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(7) Notrump Fundamentals: Superaccepting Jacoby Transfers

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Level: Intermediate

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General

When we open 1NT, the most important contracts we strive to reach are Major-suit games. When we have enough values for game, we begin by exploring our Major-suit fits and if we don't find one, then we settle for 3NT. (It is only when we are extremely distributional that we even consider playing in a minor-suit game.) As we have previously discussed, we use Stayman to find our 4-4 fits and Jacoby Transfers to find our 5-3 fits. When we have only 8-card fits we need about 24 HCP in order to bid game. But when we have a 9-card Major-suit fit (5-4 fit) we will often be able to make game with fewer HCP – “the power of the 9-card fit!” When we have this 9-card fit we want to have a set of tools to let partner know about our “big fit!” We want to let partner know that they should be aggressive in bidding game. These tools are called “Superaccepts!”

Basic Superaccept

The most common form of 9-card Major-suit fit we find is when we open 1NT and partner makes a Jacoby Transfer into our 4-card Major. In this situation we have a 5-4 fit and we need to have a way to communicate this to partner. The first example of this is the basic superaccept...

Auction

1NT - 2♦* - 3♥ 4c♥, 16+ to 17 HCP

Partner has made a 2♦ Jacoby Transfer – asking us to bid 2♥. But we have 4c♥ support and a maximum for our 1NT Opener (16-17 HCP.) So we show this great hand by bidding 3♥ instead! Similarly, if partner transfers to ♠ then we can bid 3♠ to show great ♠ support.



Other Superaccepts

Now that we know how to show “the best” hand for partner we want to discuss what other “superaccept bids” would mean. Let’s consider the example of when partner transfers to ♠. We know that 3♠ shows a maximum and 4c♠ support. But what about the other bids between 2♠ and 3♠? The first key is to know that we don’t bid past 2♠ without having a 9c fit – since partner might have a zero-count. (This is an example of *The Law of Total Tricks* at work.) Thus, all of the superaccepting bids promise 4c support. We let bids of new suits show a doubleton and 2NT show no doubleton (4333.) Additionally, we are going to define these bids to show minimum HCP, since we already have a bid to show a maximum.

1NT - 2♥* -

2NT	4-3-3-3, 16-17 HCP
3♣	4c♠, doubleton ♣, 15-16 HCP
3♦	4c♠, doubleton ♦, 15-16 HCP
3♥	4c♠, doubleton, ♥, 15-16 HCP

Similar bids apply when transferring to ♥.

The reason that showing the doubleton is a useful agreement is that it allows the Responder to know where Opener’s ruffing values are located. When you have lots of trump (like in the 9+c fit) it is very valuable to be able to know which suit you can ruff in the short hand.

Example

♠ Kxxxx
♥ xx
♦ Axxx
♣ xx

1NT - 2♥* - 3♦

Responder knows Opener can ruff most of his ♦ losers in hand – so he should bid a game!

Note: There are many useful agreements here, but showing the doubleton is my preferred agreement. It makes it easy for partner to know where he will have ruffing values – if he has Axxx opposite my doubleton (or something similar) he will know that we can take a lot of tricks by ruffing in the short (4c support) hand.



After the Superaccept

When Opener superaccepts the Jacoby Transfer and shows a doubleton, he has not yet bid “our suit.” We have not properly sided the contract. We still want to the 1NT opener to play the hand most of the time. Thus, we use “re-transfers” to properly side the contract as often as possible. The suit below our suit at either the 3-level or 4-level will be a re-transfer, siding our contract with the strong hand.

Example

1NT - 2♦* - 3♣* - 3♦* Re-transfer, asks Opener to bid 3♥.

Note: If partner bids 3♦ (showing the doubleton right below our suit) we can re-transfer with 4♦ if we are going to bid a game, but if we are going to signoff at the 3-level then we don't have room to re-transfer – and we must settle for playing 3♥ from the wrong side.

Final Note

Give these superaccepts a try. They will help you be aggressive when you have a 9c fit and they will also help you be a bit more cautious when you know you don't have a good 9c fit.