

The Lebensohl Convention in Bridge

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Problem Auctions

Interference over No Trump

Interferes with use of normal tools

Adds complexity of finding stoppers in defender's suit

Doubles of 2 Level Preempts

The bidding is at a higher level so it's hard to show invitational hands

Reverses

Need to show a bad hand vs. useful values without letting the bidding get too high

Constructive NoTrump Tools

Constructive NT auctions are overpowered

Stayman

Transfers (Jacoby and Texas)

Quantitative Notrump bids

Ability to distinguish between:

Minimum

Invitational

Game-Forcing

So, players like to interfere with NT auctions

DONT, Meckwell, Hamilton, Landy and others

An example

Partner opens 1NT, opponents overcall 2H and this is your hand

♠ 6 5
♥ 8 4 3
♦ Q J 10 8 6 5 4
♣ 7

What should you bid? (Without interference you'd bid 2S and correct to 3D (or transfer to 3D if you play 4 suit transfers). If you bid 3 diamonds, will partner know to pass?

Another example

Partner opens 1NT and opponents overcall 2H. This is your hand

♠ K Q
♥ 9 7
♦ A Q J 10 9 6
♣ Q 9 8

Without interference you'd bid 3NT (or maybe 4NT quantitative. Do you still want to bid Notrump without a stopper in hearts? If you bid 3 diamonds will partner pass? If you bid 4 diamonds, will you miss the high-scoring 3NT?

How to deal with interference

We need a solution that:

Lets us identify game forcing and minimal hands

Find major fits (Stayman)

Identify stoppers (or lack of stoppers)

Identify invitational hands

Lebensohl is the basis for most expert practice

Comes in different varieties

This class deals with the basic (and easiest to remember)

You can work with your partner adding refinements

Lebehsohl over No-Trump interference (Simplified)

- **Over Double or 2C, use standard tools (double 2C for Stayman)***
- **Over higher interference:**
 - 2 Level suit bids are natural, non-forcing, non-invitational
 - Double is for Penalty**
 - 3 Level suit bids are natural and game forcing
 - 3NT shows 10 points, no 4 card major without a stopper
 - A cue-bid is game-forcing Stayman without a stopper
 - 2NT is a relay to 3 Clubs

* If 2C is for the majors (Landy), you can play double is still Stayman but penalty oriented

** Some play this as a negative double. Discuss with your partner.

2NT relays to 3 Clubs

The key bid in Lebensohl is the 2NT relay to 3 Clubs

After relay:

Passing or bidding a suit lower than the interference suit is to play

A cue-bid is game-forcing Stayman with a stopper

3NT is 10+ points with a stopper

Bidding a higher suit is game invitational showing 5+ cards

Does it matter if the interference shows two suits?

Not really

1. Use the basic Lebensohl rules.
2. If there's a known enemy suit, it's the cue-bid suit
3. If their bid shows both majors, the lower cue-bid is invitational and the higher is game-forcing
 - 2NT followed by a cue-bid shows (denies—discuss with partner) a stopper in that suit and is game forcing
4. Double is penalty indicating a desire to penalize them in at least one of their suits (partner is supposed to double a suit she can penalize them in)

Let's look at our problem hands again

♠ 6 5
♥ 8 4 3
♦ Q J 10 8 6 5 4
♣ 7

After 1NT-2H- what's our bid with each of these hands (using Lebensohl)?

2NT-p-3 clubs (forced)-p-3 diamonds

♠ K Q
♥ 9 7
♦ A Q J 10 9 6
♣ Q 9 8

3 diamonds (game forcing). Because no Stayman, tends to deny a 4 card major

Let's look at a whole hand

Auction: 1NT-2 Diamonds-?

	♠ Q 10 9	
	♥ A J 5	
	♦ 7 4 2	
	♣ K Q 6 4	
♠ J 8 4		♠ 7 6 3 2
♥ 6		♥ Q 9 7 4 3 2
♦ A Q 9 8 6 5		♦ K 10
♣ 7 3 2		♣ 5
	♠ A K 5	
	♥ K 10 8	
	♦ J 3	
	♣ A J 10 9 8	

Dealer is South

3 NT (no stopper)

What's South's next bid?

5 Clubs? Since North didn't Stayman and doesn't have a diamond stopper, it's likely he has club support.

Time for a quiz

Auction 1NT-2H-?

