

# Chapter 13: Auctions and competitive bidding

# Outline

- Independent private values  
Second-price sealed-bid auctions, First-price sealed-bid auctions
- Common values  
The value of a player is correlated to that of another in a second-price auction.  
A answer key for Exercise 13.8

## 13.1.1 Second-price sealed-bid auctions

**Basic setting** The set of bidders:  $N = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ .  
Player  $i$ 's type,  $\theta_i$ , is drawn from the interval  $\theta_i \in [\underline{\theta}_i, \bar{\theta}_i]$ ,  
cdf  $F_i(\cdot)$ , where  $F_i(\theta') = \Pr\{\theta_i \leq \theta'\}$  and  $\underline{\theta}_i \geq 0$ .  
The draws of  $\theta_i$  are independent and not correlated.  
Player  $i$ 's payoff:  $v_i = \begin{cases} \theta_i - p & \text{getting the good,} \\ 0 & \text{not,} \end{cases}$   
where  $p$  is the price.

Every player knows the distribution functions  $F_j(\cdot)$   
( $j \neq i$ ), which are used to form beliefs about the types  $\theta_{-i}$   
of the other players.

# Independent Private Values

**Second-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ . The highest bidder wins, and he pays a price equal to *the second highest bid*.

$$v_i(b_i; b_{-i}; \theta_i) = \begin{cases} \theta_i - b_j^* & \text{if } b_i > b_j \text{ for all } j \neq i \\ & \text{and } b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j, \\ \frac{\theta_i - b_i}{\#\text{highest bidders}} & \text{if } b_i \geq b_j \text{ for all } j \neq i \text{ and} \\ & b_i = b_j \text{ for some } j \neq i, \\ 0 & \text{if } b_i < b_j \text{ for some } j \neq i. \end{cases}$$

(Player  $i$ 's strategy)  $s_i : [\underline{\theta}_i, \bar{\theta}_i] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$ .

# Independent Private Values

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Player  $i$ 's expected payoff

$$\begin{aligned} & E_{\theta_{-i}}[v_i(b_i; s_{-i}(\theta_{-i}); \theta_i) | \theta_i] \\ &= \Pr\{i \text{ wins and pays } p\} \times (\theta_i - p) + \Pr\{i \text{ loses}\} \times 0. \end{aligned}$$

$b_i$  does not influence  $p$  but does the winning prob..

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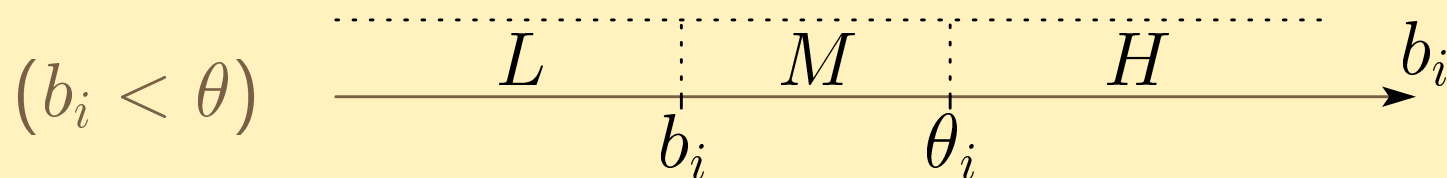
**Proposition 13.1** Each player has a weakly dominant strategy, which is to bid his true valuation. That is,  $s_i(\theta_i) = \theta_i$  for all  $i \in N$  is a Bayesian Nash equilibrium.

# Independent Private Values

**Second-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ .

$$v_i(b_i; b_{-i}; \theta_i) = \begin{cases} \theta_i - b_j^* & \text{if } b_i > b_j \text{ for all } j \neq i \\ & \text{and } b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j, \\ 0 & \text{if } b_i \leq b_j \text{ for some } j \neq i. \end{cases}$$

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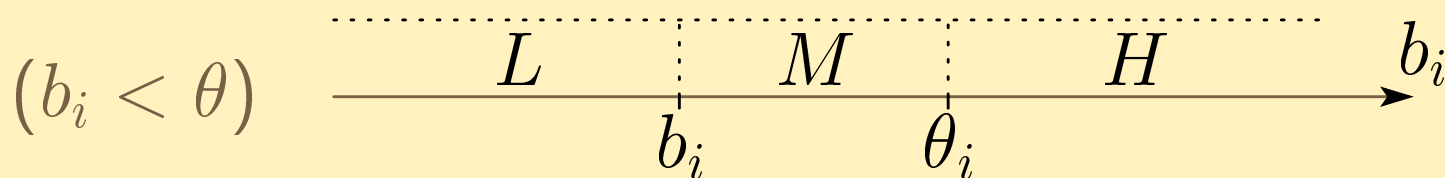
- $b_i$  is the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  on  $L$ :  
He wins and pays  $b_j^*$ . Bidding  $\theta_i$  leads to the same result.

