

## BIDDING 8

### WHEN TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT VULNERABILITY IN PAIRS

I often hear some silly things said about vulnerability. The most popular one in an ordinary club (ie matchpoint scoring) session seems to be the decision whether to bid game or not in an **UNCONTESTED** auction. “I decided to have a go because we weren’t vulnerable” is a popular refrain. This is complete nonsense. Your decision should not be based on vulnerability, but whether the chance of making game is greater than 50%. If it is, you are more likely to gain against your opponents by bidding game. Bidding games at less than a 50% chance is losing bridge in the long run. Yes, you will get a top if you make it because no one else is in game. But you are more likely to go down and give yourself a bottom because one else is in game.

So when do you take into account vulnerability? It is when the bidding auction is **CONTESTED**. Most players have realised that they can push things if they are non-vulnerable. They have seen that even if they go down for -50 or -100, this is often less than what opponents could make, and they get a good score.

However, the full situation is a littler subtler. The time you tend to push the most (ie bid one more) is when you are **NON-VULNERABLE vs NON-VULNERABLE**. Let’s consider the situation of your opponents being in a contract of 1NT:

1. If your opponents can make 8 tricks in 1NT for -120, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 5 tricks for -100
2. If your opponents can make 7 tricks for -90, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 6 tricks for -50
3. If your opponents can only make 6 tricks for +50, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could have made 7 tricks for +90
4. If your opponents can only make 5 tricks for +100, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could have made 8 tricks for +120.

Notice at every level we get a better score playing the contract than letting our opponents play the contract. However, my advice to push in this situation has to be tempered by common sense. There is nothing worse than bidding over opponents and going down only to find they couldn’t have made their contract. So don’t go stupid. But if you’re not sure whether to bid on or not, this is the vulnerability at which to push.

Curiously, you should be less willing to push when you are **NON-VULNERABLE vs VULNERABLE**. The reason is that if your opponents go down, they are going down in 100s.

1. If your opponents can only make 5 tricks in 1NT for +200, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 8 tricks for only +120.
2. If your opponents can only make 6 tricks in 1NT for +100, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 7 tricks for only +90.

However, if your opponents can make their contract, you do get a better score by declaring:

1. If your opponents can make 7 tricks in 1NT for -90, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could 6 tricks for only -50.
2. If your opponents can make 8 tricks in 1NT for -120, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 5 tricks for only -100.

Finally, the time to be most cautious is when you are **VULNERABLE vs VULNERABLE**. Think about our opponents being in that 1NT contract again:

1. If your opponents can make 8 tricks for -120, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make only 5 tricks for -200
2. If your opponents can make 7 tricks for -90, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 6 tricks for -100
3. If your opponents can only make 6 tricks for +100, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 7 tricks for +90
4. If your opponents can only make 5 tricks for +200, if you had been in the 1NT contract you could make 8 tricks for +120

Notice at every level we get a better score if we let them play the contract. However, again my advice not to push here must be tempered by common sense. If you have a clear, solid overcall you should still make it. Don't become a mouse and give them an easy contract when you have a contract your way. But if you're not sure whether to bid on, this is the vulnerability at which to be most cautious.

The information in these notes is summarised in the following tables. The scores in **Green** are the better scores for our side.

BOTH NV		WE NV, THEY V	
THEY PLAY		WE PLAY	
THEY MAKE	WE GET	WE MAKE	WE GET
8	-120	5	-100
7	-90	6	-50
6	+50	7	+90
5	+100	8	+120

BOTH V			
THEY PLAY		WE PLAY	
THEY MAKE	WE GET	WE MAKE	WE GET
8	-120	5	-200
7	-90	6	-100
6	+100	7	+90
5	+200	8	+120