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This Week in Bridge

(522) 2♠ Size Ask Response

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Level: 8 of 10

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General

Most players in modern bridge play a *4-Suited Transfer* structure in response to their 1NT opening bids. This is an excellent structure but it can be improved upon. 4-suited transfers have a downside that in order to invite we must bid Stayman and then rebid 2NT. Bidding Stayman gives away information about the Opener's hand as they show their 4-card Major or lack thereof. We would like to have a way to invite game without giving away information about the Opener's hand. This is what the 2♠* *Size Ask* does!

What Does 2♠* Size Ask Show?

The 2♠ *Size Ask* can be used with a variety of hand types. The most common is the old fashioned balanced invitational hand without a 4-card Major, the hand that would have traditionally bid an invitational 2NT.

But we also want to be able to use this bid to do more than just show a "2NT bid". We also want to include a transfer to ♣ as part of this 2♠ bid as well. This is the beauty of the 2♠ *Size Ask*. We can use this bid as both a transfer to notrump and a transfer to ♣ at the same time.

How Does Opener Rebid After 2♠* Size Ask?

When the Responder bids 2♠*, it asks Opener if they are a maximum or a minimum for their 1NT opening bid. Here is how the Opener answers the *Size Ask* question:

- 2NT* Shows a minimum hand
- 3♣* Shows a maximum hand

Note: 1NT - 2NT remains a transfer to ♦ when playing the 2♠* Size Ask, but it is best to play Opener's superaccept in the same way as we respond to Size Ask – first step being default action and second step showing extra strength. Thus, after a 2NT ♦ transfer, 3♦ is a superaccept.*



Follow-Up Bids & Other Uses of the ♠ Size Ask Response

The *Size Ask* is a valuable bidding tool and a classic upgrade to the traditional *4-Suited Transfers*.

Balanced Invitational Hands

If we have a balanced invitational hand, we:

Example 1

1NT 2♠*

2NT* ___?

Pass, since partner has a minimum.

Example 2

1NT 2♠*

3♣* ___?

Bid 3NT, since partner has a maximum.

Weak Hands with Long ♣

If we have a *weak hand with long ♣* (0-7 HCP and 6+card ♣), we:

Example 3

1NT 2♠*

2NT* ___?

Bid 3♣. This is to play and shows a hand that just wanted to transfer to ♣.

Example 4

1NT 2♠*

3♣* ___?

Pass. This is where we always wanted to play.

Invitational Hands with Long ♣

If we have an *invitational hand with long ♣* (8-9 HCP and 6+card ♣), we:

Example 5

1NT 2♠*

2NT*

Now we bid 3♣ to end the auction, since Opener has shown minimum values.

Example 6

1NT 2♠*

3♣* ___?

Now we bid 3NT (usually) since Opener has shown extra values.



Game Forcing Hands with Long ♣

When we transfer to a minor and then bid a new suit, this traditionally shows a game forcing hand with shortness and asks the 1NT Opener to help us make a decision about 3NT vs. a minor suit game or slam. We make this decision based on the amount of stoppers or wasted values we have opposite Responder's shortness. When using the Size Ask these bids have the same meaning regardless of whether the Opener shows a minimum or maximum:

Example 7

1NT 2♠*
2NT* 3♦*
10+ points, 6+♣, 0-1♦ -- worry ask

Example 8

1NT 2♠*
2NT* 3♥*
10+ points, 6+♣, 0-1♥ -- worry ask

Example 9

1NT 2♠*
2NT* 3♠*
10+ points, 6+♣, 0-1♠ -- worry ask

When the Opener shows a maximum hand with a 3♣ response to our Size Ask then we can continue the auction and use our *Worry Ask*, even with only invitational values.

Example 10

1NT 2♠*
3♣* 3♦*
8+ points, 6+♣, 0-1♦ -- worry ask

Example 11

1NT 2♠*
3♣* 3♥*
8+ points, 6+♣, 0-1♥ -- worry ask

Example 12

1NT 2♠*
3♣* 3♠*
8+ points, 6+♣, 0-1♠ -- worry ask



Using Size Ask to Invite Slam

Now that we have a tool for asking partner if they have a minimum or maximum hand, we should think about how we might use this to improve other aspects of our bidding. One of the most common auctions where we ask partner about their size (other than the traditional invite) are the quantitative auctions. These are traditionally:

- 1NT 4NT Pass with a minimum and bid 6NT with a maximum
- 1NT 5NT Bid 6NT with a minimum and 7NT with a maximum

Playing the Size Ask we do not need to bid this way anymore. We can ask Opener about their size by bidding 2♠*. This leads to the following auctions instead of 4NT and 5NT bids:

- *Traditional 4NT Auctions*

Example 13

- 1NT 2♠*
- 2NT* 3NT

We play in 3NT instead of 4NT when partner has a minimum.

Example 14

- 1NT 2♠*
- 3♣* 6NT

We play a slam when partner has a maximum.

- *Traditional 5NT Auctions*

Example 15

- 1NT 2♠*
- 2NT* 6NT

We play a small slam when partner has a minimum.

Example 16

- 1NT 2♠*
- 3♣* 7NT

We play a grand slam when partner has a maximum.

Note: This also has the advantage of freeing up the 5NT bid for other uses like “pick a slam” bidding.

Conclusion

The 2♠ Size Ask is an excellent upgrade to 4-suited transfers that gives the Responder another tool for finding out valuable information from partner. This tool can be used in many ways and without the addition of much complexity. If you are playing 4-suited transfers already, then give this gadget a try and see if you can further improve your bidding opposite partner’s 1NT opening bids.