

Bailey Two-Bids at IMPs
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Since L. Andrew Campbell's article on Bailey two-bids (5-6 cards in the suit, 2-3 in unbid majors, 8-11 HCP) appeared in the September 1998 Bridge World, I have been trying to get my reactionary teammates to consider them. The negative reactions were predictable enough. "You can't impose the repeated threat of -500 on part-score deals" and "That garbage only works against rabbits."

Andrew's exposition may have left the impression that Baileys are suitable only for match points because they achieve small gains relatively often. Perhaps he didn't want to reveal the bittersweet secret; if the suit requirements are slightly beefed up (I require two honors), Baileys are profitable at IMPs as well. There are three primary types of deal on which double-digit gains arise. Here are examples on which mighty opponents were felled by the slingshot.

(1) The lead director

	NORTH	
	♠AQ9	
	♥1098	
	♦1096	
	♣KQ92	
WEST		EAST
♠J542		♠873
♥K2		♥AQ753
♦832		♦K5
♣J876		♣543
	SOUTH	
	♠K106	
	♥J64	
	♦AQJ74	
	♣A10	

N-S vulnerable, IMPs

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
2♥*	Dbl.	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

After the Bailey 2H opening, an expert N-S bid carefully, and guessed well to achieve a plus. Their reward for negotiating the minefield was an 11 imp loss, as the simple 1NT-3NT auction across the street produced a trivial 660.

(2) The theft

NORTH

♠ Q9864

♥ 543

♦ Q106

♣ 86

WEST

♠ 105

♥ AKQ96

♦ J54

♣ 532

EAST

♠ J3

♥ 1082

♦ 932

♣ KQ1074

SOUTH

♠ AK72

♥ J7

♦ AK87

♣ AJ9

NS vulnerable, IMPs

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥*	Pass	2♠*	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This time I can't resist naming the trapped South. Mark Itabashi was properly informed that the 2♠ bid was to play, although East did not have to hold spades to choose that contract. As a Southern Californian, Mark was familiar with this toy, but could not find a better call than the cheapest game. West managed not to lead fourth best. Sure, Mark might have survived if he had started with a double this time; but even if he were sure that East was kidding, the unilateral shot might be best. At the other table, a super-accepted transfer brought in a surprising game swing.

Current ACBL posture seems to frown on East's action. I can see no justification for banning a bid that places the contract, even if the placer knows that the trump suit is not his side's best fit. The ambiguity is an inherent advantage of a descriptive, limited call. The fact that a bid causes problems does not automatically imply that opponents are entitled to protection from it.

(3) The safe harbor

NORTH

♠AQ8
♥952
♦Q10974
♣QJ

WEST

♠1072
♥QJ87
♦K
♣K10843

EAST

♠J96
♥4
♦A853
♣A9765

SOUTH

♠K543
♥AK1063
♦J62
♣2

Both vulnerable, IMPs

I can't bear to show the auction that arose after South's third seat opener. Perhaps you and your partner would have had a delicate Drury sequence, diagnosed the poor fit, and stopped low. The experts who held these cards, though, made the usual optimistic choices. This time the lie of the cards and a hostile West punished the game bid to the tune of -500.

At the other table, North opened 2♦. West might have balanced his side to the making 3♣, but didn't. So it was the safe opening pass that led to disaster, while the frisky preempt yielded a quiet +90 on sharp defense.

When hands that suit the opponents' methods are dealt, even the strongest opponents will concede large numbers of imps. The swings here were not caused by unfamiliarity or lack of preparation. They are attributable simply to the descriptive accuracy of the opening. They occurred when the Bailey opener had a flat, ordinary-looking hand, for that is what a Bailey shows.

Just as they do in match-point events, Bailey two-bids often generate atypical results. The bids are less risky at IMPs because people avoid close doubles and because -200 on a part-score hand is not so terrible.