

Responding to notrumps *by Derrick Browne*

Partner opens a 15-17 point 1NT. How should you respond with this hand?

S 5
H KJ9543
D K86
C 964

With six hearts, a fit there can be assumed as the 1NT opening promises a balanced hand. Thus shortage points can be added - 3 SP for the singleton - bringing the hand strength to 10 Total Points. While it is nice to have 26 TP for game, here with at least 25 TP it should still be called.

How to bid to 4H depends on the level of the players. Developing players should keep it simple with a direct 4H. More advanced players use transfers in response to 1NT, so North could bid 2D to show at least five hearts.

Some players use yet other methods, as evidenced when this hand was played in the Open, Women's and Seniors' finals of this year's world championships. This was the full deal:

Dealer South, nil vul.

NORTH
S 5
H KJ9543
D K86
C 964

WEST	EAST
S AK2	S JT976
H 7	H 82
D QJT53	D 92
C JT73	C KQ52

SOUTH
S Q843
H AQT6
D A74
C A8

At all six tables, South opened 1NT and West passed. Time for North's decision. In reply to partner's notrump bid, many top players use 4-level transfers known as Texas transfers, in addition to their regular transfers. Thus at two tables, North bid 4D transfer, and South bid 4H.

Some players use a variant of this known as South African Texas Transfers, whereby 4C is a transfer to hearts and 4D is a transfer to spades. In the Open final, Lauria of Italy bid 4C as North with this meaning, Meckstroth for the USA doubled for a club lead with the East cards, and Versace, South, bid 4H.

At the other tables in the final, North bid a simple 2D transfer rather than a Texas-style 4-level transfer. This raises another question: what should South bid over that? All three South players decided their excellent heart support justified bidding more than just a simple 2H accept of the transfer.

In the Women's, Baker for USA bid a 3H super-accept. In the Seniors, Romanski for Poland bid 4H – an exuberant action given that partner's transfer promises nothing more than five hearts. At the other table in the Seniors, Harper for England bid 3C. This is commonly used as a super-accept of hearts, but with a doubleton club. Over that, North called 3D as a retransfer back to hearts, and then raised to 4H.

All tables finished in 4H with South as declarer. Another question: what should West lead?

An A-K lead is an appealing choice against a suit contract, and four players led the SA, three of them switching to the DQ (the odd one out was Rodwell, whose partner had doubled 4C for a club lead; he switched to the CJ). At the other two tables, West led the DQ first up, preferring to start with the 3-card sequence ahead of an A-K holding.

At two tables, declarer made ten tricks but can you see how the other four played to make an overtrick? They ruffed spades twice. With the A-K of spades falling short, this sets up the SQ as a winner, allowing the diamond loser to be discarded from dummy.