BLACKOUT by Tim Bourke

In natural systems, difficulties can arise when a one over one response is followed by reverse bid by opener. The modern trend is to treat this sequence as forcing for one round and this makes it difficult for responder to show extra strength without going beyond the level of 3NT.

Using the Blackout principle, the only non - forcing bid available to the responder is a simple rebid of his suit. A conventional meaning is attached to the cheaper of 2NT and the fourth suit. These calls are used to "Blackout" all minimum hands unsuitable for the non-forcing rebid. This arrangement allows the use of all other rebids as constructive and forcing.

The most common auctions for the convention are:-

1.	OPENER	RESPONDER 2.	OPENER	RESPONDER
	1 C	1 H	1 C	1 S
	2 D	?	2 D	
	Here:-		Horo.	

- 2H is natural showing a 6 card suit or 5 cards to two top honours and is non forcing
- · 2S is the "Blackbut" or weakness denying the ability to bid 2H
- · 2NT shows 9-12 points with spades stopped
- · 3S is the fourth suit forcing convention, asking for a spade stopper
- · Other bids are constructive and forcing

3.	OPENER	RESPONDER	4.
	1 C	1 S	
	2 H	?	
	Here:-		

- . 2S is natural and weak
- · 2NT is the "Blackout" bid
- · 3D is the fourth suit forcing convention
- · 3NT shows 9 to 12 points with spades stopped. Stronger hands are shown via "Blackout" then 3NT or 4NT, as appropriate.
- · Other bids are constructive and forcing

Consider this West hand:-

A 8 5 - void - A 9 7 6 - A K 10 8 7 3

The auction thus far is:-

WEST	EAST
1 C	1 H
2 D ¹	?

- · 2H is the "Blackout" or weakness bid which denies the ability to bid 2S
- · 2S is natural, nonforcing showing long spades.
- · 2NT shows 9-12 points with hearts stopped
- · 3H is the fourth suit forcing convention asking for a heart stopper
- · Other bids are constructive and forcing

OPENER	RESPONDER
1 D	1 S
2 H	?

Here:-

- · 2S is natural and weak
- · 2NT is the "Blackout" bid
- · 3C is the fourth suit forcing convention
- · 3NT shows 9 to 12 points with spades stopped. Stronger hands are shown via "Blackout".
- · Other bids are constructive and forcing.

1 The 2D call is allowable for although West does not have the values for game without a fit, he has the Blackout mechanism as a protection.

If East holds:-

J732-Q1094-K52-65

he will make the Blackout bid of 2S and pass opener's 3C bid.

J72-A87652-Q93-4

he will bid 2H and pass opener's rebid of 3C.

96.4 - Q 10873 - K873 - 5

he will make the blackout call of 2S and bid 3D over 3C to show his hand.

97 - K 10763 - K J - Q J 96

he will bid 3C which is constructive and forcing and the full auction will be 1C - 1H, 2D - 3C, 3D - 4D, 4S - 5C, 6C - no. The 3D call is a cue bid and 4D shows extravalues without the HA or SA and promises the DK.

KQ4-KJ932-KQ54-7

he will bid 3D and the auction should proceed to a sound 6D contract via 1C - 1H, 2D - 3D, 3H - 4H, 4S - 5S, 6D - no. Responder might, however, take a fling at 7D but he should not for opener had the option of bidding either 5NT or 6C.

Here are some further example auctions:-

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
AX	X X X X	4) A X	WXXXX
VKQXX	V x x	VKQXX	VJX
VKX	VAXXX	V K X	VQXX
GAQJXX	co K x x	OPAQJXX	OF XXX
1 %	1 63	1 %	1 6
• 2 9	3 41	2 9	2 NT ¹
3 42	4 02	3 NT ²	Pass
4 02	4 NT		
5 v ³	6 45		
Pass			

- 1. constructive rebid
- 2. cue-bids
- 3. 2 aces

- 1. Blackout
- 2. IMPs, EW vulnerable

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
A X	QKXXXX	4 A X X	QKXXXX
VAKXX	VJX	VAKXX	VJX
VAX	VQXXX	V X	VQXXX
A K X X X	学X	SPAKQXX	SPXX
1 4	1 60	1 %	1 (3)
2 🖤	2 %	2 %	2 NT ¹
3 452	Pass	3 4,2	4 4

- 1. Natural, weak
- 2. limited rebid

- 1. Black out
- 2. constructive raise

Example auctions cont'd.

WEST	EAST	WEST	EAST
WKK	AQXXX	GAXX	QKQXXX
VAKXX	VQX	VAQXX	VXX
VAX	VKXXX	VAQJexx	V X X
BAKXXX	db Q X	425 X	S X X
1 学	1 4	1 🗸	1 8
2 4	2 NT ¹	2 4	2 431
3 NT	6 NT	4 %	Pass
1. Blackout		1. natural, weak	

Other auctions where the convention might be put to use are:-

1.) OPENER	RESPONDER	2.) OPENER	RESPONDER
1 4	1 0	1 4	1 .
2 V/2 W	?	2 3	

Generally, these auctionswill need to be considered separately. In fact it is probably best to use a simple rebid of his suit at the level of 3 by responder as constructive and to use Blackout on all weak hands.