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This Week in Bridge

(105) Fourth Suit Game Forcing

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Level: 2

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General

Just as New Minor Forcing is Responder's tool in Notrump rebid auctions (and other auctions), *4th Suit Forcing* is Responder's tool in auctions that begin with three different suits (X-Y-Z). In auctions like this, Responder will frequently need to get more information from the Opener before they know what to do. Responder will use this tool when they have a game forcing hand and are not sure where the auction should end. Let's look at how Responder uses *4th Suit Forcing* through some examples.

Note: Some players play 4th Suit Forcing as only forcing 1-round, but this actually has a lot more complexities. Most players play 4th Suit as game forcing these days – like most players play 2/1 GF instead of Standard American.

Here are some common examples of *4th Suit GF*:

1♣	1♦	1♣	1♥	1♦	1♥	1♦	1♠
1♠	2♥	1♠	2♦	1♠	2♣	2♣	2♥
1♥	1♠	1♥	1♠				
2♣	2♦	2♦	3♣				

Responder can use the *4th Suit Game Forcing* for several possible reasons:

- Look for a 5-3 Major suit fit,
- Look for a stopper in the *4th Suit* (with a stopper they would just bid 3NT themselves)
- Find out more about Opener's shape in Responder's suit,
- Set up a game forcing auction to try for slam.



General List of Principles for Opener's Third Bid

After Responder bids the 4th Suit, Opener will need to further describe their hand – as their partner has asked them to do. Here is a list of priorities for Opener further describing their hand:

- Opener will show 3-card support for Responder's suit as their first priority.
- Without 3-card support Opener will bid as naturally as possible -- to further "pattern out."
- With no more shape to show, Opener will bid Notrump with a stopper in the 4th Suit.
- Without a stopper in the 4th Suit, Opener makes the best bid they can.

Passed Hand Bidding

When Responder is a passed hand, they cannot have a game forcing hand. Thus, it makes no sense for the 4th Suit to show game forcing values. By a passed hand, Responder's 4th Suit bid shows a maximum passed hand (a good 9 to 11 points) and the same desires (to get Opener to further describe their hand) as by an unpassed hand.

One complexity that arises after passed hand bidding of 4th Suit is what follow-up bids are game forcing and what bids are non-forcing or can be passed. Opener must go out of their way to be clear when they are accepting Responder's game invite:

- Forcing bids are either jumps or Major suit bids if there is no room to jump.
- Non-Forcing bids are ones like NT bids, non-jumps when jumps were available below 3NT, or other minor suit bids.

Special Auction

1♣ 1♦
1♥ 1♠/2♠

This is a special auction that we must discuss with partner. Some players play 1♠ as 4th Suit Game Forcing while others play 2♠ as 4th Suit Game Forcing. There are many ways to play this auction, but the most important thing is for you and partner to know which bid is natural (and how forcing it is) and which bid is artificial (4th Suit Game Forcing.)

Conclusion

4th Suit Game Forcing is another valuable tool for Responder when Opener has shown an unbalanced hand – specifically a two-suited hand. Responder uses the 4th Suit to create a game forcing auction and then figure out where the auction should end. The artificial 4th Suit Game Forcing gives up very little in natural bidding – we are unlikely to want to play in the 4th Suit. 4th Suit Game Forcing convention allows our side to take the pressure off any further bidding -- similar to a 2/1 GF auctions. After the 4th suit we can safely to try to communicate with partner, to find the right strain (fit) and level (game vs. slam).