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(157) Advanced Competitive Bidding: 1m (X) Transfer

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Level: Advanced

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General

When partner opens the bidding with a minor suit and right hand opponent makes a takeout double, the modern approach for many expert partnerships is to play transfer bids by the Responder. By Responder transferring to the suit with length instead of bidding it, we gain many advantages in these competitive bidding auctions. Let's take a look at how we use these transfers by Responder and what they gain for us.

Transfers by Responder over a Takeout Double

After a minor suit opening bid and a takeout double by RHO, the best approach is to play all bids by Responder as transfers. These transfers start at a lower level than after a Major suit opening – transfers starting with a redouble. These transfer bids show something similar to a natural bid, 6+ points and at least a 4-card suit if bid at the 1-level.

Auctions

- 1♣ X —
- XX* Transfer to ♦, 4+card ♦ suit, 6+ points.
 - 1♦* Transfer to ♥, 4+card ♥ suit, 6+ points.
 - 1♥* Transfer to ♠, 4+card ♠ suit, 6+ points.
 - 1♠* Relay to 1NT. This can be used for many hand types:
 - 6-10 balanced, planning to pass 1NT.
 - 10-12 balanced, no 4-card Major, planning to raise to 2NT.
 - A negative freebid in one of the minors – after partner bids 1NT, Responder bids the long minor suit, showing a long suit and 5-9 points, non-forcing.
 - 1NT There are a couple of partnership options for a 1NT response:
 - Some partnerships choose to make this like an old 2NT bid, invitational.
 - Some partnerships choose to make it a non-forcing ♣ bid (where 2♣ would be natural and forcing.)
 - 2♣ Natural and forcing for 1-round, 10+ points, 5+♣ (like inverted minors)



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 - 2♦ Natural and forcing for 1-Round, 10+ points, 5+♦ (like inverted minors)

Advantages to Transfers -- Putting the Strong Hand on Lead

One of the big advantages to playing these transfer bids by Responder is that if we play in Responder's suit we will likely be able to play the contract from the right side.

Additionally, this transfer bid keeps the auction low, allowing Opener to support Responder's suit at either the 1-level or the 2-level with minimum-valued hands. Opener uses the Law of Total Tricks and supports Responder's suit at the 1-level with 3-card support and at the 2-level with 4-card support.

Example

1♣ X 1♦* P

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- 1♥ 12-14 points with 3-card ♥ support -- like a support double.
 - 2♥ 12-14 points with 4-card ♥ support – like a normal raise.
 - 1NT 12-14 points, balanced hand, 2-card ♥ support.
 - Other bids are natural and similar to non-transfer auctions.



What We Give Up Playing Transfers over Minors

The only bid we give up when we play transfers in these auctions is the “power” redouble, showing 10+ points. But after a minor suit opening the auction is at such a low level that it is rare that we will want to penalize the opponents and thus a “power” redouble is not that useful. Additionally, in a competitive auction it can be important to look for a 4-4 or even 5-3 Major suit fit, so starting with a redouble will often just complicate the auction.

Conclusion

Transfer Responses in competitive auctions allow our side to compete in the bidding while potentially later deciding which member of the partnership shall become the declarer. This is particularly valuable when one opponent has shown a strong hand (for example, by making a takeout double). We want to put that hand on opening lead and force them to lead away from their honors and into our partner’s strong holdings. If you have a regular partnership and are looking for some sophisticated upgrades to your competitive bidding treatments, consider adopting these transfer responses.