

Two Over One

P.A.N.T.

Protect Against Notrump Troubles

Opening 1NT used to be so fun. But then clever players started inventing intrusionary conventions for every letter of the alphabet: Astro, Brozelle, Capelletti, DONT, and so forth. Now it seems someone is always in our notrump auction, and the meaning of our subsequent bids become questionable. Are transfers on or off? Does partner have 8 points or 11 or 18 or what? Do we have a stopper? Should we be in notrump or a suit? What do I bid with only a 4-card major? It can be a real mess. Now all of our reasoned agreements go out the window, to be replaced only by simple guesses.

Of course equally clever people have come up with counter-measures. The simplest is a dismal choice called "Stolen Bid". In this case we double the intrusionary bid whenever it was the bid we were going to make. First of all, this is of no help at all if the intruder isn't kind enough to make the very bid we intended. When he doesn't, we are as lost as before. When he does, we can double to say, "That's my bid!", which is usually a transfer, so our partner must bid. The effect of this is that we can never double the intruder for penalties. And the effect of this is that the opponents will wise up and start intruding nearly every time you open 1NT since they can't be doubled and they can be assured of damaging you. Is there no alternative available?

Heretofore, those who wanted to protect themselves intelligently against these intrusions had to resort to a highly complicated convention known as Lebensohl. Although this unbelievably difficult convention handles the interference effectively, what good is it when even rocket scientists get confused and throw up their hands in dismay. Although the extremely dedicated player may buckle down and, after years of study, eventually just begin to understand this troubling

Lebensohl, the truly sensible among us simply swear that we will never even undertake to learn such a totally impossible convention. So, Lebensohl is out.

That would seem to leave us just where we started, which is to say "nowhere." And this would be the sad truth, were it not for the internet, where Truth can always be found if searched for with diligence. Much as the present author would like to take credit for inventing this intermediary convention, he cannot. He merely located it in cyberspace, and now he is nothing but a messenger bringing the word about P.A.N.T., Protect Against Notrump Troubles.

The name, by using initials in this manner, seems to reference the popular D.O.N.T. convention, although the article never explains its rationale. Neither is it systematic. For the most part, it just clarifies what some of the bids should mean over interference. By agreeing to these meanings, partners can at least know confidently what some of their bids may mean. Most importantly in the eyes of this author, it does at least retain "double" as a potential penalty double, which at least puts it miles ahead of "Stolen Bid."

P.A.N.T. also shows some cleverness in handling one of the central problems of intrusionary bids. When the opponent comes in with a suit, who will be responsible for having a stopper in it? Should the responder bid notrump to promise a stopper? Or should the responder simply rely on the opener to have a stopper? Somehow this has to be straightened out so that the partners can know if a notrump contract is safe or not. P.A.N.T. states simply that the responsibility for a stopper is the opener's. They argue that the opener has the stronger hand, and is therefore more likely to

P.A.N.T.

page two

hold the stopper. What's more, even though the 1NT opener doesn't HAVE to have all suits stopped, he nearly always has at least 3 of them stopped, if not all four.

Therefore it is very likely that the opener can stop the intruding suit, so responder need not concern himself with it. If responder has 10 or more points and thinks notrump should be the contract, he will simply up and bid 3NT, leaving opener with the burden of handling the stopper. Responder has no responsibility for a stopper at all. If opener can indeed stop the suit, as P.A.N.T. suggests will almost always be the case, then the intrusion did not stop you. You have found a perfectly good 3 notrump game that others may be too frightened to bid.

On those odd occasions when opener does not have the stopper, then he will have to start scrambling. As awkward as this may be, at least the partners know where they stand. They have the lion's share of points, they know that 3NT is dead, and they at least have a chance to come to the clear in some other reasonable spot. Others, who have no agreement about this subject at all, may simply guess at 3NT and go down.

Other than that, there isn't much to say about the simple agreements of P.A.N.T. This little convention may not solve all the problems caused by intrusions, but it at least takes care of a bunch of them in a more or less reasonable way and will often give you a safe path to follow between the two perils of Scylla (Stolen Bid) and Charybdis (Lebensohl). And certainly it is far better than nothing at all.

P.A.N.T.

**Double
of 2 Clubs.....Stayman**

**Double
of other 2 bids.....8 or 9 HCPs. Invites 3NT.
Responder needs no stopper.
Opener may accept invitation
or convert to penalty double
by passing.**

**New suit
over 2 Club
intrusion.....Transfer bids**

**New suits
at 2-level over
other intrusion.....Drop dead bid. 5-card suit
or longer with no interest at
all in game. (This is standard
bidding.)**

**3 clubs or
3 diamonds over
any intrusion.....6-card minor headed by AQ
or KQ, nothing outside.
(Standard two over one)**

**3 hearts or
3 spades over
any intrusion.....5-card major or longer,
game forcing. (10+ points)**

**3NT over
any intrusion.....10 or more points. Responder
denies a stopper. Stopper is
opener's responsibility.**

Opener will sit for 3NT with a stopper and run without a stopper. Therefore responder will not have a stopper at all.