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**Proposition 13.1**  $s_i(\theta_i) = \theta_i$  for all  $i \in N$ .



- $b_i$  is the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  on  $L$ :
- $b_i$  is not the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $M$ :  
He loses. But, bidding  $\theta_i$  leads to the win, increasing his expected payoff.

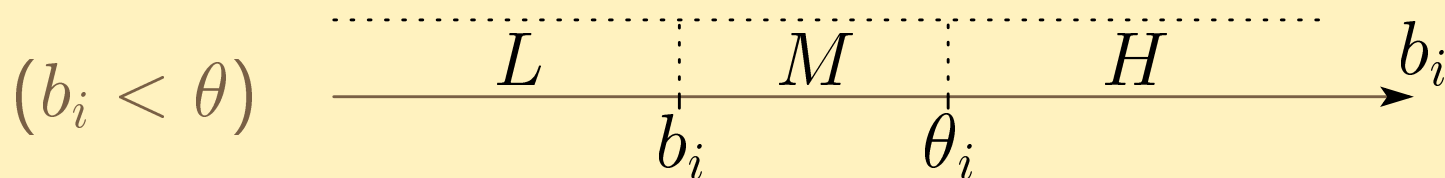


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- $b_i$  is not the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $M$ :
- $b_i$  is not the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $H$ :

He loses. Bidding  $\theta_i$  leads to the same result.

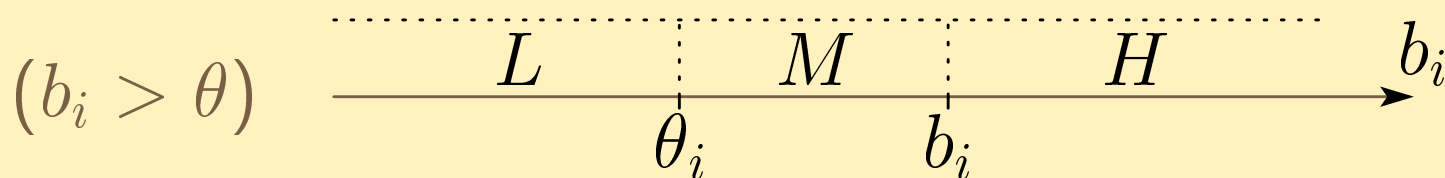
Bidding  $\theta_i$  weakly dominates any lower bid.

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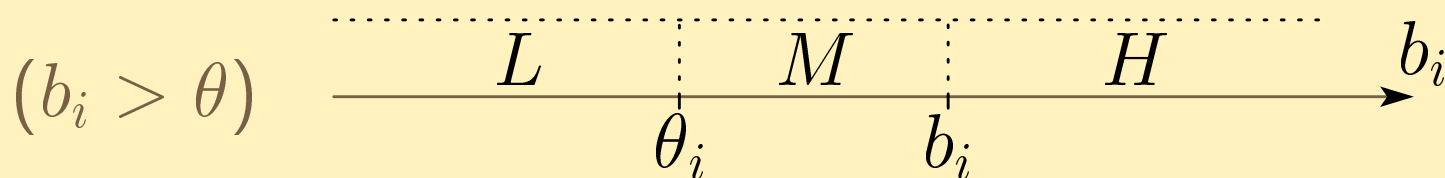
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He wins and pays  $b_j^*$ . Bidding  $\theta_i$  leads to the same result.
- $b_i$  is the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $M$ :
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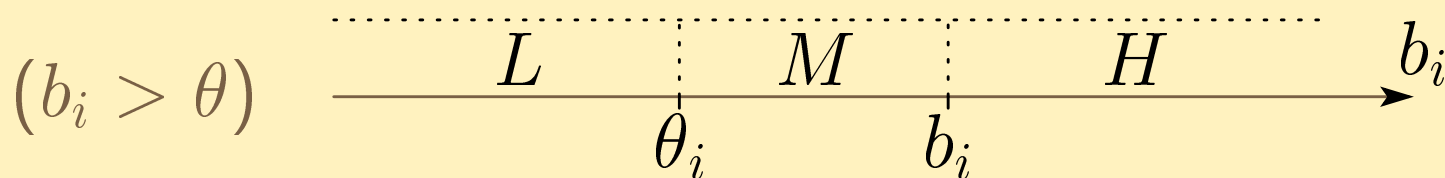
- $b_i$  is the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  on  $L$ :
- $b_i$  is the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $M$ :  
He wins and pays  $b_j^* (> \theta_i)$ . But, bidding  $\theta_i$  leads to the loss, diminishing his expected payoff loss.
- $b_i$  is not the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $H$ :

