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This Week in Bridge

(226) Transfers++ Vs. Weak NT Openings

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Level: 6

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General

When the opponents open the bidding with a weak 1NT we need a good method for dealing with their unusual opening bid. The most common range for a weak NT is 12-14 points, but we define 1NT to be *weak* if the range does not contain 16 points. Some examples: 10-12, 11-13, 11-14, 12-14, 12-15, or 13-15 points. When constructing a system to allow us to bid over these weak 1NT openings we need to take a different approach than bidding over a strong 1NT opening. Unlike after a strong NT opening, we frequently may have a powerful enough hand to be interested in exploring game when the opponents open a weak 1NT. Thus, we construct our bidding system to allow us to explore game and make constructive bids, not just be destructive. Let's look at how this works.

Transfers++ System

Here is the outline for a modern transfers system used after the opponents open a weak NT:

1NT ___?

- X Penalty. Showing the top of the 1NT Opener's range. Most partnerships use systems off by Advancer, allowing them to pull the double to their longest suit when they have a weak hand.
- 2♣* Both Majors (similar to Landy). If Advancer has equal length they can bid 2♦ to let Interferer choose where best to play.
- 2♦* Transfer to ♥ – 5+card ♥ suit.
- 2♥* Transfer to ♠ – 5+card ♠ suit.
- 2♠* 4+card ♠ and a longer minor
- 2NT* 4+card ♥ and a longer minor

One of the parts of this system that is highly effective is that Interferer always gets a second chance to bid when they have length in the Majors. After making a 2♣ bid for the Majors, Interferer can bid again, inviting game, when they have a powerful hand. After making a 2♦ or 2♥ transfer bid, Interferer can bid again – showing a second suit or rebidding their Major and showing a powerful hand.



If you are the type of player that likes to have a penalty double as part of your 1NT defense, this system can also be highly effective against strong 1NT opening bids as well.

Siding the Contract

One of the downsides of transfer bids in this type of auction is that it gives the opponents multiple chances to get into the auction – either by bidding immediately or after the transfer has been accepted and the bidding passes back to them. If we are bidding destructively, then giving the opponents more opportunities to describe their hand is a significant flaw. But with this system we are more focusing on constructive bidding and thus we are less concerned about what the opponents do. Instead, by playing transfer bids we often let the Advancer become the declarer and put 1NT Opener on lead. When we put the 1NT Opener on lead, they are often forced to lead away from their honors and this can result in the hand playing much better.

Example Using Transfer++

North

♠ AK873

♥ 92

♦ AQJ65

♣ 4

South

♠ Q942

♥ K765

♦ K7

♣ 853

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
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1NT	2♥*	P	2♠
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P	3♦	P	4♠
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Here, West opens the bidding with 1NT and North overcalls 2♥*, showing a 5-card ♠ suit. After South accepts the transfer, North can take a second bid, further describing their hand and trying for game (with a bad hand with this shape North would just pass 2♠). After North's 3♦ bid, South can see that their good ♠ fit and fitting ♦K will make 4♠ a good contract and just South just bids 4♠.



Conclusion

When the opponents play a strong 1NT opening, we usually optimize our bidding systems to be destructive. But when the opponents play a weak 1NT opening bid, we design our bidding system to allow for more constructive bidding. That means trying to play the contract from the best side and giving ourselves the option of exploring game. This Transfer++ system accomplishes these goals and allows Interferer to show a large variety of hand types. If you prefer to have the option of making a penalty double against strong 1NT opening, then this system can be effective for you all the time. Discuss it with your favorite partner and give it a try!