

Twoonie Talk #12

Balancing

By Warren Watson

KJBC and KDBC

Last Revised April 27th, 2015

When you play against me, you may think that my competition button is always on. That is not entirely true. I am using judgment every time I enter an auction, especially one that is owned by the opponents. In this talk, I will give an insight to what should be your thought process.

Definition of Balancing:

Balancing is when a pass would end the auction, a bid, other than pass, is made.

1. One always balances, especially at favourable vulnerability, at the one or two-level.
True False

Definition of Sandbagging:

With length and strength in opponent's suit, one pushes the bidding higher so one can double and set them.

2. Sandbagging is an attribute of a good player. True False
3. It is safe to say that with length and strength in opponent's five or six-card suit, it is most always best to defend. True False

Examples

4. You are North, both Vulnerable, with: ♠J8543 ♥Q2 ♦AQ2 ♣KJ2,

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♥	a?	2♥	P
P	b??	2NT	All Pass

c. What does South lead from ♠K2 ♥J43 ♦J1098 ♣7654

5. You are North, both Vulnerable, with: ♠AK32 ♥Q9875 ♦KJ2 ♣2

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♥	a?	2♥	P
P	b??		

6. You are South, both Vulnerable, with: ♠Q9875 ♥AK432 ♦KJ2 ♣---

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	1N	a?
2♣	P	P	b??

7. You are North, both Vulnerable, with: ♠QJ102 ♥Q ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♥	a?	2♥	P
P	b??		

8. You are South, both Vulnerable:

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	P	??
a.	with: ♠KJ102 ♥5 ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109		
b.	with: ♠J652 ♥K ♦QJ72 ♣QJ72		
c.	with: ♠2 ♥KJ102 ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109		

9. You are South, both Vulnerable, with: ♠KJ102 ♥5 ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	P	??

10. You are South, both Vulnerable:

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	P	??
a.	with: ♠K ♥52 ♦QJ532 ♣KJ652		
b.	with: ♠K ♥6542 ♦7532 ♣K652		
c.	with: ♠Q109532 ♥--- ♦KJ32 ♣KJ6		
d.	with: ♠J97532 ♥AQ ♦KJ ♣KJ6		

Twoonie Talk #12-Answers

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When you play against me, you may think that my competition button is always on. That is not entirely true. I am using judgment every time I enter an auction, especially one that is owned by the opponents. In this talk, I will give an insight to what should be your thought process.

Definition of Balancing:

Balancing is when a pass would end the auction, a bid, other than pass, is made.

1. One always balances, especially at favourable vulnerability, at the one or two-level.

False

At any vulnerability, one rarely allows opponents play at the one or two-level without length in any of their bid suits.

Definition of Sandbagging:

With length and strength in opponent's suit, one pushes the bidding higher so one can double and set them.

2. Sandbagging is an attribute of a good player. False

Think about this: Partner has shortness in their suit, he will do the pushing if it is right to do so. You hardly want to play doubled because you tried sand bagging. Do not let the opponents off of the hook.

3. It is safe to say that with length and strength in opponent's five or six-card suit, it is most always best to defend. True

Principle of Balancing:

One never concedes the one-level or two-level unless one has length in any one of opponent's bid suits or one has an entry-starved weak hand.

If the first opponent did not make a game try showing a minimum 12 to 14 points, and if the second opponent only made a simple raise, showing 6 to 9 points, they are willing to play at the two-level and the points are equally split between Us and Them. With shortness in their suit, push them up a level.

Balancing bids are not meant to be raised unless of course you have really good support and side shortness, namely a void. The three-level like the five-level is for the opponents, and two passed hands never should be at the four-level.

Balancing may allow opponents to find game but in the long run, it is still better to balance when one can.

How Balancing Improves Your game

If you know your partner will not sell out to the one or two-level, you can display patience and pass when you do not have a safe overcall or the correct shape to make a takeout double.

RHO opens 1♣ and you have:

♠AJ32 ♥K2 ♦AQ ♣107432 Pass, Partner should be short in Clubs and should take action. Spades are too poor to make a four-card one-level overcall and you have the wrong shape for a takeout double.

RHO opens 1♠ and you have:

♠10982 ♥KJ432 ♦AK ♣K2 Pass

Your Heart suit is too poor for a two-level overcall. It should be at most a two-loser suit played with no dummy entry. Your ten points in the minors would be more effective if in long suits.

Examples

4. You are North, both Vulnerable, with: ♠J8543 ♥Q2 ♦AQ2 ♣KJ2,
What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S	
1♥	a?	2♥	P	Pass
P	b??	2NT	All Pass	2♠

c. What does South lead from ♠K2 ♥J43 ♦J1098 ♣7654

South must lead Diamond Jack. Partner declined from bidding 1♠ over 1♥ so ♠King from Kx is a bad lead.

5. You are North, both Vulnerable, with: ♠AK32 ♦KJ2 ♣2

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S	
1♥	a?	2♥	P	Pass
P	b??			Pass

This is a diseased hand. It is better to let the opponents struggle with declaring this mess than you or your (former) partner. Your partner has a Heart void and still does not want to take action so you better just pass.

6. You are South, both Vulnerable, with: ♠Q9875 ♥AK432 ♦KJ2 ♣---

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	1N	a?
2♣	P	P	b??

Pass

Pass

You do not need to show an opening hand every time you have one.

7. You are North, both Vulnerable, with: ♠QJ102 ♥Q ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♥	a?	2♥	P
P	b??		

Pass

Dbl

8. You are South, both Vulnerable:

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	P	??

d. with: ♠KJ102 ♥5 ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109 Dbl

e. with: ♠J652 ♥K ♦QJ72 ♣QJ72 Pass-your wasted ♥King will increase the value of West's hand and he will make more than he expects. Point swallowing is in effect here if West has the Heart Ace.

f. with: ♠2 ♥KJ102 ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109 Pass

How good is your Heart suit if opponents lead Spades and let you play the Heart suit in No Trump.

9. You are South, both Vulnerable, with: ♠KJ102 ♥5 ♦QJ98 ♣QJ109

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	P	??

Pass, but I won't quibble with a ♠ overcall. The occasional four-card overcall of a relatively good suit is nothing partner should get upset over.

10. You are South, both Vulnerable:

What do you bid if the auction goes:

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	P	??

- e. with: ♠K ♥52 ♦QJ532 ♣KJ652 Pass or get ready to defend 4♥
- f. with: ♠K ♥6542 ♦7532 ♣K652 Pass- Partner will not like a dummy as poor as this.
- g. with: ♠Q109532 ♥--- ♦KJ32 ♣KJ6 Pass- Too bad partner did not make a takeout double.
- h. with: ♠J97532 ♥AQ ♦KJ ♣KJ6 Pass! How many tricks do you have in No Trump? Not many. You may lose 5 tricks in Spades if East has one of the top three Spade honours, doubleton (partner void). When you need more dummy entries than partner could conceivably have, let the opponent declare.