# Independent Private Values

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- $b_i$  is not the highest, and  $b_j^* \equiv \max_{j \neq i} b_j$  is on  $H$ :

He loses. Bidding  $\theta_i$  leads to the same result.

Bidding  $\theta_i$  weakly dominates any lower bid.

## 13.1.3 First-price sealed-bid auctions

**First-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ . The highest bidder wins, and he pays a price equal to *his bid*.

**Claim 13.1** Bidding his valuation is a dominated strategy.

# Independent Private Values

**First-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ .

**Assumption 13.1** The higher a player's valuation, the higher is his bid. That is, if  $\theta'_j > \theta''_j$ , then  $s_j(\theta'_j) > s_j(\theta''_j)$ .

# Independent Private Values

**First-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ .

**Assumption 13.1** If  $\theta'_j > \theta''_j$ , then  $s_j(\theta'_j) > s_j(\theta''_j)$ .

The prob. that  $i$ 's bid is higher than  $j$ 's bid is

$$\Pr\{s_j(\theta_j) < b_i\} = \Pr\{\theta_j < s_j^{-1}(b_i)\} = F_j(s_j^{-1}(b_i)).$$

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By the IPV setting,  $i$ 's expected payoff is

$$E_{\theta_{-i}}[v_i(b_i; s_{-i}(\theta_{-i}); \theta_i) | \theta_i] = \underbrace{\prod_{j \neq i} [F_j(s_j^{-1}(b_i))]}_{\text{Prob. of the win}} \times (\theta_i - b_i).$$



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Player  $i$ 's type,  $\theta_i$ , is drawn from the same interval  $\theta_i \in [\underline{\theta}, \bar{\theta}]$ , the same cdf  $F(\cdot)$ , and  $\underline{\theta} \geq 0$ .

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Consider a symmetric equilibrium. Given that all other players employ  $s(\cdot)$ ,  $i$ 's maximization problem is

$$\max_{b \geq 0} [F(s^{-1}(b))]^{n-1} (\theta_i - b).$$

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The first-order condition of the problem is

$$\begin{aligned} & - [F(s^{-1}(b))]^{n-1} \\ & + (n-1) [F(s^{-1}(b))]^{n-2} f(s^{-1}(b)) \frac{ds^{-1}(b)}{db} (\theta_i - b) = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Note that  $\frac{ds^{-1}(b)}{db} = \frac{1}{s'(s^{-1}(b))}.$

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Consider a symmetric equilibrium.

The first-order condition of the problem becomes

$$- [F(\theta)]^{n-1} + (n-1) [F(\theta)]^{n-2} f(\theta) \frac{1}{s'(\theta)} (\theta - s(\theta)) = 0.$$

We use the fact that  $b = s(\theta)$  and  $s^{-1}(b) = \theta$ .

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$$- [F(\theta)]^{n-1} + (n-1) [F(\theta)]^{n-2} f(\theta) \frac{1}{s'(\theta)} (\theta - s(\theta)) = 0.$$

This can be rewritten as

$$\begin{aligned} & [F(\theta)]^{n-1} s'(\theta) + (n-1) [F(\theta)]^{n-2} f(\theta) s(\theta) \\ = & (n-1) [F(\theta)]^{n-2} f(\theta) \theta. \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

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By defining  $g(\theta) \equiv [F(\theta)]^{n-1}$ , we can use the fact that

$$(g(\theta)s(\theta))' = g(\theta)s'(\theta) + g'(\theta)s(\theta), \quad (A)$$

$$(g(\theta)\theta)' = g(\theta) + g'(\theta)\theta. \quad (B)$$

The RHS in (A) is the same with the LHS in (1).

