

# **The Revision Club System**

## **4<sup>th</sup> Ed. © 2009 by John Montgomery**

### **PART IX – Defensive Bidding**

Our general approach to defensive bidding is to bid based on shape more than on the strength of the hand. At the one level, we will make light overcalls in major suits. At the two level, we will freely use two-suited bids, some of which are artificial. Experience shows that it is very difficult for the opening bidder's side to work out a penalty double sequence when the defensive bid shows two different suits, so these bids are relatively safe. They are also very disruptive of opponents' auctions. The payoff for these two-level bids is greater than any likely losses from being doubled or from getting too high when advancer tries for game. At the three level and higher, our methods are more standard (but there are some two-suited bids at this level also). Some of these methods can be described as experimental, and subject to change if they turn out not to work well. However, it should be noted that *all* of the methods described here have been specifically designed to be legal under the ACBL's General Convention Chart. Thus, "experimental" does not mean "questionably legal."

Our methods are cataloged below according to the opening bid made by the opponents.

**(ONE CLUB) (STRONG, ARTIFICIAL, FORCING):** If the opponents open a strong club, we use methods that are essentially destructive. First, a matter of definition. The opponents' 1C opening is defined as "strong" and "artificial" if it says nothing about clubs, and if it guarantees a hand of 15 or more HCP, or the equivalent. It does not include Polish or Swedish 1C openings that are either strong and artificial, or represent a weak notrump or other minimum hand. We treat the 1C as strong only if it is strong always. Otherwise, we treat it as a natural or quasi-natural bid, the same as a 1C opening in SAYC or similar "standard" systems. When the 1C opening can be a weak NT hand type, it usually includes some club length and can be treated as natural, even if the word "natural" as usually defined does not strictly apply. This section is intended to apply to 1C openings that are in a Precision or Blue Team style.

So let's assume, for the moment, that most of our opponents who play an "artificial" 1C opening will be using it as a strong bid, Precision or the like, rather than as a Polish or Swedish two-way bid. (In North America at least, this will surely be true.) There are a lot of anti-strong-club bidding methods on the market, dozens of them. If you have any experience at all in playing a big club system, you will have encountered quite a few. Does it make any difference which one you play? Are some of them noticeably better than others? I think the answer to both of these questions is yes.

Unfortunately, it seems to be impossible to prove what the best defensive bidding method is through any methodology that very many people would consider convincing. There are too many variables. We are simply going to have to use general principles and experience to determine what is best. As it happens, I do have a few ideas. The first one is that there is, in fact, a holy grail out there that can be found if you seek it – an anti-club method (or family of methods) that works better than what most people play. I believe this for a number of reasons, but one of them is that Rodwell and Meckstroth have told me (in a very indirect way) that it is so. R-M notably play Mathe, one of the oldest and simplest anti-club methods, when they themselves must sit at the same table as a big club pair. Why do they do this? Can't they come up with something better? I suspect that they can and they have, but don't want to tell anyone what it is. Meckstroth himself has more or less confirmed this, in his book *Win The Bermuda Bowl With Me*. On the subject of defense against a big club, he says, in so many words, that there are some things he isn't willing to discuss in print. You can see why. Only occasionally do R-M play against the big club, but they play it themselves on every board. If it were to become generally known what they think is the most effective anti-club method (and whose opinion would count for more than theirs?), they would find it being used against them much more often than they would get to use it against opponents. So, they use a plain-vanilla method that everyone knows about already. They accept a small loss against their big-club opponents (by not playing the most effective anti-club methods that they could), rather than teach those same opponents, and others, how to play against *them*.

Is it going to make a difference what you play? You better believe it. After all, all of the people who play (or play against) big clubs for a living seem to think so. I have seen it said in numerous places that when you play a big club system, you should expect to actually *lose* IMPs on the boards where a 1C opening comes up for your side. I have no statistics to show whether this is true or not, but enough people have said it that it seems to be a common experience. (The idea is that you should play a club system anyway because you will compensate for the loss by winning even more IMPs on the boards where you get to use your limited openings, which come up much more often.) I don't actually believe that, playing Revision, you should expect to lose IMPs on 1C openers; the methods are just too powerful. However, let's suppose this is true of others. Why would anyone expect to lose IMPs after opening 1C? Is it because they have no decent follow-up constructive bidding? I don't think so. Certainly, this is not true of Revision. Any time the auction goes (without interference) 1C-1D, 1M, we are in a plus position. Opener has shown a five-card major, the same as a regular 1M opening, but with a higher minimum. This has to be good. The other constructive auctions look pretty good to me too. So the answer must be that the problems occur when the opponents interfere. I have heard it said that in actual competition, a 1C opening attracts interference approximately half the time, more than that against

aggressive opponents. Assuming that all of this is true (I am not guaranteeing that it is; I am only repeating what I have heard), it would seem to be the case that having an effective anti-club system is at the very least worthwhile. And in any event, if you are a serious player, you should make it your business to get this area of bidding right, just the same as all the others.

In the search for the ideal method, I believe there is a magic word. The word is *spades*. The more often you can find a good spade fit quickly, the better off you are. Spades is the suit that, if you can bid it, takes away an entire level of other suits from the opponents. It is the suit that yields profitable saves against an enemy four-heart game. So, if you have spade length worth showing, show it. Show six of them by bidding one or two spades (depending on vulnerability, suit quality, etc.). Show five of them by bidding one spade, or by making a two-suited bid that guarantees spades. Show four of them by using a specialized bid when you can. Our way, you can show spades at the one level any time you have hearts to go with them, and often when you have a long minor as well. Showing a four-card spade suit is what other methods can't do (without introducing ambiguity, because the spades might be either four- or five-long). We can, and partner will know when and how high to raise when he fits the suit. Hearts is not as magical a word as spades, but it is still a good one to say. We show hearts naturally, or by showing a heart-minor two-suiter. This allows partner to raise preemptively when he can infer that the opponents have a spade fit (even if they haven't found it yet).

As you might expect from the foregoing, most of our bids against an artificial 1C are directed toward getting to a major-suit fit, if one can be found. This has two beneficial effects. First, if we are going to preempt or actually compete for the contract, major suits work better. And second, if we have a game, it is likely to be in a major suit. 3NT is not likely to have sufficient high cards, and five of a minor will usually be too high.

