

The Revision Club System

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PART VI - The Two Diamond Opening

Two diamonds is opened with any hand of 11-15 HCP that has the patterns 4=4=1=4, 4=4=0=5, 4=3=1=5, or 3=4=1=5. Occasionally the hand might be a 16 count with a singleton honor (below the ace) in diamonds, if the rest of the hand also looks poor. The above shapes never open 2C, as is done in some big club systems. We do not care if the clubs are very strong; we open 2D anyway.

Our responding structure resembles that of most other people who play a Precision 2D or 2H opening, in that 2NT is a general ask. However, few people seem to have noticed that the standard pattern of responses to this ask is unsound. (I have learned that Rodwell and Meckstroth play it the same way we do; apparently Eric Rodwell and I discovered this independently.) The usual way to play it is that opener shows his shape first, without regard to whether he is minimum or maximum. This is wrong. The right way to play it is that opener always bids 3C first with a minimum, and goes beyond 3C only with a hand that will accept a game invitation. The reason for this is that the 2NT bidder will very commonly have an invitational hand with a club fit. If, as responder, you hold Axx/Qx/K10xx/Q10xx, you certainly do not want to be in 3NT opposite an eleven count. You do want to, opposite 14-15. But if partner has a minimum 2D opening, where you want to be is in 3C. The way to achieve this is to have opener bid 3C with all minimums, so that responder can pass if he wants to.

Some of the other difficult responding hands can also be dealt with in this way. A recurring problem type is invitational values and some such shape as 3=2=5=3 or 2=3=5=3; that is to say, the hand that would like to bid a natural, invitational 2NT. Playing our way, you can bid 2NT and, if partner rebids 3C, pass! Three out of the four possible distributions for opener contain five clubs, so you are likely to be playing a 5-3 fit. If not, a 4-3 fit in clubs may make.

I do not have any solution to the 3=3=5=2 type with invitational values, or with weak values, for that matter. As the chess players say, pawns don't move backwards; and Precision players have no way to get to 1NT (or 2NT, for that matter) with this shape when partner opens 2D. (Standard players can bid 1C-1D, 1M-1NT, or 1C-1D, 1M-2NT. This is an inescapable case of Standard's being superior on a particular pair of hand types. Don't worry about it. You can't win every board. There are plenty of other hands where the 2D opening will produce good results for us.) Note that if you try to play this in a suit, there is no guarantee of getting to even a seven-card trump fit.

Either major suit may be facing three, and the club doubleton may be facing four. With this shape and, say, 11-12 points, you just have to shoot 3NT. At least you get something good if you make it. (A simulation confirmed that 3NT is best with these hands. You make it about 40% of the time, so the bid is justified anyhow if you are vulnerable at IMPs, and even NV, you don't do too badly.)

2D- Pass: Any hand that wants to play here. Long diamonds. This hand type is more common than you might think. Look at it this way. If you have a three-suited hand, and partner has a one-suited hand, which suit is partner most likely to have length in? And he can pass with some apparently quite strong hands, knowing that there is no good fit facing the suit that he would normally be hoping would turn out to be a source of tricks. This is one of the reasons that we play the old-fashioned Precision 2D opener, where others use the more modern 2H bid. Allowing for a final contract of 2D has definite value.

2D- 2H: Natural, to play. However, it should be noted that this can be on a three-card suit. The question arises of whether opener should take account of this by bidding again, say with 4=3=1=5 shape, in hopes of improving the contract. My opinion is no. Responder usually will have three hearts only with specifically 2=3=5=3 or 3=3=5=2 shape (with six diamonds he can pass 2D, and with four clubs he can bid 3C; he can also bid 3C with 2=3=5=3 if he judges it best). As against those possibilities, consider the hugely greater number of possible shapes with which he will bid 2H with four or more hearts. The usual effect of bidding again will be an irritated 3H bid by partner. Best to stay put.

Really, the only reason to bid again is to cater to a possible game. It is certainly true that the 4=4=0=5 shape has significantly greater playing strength than the others, and you may miss a game if partner has a good fit for a major. A partial solution to this problem is to open 1C with that shape and a good 15 count (valuing the five-card club suit as worth an extra point, and the void as worth something also).

