

## ***The Precision Club Bidding System***

### **Bidding the 1♦ Impossible Negative**

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In article two on the Precision Club Bidding system, we discussed the 1♦ response to our 1♣ opening bid. The 1♦ bid is normally a negative response showing less than 8HCP. However, we mentioned that when the original Precision Club System was published by C. C. Wei, 1♦ was also used to describe a hand that contained exactly three 4-card suits, a singleton, and *at least* 8HCP – Wei called it the *impossible negative*. This was the only exception to the normal 1♦ response.

Other bridge authors who wrote about the Precision Club System included the *impossible negative* bid in their books about the system.<sup>1</sup> However, many bridge authors, even C. C. Wei, have eliminated the bid from their version of the Precision Club system and have substituted what they call the *Unusual Positive* in its place.<sup>2</sup> A brief description of this change from the original Precision System is discussed at the end of the article.

My partner and I have elected to keep the *impossible negative* as we feel that the substituted bids add more complexity to the system and the original meaning has worked well for us.

#### **Responding to the Opening 1♣ With the *Impossible Negative* 1♦ Bid when the Opponents Pass.**

When responding to a 1♣ opening bid after opponents pass, 1♦ is used with any hand that has 4-4-4-1, 4-4-1-4, 4-1-4-4, or 1-4-4-4 distribution and at least 8HCP. Here are some examples:

Hands on which you would respond to a Precision 1♣ with the <i>impossible negative</i> bid:	
1) ♠ 5 4 3 2	♥ K J 9 8    ♦ A    ♣ K Q 10 7
2) ♠ A 9 8 4	♥ Q J 4 2    ♦ J 9 7 4    ♣ 6

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1 For example, in his book on the Precision Club system, Swedish author Eric Jannersten devoted several pages to describing the *impossible negative* bid. [*Precision Bridge*, Eric Jannersten (English Edition by Rhoda Barrow Lederer), Charles Scribner & Sons, 1972] Even the famous Terence Reese (1913-1996), discussed the *impossible negative* in his book *Precision Bidding and Precision Play*, Copyright © 1972, 1973, reprinted 1974, Cornerstone Library Publications, Distributed by Simon & Schuster, Inc. However, he recommended an alternative “scheme” to describe the *impossible negative* type of hand.

2 *In Bidding Precisely Volume 1*, C. C. Wei, 277 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017, Copyright © 1974, the *Unusual Positive* was introduced in place of the *impossible negative*. The *Unusual Positive* was also included in *Matchpoint Precision*, Revised Edition, C. C. Wei and Ron Andersen, published by Mona Lisa Precision Corporation, Copyright © 1975, 1978.

Hands on which you would respond to a Precision 1♣  
with the *impossible negative* bid:

- 3) ♠ A Q 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ A Q J 10 ♣ A 7 6 5  
4) ♠ Q ♥ J 8 7 4 ♦ K 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 7 3

Here are some example hands that do not meet the requirements for the Impossible Negative bid:

The following responding hands really are *negative* 1♦ hands [i.e., they do not have the requisite 8+ HCP]:

- 1) ♠ 5 4 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ 7 ♣ 10 7 6 3  
2) ♠ A 9 8 4 ♥ Q J 4 2 ♦ 9 8 7 4 ♣ 6  
3) ♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ A J 10 5 ♣ 10 7 6 5  
4) ♠ 5 ♥ J 8 7 4 ♦ J 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 7 3

### Explaining to the 1♣ Opener That You Are Bidding the *Impossible Negative*

Responding 1♦ is the easy part of the system. The whole idea behind the *impossible negative* is being able to tell your partner, the 1♣ opener, that your bid is not really a negative response. The following is how we let the opener in on the secret that we have.

Assume that your partner opened 1♣ and after you bid 1♦, she made a suit bid.