### **A. Direct Seat**

(1C)- Double: This is a special bid, not found in other anti-club methods. The theory is that the worst suit in which to miss a fit is spades. Accordingly, double shows spades and a minor, with the spades being exactly four long. (It is not hearts and spades, as there are other bids to show both majors.) The minor suit length can be only five if it is diamonds, but if it is clubs you had better have at least five good ones, and usually six. Thus, the hand will at least be some kind of 4-5 shape, although you would prefer to have 4-6.

This double enables us to find spade fits quickly when the hand in direct seat has exactly four, and a minor suit. These are the hands that have always been a

problem; with five or more spades, you can overcall spades or make a two-suited bid at the two level.

In response to the double, advancer will of course bid the appropriate number of spades if he has a spade fit. If he does not, various things can happen. If the double is passed or redoubled, advancer can run to 1D, meaning “play here if this is your minor.” To this, opener will pass if he has diamonds, otherwise run (running to a three-card heart fragment on the way, if he has three hearts; to spades with good spades that can stand to play a 4-3 fit; to 2C with good or long clubs). Advancer can pass 1C redoubled, meaning “stay here if your suit is clubs, otherwise run.” Mathematically this is correct, as 1CX and 1CXX are not game. If the opponents can take exactly seven tricks, they would beat us in 2CX for 300 points, and 1CXX making exactly is less than that (assuming NV for both sides). If responder passes the double, advancer, with clubs, can stay in 1CX; opener is very unlikely to know whether that is a good spot or not, and will almost always run. Advancer can also bid clubs or diamonds at any level, meaning pass or correct. (But if he bids a minor suit once, and then rebids it after correction, it means a self-sufficient suit.) He can also bid hearts if he wants to, knowing that doubler has promised no support there. Notrump bids would be constructive, showing an unusually good hand. Both 1NT and 2NT are good spade raises (four and five trumps respectively); this applies regardless of whether responder passes or redoubles. The purpose of these constructive bids is to advise partner that there may be a game. Normally the strength shown is that of an opening bid at least.

If responder bids something over the double (1H, let's say), now advancer can bid spades at any level, or a minor at any level to say “pass or correct.” Doubles of their bids are presumably penalties, although this would not happen very often. A free bid in notrump at either the one or two level is a constructive raise of spades, as before. No matter what level responder's bid comes at (say he jumps to 2H over the double), a 2NT bid by advancer always means a good raise in spades. We are not interested in looking for partscores in notrump in these auctions. It will almost always be right to play in a suit if we play the hand at all. However, bids of 3NT (by unpassed hands) are reserved as meaning to play. You never know, you might just get the hand for it (presumably a running suit of your own).

- (1C)- 1D: Both majors. The shape can be 4-4 or 5-4 either way; it will not usually be 5-5, as with that you would usually prefer to overcall 1NT. (Note: If you are going to have a 5-4 shape, it is better for the hearts to be longer, as partner is bidding hearts with equal length in the majors. With five spades and four hearts,

give some consideration to a 1S overcall instead. This needs research.) In response, advancer will of course bid a major at the appropriate level. He can pass 1D if he wants, and he can also run to 2C (whether 1D is doubled or not).

As usual, notrump bids are constructive. A 2NT bid is a game invitation in an unspecified major; doubler bids to the four level one way or another if he wants to accept. 1NT is the same thing, but at a lower level, and showing either a lesser hand or a hand that has less of a fit in the majors. 1NT would often be an appropriate bid with 3-3 in the majors and some values; you want partner to bid two of his longer or better major on most hands, but if he has an unusually good hand, you let him know there might be a game.

- (1C)- 1H, 1S: Natural. Usually a five-card suit, but can be longer. Advancer raises to the appropriate level, or bids a new suit (he is on his own if he does this, though), or bids a constructive notrump. A bid of 2NT, whether a jump or not, is always a game invite in partner's major. 1NT is the same, except showing only three-card support. You would need a lot of high cards to invite game with only three pieces, so it will not happen often. Note: If the 1M bid has been doubled, 1NT is still a raise, as is 2NT. A redouble means a good hand with a doubleton in partner's suit, interested in competing for a partscore; partner is allowed to rebid a six-card suit, or to bid a second suit if he has one. This treatment should probably not be used if responder's double is defined as GF (if the opponents are in a GF, you shouldn't have a good enough hand for it anyway). But many opponents use a double of a 1M overcall as competitive or limited. Then it is OK to redouble cooperatively.
- (1C)- 1NT: This shows a two-suiter, 5-5 or better, but one of the suits *must be spades*. This is consistent with our general principle of showing spades as often as possible, on the theory that a spade fit is most likely to do us some good if we can find it. Partner will normally bid spades as high as he dares with a fit there, or run to the lowest suit he can stand; a 2C runout implies willingness to play two of the 1NT bidder's second suit, whichever it is. A 2D runout implies either both red suits or a diamond one-suiter, and a 2H runout shows hearts only. (If the 1NT bid is doubled, the system of responses changes. Now, a bid of any suit other than spades is a one-suiter, natural and to play, while redouble asks for the 1NT bidder's second suit. And if responder bids a suit, natural, over 1NT, double is responsive, asking the 1NT bidder for his second suit.)
- (1C)- 2 any suit: Natural. A 2NT advance would be invitational (including if responder bids something first that could be weak, although if responder makes a

strength-showing bid, 2NT would be a raise with defensive strength, not a real game try). Other bids are natural.

- (1C)- 2NT: Hearts and a minor. In response to this, partner bids hearts when he can, clubs if he can stand to play clubs (the 2NT bidder corrects with hearts and diamonds), or 3D or 3S naturally (both presumably will occur rarely). This method does mean that you have no bid to show both minors directly over 1C, except a jump to 3NT. Too bad. Showing majors is more important. Hands with both minors can either pass, intending to back in with an unusual notrump later if appropriate, or overcall one of the minors at the two level.

## **B. Sandwich Position**

(1C)-Pass,

- (1D)- Double: The 1D response is presumably negative, or neutral. Now we double 1D to show both majors. The spade-minor canapé double is out. Everything higher than double, after the 1D response, means the same as it would in direct seat against a 1C opening.