In my view, some hands with four-card support for hearts are worth bidding again, but not all of them. Opener should never bid again with 4=4=1=4 shape. This distribution is notorious for playing poorly. But with 3=4=1=5, you might want to. Superficially, there is not much difference between Axxx/Kxxx/x/AKxx and Axx/Kxxx/x/AKxxx. Both have the same high-card points, the same support-point count, and the same losing-trick count. But experience shows that the 5431 type very often plays a trick better, and sometimes more than one trick better. This happens when the five-card side suit can be set up and cashed. So

with Axx/Kxxx/x/AKxxx, you rebid 2NT. Partner takes it from there, and may decide to play 3C now, knowing of a good five-card suit opposite. It is worth the risk that 2H was the correct spot all along. If you have the 4=4=0=5 shape and decide to bid again, you should rebid 2S, showing the four cards in spades (this gives partner an out if he has the 3=3=5=2 shape). Playing this way takes some of the pressure off responder. He knows he can respond 2H with a moderate hand and still get to game if you have a maximum, so he will not be tempted to invite on questionable values.

2D- 2S: To play. Note that a three-card suit is even less likely here, since it could only happen with 3=2=5=3 shape (with 3-3 in the majors, bid 2H if you are going to bid a three-card major at all), and even with that responder could possibly bid 3C. Here, if opener decides to bid again, he tries 2NT with 4=3=1=5 shape, 3C with 4=4=0=5.

2D- 2NT: Relay, asking for strength and shape.

2D-2NT, 3C: Any minimum, regardless of shape. This raises the question of where, exactly, the dividing line is between minimum and maximum for a 2D opener. It is easy enough to say that all 14 and 15 point hands are maximum, and all 11 and 12 point hands are minimum. 13 point hands are the problem. My inclination is to consider a 4=4=1=4 13 count a minimum, unless there are enough nine- and ten-spots for an upgrade. All 4=4=0=5 13 counts are maximum, because they are worth something if there is a major-suit fit, and if partner insists on 3NT, there is a five-card club suit. With 3=4=1=5 and 4=3=1=5, use your judgment. The quality of the five-card club suit should probably be the determining factor in close cases.

2D-2NT, 3C- Pass: Any hand of invitational strength and 3+ clubs can pass here.

2D-2NT, 3C- 3D: Further relay. Responder must have at least one four-card major to do this. Opener shows his shape here in ascending-numeric order.

2D-2NT, 3C-3D, 3H: 3=4=1=5 shape (this is the first bid in the ascending-numeric scheme). Now, responder is presumed to have sufficient general knowledge of responder's hand to place the contract most of the time. But, he may have a hand with 4-4 or 5-5 in the majors that wanted to determine opener's

longer major before making a slam try. Responder can try for slam by bidding 4D, which is a slam try in hearts. Opener can reject with 4H, or zoom with keycard-showing bids.

3H is not forcing. Responder may have 4-4 in the majors and a hand that wanted to play game only if opener had extra values. If so, he can pass 3H now.

2D-2NT, 3C-3D,

3S: 4=3=1=5. Responder places the contract now. 4D is a slam try in spades. To that, opener bids 4S to reject, 4H if not sure, or zooms to keycards.

2D-2NT, 3C-3D,

3NT: 4=4=0=5 shape. Responder places the contract, usually. He can play in four of a major by bidding it. If he wants to try for slam in a major, he transfers to it, South African style, by bidding four of the corresponding minor. (Responder does not need to bid clubs naturally here; if responder had no major and wanted to invite game in clubs, he would have bid 4C over 3C. With no major and an immediate slam try in clubs, he bids 4C directly over 2D. The only reason to bid 3D is to check for a major, and since opener has both, responder must want to play in a major now.) Opposite responder's transfer, opener bids the suit in between to indicate interest in slam.

2D-2NT, 3C-3D,

4C: 4=4=1=4 shape. (It is safe to go beyond 3NT with this, because responder must have a major.) Responder now transfers to his major, bidding 4D to get to hearts and 4H to get to spades. He can, of course, keep bidding after this if he is interested in slam.

2D-2NT, 3C-

3H: Invitational in hearts; probably, although not necessarily, a five-card suit. Opener will generally pass with three-card support, and use his judgment with four.