♠1092 ♥53 ♦KJ10974 ♣83

♠82 ♥4 ♦AQ10 ♣KQ109742

♠AQ986 ♥86 ♦974 ♣872

♠AQ986 ♥75 ♦Q102 ♣K93

♠J1098 ♥43 ♦AQJ ♣Q1087

♠Q1082 ♥AJ ♦652 ♣A1043

♠A9 ♥652 ♦AQ9 ♣J8432

♠AJ2 ♥A9 ♦Q976 ♣J1083

2NT (forcing 3C) followed by 3D

3C (game forcing)

2S (non-forcing, non-invitational)

3S (game forcing)

3H (Stayman without a stopper)

2NT (forcing 3C) followed by 3H (Stayman with a stopper)

3NT (game forcing without a stopper)

2NT (forcing 3C) followed by 3NT (game forcing with a stopper)

More Lebensohl Practice

Auction is 1NT-2D-?

♠73 ♥AJ1084 ♦9753 ♣75

2H (non-forcing/non-invitational)

♠A7 ♥KJ1094 ♦42 ♣10963

2N (forcing 3C) followed by 3H invitational

♠A4 ♥AQJ85 ♦8654 ♣64

3H Game forcing

Auction is 1NT-2H-?

♠A9 ♥QJ86 ♦J1095 ♣98

Double (penalty)

What does opener bid in Lebensohl?

If partner makes non-forcing bid, generally pass

If partner bids 2NT, bid 3Clubs (forced)

If partner denies a stopper, don't play in NT unless you have a stopper

If your partner uses Stayman, recognize it

Opener practice

Auction is 1NT-2H-2NT-P. What's your call?

♠AQ9 ♥K105 ♦KQJ87 ♣32

3 clubs (forced)

Auction is 1NT-2H-2S-P. What's your bid?

♠J10 ♥KQ9 ♦AJ104 ♣KQJ6

Pass (partner wants to play 2S)

♠AQ107 ♥74 ♦KQ85 ♣AJ10

I like 3 spades

Auction is 1NT-2H-3H-P. What's your bid?

♠AQ107 ♥74 ♦KQ85 ♣AJ10

3 spades (you're in a game force and partner Staymaned)

♠J10 ♥KQ9 ♦AJ104 ♣KQJ6

3NT. You don't have 4 spades but you do have heart stoppers

More opener practice

Auction is 1NT-2H-3N-P. What's your call?

♠ J10 ♥ KQ9 ♦ AJ104 ♣ KQJ6 Pass (you have a Heart stopper)

♠ A432 ♥ K9 ♦ KJ104 ♣ AJ10 Pass (you have a Heart stopper)

♠ AJ32 ♥ 43 ♦ KQ98 ♣ KQ4 4 Diamonds (no stopper no NT)

♠ AK987 ♥ J2 ♦ KQ6 ♣ QJ5 4 Spades (promises 5 card suit)

Auction is 1NT-2H-3H

♠ AJ32 ♥ 43 ♦ KQ98 ♣ KQ4 3 Spades (partner's bid was Stayman)

Variations

Talk about it with your partner:

- Some people play doubles as negative rather than penalty
- Some people play 2NT as asking for better minor rather than relaying to 2C
- There are other variations (Transfer Lebensohl, etc.) that you may want to research at some point

Any sort of Lebensohl is a good start in dealing with No-Trump interference

Lebensohl over NT interference Recap

Ignore X or 2C (double of 2C is Stayman)

Double is Penalty

2 Level bids are to play

3 Level bids are Game Forcing

4 Level bids are systems on (e.g., Texas Transfers if there's room for a jump)

2NT is a relay to 3C

3NT is GF without a stopper

Cue bid is Stayman without a stopper

Relay then Cue is Stayman with. Relay then 3NT is GF with a stopper

Relay then a higher suit is invitational

Sample deals

In all hands, South is dealer

I'll assign interference

Only look at the N/S hands

Next Steps

Next week, we deal with the other two problem auctions:

Invitational vs. Minimum responses to doubles of weak 2 bids

Positive vs. Minimum responses to reverses (we'll also have a quick review of what's required for a reverse)

Lebensohl Week 2

Review of Lebensohl over No Trump Interference

Problem Auction #2—Responding to a double of a weak 2

Problem Auction #3—Responding to a Reverse

Lebensohl (over NT) Review

Lebensohl uses the 2NT relay to 3C to allow responder to describe his hand

Double is penalty

2 Level bids are to play

3 Level bids are game forcing

A direct Cue-bid is Stayman without a stopper

2NT followed by pass or a suit lower than interference are to play

2NT followed by a cue-bid is Stayman with a stopper

2NT followed by a higher suit is invitational

2NT followed by 3NT is game forcing with a stopper

3NT is game-forcing without a stopper

Problem auction #2 (Double of Weak 2)

Doubles of 1 level bids (Standard):

A non-jump bid shows 0-8 points

A jump (e.g. 1H-X-P-2S) shows 8+-11 points

A cue-bid or game bid shows 12+ points

Two level doubles don't give us bidding room to jump

We need a way to differentiate between weak hands and invitational hands

Roll out our friend Lebensohl

How Lebensohl works over Weak 2 Doubles

Use the 2NT relay to 3C to show weakness (usually)

Advancer's 2NT bid asks for a 3C response*

2S-X-P-2NT-P-3C-P-3H shows a weak hand

Cue-bids are game-forcing and imply 4 in the other major(s). Direct Cue-bids deny a stopper. Cue-bids after relay promise a stopper.