(1C)-Pass,

- (Any) - Any: If the response to the 1C bid is anything other than an artificial 1D, we revert to mostly natural bidding. There are three exceptions. One is that a notrump bid at any level is for takeout. Normally it would show both minors (or the two lowest unbid, if the responder has shown a minor naturally; although I do not know anyone who plays transfers to minors at a level lower than 1NT). The second is that if the response does not show length in one or more of the major suits, double by us is for both majors. Example: They open 1C, I pass, responder bids 2D, Precision, natural and GF. If you double now, that is both majors. The same would apply if they had made a natural bid in notrump. But if the response is, say, a natural 1S or 2S, double does not mean both majors, obviously. What it is is a “Michaels double,” showing the other major and an unknown minor. This lets us show shape at a lower level. This comes in handy against natural one-level responses in major suits (quite common). You should have 5-5 for this bid, except at the one level when they bid hearts; then it is acceptable to have only four spades to go with the minor.

**(ONE CLUB) (NATURAL):** Our approach to defensive bidding against “natural” opening bids is largely standard. For example, we play normal methods after a takeout double. However, our approach to overcalls, especially at the two level, is quite different. Please note that as stated above, all of this applies to Polish or Swedish 1C

openings, which are initially presumed to show weak notrump hands and therefore to contain some club length. Also, if we encounter the currently popular treatment of opening 1C on some balanced hands with a doubleton club, so as to use transfer responses at the one level, we do not worry about that possibility. The 1C bid is still presumed to be “natural,” and the following methods apply.

### A. Direct Seat

- (1C)- 1D: Standard, natural overcall. This should be a relatively sound hand (or else a very good suit for lead-directional purposes), because there is not the same value in making a light overcall in diamonds just to find a fit as there is in a major. We are not likely to outbid anyone with a diamond fit facing a weak hand. Thus, a 1D overcall is more constructive than 1H or 1S (this seems to be relatively standard expert practice). We do differ from standard practice here in one way, which is that the 1D overcall virtually denies holding a major suit. Advances are standard. New suits are nonforcing at any level, but jumps are stronger. A cuebid of clubs is forcing, usually a raise, perhaps creating a forcing bid in a major (rare). A jump to 3C is a mixed raise; four-card support, side shortness, and 6 to 9 high-card points.

Having said all this, there is also a good case for playing 1D overcalls light, the same as in major suits.

- (1C)- 1M: Natural overcall. Can be quite light. Our philosophy is to find the major suit fit as quickly as possible. This will only rarely be a four-card suit, because with most hands that qualify for action that contain a four-card major, there is another suit and we have a special bid to show both suits.

Responses to the overcall are based on Rubens transfer responses. A jump cuebid is a mixed raise. Also, we apply our general principle that when one of us has overcalled naturally in a major at the one level, jumps in unbid suits to the four level are fit-showing, but *only* at the four level (with one exception, that being a 3S jump response to a 1H overcall; that is fit-showing because all spade-only hands can begin with a 1S or 2S bid).

We play Rubens transfers when there is space in between the opened suit and the overcalled suit.<sup>1</sup> This applies, for example, in the auction (1C)-1S, (P)-2C. 2C here is a transfer to diamonds, possibly with spade support to

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<sup>1</sup> For a long time, this convention was illegal under the ACBL General Convention Chart. The rules have recently been changed to allow it. Now, if only the ACBL would allow transfer *responses* after overcalls, so that after 1H-(1S), 2S could show clubs, invitational or better, 3C could show diamonds . . .

come later. 2D would be a transfer to hearts, and 2H is a cue-bid raise of spades. The Rubens principle applies up to the four level. (3C)-3S, (P)-4C shows diamonds, and so on. It works whenever the opening bid was natural (a natural 2C bid is included), we overcall, and there is space in between the two suits. Don't forget jump overcalls as well, like (2C)-3S, (P)-4C. As usual, this shows diamonds. One last point is that if responder doubles instead of passing, the transfer is still on. But not when he bids a suit naturally, or bids 1NT; then we revert to standard principles, or use special methods (see Part X).

- (1C)- 1NT: Natural overcall. The basic range is 15 to 18, but dull 19 counts are allowed. Hands with length in the other minor are allowed to overcall 1NT. (This would be less common when the opening bid is 1C, since a natural 1D bid is available, but it could happen.) If our 1NT overcall gets doubled, in this auction or after any other start of one of a suit by the opponents, we play Bergen runouts (by analogy to the Bergen overcall system over their strong notrump opening, which see). You bid two of any suit to play, and redouble shows any two suits, asking the 1NT bidder to bid the lowest suit he can stand to play in, and so on up the line until a fit (or at least a place to play) is found. Please note that in all of the auctions in which we have made a natural overcall of 1NT and then run out, the opening bidder's suit is a suit we can play in. So if advancer runs to 2C over the double, that is to play. If advancer redoubles, asking for the lowest suit overcaller can stand to play in, overcaller bids 2C when he has four or more (he is known to have at least two, so advancer can run to 2C any time he has five of them; if he redoubles to show clubs and another, advancer's clubs are likely to be exactly four long, looking for a 4-4 fit).

It should be noted that in the earlier editions of this book, I said that a 1NT overcall should have a minimum of 16 points. I have now changed my mind to say that a lot of 15 counts are OK for the bid. The current consensus of expert opinion is that nowadays, there are too many people out there opening and responding light to risk being shut out of an auction where you and partner might own the deal for a partscore or even a game. You have to get involved with any reasonable hand. A 1NT overcall on a fifteen count may not be pretty, but it is reasonable, and you will get to your own contract if you have one. Of course there is the chance that you will get doubled and turn out not to have any contract that can be played without loss, but that is the chance you take. (Perhaps one of these days we will all be saying that the time has come to start overcalling 1NT on ordinary 14 counts. I hope this will not happen until my own bridge career is over. There are some



things I do not think I would be able to adjust to, even if theory and practice said that they were winning bids.) The modern style, 15 to a bad 19, does mean that your 1NT overcall has rather a wide range. Too bad; there is a shortage of bids to make when the opponents open. We do use invitational bids here (a raise to 2NT if responder passes is always natural and INV) that we would not use after a 1NT opening. This helps us to deal with the wider range.

Where we part company with most is in the response structure. We do not use the currently popular “front of card” treatment. Instead, new suits at the two level are NF, at the three level (as a jump) are invitational (but note that this includes opener’s suit as well), and a cuebid is Stayman, or the beginning of a forcing sequence. If responder bids something over the 1NT overcall, however, *then* we use the “front of card” principle, with doubles of natural bids being negative, 2NT being transfer lebensohl, etc. In this particular case, against (say) a natural, nonforcing bid of 2S by responder after the 1NT overcall, an advance of 2NT is transfer lebensohl to clubs; it is possible for responder to want to play 3C. And (1C)-1NT-(2S)-3S is cuebid Stayman with spade shortness (with a stopper or length, start with a negative double of the 2S bid).