2D-2NT, 3C-

3S: Invitational in spades.

2D-2NT, 3C-

3NT: To play. Responder probably has a hand with a club fit and diamond stoppers that was going to look for slam if opener had

shown extras, but which decides to settle for the cheaper game now that opener has shown a minimum.

- 2D-2NT, 3C- 4C: Invites game in clubs. Responder presumably was going to drive to game if opener had shown extras; now his hand is only worth an invitation.
- 2D-2NT, 3C- 4D: Does not exist.
- 2D-2NT, 3C- 4H, 4S: Do not exist. If responder were interested in *both* majors, he would bid 3D now to find out shape. If he were going to game in *one* major, he would just bid 4H or 4S over 2D. If he had a *slam* try in one major, he would bid 3H or 3S over 2D.
- 2D-2NT, 3C- 4NT: Invitational to 6NT. Responder probably has 3=3=5=2 shape, and is interested in 6NT despite having heard of a minimum opening; he was probably going to bid 6NT directly if opener had shown extra values.
- 2D-2NT, 3D: Maximum, 4=4=1=4 shape. This, and any rebid over 2NT except 3C, creates a game force. Responder places the contract, or he can make a slam try, setting any suit by bidding it minimally. Technical note: The reason 3D and 3H, the cheapest steps, are used to show 4=4=1=4 and 4=4=0=5 shapes is that these two shapes have two four-card majors, and by keeping the bidding lower, we allow responder to set either major for slam purposes. It is not necessary to do this for the 3=4=1=5 and 4=3=1=5 hands, because with these, responder will only ever want to play in the longer major when he has a slam try (he may have a hand that wants to play game in the shorter major, but in that case, he just bids four of that suit). So, in this one sequence, we use *descending* numeric order, the reverse of our usual practice.
- 2D-2NT, 3H: Maximum, 4=4=0=5 shape. Responder will normally just place the contract now, but he could bid 3S or 4C, forcing, to investigate slam in those suits, and he can also bid 4D as a slam try in hearts.
- 2D-2NT, 3S: Maximum, 4=3=1=5 shape. Responder places the contract, or tries for slam. He bids 4C to set clubs, 4D to show a slam try in spades. Responder can only want to bid hearts now if his hand was invitational in hearts, with a five-card or longer suit; with that, he just bids 4H here (no

slam try in hearts is needed). And with 4-5 in the majors, responder would want to play spades, having found a 4-4 fit.

2D-2NT, 3NT: Maximum, 3=4=1=5 shape. Responder places the contract now, or sets clubs, or bids 4D to show a slam try in hearts. Responder can only want to play spades if he has, e.g., an original game invitation with five or more spades; with that, he just bids 4S now. And again, with 5-4 in the majors, responder would want to play hearts now.

2D- 3C: To play. Opener always passes.

2D- 3D: Natural, invitational (rare).

2D- 3H: Slam try in hearts. But by a PH, it is an immediate game try, requiring opener to choose between 3H and 4H (3NT is not a consideration; responder is showing a suit-oriented hand with at least five hearts).

2D-3H, 3S: Minimum with only three hearts. Over this, responder can bid 3NT to play, and he can also bid 4C to say that he has changed his mind and now wants to make clubs the trump suit (possible, since he has just learned that opener has five clubs). Other bids are to play (4H) or directed toward a heart slam (anything else).

2D-3H, 3NT: Maximum with only three hearts. Over this, responder's bids have the same meanings as if opener had rebid 3S. Responder can pass 3NT.

2D-3H, 4C, 4D: These are control-bids, showing four-card heart support. Opener should always control-bid 4D with a diamond void, since this may be crucial information, possibly even the key to a grand slam. If opener does not have a void, he can control-bid 4C with the club ace. He should not, however, skip over 4H to control-bid the spade ace, since this would take away responder's Kickback bid, which is very likely to be the next move he wants to make. If opener cannot do anything else, he raises to 4H.

2D-3H, 4H: Four-card support, nothing to control-bid. E.g. QJxx/AKxx/x/Qxxx.

2D- 3S: Slam try in spades. But invitational by a PH.