If her suit bid is not in your singleton, you jump in the suit with your singleton to tell partner that you have made an *impossible negative* bid. For example, the bidding goes as follows:

- [Partner] 1♣
- [RHO<sup>3</sup>] pass
- [You] 1♦
- [LHO<sup>4</sup>] pass
- [Partner] 1♠
- [RHO] pass

Your partner has just told you that she has at least 5-spades and 16-19HCP. If your singleton is not in your partner's spade suit, you need to jump in the suit where you have the singleton to tell her that your 1♦ bid was the impossible negative.

For example, if your singleton is in clubs, you will bid 3♣ to show that your first bid was

<sup>3</sup> RHO = Right Hand Opponent.

<sup>4</sup> LHO = Left Hand Opponent.

the *impossible negative*. This is very helpful to partner as it confirms that you have a spade fit, at least 8HCP, and a singleton club. Of course, your partner must alert your 3♣ bid and, if the opponents request an explanation, tell them all about what your bid means.

So, what do we bid if, given the bidding sequence above, we have a singleton in partner's spade suit? This time, instead of jumping in our singleton (her spade suit), we must jump in NT to show that our 1♦ bid was the *impossible negative*. In other words, you must jump to 2NT over partner's 1♠ bid to tell her that your original response was not really a negative bid. Again, your partner must alert your bid and, if the opponents request an explanation, tell them all about what your 2NT means.

#### Describing the *impossible negative* when partner makes a NT rebid.

This time, assume the bidding goes as follows:

- [Partner] 1♣
- [RHO] pass
- [You] 1♦
- [LHO] pass
- [Partner] 1NT
- [RHO] pass

Partner's 1NT bid has just told you that she has 16-18HCP and a balanced hand. With this information, you must make a jump bid in your singleton. For example, if your singleton is in the heart suit, you will bid 3♥ to tell partner that you have the *impossible negative* with a heart singleton.

#### **Summary of the *Impossible Negative* Bid**

Bid the 1♦ *impossible negative* when your partner has opened the bidding with 1♣, RHO has passed, and you have (a) three 4-card suits, (b) a singleton, and (c) at least 8HCP.

After partner has responded in a suit after your *impossible negative* bid, here is how you alert partner to your situation:

1. If your partner's bid suit is not where you have the singleton, you jump in the singleton.
2. If your partner's bid suit is is where you have the singleton, you jump in NT.

After partner has responded in NT after your *impossible negative* bid, your job is simplified, you jump in the suit where you have the singleton. This describes your hand to partner.

Take the *Impossible Negative* bid quiz on the next page. Quiz answers are at the end of the article.

**QUIZ #1** [*bidding the Impossible Negative*]: In the following hands, you have responded 1♦ after your partner made a 1♣ opening bid. Assume that your partner then bid 1♥, what bids should you make with the following hands?

- 1) ♠ Q 4 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ A ♣ 10 7 6 3
- 2) ♠ A 9 8 4 ♥ Q J 4 2 ♦ J 8 7 4 ♣ 6
- 3) ♠ Q J 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ 9 ♣ 10 7 6 3
- 4) ♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ A K J 10 ♣ 10 7 6 5
- 5) ♠ 5 ♥ K 8 7 4 ♦ J 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 7 3

### **The Unusual Positive**

The following table summarizes the *Unusual Positive Response* to a 1♣ opening bid when you hold at least 8HCP and any 4-4-4-1 distribution hand and the opponents have passed. It is based upon the method proposed by Wei and Andersen<sup>5</sup> to replace the Impossible Negative bid.

<b><i>Unusual Positive Bids and Rebids</i></b>			
<b>Responder Hand</b>	<b>Responder Bids</b>	<b>Opener's Rebids</b>	<b>Responder's Rebids</b>
Singleton in one of the black suits, less than 11 HCP, and 0-3 controls <sup>6</sup>	3♣	3♦ Asks which suit?	3♥ shows singleton ♣ 3♠ shows singleton ♠
Singleton in one of the red suits, less than 11 HCP, and 0-3 controls	3♦	3♥ Asks which suit?	3♠ shows singleton ♦ 3NT shows singleton ♥
Singleton spade with at least 3 controls and at least 11 HCP	3♥	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.
Singleton club with at least 3 controls and at least 11 HCP	3♠	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.
Singleton diamond with at least 3 controls and at least 11 HCP	4♣	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.
Singleton heart with at least 3 controls and at least 11 HCP	4♦	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.	All bids are natural or in accordance with your partnership agreement.