- (1C)- 2C: Top and bottom. Here is where we really start to get different from standard defensive bidding. 2C shows diamonds, almost always at least five long, and spades, almost always exactly four long. The hand does not have to be especially strong. AJxx/xx/Kxxxxx/x is sufficient. However, the bid can be based on a strong hand, anything up to whatever would be considered too strong for a standard 1D overcall and qualify for a high-power double instead.

Responding to bids of this type is described in detail in the Hardy book *Competitive Bidding With Two-Suited Hands*. Responses by advancer are, of course, natural in spades and diamonds. Notrump bids would also be natural. A cuebid in clubs at the three level, if a jump to 3S is not available, is invitational in spades, with a bid of 3S being competitive or preemptive. Bids in hearts are natural, but without any guarantee that support will exist opposite.

The reason for playing this bid, and the related ones described below, is that major-minor canapé hands are among the most difficult to describe in standard defensive bidding. You can start by bidding the longer minor suit, and hope to get your major in later, but there is no guarantee that you will be

able to do that. If partner does have four or more of your major, you will do well to have him know of the fit right away. All that is lost are some weak jump overcalls (specifically, 2D and 2H over a 1C opening, 2H and 2S over a 1D opening, and three of either minor after a major-suit opening), which are not that important anyway. And the special canapé overcalls interfere with the opponents' bidding too.

If 2C is doubled, advancer makes his normal bid. If he passes 2CX, he wants to play it there. Probably redouble means the same, only more emphatically (I cannot think of a useful artificial meaning for XX here).

(1C)- 2D: Reds. The same, in principle, as a 2C cuebid, except that the suits are hearts and diamonds. Continuations are analogous.

(1C)- 2H: This is the "Michaels jump overcall" (MJO). It shows all of the hands that would be shown by a 2C Mike bid, up to a certain maximum strength limit. 5-5 or better shape is guaranteed, in principle (if you turn out to have fewer than five in one of the majors, that's your responsibility). This bid was created because we are not willing to play the way the Hardy book recommends. They have it that with 5-5 in the majors, you *double* the opening bid of one of a minor, then correct to hearts if partner bids the other minor. This looks horrendous to me. It is better to give up the single jump overcall in hearts. After all, it is not as though you can't find something else to bid if you have hearts. You can overcall a simple 1H, or bid 3H like a man.

Responses to the MJO are similar to those standardly played in response to a Michaels Cue Bid (MCB). Bids of hearts or spades at any level are natural. So is a bid of the unbid suit, although no support is expected. 2NT is natural. A cuebid is undefined (as far as I can tell) in standard, so I think it can be used to show a hand that wants to get to 3NT if partner has a stopper in the enemy suit. Something like K/xxx/AKQJxxx/xx. (I realize this hand won't come up too often.) A jump to 4C would demand partner choose one of his majors. A slam try in a major (rare) could be handled by cuebidding, then correcting to four of a major. If responder raises to 3C, a double shows invitational values with a fit for at least one of the majors.

(1C)- 2S: Standard WJO. Responses as if to a 2S opening.

(1C)- 2NT: 5-5 hearts and diamonds, as in standard.

- (1C)- 3C: This is Supermichaels. We need this bid because the MJO to 2H is not a forcing bid. Accordingly, overcaller cannot have too much when he bids 2H. AKxxx/AKJxx/x/xx is just about too much; with anything more, it would be clear to bid 3C. The general principle for responder to the 2H bid is that he passes with two cover cards or less, since overcaller has at least five losers. (A strong hand with two cover cards, like Kxx/Axxx/xxx/xxx, will still invite.) If overcaller has 4 ½ or fewer losers, he must bid 3C to inform partner that game is a consideration.

In response to 3C, advancer just bids a major at the appropriate level, almost always. Other bids are natural, with the exception of 4C, asking for choice of majors.

By a passed hand, 3C would be natural, although this does raise the question of why you did not open 3C. Presumably the suit quality and/or hand strength was inadequate. QJ109xxx and out does not open 3C, but it might want to bid 3C now.

- (1C)- 3D, 3H, 3S: Normal preempts (meaning 3D does not have the suit quality requirement that it does as an opening bid, because game is so unlikely). Responses as if to opening bids of three of a suit, except that a cuebid is a Rubens advance.
- (1C)- 3NT: To play, or extreme shape in reds if by a PH. (Assuming it is possible to bid this as a PH; perhaps with x/QJ10xxx/KJ10xxx/void you would do this.)
- (1C)- 4C and higher: Whatever they would be in standard. 4C is natural, presumably. I have heard of people playing this bid as Mega-Michaels, but this seems unnecessary for us, since our Supermichaels bid of 3C is forcing. I have also heard of people playing this 4C bid as showing a hand with a long major suit, too strong for a direct overcall of 4H or 4S. These hand types come up so rarely that it is hard to know whether such a treatment is good or not.

## **B. Sandwich Position**

After any response to a natural opening bid, our defensive bidding becomes relatively normal (assuming partner has passed first). After two natural bids in different suits, e.g. 1C-1H by the opponents, double is takeout, but at least four cards in both unbid suits are guaranteed. Sandwich notrumps are for takeout, with appropriate shape shown. (Against opponents who are known to open and respond very light, which is to say Meckwell types, we can by advance agreement switch to having sandwich notrump

overcalls be natural by an unpassed hand. When this agreement is in effect, we play front-of-card responses to the 1NT bid if the opening bid was in a minor, and cuebid-in-opener's-suit-to-force when the opening bid was 1H.) Cuebids are natural in the suit bid on the right. A cuebid of the suit bid on the left is Astro-style, showing six-plus in the lowest unbid suit, exactly four in the other. Overcalls in unbid suits are, of course, natural.

If the direct response to 1C is 1NT, a 2C bid is Michaels. We revert to “normal” Michaels in this position because we want to reserve 2H to show hearts; there is not the alternative of a 1H overcall that frees up 2H for a different use.

**(ONE DIAMOND) (NATURAL):** Almost everyone plays that an opening bid of 1D is “natural,” so we assume that it is. A bid of 1D that “could be” short is still treated as natural. This includes Precision-type diamond bids like ours.

