Practicing Bidding on BBO

Sudhir

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This document explains how to use *Bridge Base Online* to practice bidding sequences with specific reference to the *COSL Precision* bidding system.

1 Setting up a bidding table

After logging in to BBO, select "Practice" and "Start a Bidding Table" from the menus. On the screen that appears next (see Figure 1), setup your and partner's log in ids in the North-South slots (opponents will be robots, automatically). Options to allow kibitzers (or not) as well as whether to make the bidding table invisible (not listed) can be set here. After the setup is complete, press the "Start Table" button and this will show the table top.

At this point, select "Deal Source" from the options menu as shown in Figure 2. This opens the constraints editor that will allow specification of the kinds of hands that are dealt. Constraints can be set on (a) the number of high card points and (b) number of cards in each suit.
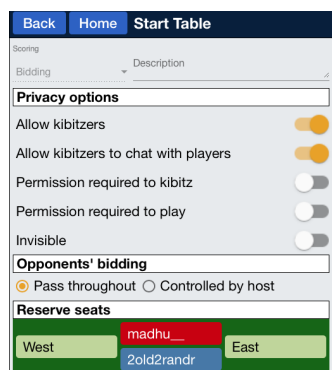

Figure 1: Starting a bidding table

Figure 2: Opening the constraints editor

In the constraints editor, several constraint sets can be defined. In the example shown in Figures 3 and 4, practice hands for the 1♢ opening are desired to be generated. The constraints are set up to generate either 11-13HCP balanced hands or 11-15HCP minor two-suiters with exactly 5 clubs and at least 5 diamonds. The option "Randomly rotate generated deals 180 degrees" should be checked so that opening hands are dealt to either North or South randomly (otherwise they will be dealt only to South).
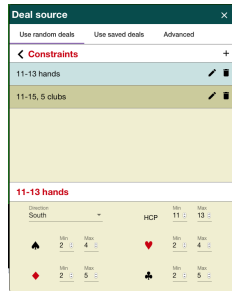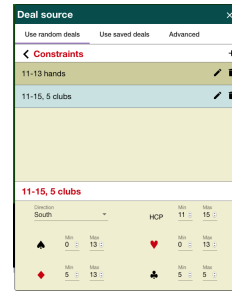
Figure 3: 11-13, balanced hands

Figure 4: 11-15, minor two-suiters

Use the redeal menu option on the tabletop a few times to check that the constraints are set up correctly. If all goes well, deals will be generated to practice bidding the particular hands you are interested in as shown in Figure 5. Note that only one hand is visible during bidding (partner's hand and opponents' hands are hidden).
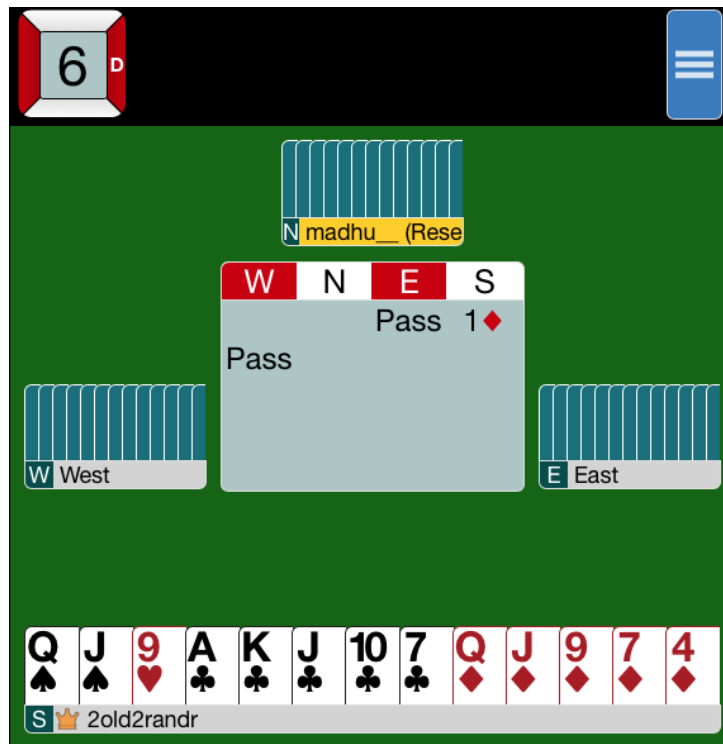

Figure 5: Sample deal

2 Constraints

Constraints can be setup as in the table below to practice each kind of opening hand. The next section has a study schedule that can be used in conjunction

with this table to practice bidding.