<sup>5</sup> *Matchpoint Precision, Revised Edition*, C. C. Wei and Ron Andersen, published by Mona Lisa Precision Corporation, © 1975, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> A king = 1 control and an ace = 2 controls.

Once the responder has described her hand in accordance with the table on the previous page, if desired, the opener can inquire further about the total number of controls held by the responder. Note that all the bids shown in columns 2-4 on the preceding table require the partner of the person who made the bid to “alert” the opponents and explain what the bid means if asked.

The table below shows the opener's bids asking about controls and responder's possible answers.

<b>Asking Bids after Responder Describes 4-4-4-1 Distribution and Controls</b>		
<b>Responder's Bids</b>	<b>Opener's Asking Bid (bids are in the responder's singleton)</b>	<b>Possible Responses</b>
3♣/3♥ shows singleton ♣	4♣	4♦ = 0-2 controls 4♥ = 3 controls
3♣/3♠ shows singleton ♠	4♠	4NT = 0-2 controls 5♣ = 3 controls
3♦/3♠ shows singleton ♦	4♦	4♥ = 0-2 controls 4♠ = 3 controls
3♦/3NT shows singleton ♥	4♥	4♠ = 0-2 controls 4NT = 3 controls
3♥	3♠	Step responses: step1 = 3 controls, step 2 = 4 controls, and so on
3♠	4♣	Step responses: step1 = 3 controls, step 2 = 4 controls, and so on
4♣	4♦	Step responses: step1 = 3 controls, step 2 = 4 controls, and so on
4♦	4♥	Step responses: step1 = 3 controls, step 2 = 4 controls, and so on

Again, note that all of the bids shown above require an “alert” and then, if an opponent requests, an explanation.

Try the Unusual Positive quiz that appears below. Quiz answers are at the end of the article.

**QUIZ #2 [Bidding the Unusual Positive]:** In the following hands, you have responded 1♦ after your partner made a 1♣ opening bid. Assume that your partner then bids 1♥, what bids should you make with the following hands?

1) ♠ Q 4 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ A ♣ 10 7 6 3

2) ♠ A 9 8 4 ♥ Q J 4 2 ♦ J 8 7 4 ♣ 6

**QUIZ #2 [Bidding the Unusual Positive]:** In the following hands, you have responded 1♦ after your partner made a 1♣ opening bid. Assume that your partner then bids 1♥, what bids should you make with the following hands?

- 3) ♠ Q J 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ 9 ♣ 10 7 6 3  
4) ♠ Q 6 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ A K J 10 ♣ 10 7 6 5  
5) ♠ 5 ♥ K 8 7 4 ♦ A 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 7 3

Here are the suggested answers to the quizzes that appeared in this article.

**Answers to Quiz #1 [bidding the Impossible Negative]:**

- 1) ♠ Q 4 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ A ♣ 10 7 6 3

With your 10HCP and 4-4-1-4 distribution, you should jump in diamonds (bid 3♦) to show partner that you have an *impossible negative* hand.

- 2) ♠ A 9 8 4 ♥ Q J 4 2 ♦ J 8 7 4 ♣ 6

This time, with your singleton in clubs and 8HCP, jump in clubs (3♣) to show partner your *impossible negative* hand.

- 3) ♠ Q J 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ 9 ♣ 10 7 6 3

In this hand, you do not have the requisite 8HCP to make the *impossible negative* bid. So, you can show your partner support for her hearts and 4-7HCP by raising her hearts to the two level. [Note that some more aggressive players would respond 3♥ or 4♥ instead of 2♥ with this hand. This is something that you and your partner should discuss. Do you plan to use asking bids or que bids if responder raises opener's 1♥ to 2♥ in order to explore the possibility of a game or slam? Would you consider a raise to 4♥ a shutout bid? You should discuss these ideas and make decisions about how you would like to play this type of hand.]