The defensive bidding structure after 1D is similar to that over 1C.

#### **A. Direct Seat**

- (1D)- 1H, 1S, 1NT, 2C: Major-suit and 1NT overcalls are analogous to actions after a 1C opening. 2C is a normal two-level overcall, except that it virtually denies a major, because otherwise overcaller would have used a special two-suited bid. Rubens advances apply after (1D)-1M. After (1D) – 1NT, 2C, 2H, and 2S are natural, 2D is cuebid Stayman.
- (1D)- 2D: Two lower, four hearts and 5+ clubs (usually six). Note that this is the same defined meaning as a 2D bid over a 1C opening; the same hand types are shown, even though in one auction, the bid is a cuebid, and in the other, it isn't.
- (1D)- 2H: Still a Michaels JO. Again, the same hands as would be shown by a 2H overcall of a 1C opening.
- (1D)- 2S: Here is where the defensive bidding structure over a 1D opening parts company with the one used over a 1C opening. Here, 2S is a canapé Astro jump overcall. It shows exactly four spades, and long clubs (usually six, although it could be five in a good hand). Of course, like all Astro-type bids, it denies the appropriate shape to make a takeout double instead. A prototypical 2S bid here might be AKxx/x/Ax/K109xxx. With this hand, for sure you want to show both clubs and spades, and the correct length of each. You also would like to get in the way of the opponents, making it hard for them to know whether or not they have a fit in a red suit, or if they do, how high to bid in it. 2S on this hand type

accomplishes all of these objectives. I have been aware of the possibility of two-level AJOs for a long time, but wondered whether the method is not too bizarre to try out in real life. Then I noticed some of the top Swedish players using the same bid in the auction (1H)-2S. That is Astro (with an unspecified minor) for them. Well, if they can bid like that, so can we.

The inevitable objection to this sort of thing is that we are losing our weak jump overcalls at the two level. First I took away the natural 2H bid by redefining it as Michaels; now the natural 2S overcall is gone too. Once I began thinking about using Astro, I started looking for occasions in hands I read about or kibitzed where a two level WJO was needed. I noticed some interesting things. In the modern game, players rarely use these bids anymore, especially when vulnerable. Usually they overcall 1M, even with a six-card suit, and things work out just fine. Occasions where it is even appropriate, let alone necessary, to jump on a one-suited hand seem to be rather rare. You get along perfectly well without the bid. Meanwhile, the Michaels/Astro jump overcalls let you show hands that are a real problem to show if you do not have special bids for them. They also take pressure off the overcalls in the other minor, which now can be presumed not to have a major suit on the side. The two-suited overcalls are also a real bear for opponents to deal with. Even with agreements, they are going to be guessing at the three level, while we have a fair degree of assurance that we know what we are doing.

In response to the 2S bid, advancer can bid 2NT or 3NT naturally, run to 3C naturally, or bid hearts naturally (knowing that no support has been promised for this suit, and in fact knowing that the overcaller will more often have a stiff heart than a doubleton). A raise to 3S is invitational if responder passes, competitive if he bids three of something. If the opponents raise to 3D, a double of that invites game in spades. And if a 3D cuebid is available to advancer, this tends to ask for a stopper for notrump purposes (with a club fit, almost certainly).

By a PH, this (and other, similar Astro-type bids we use) has the same meaning, only with insufficient high cards to have opened the bidding.

(1D)- 2NT: 5-5 in the rounded.

(1D)- 3C: Clubs, at least six, and not a side major suit (bid 2D or 2S if you do have a side major). So the 3C bid is one-suited in clubs only. Strength is the question. Of course, if you are a passed hand it can only be weak. What if you are a UPH? I am going to say that if not vulnerable, it is a normal weak jump, similar to a 3C opening bid (and with a six-card suit definitely being OK). Vulnerable, the trend

these days is for 3C to be intermediate, a good hand, something like Ax/Kx/xxx/AKJ10xx. With this hand, you show immediately that you are interested in 3NT if partner has some cards. A direct 2C overcall, which can be a bit on the weak side, does not carry this same implication. I like this treatment and we will play it. Forget three-level WJOs vulnerable; they don't exist (unless you are a PH, in which case they exist but are very unlikely). Bid 3C to show your good hands. If partner has some cards, he bids 3D to look for 3NT, or can bid a major, natural and forcing. All of this is consistent with the modern defensive bidding philosophy that the main danger when the opponents open the bidding is that they will be very light and steal the hand from you. You have to have ways to show good hands so they can't do this. For *us* to steal from *them* is a much lower priority when they have already opened the bidding. Successful thievery usually requires being first into the auction.

(1D)- 3D: Supermichaels. Or natural and preemptive by a PH.

(1D)- 3H and higher: Normal.

## **B. Sandwich Position**

As after a 1C opening.

**(ONE HEART):** We assume this bid is always natural. We do not change our methods depending on whether the opponents play five-card majors or not.

### **A. Direct Seat**

(1H)- 1S: Normal overcall, can be light. It is important to find a spade fit when the opponents have a heart fit. Cuebid for forcing sequences.

(1H)-1S, (P)- 1NT: Natural, 9-12 HCP.

2C, 2D: Natural, non-forcing.

2H: Sound limit-plus spade raise.

2S: Weak (6-9) raise.

2NT: Natural. 13-16 HCP

3C, 3D: Natural, invitational.

3H: Mixed raise. Four-plus spades, 6-9 HCP, side shortness (but possibly only a doubleton), not necessarily in hearts.

3NT: Natural. 16+ balanced, less with a long solid suit on the side. Correctable, but expresses less interest in spades than a cuebid followed by 3NT.

4C, 4D: Fit-showing jumps, spade support.

4H: Splinter raise of spades.

4S: Wide-ranging raise. Could be preemptive, could be a good hand.

- (1H)- 1NT: Normal notrump overcall. As usual, transfers are off and a cuebid (2H) is the force if responder does not bid. If 1NT is doubled, Bergen runouts are on and hearts is a possible place for us to play.

