

THE

CONTESTED AUCTION

ROY HUGHES

**FROM THE AUTHOR
OF BUILDING A
BIDDING SYSTEM**

**FOREWORD BY
ERIC KOKISH**

THE
CONTESTED
AUCTION
ROY HUGHES

FOREWORD BY
ERIC KOKISH

Text © 2012 Roy Hughes

Cover image: Nao Imai/Aflo/Getty Images

All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press

331 Douglas Ave.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

M5M 1H2 (416)781-0351

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com

www.teachbridge.com

www.bridgeblogging.com

www.ebooksbridge.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Hughes, Roy, 1954-

The contested auction [electronic resource] / Roy Hughes.

Electronic monograph.

Issued also in print format.

ISBN 978-1-55494-185-8 (PDF).-ISBN 978-1-55494-440-8 (HTML).-

ISBN 978-1-55494-990-8 (MOBI)

1. Contract bridge--Bidding. I. Title.

GV1282.4.H845 2012

795.41'52

C2012-902867-3

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) for our publishing activities.

Editor

Ray Lee

Copy editor/interior format

Sally Sparrow

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Eric Kokish for providing inspiration, encouragement and insight in the many times they were needed. I benefited greatly from discussions with Anders Wirgren, Mats Nilslund and Ray and Linda Lee. For stimulating conversations on competitive bidding spanning forty-odd years, I offer a special note of appreciation to Irving Litvack. *The Bridge World* was of assistance so many times that I cannot list them all, and for numerous deals from high-level play I am greatly indebted to Bridge Base Online.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	7
1. THE NATURE OF CONTESTED AUCTIONS	9
The New Landscape • Competitive Methods • Doubles • Conventional Competitive Calls	
2. TOWARDS A COMPLETE METHOD	21
Be Guided by Principles • Document • Define Completely, Exactly and Early • Reduce Clutter • Avoid Contradictions • Consolidate • A Taxonomy of Calls • Rule #1 • Offensive and Defensive Strength	
3. INTERVENING AGAINST OPENING SUIT BIDS	45
Requirements • Choice of Intervention • 1NT Overcall • The Defensive Arsenal • Upper Limit to a Simple Overcall • The Effect of Length in the Opposing Suit • When Nothing Fits • Overcall on a Four-card Suit	
4. PROBLEMS OF THE ADVANCER	63
Advancing vs. Responding • Existence of Fit • Direct Raises • Conventional Raises • Fit-showing Jumps • Notrump • New Suit Advances • Responding to Notrump Overcalls • Responding to Takeout Doubles • Jump Responses • Double Jump Response • Cuebid Response • After Redouble by Responder • After Other Actions by Responder	
5. COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS OF THE RESPONDER	87
Major-suit Raises • Minor-suit Raises • Suit Takeouts • Notrump Responses • The Negative Double • What Hands to Compete On • After a Takeout Double • After a 1NT Overcall • Michaels and Unusual Notrump • Switches and Transfers	
6. COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS OF THE OPENER	107
Reopening by Opener • Responding to a Reopening Double • When Opener is Balanced • When Both Opponents Bid • After a Reopening by Fourth Hand • Replying to a Negative Double • With Strong Hands • After Action by Advancer • Default Rebids	