From (B), the RHS in (1) is  $([F(\theta)]^{n-1} \theta)' - [F(\theta)]^{n-1}$ .

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**First-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ .

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(1) becomes

$$([F(\theta)]^{n-1} s(\theta))' = ([F(\theta)]^{n-1} \theta)' - [F(\theta)]^{n-1}$$

# Independent Private Values

**First-price auction** Player  $i$  sets his bid,  $b_i$ .

**Assumption 13.1** If  $\theta'_j > \theta''_j$ , then  $s_j(\theta'_j) > s_j(\theta''_j)$ .

The condition for a symmetric Bayesian Nash equilibrium

$$([F(\theta)]^{n-1} s(\theta))' = ([F(\theta)]^{n-1} \theta)' - [F(\theta)]^{n-1}$$

Using the above equation, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_{\underline{\theta}}^{\theta} ([F(x)]^{n-1} s(x))' dx \\ &= \int_{\underline{\theta}}^{\theta} ([F(\theta)]^{n-1} \theta)' dx - \int_{\underline{\theta}}^{\theta} [F(\theta)]^{n-1} dx. \end{aligned}$$

The LHS is the LHS of (13.6) in Tadelis ( $\because F(\underline{\theta}) = 0$ ).



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Using the above equation, we obtain

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Solving (13.6) with respect to  $s(\theta)$ , we obtain (13.7).

## 13.2 Common Values Case

**Common values case** Consider a second-price auction. There are two bidders. A product's value,  $v$ , is common among them although each bidder receives only the signal of the value,  $\theta_i = \{L, H\}$ , where  $L$  and  $H$  respectively represent low- and high-quality.

**Common values case** Consider a second-price auction. There are two bidders. A product's value,  $v$ , is common among them although each bidder receives only the signal of the value,  $\theta_i = \{L, H\}$ .

The realization of  $v$  depends on the following probability distribution:

$$\Pr\{v = 10\} = \Pr\{v = 30\} = 1/4, \quad \Pr\{v = 20\} = 1/2.$$

The relation between the signals and the true value is

1. If  $v = 10$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = L$ .
2. If  $v = 30$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = H$ .
3. If  $v = 20$ ,  $\theta_i = L$  and  $\theta_j = H$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ ).

# Common Values

**Common values case** Consider a second-price auction.

There are two bidders.

The realization of  $v$

$$\Pr\{v = 10\} = \Pr\{v = 30\} = 1/4, \quad \Pr\{v = 20\} = 1/2.$$

The relation between the signals and the true value is

Ex post belief ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ )

		$\theta_2$	
		$L$	$H$
$\theta_1$	$L$	1/4	1/4
	$H$	1/4	1/4

$$\begin{aligned} & \Pr\{\theta_j = L | \theta_i = L\} \\ &= \Pr\{\theta_j = H | \theta_i = L\} = 1/2, \\ & \Pr\{\theta_j = L | \theta_i = H\} \\ &= \Pr\{\theta_j = H | \theta_i = H\} = 1/2. \end{aligned}$$

# Common Values

**Common values case** Consider a second-price auction.

There are two bidders.

The realization of  $v$

$$\Pr\{v = 10\} = \Pr\{v = 30\} = 1/4, \quad \Pr\{v = 20\} = 1/2.$$

The relation between the signals and the true value is

Ex post belief ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ )

		$\theta_2$	
		$L$	$H$
$\theta_1$	$L$	1/4	1/4
	$H$	1/4	1/4

$$\begin{aligned} & \Pr\{\theta_j = L | \theta_i = L\} \\ &= \Pr\{\theta_j = H | \theta_i = L\} = 1/2, \\ & \Pr\{\theta_j = L | \theta_i = H\} \\ &= \Pr\{\theta_j = H | \theta_i = H\} = 1/2. \end{aligned}$$

There is a symmetric Bayesian Nash equilibrium.

# Common Values

**Realization of  $v$**  The relation between  $\theta_i$  and  $v$  is

If  $v = 10$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = L$ ; If  $v = 30$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = H$ ;

If  $v = 20$ ,  $\theta_i = L$  and  $\theta_j = H$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ ).