However, the meaning of 1NT is different from standard when you are a PH. Standard says it shows both minors. We play that it is an Astro 1NT, showing exactly four spades and a long minor; in other words, the hand that might have been shown by an Astro cuebid (or an Astro jump overcall). This lets us get to spades when partner has four or more, and more importantly, it allows us to get out at 2m when he does not. (2C in response to 1NT would be pass or correct, of course.) When you are a PH, you are not likely to have the playing strength for a 2H Astro cuebid, which forces partner to 3m when he cannot play spades. So, we play 1NT as Astro here. (Actually, it has the same meaning as a Raptor 1NT overcall. Fred Gitelman and other commentators despise Raptor, for good reasons I think, but in this one auction – P-(P), P-(1H) – it makes sense.) Hands with both minors that are strong enough to bid now, even as a passed hand, can bid 2NT or start by overcalling 2C or 2D.

- (1H)- 2C, 2D: Normal two-level overcalls, except that they virtually deny holding spades also. This is a Rubens situation, so a 2H advance is a transfer to spades, etc.
- (1H)- 2H: Astro cuebid, 4-6 between spades and a minor. Further bidding is standard; that is, you continue the same way as if 2H were Michaels, except that of course you bear in mind that the cuebidder has only four spades, not five. But note that if you are a passed hand, 1NT takes the place of the Astro bid, so a delayed cuebid of 2H is Michaels, probably showing 5-6 between spades and the minor.

(Advances of the PH Mike bid are the same as to the Astro cuebid, except of course that advancer plays overcaller to have five spades instead of four.)

- (1H)-2H, (P)- 2S: NF, to play. May be only three spades.
- 2NT: Asks for the minor. In response, intervenor can zoom to 3H or 3S, showing the corresponding minor and extra values/shape.
- 3m: Natural, to play, an independent suit.
- 3NT: Natural.
- (1H)-2H, (X)- If responder doubles the 2H bid, advancer bids normally (meaning he ignores the double) with bids of 2S or higher.
- Pass: A pass is to play (although quite rare).
- Redouble: A redouble would show invitational values with a spade fit; this way, we can get out at 2S if intervenor rejects the game try.
- (1H)-2H, (3H)- If responder raises hearts:
- Double: Invitational in spades.
- 3S: Competitive.
- (1H)-2H, (2NT, 3C, 3D)- If responder bids something between 2S and 3D, then:
- 3H: Invitational in spades.
- 3S: Competitive.

One question that is, I believe, unsettled is the meaning of a bid of 4C by advancer. This could be natural, or it could show both minors and demand a choice, or it could show a spade fit and be fit-showing. I vote for the both-minors meaning. After (1H)-2H, (P)-4C, responder might have something like 1=3=4=5 shape and want to bid 4C to show both minors (3NT is natural and not available for that purpose). I do not consider the answer to this question to be very important.

The reason for playing Astro cuebids instead of Michaels in this specific auction is as follows. We already know that we are going to have a way to show 5-5 spade/



minor hands, and another way to show 4-6 spade/minor hands. Only the 2H bid allows the partnership to get out at the level of 2S. Which hand has a greater need to get out low? The answer is the 4-6, for two reasons. First, there is less of a chance of a big spade fit when your spades are shorter. Advancer will often have exactly four spades and no desire to get higher, and he also will often have three spades and no desire to go looking for a minor suit fit. Whichever he has, 2S is a parking place. The other reason is that when you have the 5-5 hand over a 1H opening, you can always overcall 1S if for any reason you don't want to show your entire shape right away. So, we are going to play Michaels jump overcalls at the three level for the 5-5 hands.

But as noted above, 1NT is Astro by a PH against a 1H opening. So in that specific situation, 2H is Michaels (probably 5-6 shape, since otherwise a 1S overcall seems indicated).

(1H)- 2S: Normal WJO. Responses as if to a weak 2S opener. Please note here that the meaning of the 2S bid changes back and forth depending on what the opponents opened. If they opened 1C, 2S is a WJO. If they opened 1D, 2S becomes a canapé Astro jump overcall, and if they have opened 1H, it becomes a WJO again. The amount of bidding room available after an opposing opening bid is what determines the meaning of the various overcalls. It is inferior to play a one-size-fits-all system where the various bids always have the same meaning.

(1H)- 2NT: Both minors, standard.

(1H)- 3C: Michaels, clubs and spades. Good hand, but NF. The general rule is that if advancer sees two cover cards in support of spades, he can bid 4S. A 3D bid in response would be NF, a 3H cuebid would be invitational in spades.

Obviously, by playing this way we give up the standard weak jump overcalls in the minors. Ever since I came up with the idea of using these bids as two-suited (which is not in itself a new idea, since Ghestem-type jump overcalls have been popular with European players for many years), I have been observing hands where WJOs were or might have been made in this auction. As far as I can tell, they are not necessary. Preempting against an opponent who has already shown his major suit and opening values is much less effective than an opening preempt. I think it is better to have ways to show as many as possible of our two-suited playing hands, and try to get to our own best contract with them.

However, as noted above, by a PH you show a Michaels hand the normal way, by cuebidding. So now, 3C reverts to being a standard WJO. Why didn't you open 3C? Possibly because the hand was too weak, or the suit too weak, or perhaps

you had a four card major on the side – here, that could only be hearts, since with four spades, you would bid 1NT now, Astro.

- (1H)- 3D: Michaels, diamonds and spades. A 4C bid here is still NF. But 3D is a WJO by a PH.
- (1H)- 3H: Standard, asking for a stopper with a solid minor outside. If by a PH, it is undefined.
- (1H)- 3S and higher: Standard. 3NT is natural by UPH, four of a minor is natural. The meaning of a direct overcall of 4H is interesting. I have heard of it being played to show a strong 4S overcall. It could also be mega-Michaels, showing a 6-6 type. Let's say it is natural

## **B. Sandwich Position**

The only auction by the opponents at the one level that involves two natural bids of suits after a 1H start is, of course, 1H-1S. Here, we play double as takeout, 1NT as minors (but if we are using the alternative agreement that 1NT is natural, then a cuebid in hearts is forcing by advancer, and everything else is natural), and bids of minors as natural. A 2S bid, the suit bid on the right, is generally accepted as natural. This leaves the question of what a 2H bid would mean here. It would be rare to need it as natural, so we will play it as Astro-for-the-minors, 4-6 diamonds/clubs.

When the opponents bid 1H-1NT, we do not play exactly the same methods as we do directly over a 1H opening. 2m is natural, as usual, but could be 6-4 between the minor and spades; in that case you are hoping to bid 2S later. 2H is Michaels, as in standard. 3C and 3D are Astro jump overcalls, showing stronger hands than 2m followed by spades.