7. LOW-LEVEL DOUBLES — THE CLASSIC APPROACH	127
When is Double for Takeout? • Responsive Doubles • After an Overcall • Snapdragon Doubles • Double by Opener after One-over-one • Double by Responder after One-over-one • When the Opponents Bid and Raise • Repeat Takeout Double • Limited Trumps	
8. LOW-LEVEL DOUBLES — THE MODERN ALTERNATIVE	153
Forcing Sequences • One Hand Well-defined • Doubling at Second Opportunity • Doubles of Our Potential Suits • Doubles of Artificial Bids • Degrees of Takeout and Penalty • In Summary	
9. REDOUBLES	169
Penalty Redoubles • Strength-showing Redoubles • Conventional Redoubles • Redoubles of Artificial Bids • S.O.S. Redoubles • Redouble as an Artificial Step • Penalty Passes of Redoubles	
10. FORCING COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS	181
Establishing a Force • Agreeing Trumps • Kinds of Forces • High-level Forces • Our Side Shows Strength • The Opponents Show Weakness • Pass-and-pull • Intervention Below Game in our Trump Suit • Pass/Double Inversion	
11. NON-FORCING COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS	205
Unclear Ownership • Transferable Values • Pressure	
12. MORE ON INTERVENING	215
Rebids by Overcaller • Rebids by Takeout Doubler • Entering Against Two Opponents • Reopening in Fourth Seat • Reopening Later in the Auction • Prebalancing • Passed-hand Intervention • Delayed Intervention and Trap Passes	
13. OPENING PREEMPTS	239
Requirements • Responding to Preempts • Intervening over Preempts • Advancing a Two-level Takeout Double • Overcalls of Weak Twos • 2NT Overcalls • Advancing Three-level Doubles • Gambling Passes • Advancer's Cuebid • 3NT Overcalls • Higher Levels	
14. THE EFFECT OF ARTIFICIAL BIDDING	259
Spread of Artificial Bids • Thirty Questions • Surrogates • Two Suits at Once • Unusual over Unusual • Adapting to Reduced Space • Germ Warfare • The Multi 2♦	

15. DEFENDING AGAINST NEBULOUS MINORS	289
Modern Minor-suit Openings • Some History • How to Defend • One-suited, long in the suit opened • Two-suiters (5-5+) • Balanced hands • Three-suited hands • Major-suit Overcalls • Minor-suit Overcalls	
16. CONTENTION AFTER NOTRUMP OPENINGS	301
Risks and Rewards of Competing • Conventional Intervention • D.O.N.T. • Astro and Aspro • Comparison with Weak Opening Two-bids • Reopening against 1NT • Countermeasures by the Opening Side • Independent Action by Opener • Reopening by Responder	
17. SCRAMBLING	318
High-Level Fit-Finding • Scrambling and Inviting • Escape Maneuvers	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	336

FOREWORD

Many years ago, in a time of greater innocence, I contemplated writing a book on bidding in competition with the working title 'The Offense Strikes Back'. Perhaps I am dating myself with such a blatant homage to the Star Wars saga. The scrupulously detailed proposed Table of Contents ran to a half dozen pages, and it soon became clear to me that a co-author would be needed to get the project off the ground. Hopefully, I lobbied my theory-minded brethren in the scribblers' art only to receive a steady stream of polite rejections, all of them encouraging me to do the book, but indicating that the project would be too time-consuming for them. Life being what it is, my file folder of notes and research grew like rice, but never threatened to segue into a book, eventually finding a home in my office filing cabinet. And there it rested.

When Roy Hughes retired and decided to pursue his writing muse, we discussed many ideas and even contemplated a joint venture or two. When the subject of a book on contested auctions arose, I remembered my file and brought it out of mothballs, a blast from the past that led to some whimsy and knowing smiles. Where my original orphaned project was meant to cover competitive auctions after our side opened the bidding, Roy was suddenly speaking of covering all contested auctions in considerable detail. I raised an eyebrow, offered to help as much as I could, and left Roy to carry the ball.

The product of his efforts is this essential master work, which neither proselytizes nor dismisses, but presents cogent options while covering in depth an increasingly complex and essential area of bidding. Here you will find extensive 'market research' on popular and occasionally arcane treatments designed to solve problems that might not have been at issue when some of the best books on competitive bidding were written. The game has changed, and Roy discusses different philosophies and strategies to cope with the modern vernacular, stressing the importance of clarity of principles, comfort with agreed methods, and a commitment to understanding any treatment and its consequences before adopting it.

If you stick with this book and buy a copy for your partner you will be pleased that you did.

Eric Kokish

THE NATURE OF CONTESTED AUCTIONS

In the gentler times of some years ago, one might have encountered the following problem discussed in a bridge magazine:

Teams, Dealer West, North-South vul.
As South, you hold:

♠ K ♥ A J 9 4 ♦ A Q 9 4 2 ♣ Q 10 5

The bidding proceeds pass, pass, pass to you. What is your bidding plan?

