

## TRAVIS-T(ip) #5

by Barbara Travis

### BEWARE AND BE AWARE OF REVERSING

Opening the bidding and making your first response is relatively easy, but the second round of the bidding is far more challenging. One of the things that people do is to 'bid out their suits' without giving thought to whether partner may have already denied a suit. When you "reverse" (or "bid beyond your barrier") you are bidding a suit that your partner has either 100% denied or potentially denied – let's see why.

You hold:       KQ10x  
                  KQ10xx  
                  Kx  
                  xx

You open 1H and partner responds 1NT. What is your next bid?

Lots of players now fall into the trap of rebidding 2S. However, if you think about partner's response of 1NT, they have already denied 4 spades (they'd have bid 1S) or heart support (they'd have raised to 2H). So, together with their 6-9 HCP, you know there are not the values for game, and you should PASS 1NT.

Another:       Kxx  
                  KJxx  
                  AK10xx  
                  x

You open 1D and partner responds 1NT. What is your next bid?

Again, I regularly see people bid either 2H (if they don't understand reverses) or 2D (if they worry about the club singleton). However, partner's response of 1NT has denied 4 spades or 4 hearts so obviously 2H is wrong. If we take those thought processes further, partner's 1NT has denied a Major and usually denied diamonds, therefore the only suit partner has is clubs and we shouldn't be concerned about the club shortage. You just PASS 1NT.

Equally, if the auction starts    1C     1S  
  2H

has similar connotations. At the time that the 2H bid is made, opener only knows that partner has 4+ spades and 6+ HCP. If they only have 4 spades, then they do NOT have 4 hearts (you bid 4 card suits 'up the line' and 5 card suits 'down the line'), therefore you are bidding a suit which partner has potentially denied. [Yes they might have 5 spades and 4+ hearts, but their subsequent bidding should tell you that.]

So what does this mean for bidding? For your second bid, you have an in-built "barrier" of 2-of-your-first-suit, and if you bid A NEW SUIT beyond that barrier (i.e. higher than your first suit) as your second bid it is a REVERSE. A reverse shows:

- 16+ HCP as opener, or 13+ HCP as responder
- Longer in the first suit than the second-bid suit (ie 4-5 or 5-6 or 4-6)
- The bid is forcing on partner (see below for more information); partner CANNOT Pass

## OPENER'S REVERSE SHOWS:

- A hand that is not a minimum opening bid (i.e. not 12-15 HCP)
- **Typically you show 16+ HCP and 5+ cards in your first suit with 4 cards in your second** (maybe 4-6 or 5-6 in your suits too). With a 5-6 you would next rebid your 5-card suit (and your first suit is still longer!)
- **FORCING on partner for one round even if partner is weak.**
- **If responder has bid at the 2-level (10+HCP), opener's reverse is GAME FORCING (16+ HCP), so you don't need to jump around in the bidding now unless you think you belong in slam.**

*Think about it – opener cannot be balanced or they'd either have opened 1NT (15-17HCP or 16-18 HCP, whatever your range is), or they'd jump to 2NT at their second bid (showing better than a 1NT opening bid). Therefore when they reverse/bid beyond their barrier they have to be distributional, meaning their first suit is longer, even if it is a minor! (It's basically the same thing as opening 1H and rebidding 2C showing a 5-4; but you might open 1C and over partner's 1S you rebid 2H showing a 5-4, but this time your hand is stronger because you have gone past your barrier of 2C.*

## RESPONDING TO A REVERSE:

- With a minimum, responder bids at the lowest level and opener does not bid again with 16 HCP.

### Examples of weak responses:

1C	1S	1C	1S	1C	1S
2H	2NT	2H	2S	2H	3C

- With stronger hands (9+ HCP), responder must find a strong and forcing rebid.
- You either jump in one of the bid suits or respond 3NT (or even 4NT for aces!).

### Examples of strong responses:

1C	1S	1C	1S	1C	1S	1C	1S
2H	4H	2H	3S	2H	4C	2H	3NT

### Example of reverse after 2-level response:

1H    2C  
2S    **forcing to game** (since 2C showed 10+ HCP)

*Since a 1NT response is limited (6-9 HCP), then a reverse after 1NT is an invitational (or better) hand.*

**It is forcing – since partner has already denied that suit!**

### Example of a reverse after a 1NT response:

1H    1NT  
2S    showing 5H and 4S and inviting game – but knowing responder has denied 4S already!

(You might have 19 HCP and plan to play in game, but either want to bid out your shape if 4-6 or 5-6, or be worried about one of the minors.)

## RESPONDER'S REVERSE SHOWS:

- Responder's reverse is *GAME FORCING*, showing game values (13+ HCP)
- 5+ cards in your first suit and 4 cards in your second suit (you could also be 5-6 with your first suit always being longer)
- You cannot stop below game

## RESPONDING TO A RESPONDER'S REVERSE:

*A reverse by responder is game forcing so opener MUST bid again. Now neither player can stop the auction below game.*

### Example of a responder's reverse:

1C            1H  
2C            2S     *forcing to game (longer hearts than spades)*

*Opener must keep bidding, with their first option being to show 3 hearts, or to bid 2NT with diamonds stopped, and otherwise to rebid their 6-card suit.*

1D            1H  
1NT/2D      2S     *forcing to game (longer hearts than spades)*

Even if the opponents overcall, the notion of a reverse still applies. Let's look at an auction:

1C    (P)    1H    (2D)  
2S

You have just bid a suit higher than your first suit, forcing partner to keep bidding. This should still be a reverse! Of course, if the opponent had not overcalled, you would have been able to bid 1S, and new suits at the 1-level are NOT reverses. They just show shape, at least 4-4 (unless you have another agreement). Bear in mind, that when you face an overcall 'after' partner's response, you are now allowed to Pass, which is something many players overlook.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER ABOUT 'REVERSES' ("BIDDING BEYOND YOUR BARRIER") IS THAT THE BID IS FORCING. IF YOU PASS IT IS A BREACH OF PARTNERSHIP TRUST!

At the same time, learning to recognise your partner's reverses and learning to recognise that you are going to reverse takes a long time. I think 'the reverse' is the most misunderstood bid at SABA.

So remember, if you hold a hand like this:

xx  
KQxx  
Kxx  
AQxx

and the auction starts:

1C            1S

your next bid should be 1NT (not 2H). Your partner has so far 'denied' 4 hearts by not bidding 1H. Should they have 5 spades and 4 hearts, they should bid 2H (non-forcing) or 3H (forcing) over your 1NT rebid.