When the opponents bid two-over-one, as for example 1H-2D, we presume that the hand belongs to them (if they play 2/1 GF or 2/1 shows a ten count). Here double is for takeout, as is standard, but shows 5-5 or better, looking for a save. A sandwich cuebid of 2H should not be natural. I suggest that it be Astro, showing a 3C bid with four spades on the side, just in case partner happens to have lots of spades. Axxx/x/x/QJ109xxx would be a suitable hand. If partner has five or six spades 4S for a save or even a make could be our spot, and if it is a save it could go for a trick less than 5C would. I do not think it is worth the effort to define a special meaning for 3D here. I would play it as natural, indicating that the 2D bid may have been a semi-psych, with responder trying to stave off a diamond lead on the way to a heart or notrump contract.

2NT here is similar to a takeout double, but with more shape, as it forces us to the three level.

1H-3H by the opponents is an interesting auction. If 3H is a true limit raise, i.e. it shows a ten count or so, double as takeout is probably not a good idea. It is very unlikely that you would hold a three-suited hand strong enough to force the bidding to the four level (partner can only get out at the three level if he happens to have spades). I suggest this should be a Michaels double. That is, it shows five spades and also a long minor. Such hands are hard to bid otherwise. This way, if opener bids 4H next (as he will most of the time), doubler's partner will be able to choose between pass, double, 4S, and 4NT to ask for the minor. I believe that two-suited hands suitable for competition are far more common than three-suited ones, in this auction anyway. However, if 3H is weaker than a standard limit raise, it is probably OK to retain double as three-suited.

If the opponents play Bergen raises, we apply similar principles. A Bergen raise of 3C or 3D allows us to double as three-suited takeout if it shows less than a 10+ limit raise. If it shows at least ten HCP, the double becomes Michaels. The same applies to Bergen raises of a 1S opening.

If 1H gets a splinter response of, say, 4C or 4D, agreements are needed. The Ira Rubin treatment is that to double the splinter asks for the lead of the lower unbid suit, while pass suggests you prefer the higher suit (or else have no preference). I suggest we adopt this, with the exception that at NV vs. V, double suggests a save in the splinter suit. The above is for "natural" splinters, where the opponents bid the suit they are short in. For coded splinters, where the suit bid is not (necessarily) the short suit, I suggest the straightforward approach of doubling to ask for a lead in the suit bid.

When the bidding goes 1H-4H, double should be generalized takeout, that is, it could be either three-suited or two-suited (if two-suited, one of the suits must be spades, as with both minors the bid is 4NT). So if partner doubles and you are not going to bid 4S, make liberal use of a 4NT advance anytime you do not have a strong preference for a suit of your own. With xxx/x/Kxxxx/Qxxx, the correct response to a double of 4H is 4NT. You prefer diamonds, but partner's double may have been on spades and clubs, so give him a chance to bid 5C.

If you are a passed hand and make a delayed double of 4H after the opponents bid 1H-4H, some would say that is penalty (since if you had a good hand you would have opened the bidding). I think it is Michaels again; QJxxx/x/x/KJ10xxxx.

**(ONE SPADE):** We assume this bid is always natural. We do not change our methods depending on whether the opponents play five-card majors or not.

### A. Direct Seat

- (1S)- 1NT: Analogous to 1NT overcall of a 1H opening, by UPH. But by a PH, a 1NT overcall of a 1S opening is a Michaels notrump, showing hearts and a minor (5-5 or better), and not enough strength to bid 2S. To this, advancer's bids of minor suits at any level are pass or correct. There are two reasons for this treatment. First, hands with hearts are more important to show than hands without, since there is still some chance of game, however remote. The second, and more important, reason is that these hands are twice as likely to come up, because there are two kinds of heart-minor two-suiters, but only one kind of minor two-suiter. With an extreme minor two-suiter that was not strong enough in high cards to open, you can bid 2NT now, or just start with two of a minor.

If a 1NT overcall (by an unpassed hand) is doubled, we play Bergen runouts, as usual. Later on, it will be stated that a Bergen double of their strong 1NT opening, showing a two-suiter, will not include clubs and hearts. Here, the Bergen redouble for runout, showing a two-suiter, can include clubs and hearts; it is important to be able to run to the best spot when advancer holds any two-suiter, including clubs and hearts. So, the auction (1S)-1NT, (X)-XX, (P)-2D, (P or X)-2H means that advancer had clubs and hearts all along. (However, with a minor suit and five spades, advancer might redouble with the intention of settling in *spades* if the 1NT bidder dislikes his minor suit.)

Also please notes that we always allow for the possibility of playing in opener's suit, so if 1NT is doubled and advancer runs to 2S directly, that is to play. (It is most likely to come up when opener has bid 1S in third seat on a four-card suit, or against people who open four-card majors in any position, but we play it the same way all the time.)

- (1S)- 2C, 2D: Analogous to the same bids over a 1H opening. These overcalls virtually deny holding four hearts. (For this reason, they should be alerted.) If the overcall is 2D, then there is a Rubens transfer of 2S to 3C, with 3C being a raise to 3D.
- (1S)- 2H: This is a normal overcall, just as in standard. It is not needed for any two-suited purpose, and there has to be a way to show a good hand with hearts. Continuations are Rubens transfers. If responder passes or doubles, then 2S is

the first in the series of Rubens bids, showing clubs; 3C shows diamonds; and 3D is a good raise in hearts.

- (1S)- 2S: Standard Michaels cuebid, at least 5-5 between hearts and a minor. We do not play Astro here because the purpose of Astro over a 1H opening is to keep the bidding low when we have only four spades. After a 1S opening bid, you are getting to the three level regardless of whether you have the Astro hand or the Michaels one.
- (1S)- 2NT: Minors.
- (1S)- 3C: Astro jump overcall, long clubs and four hearts. A 3D advance is nonforcing (almost all GF hands here would either have a 3NT bid, or could bid 3S, which is asking for a stopper). Please note that the same meaning for 3C (and 3D) is retained over a 1S bid, regardless of whether you are a PH or not. This is not true when the opening bid was 1H.
- (1S)- 3D: AJO. A 4C bid by advancer is NF.
- (1S)- 3H: Standard, weak, if not vulnerable. Vulnerable, we are going to switch to the intermediate treatment, where 3H is a better hand and a better suit than would necessarily be shown by a 2H overcall. I don't see very many suitable hands for vulnerable 3H preempts. Better to use the bid to show a good hand. Of course, if you are a PH, there is nothing else for the bid to mean except a preempt, however unlikely that may be.
- (1S)- 3S: Standard, asking for a stopper with a solid minor outside.
- (1S)- 3NT and higher: Standard. 3NT is natural, four of a minor is natural. A jump to 4S over 1S presumably is to play.

