

START WINNING

Chapter 6: Interference.

Now that we have a good understanding of basic bidding, or in other words, discussion between two people, we must look at when other people want to have their say as well. That's what opposition bidding is, other people having their say and interfering with your conversation.

As in business related auctions, seldom will you go to any auction where there is no other buyer, and so it is with bridge. You have to prepare yourself to outbid the opponents, and know when to stop if the level is too high for you.

I will reproduce the EW hands from Chapter 5 and introduce one or more interference bids from opponents so we can look at ways we can handle the interference.

a)

WEST	EAST
♠ KJ43	♠ 9862
♥ AKJ4	♥ Q83
♦ J9	♦ Q1087
♣ 874	♣ Q3

West opens 1H and North overcalls 1S.

There is no obligation for East to respond. Yes, East does have six points but it is a very poor six count and a 1NT bid after the 1S overcall would show that point count, but should also show a hold in that suit. If East's queen of hearts was the queen of spades, then a 1NT bid over North's 1S could be considered. East has only two sensible options: Pass or a raise to 2H despite only three card support.

So, East passes, and if South also passes, West will be happy to defend.

Now let's say EW are playing Acol, with a 12-14 No Trump. West would open 1NT and whatever North bids, East will pass, because West's hand is accurately enough known. EW don't have the balance of power so cannot outbid NS.

Both West and East should be happy to defend whatever contract NS end up in. The likelihood is that South will also pass North's 2S bid and EW, with four trumps each, will make life very difficult for North. And if South decides to try and get out of such an awful spot, the bidding is likely to carry NS too far wherever they go. They may not know how and where to stop! So, a plus for Acol and the weak 1NT, because playing the natural and "Simple" way, North would no doubt buy the contract in 1S. But then again, North may be reluctant to enter the bidding and pass 1NT. No doubt that would work in NS's favour.

b)

WEST

♠ 843

♥ AJ932

♦ A

♣ K1086

EAST

♠ J62

♥ 76

♦ Q1087

♣ A432

West opens 1H and North overcalls 1S. What can East do? Many Easts would bid 1NT despite the fact that they don't have a spade stop. My old fashioned way of playing is that you must have a stopper in the overcalled suit as well as the correct point count, so East would appear to be in a fix.

While passing is always an option when you have marginal values and nowhere sensible to go, there is an answer. East can double, which is a takeout double. It should be more than just a double to show some points, but mean something.

In the old days a double at any level said just one thing: penalty. You would expect to beat the contract. That sort of double is redundant these days, and everybody plays takeout doubles, usually up to 3S. But to me, and also how I recommend you play it, the takeout double should mean something more than just points, and I must stress that the use of the double is vital if you are to get the most mileage out of your bidding.

A double in this sequence should be unequivocal. It should be aimed at the unbid suits, which are the minor suits here. It suggests that East would be happy to hear West bid a minor OR 1NT if West has spade cover. Failing that, East will be able to tolerate a rebid of 2H, which at worst should be playable as long as West has at least five of them.

So, as it happens, West is happy to bid 2C. If NS continue to bid over 2C then more decisions will need to be made, and much will depend on the vulnerability conditions, which are a vital component, as you will see later.

c)

WEST

♠ 4

♥ KJ43

♦ KJ972

♣ KJ2

EAST

♠ Q9732

♥ 72

♦ 1084

♣ A63

West opens 1D and North once more overcalls 1S. East would have responded with 1S, so what is he to do now? East could bid 1NT because East has 6-9 HCP and a spade stop, but it is an absolute minimum hand, and because of East's poor spades, East does not want to encourage West to go further. Apart from a No Trump bid, there is an even better way to warn partner to take care: a PASS. That is what East should do. After a pass from East and South, the bidding is back to West. What do you suggest West should do? The answer will surprise you I think.

West should stop and think: why has East passed? The obvious answer is because East has nothing. The other possibility is that East has SPADES and no sensible bid available. East's spades could be so good that East wants North to play in 1S. East cannot double for penalty because a double of 1S would be for takeout! Only if West doubles, for takeout, can EW penalise North, and therefore East would pass with such a hand, and hope that West can make a takeout double. This East hand is not good enough to want to penalise North in 1S, East's hand would need to have much better spades as well as outside tricks. So, West, having thought it out, makes the takeout double. West also has four hearts, so the takeout double is even more reasonable. East, having a weak hand and not great spades, is not interested in any penalties, nor any suit, and, with his spade holding, does bid a delayed 1NT. That pretty well tells West all he needs to know, and West passes, leaving East in 1NT.

c)

WEST

♠ 4

♥ Q965

♦ KQ972

♣ AJ2

EAST

♠ KJ732

♥ A1084

♦ 4

♣ 653

West opens 1D and North overcalls 1S. This time, East's bidding is much more difficult. East has much better spades but still not necessarily good enough to want to penalise North in a contract as low as 1S. A 1NT bid might be in order. Another option is for East to double 1S, which is the perfect bid to show the heart suit, but the problem with that is: West may not have hearts, and only a diamond suit, and would rebid 2D. What then? East has a problem no matter what happens next.

Because East has a) four hearts and b) very good spade cards, East should double, taking the risk that West will rebid 2D. Then, East could bid 2NT, taking his chances despite having shown about 11 HCP. There are times when you simply have to do the best you can, either to increase your chances of a plus result, or to cut your losses. In this example, East's spades make the hand worth closer to 11 HCP than the 8 that East has. That would be my excuse anyway!

I don't believe it would be right to pass a 1S overcall with this East hand, nor to bid 1NT. The best option is to double 1S, at least West will know you have hearts. This time, it works well, because West will bid 2H and East will pass, letting West play in a very comfortable 2H contract. And please note: After East has made a takeout double to show hearts, West's bid in hearts should not be interpreted as a reverse. Had East passed an overcall, then 2H would be a reverse. I hope you understand the difference.

d)

WEST

♠ 42

♥ Q96

♦ KQ972

♣ AJ2

EAST

♠ KJ73

♥ 1084

♦ 4

♣ K7532

West again opens 1D and North overcalls 1S. This time East has the perfect 1NT bid, with two certain spade stoppers, 7 HCP and a five card club suit that might produce tricks. The only drawback is the singleton diamond. East will probably be allowed to play in 1NT because South won't have any support for North's spades. South will probably lead a spade and from then on it will depend much on what declarer does and what the defence can conjure up in the play.