

Mini-Turbo GF-responses to a strong-1♣ opening

Presented here is a new scheme for gameforcing (GF) responses to a strong-1♣ opening (16+).

Background

In Precision Club, 1♣-1M is a natural GF with 5+major, while 1♣-1NT is a balanced GF.

The immediate and obvious downside of this natural scheme is that the final game/slam-contract very often gets "wrong-sided", i.e. declared by the weaker hand.

Later approaches to remedy this weakness has been, for example in Carrot-Club, to define 1♣-1♥ as GF without 5+major, while 1♠ shows 5♥s and 1NT shows 5♠s (another possibility is: 1♣-1♥=5♠, 1♣-1♠=bal, 1♣-1NT=5♥).

This is an improvement, since it will wrong-side the final contract less often. But after 1♣-1♥, for example, it is not unlikely that the final contract will still turn out to be hearts, particularly since responder may well have 4♥s. And after 1♣-1NT, unless opener has spade support, the final contract is often a wrong-sided 3NT.

So can we do better than that?

Introduction

Last summer, at the annual Örebro Bridge Festival in Sweden, I met with an old friend and bridge-partner from the 1980's, math professor Bengt Alrud from Gothenburg, Sweden, and got an introduction to his latest bidding-system, named "Turbo".

One of the features I really like, is the GF-responses to a strong-1♣ opening, particularly designed to minimize the risk of wrong-siding the contract.

The full system is very innovative and, frankly, amazing. But with a lot of complex relay-sequences hard to memorize. Therefore, I made a simplified version ("Mini-Turbo"), that I have played with a couple of other partners, and which resulted in the scheme presented here.

Besides placing the 1♣ opener as declarer, the aim is also -- through relay-methods -- that declarer should disclose as little information of his hand as possible to defenders.

While we can, of course, never completely guarantee right-siding of the final contract, I think you will agree that this approach increases the probability significantly.

Re. the relay-sequences, I am here employing a simple -- yet, very playable -- version, in order not to overshadow the basic concepts with complexities for now. They can later be elaborated and enhanced, if so desired, as players gain experience and get more familiar with these methods.

System

We open a strong-1♣ on all hands with 16+hcp, and a GF-responder is ca 9+hcp or a good 8 hcp. A sound principle for subsequent slam-bidding is also that a GF-response promises minimum 2 controls (c) -- where Ace=2c, King=1c -- otherwise start 1♣-1♦.

If you prefer 1♣ as 17+, you can of course adjust the hcp-ranges of responses below.

Generally, a GF-responder will show, in turn:

- a) His relevant lengths in the majors, so opener can assess whether we have a common major trump-suit or not.
- b) Whether he is **minimum (ca 8-11 bad hcp)** or has **extras (11 good hcp and up)**. When responder shows a minimum hand, opener can often set the game-contract immediately, to avoid spilling more information to defenders.
- c) Only if opener still needs to know: More details about lengths/shortnesses in other suits, etc.

Here's the first round responses:

1♣-1♦ = 0-7(8) hcp, or less than 2c.

1♣-1♥ = GF. Denies 4♥s. May or may not have ♠-suit, i.e 0-5♠s. Covers both balanced and unbalanced hands.

1♣-1♠ = GF. 4-5♥s. Denies 4♠s. Covers both balanced and unbalanced hands, and may have a longer minor side-suit.

1♣-1NT = GF. A 6-card major. Denies 4 in the other major.

1♣-2♣ = GF. At least 4-4 in the majors, but no 6-card major -- i.e 4-4/4-5/5-4/5-5 in majors.

1♣-2♦ = Weak, ca 0-4 hcp. 6+♥s.

1♣-2♥ = Weak, ca 0-4 hcp. 6+♠s.

1♣-2♠ = GF. At least 5-5 in minors.

1♣-2NT = GF. 6-4 or 4-6 in the majors.

1♣-3X = GF transfers, with 7+cards in the next higher suit (1♣-3♦ shows 7+♠s).

I will not cover the 1♣-1♦ continuations. Any strong-1♣ scheme where 1♣-1♦ is negative 0+hcp will work.

The 1♣-1♥ response

This is the most frequent positive response. Responder denies 4♥s, and could have anything from 0 to 5 ♠s.

