

Fully Qualified, Forcing or Not Forcing

Prisoners of Point Count, The Amazing Reverse Episode 2

By Mick Riccio

dynamick747@gmail.com



This is the continuation of a series of articles on forcing bids. In modern bidding one must know which bids – made either by you or your partner, as a response or a rebid – are forcing or can be passed. This is the foundation of good bidding.

The Reverse Bid by Opener

For prisoners of point count, this is a reminder that the relative value of a hand is not just about point count but about shape and trick taking ability. The idea of making a forcing rebid after opening is done with a hand of such potential value that you want to hear from your partner again no matter what their hand is.

Let's talk first about the **REVERSE**

Consider the following hand:

♠ x
♥ x
♦ AQxx
♣ AKQJxxx

You might agree that this hand has amazing potential. However, it has only 16 high card points. Partner could deliver a game with a very modest hand. We are often taught that you need 17-21 high card points to reverse. If one looks only at that single criteria, one could never bid this hand properly.

Certain conditions must prevail in order for a reverse bid to be certain. I want to eliminate confusion on this topic. You or your partner must open the bidding, responder bids a suit (usually at the one level). Any suit bypassed by responder suggests that the suit is **not** held by responder. This is called **implicit** denial.

General conditions for recognizing a reverse:

- One of the partners must open the bidding
- Responder makes a forcing/non forcing bid at the 1 level
- Opener assumes that any suit responder bypasses is not held
- Opener's rebid is higher ranked than the opening suit bid
- Opener's rebid is a suit the responder has bypassed
- Opener's rebid is at a higher level than his opening strain
- Reverses are absolutely forcing
- Opener may have 17-21 high card or evaluation points
- The reverse is therefore not "fully qualified" and therefore forcing

When partner opens the bidding and we cannot make a Two over One bid, responder usually bids “up the line”. For example, if Partner opens 1♣, responder might bid 1♥ while holding 4 or 5♦. It is common bidding practice to bypass diamonds in favor of bidding the major.

Opener should assume that if partner did not bid ♦, the likelihood is that responder does not have them. But they could! This is called implicit denial. If opener opens the bidding with 1♦ and responder bids 1♠ we assume that responder does not have 4♥ but they could! If partner has 5♠ and 4♥, they bid ♠ first. Again, this is called implicit denial. Opener should assume that if responder did not bid the bypassed suit, responder does not have it.

Before we consider the shape and promise of the reverse, let’s look at some examples:

Bidding

Opener	Responder	<i>Reverse?</i>
1♦	1♥	
2♣		<i>No</i>

- opener’s rebid is lower ranked than opener’s first bid suit

Opener	Responder	<i>Reverse?</i>
1♦	1♥	
1♠		<i>No</i>

- opener’s rebid is not at a higher level than opener’s first bid suit

Opener	Responder	<i>Reverse?</i>
1♣	1♥	
1♠		<i>No</i>

- opener’s rebid is not a suit denied by responder
- opener’s rebid is not at a higher level than opener’s first bid suit

Opener	Responder	<i>Reverse?</i>
1♥	1NT	
2♦		<i>No</i>

- opener’s rebid is not a suit denied by responder
- responder’s bid may or may not be forcing
- opener’s rebid is not higher ranked than opener’s first bid suit

Opener	Responder	<i>Reverse?</i>
1♥	1NT	
2♣		<i>No</i>

- opener’s rebid is not a suit denied by responder
- responder’s bid may or may not be forcing
- opener’s rebid is not higher ranked than opener’s first bid suit

Opener’s hand for the bidding that follows:

♠ Q
 ♥ AQxx
 ♦ Kx
 ♣ AKxxxx

Opener	Responder	<i>Reverse?</i>
1♣	1♠	

2♥

Yes

- opener's rebid is a suit implicitly denied by responder
- opener's rebid is higher ranked than opener's first bid suit
- opener's rebid is at a higher level than opener's first bid suit

Opener's hand for the bidding that follows:

♠ x

♥ Axx

♦ AKJx

♣ AJxxx

Opener Responder *Reverse?*

1♣

1♠

2♦

Yes

- opener's rebid is a suit implicitly denied by responder
- opener's rebid is higher ranked than opener's first bid suit
- opener's rebid is at a higher level than opener's first bid suit

Opener's hand for the bidding that follows:

♠ AKxx

♥ AQJxx

♦ x

♣ Axx

Opener Responder *Reverse?*

1♥

1NT

2♠

Yes

- opener's rebid is a suit implicitly denied by responder, if responder had 4♠ they bid 1♠
- opener's rebid is higher ranked than opener's first bid suit
- opener's rebid is at a higher level than opener's first bid suit

So how would you bid the hand first shown in this article? Assume you are the opener. You bid 1♣ and partner has responded 1♠.

Opener's hand:

♠ x

♥ x

♦ AQxx

♣ AKQJxxx

Would you bid 2♦? Is it a reverse? Is it forcing? Does it fit the 3 major requirements of the reverse bid? Why is the reverse so important anyway? Should you reverse with only 16 high card points?

- Yes, you should bid 2♦
- It is a reverse
- It is forcing
- It does fit the 3 major requirements of the reverse:
 - 2♦ is a suit responder has implicitly denied (although they might have them)
 - 2♦ is higher ranked than 1♣
 - 2♦ is at a higher level than 1♣
- With 16 high card points, extreme distribution and trick taking potential yes, you should reverse

- **Reverses let you show higher value and shape without jumping**

The characteristics that a hand must have in order to reverse with are:

- Opener has approximately 17-21 high card points
- The first bid suit is longer
- This bid denies a balanced 15-17 or 20-21 high card points
- Opener's second bid is a suit implicitly or explicitly denied by responder
- Opener's rebid is at a higher level of bidding

I hope this article helps you to recognize the fantastic and wonderful reverse. This is a bid which lets you show a big hand with shape. Done properly there is no need to jump to show this hand. It has been part of Standard American bidding since the 1920's when the first article appeared.

Next episode will focus on my favorite bidding pattern for responding to a reverse.