$s_j(\cdot)$ : Bid  $b_j(k)$  if  $\theta_j = k$  ( $k = L, H$ ) and  $b_j(L) \leq b_j(H)$ .

Bid ( $\theta_i = L$ )	$E[v_i(b_i, s_j; L) L]$
$b_i(L) \in [0, b_j(L))$	0,
$b_i(L) = b_j(L)$	$\frac{1}{2} \frac{(10 - b_j(L))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(L) \in (b_j(L), b_j(H))$	$\frac{1}{2}(10 - b_j(L))$ ,
$b_i(L) = b_j(H)$	$\frac{1}{2}(10 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2} \frac{(20 - b_j(H))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(L) \in (b_j(H), \infty)$	$\frac{1}{2}(10 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2}(20 - b_j(H))$ .

# Common Values

**Realization of  $v$**  The relation between  $\theta_i$  and  $v$  is

If  $v = 10$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = L$ ; If  $v = 30$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = H$ ;

If  $v = 20$ ,  $\theta_i = L$  and  $\theta_j = H$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ ).

$s_j(\cdot)$ : Bid  $b_j(k)$  if  $\theta_j = k$  ( $k = L, H$ ) and  $b_j(L) \leq b_j(H)$ .

Bid ( $\theta_i = L$ )	$E[v_i(b_i, s_j; L) L]$
$b_i(L) \in [0, b_j(L))$	0,
$b_i(L) = b_j(L)$	$\frac{1}{2} \frac{(10 - b_j(L))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(L) \in (b_j(L), b_j(H))$	$\frac{1}{2}(10 - b_j(L))$ ,
$b_i(L) = b_j(H)$	$\frac{1}{2}(10 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2} \frac{(20 - b_j(H))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(L) \in (b_j(H), \infty)$	$\frac{1}{2}(10 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2}(20 - b_j(H))$ .

What is the cond. player  $i$  with  $\theta_i = L$  bids  $b_i(L) = b_j(L)$ ?

# Common Values

**Realization of  $v$**  The relation between  $\theta_i$  and  $v$  is

If  $v = 10$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = L$ ; If  $v = 30$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = H$ ;

If  $v = 20$ ,  $\theta_i = L$  and  $\theta_j = H$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ ).

$s_j(\cdot)$ : Bid  $b_j(k)$  if  $\theta_j = k$  ( $k = L, H$ ) and  $b_j(L) \leq b_j(H)$ .

Bid ( $\theta_i = H$ )	$E[v_i(b_i, s_j; H)   H]$
$b_i(H) \in [0, b_j(L))$	0,
$b_i(H) = b_j(L)$	$\frac{1}{2} \frac{(20 - b_j(L))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(H) \in (b_j(L), b_j(H))$	$\frac{1}{2} (20 - b_j(L))$ ,
$b_i(H) = b_j(H)$	$\frac{1}{2} (20 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2} \frac{(30 - b_j(H))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(H) \in (b_j(H), \infty)$	$\frac{1}{2} (20 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2} (30 - b_j(H))$ .



# Common Values

**Realization of  $v$**  The relation between  $\theta_i$  and  $v$  is

If  $v = 10$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = L$ ; If  $v = 30$ ,  $\theta_1 = \theta_2 = H$ ;

If  $v = 20$ ,  $\theta_i = L$  and  $\theta_j = H$  ( $i, j = 1, 2, i \neq j$ ).

$s_j(\cdot)$ : Bid  $b_j(k)$  if  $\theta_j = k$  ( $k = L, H$ ) and  $b_j(L) \leq b_j(H)$ .

Bid ( $\theta_i = H$ )	$E[v_i(b_i, s_j; H)   H]$
$b_i(H) \in [0, b_j(L))$	0,
$b_i(H) = b_j(L)$	$\frac{1}{2} \frac{(20 - b_j(L))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(H) \in (b_j(L), b_j(H))$	$\frac{1}{2}(20 - b_j(L))$ ,
$b_i(H) = b_j(H)$	$\frac{1}{2}(20 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2} \frac{(30 - b_j(H))}{2}$ ,
$b_i(H) \in (b_j(H), \infty)$	$\frac{1}{2}(20 - b_j(L)) + \frac{1}{2}(30 - b_j(H))$ .

What is the cond. player  $i$  with  $\theta_i = H$  bids  $b_i(H) = b_j(H)$ ?