2D-3S, 3NT: Any hand with only three spades. We compress the minimum and maximum types with 3=4=1=5 into this bid, just in case responder has a

hand that is only interested in slam if opener has four-card support. If so, he can pass now. Over 3NT, responder can bid 4C to say that he has changed his mind and now wants to make clubs the trump suit. Any other bid would mean that he still wants to play in spades; 4S would be a signoff, 4D and 4H would be control-bids for spades.

2D-3S, 4C, 4D, 4H: Control-bids for spades, showing four-card support. Opener should always show a diamond void first if he has one; failure to bid 4D here denies a diamond void.

2D-3S, 4S: Four-card support, nothing to control-bid. E.g. AKxx/QJxx/x/Qxxx.

2D- 3NT: To play.

2D- 4C: Slam try in clubs. (This one is on even by a passed hand. Responder could have x/Kx/xxxx/AQxxxx, and opener could have Axxx/AQxx/x/Kxxx, a favorite for 6C. Give opener a diamond void, and seven is possible.) Opener now cuebids a diamond void if he has one, or does something else if he does not; 5C is the weakest bid. As usual in such situations, responder's next step after opener's second bid is Redwood; e.g., in the auction 2D-4C, 4H-4S, opener's 4H rebid shows a heart control, and 4S is Redwood for clubs.

Responder does not need this 4C response as a game try in clubs, since then he would just bid 2NT and pass cheaply in 3C if opener showed a minimum.

2D- 4D: Slam try in diamonds. Opener is being asked if he has a singleton honor (J or higher). If he does, he bids the next step, 4H. If not, he either bids 5D, the weakest bid, or something else to say he has good values outside diamonds. Either way, responder's bid of the next step at his second turn is Redwood, if it is any bid below 5D. E.g. if the auction goes 2D-4D, 4S-4NT, the 4S bid is a control-bid for diamonds, and 4NT is Redwood. The 4D response is DNEBAPH.

2D- 4H, 4S, 5C, 5D: To play.

Competitive Auctions After A 2D Opening

After any direct overcall of a 2D opening, all doubles are penalty by responder. If there is an overcall, responder can bid hearts or spades at a minimum level, competitively (but have a good enough hand for this to hear opener bid again, which he

will with suitable shape and a maximum). Responder can also bid clubs, but a bid of 3C is not invitational. If the opening 2D bid is doubled, a pass by responder means stay and play. Redouble means that responder wants opener to run. Typically, responder would do this with equal length in the majors, so as to get opener to bid his longer major when he is 4-3 either way. If responder wants to penalize the opponents after they double, he must pass and double whatever they land in; to do this, he must be able to play 2DX, so his shape would probably be 3=3=5=2 with good diamonds and a good hand. If responder does not pass or redouble, all other responses mean the same thing as if the double did not exist. If 2D is passed around and doubled, opener must pass; responder has made the decision to play in diamonds, and opener should respect that, even if he is void.

If 2D is passed around and there is a balancing overcall, opener should always pass; if he thinks he can beat whatever they have just bid, it is better to pass and hope they stay there, and if he doesn't think he can beat it, there is no reason to double. There is never a reason for opener to bid a suit in this auction, since responder has already denied having a fit with any of opener's suits.

Occasionally the opponents will intervene after responder has bid something. Usually it will be a bid in diamonds. Opener will normally pass when this happens. A double, if the opponents have bid at a high level (e.g. you open 2D, partner bids four of a major, RHO "saves" in 5D) would show good two-way values. If the opponents intervene in a strength-showing auction (e.g. after a 2NT response, or a 3M slam try), opener doubles to say his hand is relatively good for defense, passes with nothing special to say, and raises the major suit, or control-bids, if he has a good fit and can cooperate in a slam venture.

One auction here that might be common enough for specific agreements is 2D-(P), 2NT-(3D). Here, opener passes to show a minimum that would reject a game try, and responder can now bid 3M or 4C, nonforcing, or pass, or bid game or slam to play, or bid 4D to force opener to choose a major. If opener's hand is good enough to accept a game try, he can bid 3M to show that major only, or bid 4D to show both majors. He can also make a forcing pass if he has a singleton honor in diamonds and wishes to allow responder to double for penalties.