

## Lebensohl After Reverses

by Ed Rawlinson

Lebensohl may be used after partner reverses to show the strength of responder's hand. A partnership may choose one of two variations of Lebensohl after reverses. The simple choice is to always use 2N as the Lebensohl bid. If responder bids freely at the three level after a reverse, she shows 8 good points or more. If she bids 2N over the reverse, she shows a bad 8 points or less.

A better method is to use "the cheaper of 2N or fourth suit" as the Lebensohl bid. Thus, after:

- 1♣-1♥-2♦, 2♠ would be Lebensohl, asking opener to bid 3♣
- 1♣-1♠-2♦, 2♥ would be Lebensohl, asking opener to bid 3♣
- 1♣-1♠-2♥, 2N would be Lebensohl, asking opener to bid 3♣

The advantage of this method is that, on some auctions (such as the first two above), it allows opener to rebid 2N to play (choosing to rebid 2N rather than 3♣).

When opener reverses, she promises a good 16 points or more. After the reverse, it is important for each member of the partnership to show whether she has extra values. If responder makes the Lebensohl bid, opener shows 16-18 and a willingness for partner to pass by bidding 2N or 3♣. If opener doesn't want to be passed in 2N or 3♣, she makes some other natural bid. Some examples include:

- After 1♦-1♠-2♥-2N Bid 3♥ with x/AKJxx/AKJ10xx/x  
Bid 3♦ with x/AKJx/AKJ10xxx/x  
Bid 3N with x/AKJx/AJ10xx/AQx  
Bid 3♣ with Axx/KQxx/AKJxx/x
- After 1♣-1♥-2♦-2♠ Bid 2N with AQ/xx/Axxx/AK109xx  
Bid 3♣ with xx/x/KQJx/AKQJxx  
Bid 3♦ with -/Ax/KQJxx/AQJxxx  
Bid 3N with Kx/x/AQx/AKQxxxxx  
Bid 3♥ with A/Qxx/AJ10x/AKxxx

When opener reverses, it is forcing one round, so responder may not pass. With a bad hand (5 to a bad 8 points), responder may rebid her suit at the two level (if possible) with 5 or more cards in the suit. With other bad hands, responder must communicate this fact by making the Lebensohl bid. After opener's next bid, responder makes the logical bid with her weak hand (pass, raise, rebid her suit, or even bid a new suit if opener shows extra values). Examples include:

- After 1♣-1♥-2♦ Bid 2♥ with xxx/Q10xxx/KJx/xx  
Bid 2♠ (Lebensohl) with xxx/Q10xx/KJx/xxx, intending to pass 2N or 3♣; bid 5♣ over 3♦; bid 4♣ over 3♥.
- After 1♣-1♠-2♥ Bid 2♠ with Jxxxx/Qxx/ Ax/xxx, intending to pass 2N or 3♣; or raise 3♥ or 3♠ to 4.  
Bid 2N with Q10xx/xxx/Axx/xxx, intending to pass 3♣; raise 3♦ to 3N or raise 3♥ or 3♠ to game.  
Bid 2N with Qxxxx/Qxxx/xxx/Q, intending to bid 3♥ over 3♣ or 3♦; bid 4♥ over 3♥, 3♠ or 3N. Note: It's far more

important to show your heart support than to rebid your ratty 5-card spade suit).

- After 1♦-1♠-2♥ Bid 2N with Qxxx/xx/x/QJ109xxx, intending to pass 3♣, 3♦, 3♥, or 3♠; to bid 4♣ over 3N.
- After 1♣-1♠-2♦ Bid 2♥ with QJxxx/Q10xxx/xx/x, intending to bid 3♥ over 2N but to pass over 3♣, 3♦ or 3♠. Note: an alternative (perhaps better) is to bid 2♠ over the reverse to keep the bidding lower.

Suppose responder has greater strength. Any bid at the three level shows a good 8 points or more and is forcing to game. A jump rebid by responder shows a 6+-card suit with a good 8 points or more. Examples include:

- After 1♣-1♠-2♥ Bid 3♠ with QJ98xx/xx/KQx/xx  
Bid 3♣ with QJ98/QJx/Kxx/xxx  
Bid 3♦ with Kxxx/Kx/Kxxxx/xx  
Bid 3♥ with Qxxxx/QJxx/Ax/xx (Again, showing the heart fit is more important than showing 5 spades.)
- After 1♣-1♥-2♦ Bid 2N with KJxx/KJxx/xxx/Jx (Note: This is game forcing, since 2♠ would have been Lebensohl. Responder should not normally initiate NT, but with this hand she would want LHO on lead. It shows a good 8 to a bad 12)

Responder can use Lebensohl (or not) to describe the strength of game-forcing balanced hands. With a good 8 to a bad 12 balanced, responder makes the Lebensohl bid followed by a 3N bid. With a good 12 to a bad 15 balanced, responder jumps to 3N over the reverse. Examples include:

- After 1♦-1♠-2♥ Bid 2N with Kxxx/xxx/xxx/AQx, intending to bid 3N over 3♣, 3♦, or 3♠ and to bid 4♥ over 3♥.  
Bid 3N with KQxx/xxx/Jxx/AQx.

A typical use of “fourth suit forcing” in standard or 2/1 auctions is to ask for 3-card support of responder’s major. Since our treatment of Lebensohl over reverses has a special use for “fourth suit forcing” (at the two level), we need another method to ask for 3-card support. That method will be for responder first to make the Lebensohl bid and then to rebid his suit at the 3 level (if it makes sense to do so.) Examples include:

- After 1♣-1♠-2♦ Bid 2♥ with K109xx/Ax/Qxx/xxx, intending to bid 3♠ over 3♣. Note that if opener had rebid 2N or 3♦, it would be extremely unlikely for her to hold more than 2 spades. Raise 2N to 3; bid 3N or 5♣ over 3♦ (but not 4♣, because opener will think you have a weak hand); over 3♠, cue-bid 4♥.