Opener now has 2 relays:

1♣-1♥-1NT denying 4♠s, while

1♣-1♥-1♠ shows 4+♠s.

Both relays can be either balanced or unbalanced -- only the spade-length matters -- and with 4+♠s opener may also have another longer suit.

The 1♣-1♥-1♠ relay

After 1♣-1♥-1♠ (in line with the principles above) responder's priorities is to tell:

- Whether he has 4+♠ support, exactly 3♠s, or shorter ♠-suit.
- Whether he has minimum or extra values.
- (If needed) Whether he has a 5-card (or 6-card) minor.

The responses:

1♣-1♥-1♠-1NT = 4+♠s (sets ♠s as trumps).

-2♣ = Exactly 3♠s.

Higher bids all show 2 or fewer ♠s:

1♣-1♥-1♠-2♦ = Minimum hand, ca 8-11 bad hcp.

-2♥ = Extras (ca 11 good hcp and up). Denies 5+minor.

-2♠ = Extras, 5♣s.

-2NT = Extras, 5♦s.

-3♣ = Extras, 6♣s.

-3♦ = Extras, 6♦s.

If you grasp the scale above, the same pattern will re-appear in many similar sequences.

After the minimum-showing 2♦ above and new relay:

1♣-1♥-1♠-2♦-2♥-2♠ = No 5-card minor.

-2NT = 5♣s.

-3♣ = 5♦s.

-3♦ = 6♣s.

-3♥ = 6♦s.

After the 1NT response above establishing ♠ as trumps and new relay, we can use a similar model:

1♣-1♥-1♠-1NT-2♣-2♦ = Minimum. After new relay: No 5+minor, 5♣s, 5♦s, etc.

-2♥ = Extras, no 5-card major.

-2♠ = Extras, 5♣s.

-2NT = Extras, 5♦s.

- 3♣ = Extras, 6♣s.
- 2♦ = Extras, 6♦s.

The 1♣-1♥-1NT relay

Without 4+♠s, opener here relays with 1NT.

Now, responder could still have 5♠s and opener 3-card support. So 1♣-1♥-1NT-2♥ is therefore reserved as a transfer bid showing 5♠s, while all other responses denies 5♠s and make a similar scale as above. Thus we get:

- 1♣-1♥-1NT-2♣ = Minimum, denies 5♠s. After new relay: No 5+minor, 5♣s, 5♦s, etc.
- 2♦ = Extras, denies 5♠s, no 5+minor.
- 2♥ = 5-card ♠-suit.
- 2♠ = Extras, denies 5♠s, 5♣s.
- 2NT = Extras, denies 5♠s, 5♦s.
- 3♣ = Extras, denies 5♠s, 6♣s.
- 3♦ = Extras, denies 5♠s, 6♦s.

When responder has shown a 5-card major, we essentially use the same scale, but since a 5-card minor is more rare here, the scale primarily distinguishes between 4-card minors or not:

- 1♣-1♥-1NT-2♥-2♠-2NT = Minimum. After new relay: No 4+minor, 4♣s, 4♦s, etc.
- 3♣ = Extras, no 4+minor.
- 3♦ = Extras, 4♣s.
- 3♥ = Extras, 4♦s.
- 3♠ = Extras, 5♣s.
- 3NT = Extras, 5♦s.

The 1♣-1♠ response

Responder here denies 4♠s, and promises 4 or 5 ♥s.

To preserve bidding space, opener relays with 1NT, regardless of whether he has ♥-support or not. Thus, an important feature here is that responder must **never** reply with 2♥, since that could wrong-side the contract when opener has ♥-support.

Since opener might also hold 3♥s, responder will use a transfer-bid here, too, to show 5-card ♥s.

Therefore, the scale looks like this:

- 1♣-1♠-1NT-2♣ = Minimum, denies 5♥s. After a new 2♦ or 2♥ relay: No 5+minor, 5♣s, 5♦s, etc.
- 2♦ = 5-card ♥-suit.
- 2♥ = **NOTE: "Forbidden bid" since opener might have ♥-support!**
- 2♠ = Extras, denies 5♥s, 5♣s.
- 2NT = Extras, denies 5♥s, 5♦s.
- 3♣ = Extras, denies 5♥s, 6♣s.
- 3♦ = Extras, denies 5♥s, 6♦s.