- 4) ♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ A K J 10 ♣ 10 7 6 5

With 10 HCP and your 4-1-4-4 distribution, you need to jump in NT (2NT) to show partner that you have an *impossible negative* hand with the singleton in her heart suit.

- 5) ♠ 5 ♥ K 8 7 4 ♦ J 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 7 3

Your 1-4-4-4 distribution and 8HCP qualify for an *impossible negative* bid. In this case, you would jump in spades (2♠) to tell partner about your hand.

Answers to the Unusual Positive quiz are on the next page.

**Answers to Quiz #2 [bidding the Unusual Positive]:**

1) ♠ Q 4 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ A ♣ 10 7 6 3

With this hand, you would jump to 3♦ to show that you have the *unusual positive* bid with a singleton in one of the red suits, less than 11HCP, and 0-3 controls. Partner would now bid 3♥ to ask where you have your singleton. You would bid 3♠ to show the singleton diamond.

If partner wants to explore slam possibilities, she can inquire about your controls. To do this, she would bid four of the suit where you have your singleton (4♦) asking you to tell her how many controls you have in your hand. You have one king and one ace, equal to three controls. This requires you to go up two steps (4♠) in your response. However, if she does not want to explore slam possibilities and is content to settle for less, she can bid the game of her choice – either 3NT or 4♥ are the most likely bids she would make.

2) ♠ A 9 8 4 ♥ Q J 4 2 ♦ J 8 7 4 ♣ 6

This hand qualifies for the *unusual positive* bid. In order to show that the hand has a singleton in the black suits, less than 11HCP, and 0-3 controls, you would bid 3♣.

Now, if partner wants to know the suit where your singleton is located, she would bid 3♦ to ask you. [Remember, she has at least five hearts and may be satisfied to jump to game in hearts now that you have explained your distribution, point count, and number of controls.]

In responding to the 3♦ bid, you bid 3♥ to show a singleton club. If partner has slam aspirations after you bid 3♥ to tell her about your singleton club and the other information, she would bid 4♣ to ask you about your controls. With 0-2 controls, you bid 4♦. Partner now knows a great deal about your hand and can make a decision about the ultimate contract.

3) ♠ Q J 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ 9 ♣ 10 7 6 3

In this hand, you do not have the requisite 8HCP to make the *unusual positive* bid. So, you can show your partner support for her hearts and 4-7HCP by raising her hearts to the two level. [Note that some more aggressive players would respond 3♥ or 4♥ instead of 2♥ with this hand. This is something that you and your partner should discuss. Do you plan to use asking bids if responder raises opener's 1♥ to 2♥ in order to explore the possibility of a game or slam? Would you consider a raise to 4♥ a shutout bid? You should discuss these ideas and make decisions about how you would like to play this type of hand.]

4) ♠ Q 6 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ A K J 10 ♣ 10 7 6 5

With this hand you jump to 3♦ to once again show partner a singleton in the red suits, less than 11 HCP, and 0-3 controls. However, unlike hand one, above, you are going to disappoint

partner when you tell her that the singleton is in her heart suit. If she asks you which red suit has the singleton by bidding 3♥, you need to bid 3NT to show the singleton heart.

Now, if partner desires to go any further, she could ask about the controls you have in your hand by bidding 4♥. You must bid 4NT to show that you have the maximum of 3 controls for your original *unusual positive* bid. Partner will decide where to go from there.

5) ♠ 5 ♥ K 8 7 4 ♦ A 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 7 3

This is the first hand in this quiz where you have more than three controls (you have two aces and a king for a total of five controls). With the singleton space and more than three controls, you need to bid 3♥ to show your distribution, point count, and number of controls. If partner wants to know more about your control total, she can bid 4♠ to ask you to further describe your hand. Based upon your number of controls, you need to bid 5♦ to show five controls (3 steps above your partner's asking bid).

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