand is appropriate, since most overcalls are made with 8+ points. Borrow a King and then make the same bid that you would in the direct seat.

Since the balancer "borrowed" a king, the partner of the balancer must remember to "subtract" a King before responding. So, if you balance with the first hand given, your partner must not bid until s/he "subtracts" a King. If partner balances, and you hold the hand given above for the partner of the balancer, you must take 3 points away from your total before deciding what to respond. With a balanced 10 point hand, and no fit for partner's suit, what is your response? Right, 1NT.

Now, let's look at a better hand that the balancer might hold. The auction has proceeded 1C - P - P - ? And your hand is KJx, Qxx, AJx, KTxx. This time you have no 5 card suit and a balanced hand. You need to bid here, but what? Even though you have a decent hand this time, you must still "borrow" a King before bidding. If you add 3 points to your hand for the borrowed king, what bid can you make in the direct seat with a balanced 17 point hand? 1NT. So that should be your bid in the balancing seat with 14 points.

What about reopening (balancing) with a Double? For a Takeout Double in the direct seat you should have an opening hand, at least 12 points and at least 3 card support for each of the unbid suits. In the balancing seat, since you will "borrow" a K from partner, you may have less than that. Reopen with a double when you have at least 9 points and the proper distribution. Look at this example:

The auction has gone: 1D: P: P: ? You hold: AT64, KJ3, 32, QT43 With 10 points and this distribution in the direct seat, you would routinely pass. But, in the balancing seat, you need to make a call in order to protect your partner who may have a good, but unbidable hand. "Borrow" a K from partner and make the bid you would make in the direct seat - Double.

Now let's move around to the other side of the table and look at some of partner's possible hands in this auction.

- a) K983, A5, QJ53, J82 Partner will "subtract" a K before responding to your reopening double and bid 1S.
- b) J8, A42, QT84, KQ85 Partner will "subtract" a K from his hand and respond with 1NT.
- c) KT, Q54, AQJT2, J93 With no fit in your suits and a diamond stack behind the declarer, partner should convert your Takeout Double to a Penalty Double by passing.

The "borrow a K; subtract a K" rule will not cover every balancing situation that you encounter at the table, but if you adopt this agreement with your partners, you will be able to handle most balancing situations quite accurately.