3 Level bids show 'useful' values**

With a game-going hand and 5+ pieces, no need to cue-bid. Just go.

*With a game against nothing, doubler may bid something else

**Generally defined as around 7 points

Example hands

Auction is 2S-X-P-?

Your hand:

♠632 ♥97 ♦1083 ♣107654

Or

♠1054 ♥K8 ♦1094 ♣KQ1087

Bid 2NT and pass the 3C response

Bid 3C promising useful values

Jumping with hand 2 goes past 3NT. But just making a 3C bid with both hands hides a huge difference.

What does doubler do?

Over 2NT, generally bid 3C (unless you can't stand being passed in 3C)

If partner cue-bids, you're going to game

If partner shows useful values, determine whether there is a game (or slam), treating it as if she'd jumped in a one-level double

Doubles over preempt quiz

Auction is 2S-X-P-?

♠108 ♥KJ92 ♦874 ♣A653

♠AQ ♥K1087 ♦Q1096 ♣J43

♠432 ♥J86 ♦10872 ♣Q64

♠A84 ♥65 ♦AKJ98 ♣1087

♠764 ♥AQ108 ♦97 ♣KQ95

♠QJ98 ♥6532 ♦A4 ♣K109

3H (useful values)

2NT followed by 3S (4 hearts and stopper)

2NT followed by 3D (bad hand)

3NT (bid what you can make)

3S (cue-bid without stopper)

Pass (enjoy the penalties)

Lebensohl over Reverses

What is a Reverse?

Bidding a higher suit than originally bid at the 2 level. E.g., 1C-P-1H-P-2D

What does a Reverse promise?

“Extra Values” (Generally defined as about 17+ points)

Longer first suit than second

Unbalanced hand

Is it forcing?

Yes!

Is it Game-forcing?

No

Why is this a problem?

Need to be able to stop the bidding with a weak hand

Need to be able to set trump with a strong hand without partner passing

Solution: Our friend Lebensohl

A problem auction

Auction: 1D-P-1S-P-2H-P-?

Your hand:

♠ J543 ♥ 63 ♦ Q643 ♣ QJ8

♠ AQJ10 ♥ 1097 ♦ KJ106 ♣ A10

With hand 1, you'd like to bid 3D and have partner pass. With Hand 2 you'd like to bid 3D to set trump and explore for slam

The Lebensohl Solution

Bidding at the 3 level is game-forcing*

To show weakness, relay through 2NT

Opener may bypass the 3C relay if she wants to insist on game

In our example hands:

♠ J543 ♥ 63 ♦ Q643 ♣ QJ8

Bid 2NT and then 3D to show weakness

♠ AQJ10 ♥ 1097 ♦ KJ106 ♣ A10

Bid 3D (forcing) and then Cue-bid or Blackwood

* Discuss with partner whether a 2 level bid is strong or weak. I play weak.

Reverse quiz

Auction: 1C-P-1S-P-2H-?

♠ J9543 ♥ J10 ♦ Q64 ♣ Q76 2NT and then pass partner's 3C bid

♠ KQ1054 ♥ Q1097 ♦ 6 ♣ Q104 3H (sets trump and forcing)

♠ AJ532 ♥ K3 ♦ 74 ♣ J832 3C (forcing)

♠ AQJ96 ♥ Q84 ♦ 53 ♣ J62 2S/3S (2S if forcing. Otherwise 3S?
Discuss if 4th suit forcing is on)

♠ AQ108 ♥ 85 ♦ KQ92 ♣ 763 2NT followed by 3NT

Refinements to discuss with partner

Double as negative rather than penalty (make sure the 1NT bidder is ready to double if responder passes)

Combining Transfers with Lebensohl

2NT as better Minor rather than a relay

Many experts play some of these refinements and you may wish to consider them once you're comfortable with basic Lebensohl

Conclusions

Lebensohl is designed to deal with a number of problem auctions.

The key bid in Lebensohl is 2NT (forcing a 3C response)

Playing Lebensohl gives you a chance to reach better contracts and more safely double your opponents

There are refinements and variations on Lebensohl that you may wish to discuss with your partner once you feel comfortable with the basics