**Bridge Theory for the Practitioners**

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 **30. The Semi-Forcing Notrump, Part II**

This is a continuation of my column on Semi-Forcing Notrump. I will discuss issues related to passing the semi-forcing NT after opening one of a major (1M).

When responder bids 1N over a major, semi-forcing, she would have 6-11 high card points (hcp) and only up to 2 cards in opener’s major. The Limit Raise hand is separated from the 1N semi-forcing hand and a structure was discussed in my previous column on this topic. I recommend passing after a 1M – 1N auction with a 5332 shape and 12-bad 14 hcps.

* **What is a bad 14? And for that purpose what is a good 14?**

A bad 14 is what you expect not to produce game when partner is at the top of her range i.e. typically 11 hcps.

A bad 14 might look like:

AJxxx KJx Qxx QJ

With this hand open 1S and when partner bids 1N, pass. You will like the result more often than not.

A good 14 might look like:

AQTxx KTx KTx Qx

i.e. good suit structure and at least couple of Tens.

* **What to do with a good-14 or even a 15-16 count hand with a 5332 shape after the bidding goes 1M – 1N?**

You will have a problem here. Responder could have 10-11 points and game is definitely possible. So you cannot pass 1N. You do not have a side 4-card suit to bid. And finally you do not want to rebid 2N as that would show a much better hand. What to do now that we have exhausted all our options?

In situations like this, one must question the basic premise. Should I open 1M with this hand? The answer is no because if you do open 1M, you get into this sort of impossible situation when the auction goes 1M – 1N. So the remedy is?

Open 1N with a 5-card major but only with a 5332 shape. And don’t forget to mark the box in your convention card where it says 5-card major common with 1N opening.

**Chakrabarti Revision of Strong 1N opening:**

* Good 14 to 17 balanced hand.
* Might have a 5-card major; if it does then the shape of the hand must be 5332.
* The 14 count balanced hand must have a 5-card suit, major or minor, and/or lots of Tens.
* The 17 count balanced hand would not have a) any 5-card suit -- either major or minor or b) 4-4 in both majors. The reason for these restrictions is simple. You want to be in game with a good 17 count hand opposite responder’s good 7 count hand. But if you open 1N, partner would pass with *all* 7 count hands.

At this stage you must be worried that if you open 1N with a 5-card major, a 5-3 major fit might be lost. This problem was solved by Hall of Famer Kit Woolsey and Steve Robinson in an article in Bridge World in 1977. In that article however, Woolsey gave the credit to Neil Silverman of New York for the development of the concept of *Puppet Stayman.*

**Responses to 1N opening:**

**2C Stayman; whatever way you like to play**

**Whatever else you want to play like Jacoby or Texas Transfers**

**3C Puppet Stayman; Game Forcing; 10+ hcps; has at least one 3 card major**

 I play a different variation with my regular partner but here I will give the Woolsey Prescription for general use:

 **Opener’s rebids after 1N – 3C**

3D = I have one or both 4 card major

 3H = I have 5 Hs

 3S = I have 5 Ss

 3N = no 4 or 5-card major.

**Continuations after 1N – 3C – 3D –**

**Responder bids the 4-card major she does not have or 3N if she is not interested in a 4-4 fit (was looking for a 5-3 fit). Is she has both majors she bids 4D.**

 3H = 4 Ss

 3S = 4 Hs

 4D = both majors 4-4

 3N = no 4-card major

**Two further worthwhile points:**

* **Why do we have both 2C and 3C asking for majors? Can we not just use 2C to cover both regular and Puppet Stayman?**

Yes, you can. However, if you want to play the so-called Garbage Stayman (weak hands with both majors), you do not want partner to respond 2N when he does not have a 4 or 5 card major. I have written some notes named “Puppet-Garbage Stayman” which avoids this problem. It is, however, a bit complex and I do not want to propose it to a general audience.

* **Will I not miss a S fit if I open 1N with 5 Ss and partner has say 6 count and 4 Ss?**

Yes, sometimes you will. But you will have more good boards mainly because 5332 shaped hands are not productive. Remember, a 67% game wins the event. That means, a full one third of time the results will not go your way and you have to take it on the chin with a grin.

In one example of this, this exact problem showed up at the real Bridge table in a recent tournament. I opened 1N with 5 SS and 5332 shape and partner passed with 6 count and 4 Ss. Both sides were non-vulnerable. I made + 90 after some struggle. It turns out they can make 3H. If I open 1S they double and find their H-fit and we must go to 3S to protect against -140 with 3H making their way. 3S, however, does not make and you end up with either -50 undoubled or – 100 doubled. Our +90 was a shining star with all the marbles.

Wonderful game, this Bridge.