

August 15, 2020

Bridge with Richard Ward

Once upon a time we were taught that to make a takeout double and then bid a new suit promised a very strong hand, usually single-suited. But nowadays, in the interests of greater bidding flexibility, there is an exception to this. Say hello to “Equal Level Conversions”.

Your right-hand opponent opens 1H and you would like to look for a possible spade contract.

HAND 1	HAND 2
♠ K 10 7 5	♠ K 10 7 5
♥ 6 2	♥ 6 2
♦ A 3	♦ K Q J 10 8
♣ K Q J 10 8	♣ A 3

If you double on Hand 1 you will be stuck for a bid if partner responds 2D – so the best you can do is an immediate 2C. But, on Hand 2, if partner responds 2C to your double, you can bid 2D – an “equal level conversion” which does not promise extras.

This hand from a recent BBO tournament has a similar theme.

NORTH		S/ALL VUL
♠ A 9 2		
♥ K Q 8 2		
♦ 9 3		
♣ Q J 10 9		
WEST		EAST
♠ 6 4 3		♠ K Q 8 5
♥ 5		♥ A 10 7
♦ K Q 6 4 2		♦ A J 10 8 5
♣ 8 5 3 2		♣ 4
SOUTH		
♠ J 10 7		
♥ J 9 6 4 3		
♦ 7		
♣ A K 7 6		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	4H	PASS	2H
PASS			PASS

South's opening showed 5+ hearts, 4+ diamonds or clubs and a weak hand, so North put the pressure on with a jump to game. East should not have passed. He knows from the bidding that partner will be short in hearts and, whilst not knowing who can make what, he cannot afford to give up on a possible vulnerable game. So he can double, planning to remove a club response to diamonds, or, on a good day, finding a 4-4 spade fit. This is worthwhile insurance as four hearts can make unless the defence is very accurate with North leading a spade early on. Five diamonds makes an easy ten tricks so it is not expensive.

Breaking news is that Australia's biggest and best congress, the Gold Coast International, has been cancelled for 2021. This sadly unavoidable decision will be a great disappointment to the thousands of bridge players who have attended regularly for decades.
