VISUALIZATION by Maritha Pottenger

The world's best bidders are constantly **building up an image of their partner's hand**—and how well it meshes (or does not!) with their own. This gives them a better chance of finding "magic fits" where they can bid game or slam with fewer than the normal number of high card points. It also keeps them sensible and signing off when a misfit is recognized.

Bidding out your complete "pattern" of distribution will often prove helpful to partner.
Responder may use artificial bids—such as New Minor Forcing or Fourth Suit Forcing—in order to gain extra information. Consider some examples.

With opponents passing, 1D/1S/2C/2H (Fourth Suit Forcing)--could be artificial. If Opener now bids 2S, s/he is expected to be 3-1-4-5 ("prepared rebid" hand) OR 3-1-5-4 OR 3-0-5-5. **The key issue for Responder, if s/he has 5 spades, is that Opener is now KNOWN to have a singleton or void in the heart suit**. So, if Responder has NO wasted values in hearts (such as xxx), the 40 point deck just became a 30 point deck for them, and slam is quite possible.

The opening bid is 1C and Responder bids 1S (opponents passing throughout). Opener rebids 2C (usually a 6-card suit) and Responder bids 2D (New Minor Forcing or the equivalent). If Opener now bids 2S (showing 3-card support), s/he is also DENYING a 4-card heart suit (1st priority in response to NMF). Therefore Opener's distribution is (most likely) either 3-2-2-6 OR 3-1-3-6 OR 3-3-1-6. If Responder was doing a "fake" NMF—just to get more information—and has a hand that is something like AKxxxx Ax Ax xxx, s/he can "see" that a spade slam is quite likely—perhaps even a Grand Slam even though they cannot have more than 30 HCP combined and could have only 27 HCP. [Maximum number of HCP that Opener can have is 15 because s/he did NOT jump in her suit on the rebid.]

Another example: 1S on your left. Pass by partner. 1NT FORCING on your right. Pass by you. 2H by LHO. Pass by partner. 2S by RHO. You are looking at a singleton spade; 2 baby hearts; AQxxx in diamond and KJxxx in clubs. *It looks like a LOVELY hand for bidding 2NT, asking partner to pick a minor*. **STOP AND THINK!** What does **partner** have? RHO does NOT have 3 spades or s/he would have raised spades directly. That means RHO took the "false preference" (after the forcing NT) with 2-card spade support. Therefore, your partner has **5 spades**! If RHO had held 4 hearts, s/he would have passed 2H, rather than taking the false preference. Therefore, RHO has 3 or fewer hearts. Thus, **your partner has at least 4 hearts**! **Your partner has NO MORE than 4 cards in the minors** (2-2 or 3-1 or 1-3) and could have even fewer. This is a **misfit** hand. Do NOT bid anything!!! Since partner is marked with 5 of their trump, and you are sitting behind Dummy—where most of the minor cards are likely to be, they are extremely likely to go down! Do NOT turn a probable plus into a minus score.

Another aspect of visualization is to think about what partner has shown you, e.g., in response to Roman Key Card Blackwood. and compare it to what HCP you can expect from partner's hand, based on the bidding. For example, if partner answers 5H (two Key Cards without the Queen) when you query with RKCB, and you have the other three Key Cards, plus the Queen, you can tell that partner is showing only 7 HCP (Ace and King) or 8 HCP (two Aces). If partner opened the bidding and rebid NT, she has at least 5-7 or 4-6 more HCP in her hand. You can decide whether to ask for Kings. In some cases, you can even judge the likelihood of partner holding a couple of Queens. All this further aids your visualization of partner's hand, and how well it will combine with your hand.