1♣	HCP: 17 to 37.
	Omitting 16 avoids lots of 1NT openings. You may see the occasional 22-23HCP balanced 2NT opening coming up, though. It is possible to avoid this by setting up multiple constraints (17-21 any, 24-37 any, 22-23 unbalanced) but this is probably overkill.
1♢	Type 1 11-13HCP, ♠ 2-4, ♡ 2-4, ♢ 2-5, ♣ 2-5.
	Type 2 11-15HCP, ♠ 0-1, ♡ 3-4, ♢ 3-5, ♣ 3-5.
	Type 3 11-15HCP, ♠ 3-4, ♡ 0-1, ♢ 3-5, ♣ 3-5.
	Type 4 11-15HCP, ♠ 3-4, ♡ 3-4, ♢ 3-5, ♣ 0-1.
	Type 5 11-15HCP, ♢ 6-13.
	Type 6 11-15HCP, ♢ 5-13, ♣ 5-5.
1♡	Type 1 11-13HCP, ♠ 2-4, ♡ 5-5, ♢ 2-4, ♣ 2-4.
	Type 2 11-15HCP, ♡ 6-13.
	Type 3 11-15HCP, ♠ 0-1, ♡ 5-5, ♢ 0-5, ♣ 0-5.
	Type 4 11-15HCP, ♠ 0-4, ♡ 5-5, ♢ 0-1, ♣ 0-5.
	Type 5 11-15HCP, ♠ 0-4, ♡ 5-5, ♢ 0-5, ♣ 0-1.
1♠	Type 1 11-13HCP, ♠ 5-5, ♡ 2-3, ♢ 2-4, ♣ 2-4.
	Type 2 11-15HCP, ♠ 6-13.
	Type 3 11-15HCP, ♠ 5-5, ♡ 0-1, ♢ 0-5, ♣ 0-5.
	Type 4 11-15HCP, ♠ 5-5, ♡ 0-5, ♢ 0-1, ♣ 0-5.
	Type 5 11-15HCP, ♠ 5-5, ♡ 0-5, ♢ 0-1, ♣ 0-5.
1NT	14-16HCP, ♠ 2-4, ♡ 2-4, ♢ 2-5, ♣ 2-5.
	Increase point range to 20-21 for 2NT hands.
2♣	11-15HCP, ♣ 6-13.
2♢	11-15HCP, ♠ 3-4, ♡ 3-4, ♢ 0-1, ♣ 4-5.

For most practice sessions, no constraints need be set on the responder's (North) hand so that the hands dealt are truly random in terms of high-card points and distribution. However, it may be useful to set up constraints when studying specific bidding sequences. For example, to practice responses to one of a major over a 1♢ opening, the following two constraint types could be used on responder's hand.

Type 1	HCP: 6-37, ♠ 0-4, ♡ 4-13, ♢ 0-13, ♣ 0-13.
Type 2	HCP: 6-37, ♠ 5-5, ♡ 6-13.

3 Study Plan

The following is a 15 session plan to practice each area of the bidding system. The schedule is based on the one in the book "Standard Modern Precision" by Daniel Neill.

Session	Study Plan
Day 1	Practice responses to 1♢, the most common opening. Give dealer a 1♢ opening and responder 6-37HCP and make the correct response, but no deeper into the auction. Practice until the responses are easy and automatic.

Day 2	Still on 1♢, practice the special 2♣ and 2♢ responses. Give responder hands as below:
	Type 1 HCP: 13-37, ♠ 0-3, ♡ 0-3.
	Type 2 HCP: 10-11, ♢ 6-13.
	Type 3 HCP: 10-11, ♣ 6-13.
	Type 4 HCP: 10-11, ♢ 5-13, ♣ 4-13.
	Type 5 HCP: 10-11, ♢ 4-4, ♣ 5-13.
Day 3	Practice 2♡, 2♠, 3♣ responses to 1♢.
Day 4	Practice all responses to 1♡ and 1♠ openings. Remember that a limited opener can be split into at least three ranges for slam purposes.
Day 5	Practice all responses to a 1NT opening. Remember that the opener's range is 1 or 2 points stronger than standard Precision.
Day 6	Practice all responses to a 2♣ opening. Be sure to include some practice with responder's point range set to 14-37.
Day 7	Practice all responses to a 2♢ opening. For part of the session, set responder's point range to 6-13. Then set responder's range to 14-37 and practice bidding of slam (including RKCB) or signing off in a suit (with or without RKCB).
Day 8	Finally, it is time to practice the strong club. Set responder's range to 0-7HCP to practice bidding over a negative response. Additionally, for part of the session, set opener's point range to 20-37HCP to develop judgement on when opener should force to game.
Day 9	Practice 2♡ and 2♠ responses to 1♣.
Day 10	Practice all the positive responses to 1♣. Be sure to devote some time to practicing the case when opener has a 4-4-4-1 distribution with singletons in each suit.
Day 11	Practice interference by giving 2nd seat an overcall in a specific suit. Give dealer a 1♢ opening and let the robots play E-W configured to generate overcalls. Rotate the suits in which overcalls are made and figure out which of responder's bids are forcing and the kinds of decisions opener must make when bidding competitively.
Day 12	Same as Day 11.
Day 13	Practice interference by 2nd seat over a 1♣ opening. Again, give 2nd seat specific suit overcalls with robots bidding E-W. Responder must be able to handle a natural overcall. Unfortunately, there is no way to make the robots bid 2-suited overcalls.
Day 14	A repeat of Day 8 but give 4th seat robot some natural overcalls. The auction would go 1♣–(Pass)–1♢–(bid).
Day 15	Practice 1♣–(Pass)–1♡–(bid).