

November 18, 2009

MODIFIED SUCTION
(A Superior Defense
to a Forcing Club System)
By Randy Pettit

1. Purpose

This is an effective conventional approach to interfering to any system which utilizes an opening bid of one club forcing, usually 16+ HCP or more. It is not only lethal to constructive auctions of "big clubbers", it can actually be used very constructively by opponents of forcing club systems, arriving very swiftly at useful makeable contracts and good advance sacrifices. But, even a tool primarily used to disrupt big club auctions must be utilized within very precise boundaries in order to make it a positive force for you, particularly in team events where you do not need to generate randomly good or bad results for your team.

II. General design

The bids used in this system are generally exclusion bids, defining either a one or a two-suited hand. For example, a bid of double over a forcing club shows EITHER the suit immediately above the suit or the two suits above that suit.

RHO You

1♣* X Either diamonds, OR hearts AND spades.

1♣* 1♦ Either hearts, OR spades AND clubs

1♣* 1♥ Either spades, OR clubs and diamonds

Before we proceed with the other bids, in the standard Suction system, 1NT is reserved for two non-touching suits, i.e., EITHER clubs AND hearts, OR diamonds AND spades. However, it is useful to change the system to using the bid of 1 SPADE to show two non-touching suits so partner can INQUIRE which of the two possible suits are held by the bidder by bidding 1NT. The conventioneer can then bid 2♣ to show clubs and hearts and 2♦ to show diamonds and spades. Therefore:

1♣* 1♠ 2 non-touching suits

1♣* 1NT Either clubs, OR diamonds AND hearts

III. Continuations

The better your hand, the more you can bid, because this system repeats itself no matter what the level of bidding.

1♣* 2♣ Diamonds, OR hearts AND spades

1♣* 2♦ Hearts, OR spades AND clubs

1♣* 2♥ Spades, OR clubs AND diamonds

1♣* 2♠ 2 non-touching suits

1♣* 2NT Clubs, OR diamonds AND hearts

It is obvious that 1♣* - 4♥ would be either spades, OR clubs and diamonds, et cetera!

IV. Discipline

To avoid losing partnership confidence, it is assumed that both partners will adhere to a policy of staying "in the box". This is a "pass or correct" agreement. For example, let's say partner bids 2♣ over 1♣*, showing either diamonds, OR the majors, and you hold ♠J10xx, ♥xx, ♦Qxxxxx, ♣Kxx. If you choose to bid 3♦ and partner "corrects" to 3♥, you will be well placed to "correct" to 3♠

If you hold ♠xxx, ♥Kxx, ♦x, ♣Jxxxxx, you will be "out of the box" if you pass. Why? Because partner announced a pretty good hand with diamonds or the majors and you should just bid 2♦. He will have at least 6 decent diamonds or 5-5 in the majors for this action.

V. Responder's Cue

If responder cue bids the suit that conventioneer CANNOT have, i.e., if he bids diamonds showing either hearts, OR spades AND clubs, then any bid of diamonds by responder is forcing one round at the two level and to game at the 3 level or higher.

VI. LHO Opponent bids after Conventioneer's bid

Responder is released from obligation to bid. Any bid he makes show values and is governed by the pass or correct rule. Double shows cards and asks partner to bid what he has.

VII. Opener bids 1♣*, second seat passes, responder bids 1♦

The system is off unless the response does not show a suit. Then the same rules govern 4th seat. Example: 1♣*-P-1♦-1♥ shows spades or the minors.

VIII. The effect of vulnerability

Due to the tremendous power of interference, many practiced partnerships that play a forcing club system have switched to a strong notrump system when facing unfavorable vulnerability, i.e., when vulnerable versus non-vulnerable. Be sure to check their agreements as to when they switch, if at all. Then, when facing FAVORABLE vulnerability, many of them use a weak NT system combined with gadgets, perhaps retaining the forcing club for hands with 18 HCP or more, then using the 1♦ opener for a variety of hands. It is very important that you do not abuse the Suction bids unless you just prefer to play an undisciplined style. Therefore, when the opponents are Vul and you are Non-vul, you may choose to play a normal overcall style. It is very important to have partner know at least one of your suits early because the space for investigation (pass or correct) carries the risk of larger penalties which exceed the opponent's probable result. For example, RHO opens 1♣* and you hold ♠xx, ♥Q109xx ♦KJxxx, ♣Kx. At favorable vulnerability or maybe at equal vulnerability you might bid 1NT, showing clubs, OR diamonds AND hearts. But at unfavorable any bid exceeding 1♥ is just rolling the dice.

IX. Sample hands, favorable vulnerability, RHO opens 1♣*:

A: ♠QJ9xxx ♥Kxx ♦xx ♣xx
B: ♠x ♥Jxxxxx ♦KQ10xx ♣x
C: ♠AKJ10x ♥QJ10xxx ♦x ♣x
D: ♠A10xx ♥J109xxx ♦xx ♣x

X. Sample responder hands

A: ♠xx ♥Axxx ♦QJ10xxx ♣x
B: ♠Kxx ♥x ♦Jxxxx ♣Axxx
C: ♠xxx ♥xx ♦QJxx ♣Axxx
D: ♠QJx ♥AKxx ♦Axxx ♣xx