As indicated after 1♣-1♠-1NT-2♣, opener may here chose to relay with either 2♦ or 2♥.

Holding 4♥s himself, he now right-sides the likely ♥-contract by relaying with 2♥. Lacking 4♥s, he rather maximize the bidding-space by relaying with 2♦, and responder's scale can now start with 2♥ since ♥-trump is normally out of the picture.

In both cases, the continued scale is the same: No 5+minor, 5♣s, 5♦s, etc.

After responder shows a 5-card ♥-suit, the scale, of course, is the same as with 5-card ♠-suit above, primarily distinguishing between 4-card minors or not.

1♣-1M-...; continuations

As soon as opener has the information he needs to set a 3NT or 4M game-contract, and cannot see slam-chances after responder shows minimum, he of course jumps to the final contract.

After the sequences where responder denies 5-card minor, the next relay asks for a 4-card minor, which he bids naturally. If responder has nothing particular to show, he can generally "default" to the cheapest major-bid (he has already denied the suit,

or denied extra-length in it).

Otherwise, after responder has ran the scales above to the end, for simplicity, one can continue bidding naturally and/or according to normal principles in a standard system.

If the trump-suit has not yet been clearly set, opener can do so at the 3-level. Or bid a natural bid. Or cue-bid/slamtry at the 4-level. Etc.

Opener breaks the relay

Sometimes, when opener has a long suit, he might wish to break the relay-sequences at the 2- or 3-level, to show a suit naturally.

However, if he does so **immediately** after 1♣-1M, and bids a new suit at the 2-level, these sequences are reserved for showing **voids**. Opener then bids 2-level "transfers" to his void-suit (1♣-1M-2♠ showing a ♣-void).

Responder can then bid 2NT with strong stoppers (e.g. KQTx or better) in the void-suit, or bid a 5-card suit naturally (outside the void), and otherwise responds by relaying in the void-suit and let opener continue naturally.

The 1♣-2♣ response

While 1♣-1NT and 1♣-2NT cover responder-hands with a 6-card major, 1♣-2♣ shows both majors with 4 or 5 cards in each suit -- i.e 4-4/4-5/5-4/5-5.

The 1♣-2♣-2M relays

If opener has 4-card support in either major, he can immediately set the trump-suit at the 2-level by bidding the suit.

The relay-scales are similar as after 1♣-1M, but since responder now has already shown 2 suits, it seems more efficient to show any shortness in a minor than length. Thus, when opener sets ♥s as trumps, the scale looks like (sgtn=singleton):

1♣-2♣-2♥-2♠ = Minimum. After new relay: No sgtn, sgtn-♣, sgtn-♦, void-♣, void-♦.
-2NT = Extras, no sgtn.
-3♣ = Extras, sgtn-♣.
-3♦ = Extras, sgtn-♦.
-3♥ = Extras, void-♣.
-3♠ = Extras, void-♦.

If opener sets ♠s as trumps with 1♣-2♣-2♠, responses are the same, only shifted one level higher.

The 1♣-2♣-2♦ relay

When opener lacks a 4-card major, and cannot set the trump-suit immediately, he may relay with 2♦, and responder bids "exclusion" to avoid wrong-siding the contract -- i.e by-passes his 5-card major(s):

1♣-2♣-2♦-2♥ = Exactly 4♥s, 4 or 5 ♠s.
-2♠ = Exactly 5♥s, exactly 4♠s.
-2NT = 5-5 majors. Minimum. After new relay: sgtn-♣, sgtn-♦, void-♣, void-♦.
-3♣ = 5-5 majors. Extras, sgtn-♣.
-3♦ = 5-5 majors. Extras, sgtn-♦.
-3♥ = 5-5 majors. Extras, void-♣.
-3♠ = 5-5 majors. Extras, void-♦.

After the 2♥ response above, with 3♠s opener may bid 2♠ to probe for a 5-3 fit, after which:

1♣-2♣-2♦-2♥-2♠-2NT = 5-card ♠-suit. Establishes ♠s as trump.
-3♣ = 4♠s. Minimum. After new relay: No sgtn, sgtn-♣, sgtn-♦.
-3♦ = 4♠s. Extras, no sgtn.
-3♥ = 4♠s. Extras, sgtn-♣.
-3♠ = 4♠s. Extras, sgtn-♦.