The majority of the expert panel would have voted for 1♦, with a divergence of opinion expressed should partner make the somewhat inconvenient response of 1♠. The naturalists could without embarrassment have rebid 2♥, a reverse promising extra values but not forcing. The new scientists would have considered the hand not good enough for a reverse; they would have chosen between the unpleasant alternatives of 2♦ (understating the hand while overstating the suit), 1NT (underbid and misbid) and 2♣ (lying about suit length and risking a ridiculous contract). A few old-timers might have avoided the rebid problem by opening the bidding with 1♥.

THE NEW LANDSCAPE

As I write this in 2011, I suspect that most experts playing standard methods would not consider this much of a problem. They would do what they seem to do whenever it is remotely possible: that is, open 1NT. Besides, the problem is largely irrelevant. Who gets to open this hand in fourth chair, red against white? The problems of today run more along the lines of:

As South, vulnerable against not, you hold:

♠ K ♥ A J 9 4 ♦ A Q 9 4 2 ♣ Q 10 5

Dealer, West, opens 1NT (10-12). East bids 2♥, a transfer to spades. Your call?

or

Dealer, West, opens 1♣ (11-13 balanced or clubs or any hand with 17+ HCP). East responds 1♥, showing four or more spades. Your call?

or

Dealer, West opens 2♦ (weak two in an unspecified major or 20-21 balanced). East responds 2♥, 'pass-or-correct' (i.e., asking partner to pass if he has hearts and bid 2♠ if he has spades). Your call?

or

Dealer, West, opens 2♦ (6-10, red suits or black suits, at least 5-4). East responds 2♥, pass-or-correct. Your call?

Welcome to today's new game! No longer do opponents have the decency to simply open their longest suit when holding good cards and pass otherwise. No, they are in there with preempts on wretched suits, artificial two-bids, one-bids on balanced 11-counts, responses on nothing, and when they happen to hold good cards, they are bidding two-card diamond suits, strong/weak clubs or opening 1NT on a singleton. Some of these methods, such as transfer responses to 1♣, are played largely for their theoretical advantages. By responding 1♦ with hearts, and 1♥ with spades, one step of bidding space is saved, a step that may be crucial to subsequent detailed investigation. Other methods, like the 'red suits or black suits' 2♦, are played primarily to create problems for the other side. But whether the intent is better constructive bidding through new techniques, or more effective obstructive bidding through new devices, the effect is largely the same: new, unfamiliar situations are created for the opponents. To survive in this new game, partnerships must be prepared. These unfamiliar situations must become familiar ones. It is dangerous, and ultimately losing bridge, to assume that without discussion partners will see these situations the same way. Taking the example of the transfer response of 1♥ showing spades:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	pass	1♥*	?

What should a double by South here mean? Should it show hearts, say the equivalent of a 1♥ overcall? Or should it be a takeout of the suits shown by East-West? Or, if 1♣ could be short, should double be a three-suit takeout of spades? I see no obvious answer; North-South need to have an agreement. Similarly, if South bids 1♠, what should that be? I can see a case for its being:

MASTER POINT PRESS ON THE INTERNET

www.masterpointpress.com

Our main site, with information about our books and software, reviews and more.

www.teachbridge.com

Our site for bridge teachers and students – free downloadable support material for our books, helpful articles and more.

www.bridgeblogging.com

Read and comment on regular articles from MPP authors and other bridge notables.

www.ebooksbridge.com

Purchase downloadable electronic versions of MPP books.

“THIS ESSENTIAL MASTER WORK PRESENTS
COGENT OPTIONS WHILE COVERING IN DEPTH
AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND ESSENTIAL
AREA OF BIDDING.”

ERIC KOKISH

Roy Hughes' first book, *Building a Bidding System*, has become a must-read for expert pairs looking to develop effective constructive bidding methods. Now Hughes turns his attention to the theory and practice of competitive auctions, a critical component of the modern game.

Beginning again by establishing what the bidding system needs to accomplish, Hughes goes on to discuss every type of contested auction, recommending useful methods and agreements from which the reader can select. This is a state-of-the-art discussion, covering in detail many topics that until now have at best seen cursory treatment in print.



ROY HUGHES (Toronto, Canada) is the author of several successful books, including the 2007 IBPA Book of the Year award winner, *Canada's Bridge Warriors*. His background in mathematics and linguistics led to his work on the theory and structure of effective bidding systems. Roy is also an accomplished musician, a talent he shares with his wife, Erika.



MASTER POINT PRESS