### **C. Sandwich Position**

Most auctions here are similar to analogous ones after a 1H opening.

1S-3S is treated similarly to 1H-3H. The Michaels double applies if the 3S bid is limit, not preemptive.

When the bidding goes 1S-4S by them, double is three-suited, more or less. It can also be a relatively balanced hand, but some kind of support in the other three suits

is guaranteed, if partner has a long suit and wants to bid it. Overcall 4NT with any true two-suiter.

If you are a passed hand and make a delayed double of 4S after the opponents bid 1S-4S, that is a gambling bid showing 0=(4-4-5) shape with a void in spades and asking partner to save in his long suit, or pass if spades is his long suit. Try to be not vulnerable when you do this.

## **(ONE NOTRUMP) (NATURAL):**

### **A. Direct Seat Over Strong NT**

Our approach to defensive bidding against 1NT openings depends on the opponents' range. If it is strong, which is defined as any range that includes a 15 count, in direct seat we play Bergen. Direct bids are one-suiters, double is two-suiters (but not hearts and clubs). When your two suits actually are hearts and clubs, you can overcall 2NT. With both minors, you either start by overcalling two of a minor, or by passing and balancing with an unusual notrump. If you double to show a two-suiter and the next opponent passes, partner either bids two of the lowest minor he can stand to play in, or bids 2M or 3m to show a one-suiter of his own. If he bids 2m, intervener either passes or bids his lowest suit, and so on, until a contract is arrived at. If responder bids something at the two level, advancer can either bid his own suit, natural, or double to ask intervener to show a suit (he guarantees a fit with at least two suits when he does this). If responder redoubles, advancer passes to ask intervenor to bid his lowest suit, or bids a suit of his own, to play. In this way, you can show any two-suiter or any one-suiter at a low level, and with the one-suiters, your suit is shown directly.

We play this way because one-suiters are more common than two-suiters, and also are more likely to allow advancer to go to the three level usefully (he needs to know which suit overcaller has to be able to do this). I learned this convention from Ethan Stein when I lived in New York. Stein, Bergen's former regular partner before Larry Cohen, learned it from the horse's mouth. It is better than Bergen's later invention of DONT. Playing Bergen, you can often make a natural overcall of 2C or 2D and let partner decide whether to compete to the three level. Playing DONT, you have to double first, and the opponents have often arrived at 2M before you have shown your suit.

Bergen is really an exactly upside-down version of DONT, except that in Bergen, you can't show a heart-club two-suiter at the two level (you must bid 2NT to show this hand). The reason is that a double followed by a 2H bid always shows both majors. If

you doubled with hearts and clubs, and advancer bid 2D, you couldn't then bid 2H. So, we can't show one of the six possible two-suiters at the two level.

There are a few sequences in the sandwich position, versus a strong NT, that need to be discussed. A double of a 2C response (regardless of whether they play it as Stayman or as some other kind of artificial bid) shows clubs. A double of 2D or 2H when bid as a transfer, or of 2S showing one or both minor suits, shows the suit they bid. If they bid 2D (or 2H) as a transfer, and we bid the suit transferred to, it shows a Michaels-type hand. (1NT)-P, (2D)-2H shows spades and a minor. If you are three-suited short in hearts, you pass 2D and wait for the next round of bidding. If opener bids 2H and responder passes, now you can double. If they end up in 4H or 3NT before you get a chance to bid again, you may be glad you passed and didn't describe your distribution.

If the opponents' NT opening is weak, we bid as described below. Exception: If you are a passed hand, Bergen is on (because you cannot have a penalty double hand).

## **B. Direct Seat over weak NT**

(1NT)- Double: For penalties, in principle, showing a good hand. Good is defined as being at the top of their range. In practice this translates to 14 points, usually, although you do not have to act with a flat fourteen count; in direct seat, it will often prove better to wait until you have 15. There are certain hands that double generally will *not* be. With both majors, or with a major/minor canapé hand, or with a shapely major single suiter, other bids are available. In fact, double is usually: (a) balanced or semi-balanced; (b) a three-suiter that is too strong to pass and which does not have both majors; or (c) a good hand with a long minor suit.

In response to the double, advancer will of course usually pass with a balanced hand as well (if responder passes, that is). If it goes (1NT)-X, (P), and advancer does not want to pass, we now pretend that *partner* is the one who opened 1NT, and further bidding continues that way; i.e., 2C is now Stayman, etc. This may not be theoretically ideal, but it will work on the vast majority of hands, and is easy to remember. However, there is one change from the regular notrump structure that needs to be kept in mind. On an auction like (1NT)-X, (P)-2H, where 2H is a transfer to spades, the doubler can superaccept spades only by bidding 3S. Bids of 2NT, 3C and 3D would be natural, implying shortness in spades; i.e. hand types (b) or (c). A 3H bid would probably also be natural, although rare.

If 1NT doubled is redoubled, further bidding depends on the defined meaning of the redouble. If it initiates a runout by the 1NT opener's side, or in fact if it means anything at all other than business, then advancer bids exactly the same as if responder had passed, so that 2C is Stayman, etc. If advancer has a hand with which he is interested in extracting a penalty after the opponents run, he passes now and hopes that partner can double for takeout (we follow here our usual rule that the first double of a suit bid naturally by them at the two level is for takeout, regardless of whether the doubler is the player who doubled 1NT previously, or advancer). If he can't or doesn't want to double them later, he bids notrump naturally, or cuebids their suit to ask partner to bid notrump with a stopper or to show a major suit, whichever seems best.

If the redouble is explained as business (i.e. responder is saying his side has the majority of strength, and the 1NT opener is expected to stay in 1NTXX), then we are probably in trouble. Now all bids at the two level (or otherwise) are runouts. Bid two of any suit to play; no nonsense about transfers. We need to be able to play in any suit (including opener's). But there are a few tricks here. Specifically, the runouts to 2C and 2D need to be alerted, because they do not necessarily guarantee length in the suit bid. It is presumed at first that they do, but they do not have to be natural bids. If 2C is doubled (by either opponent) and advancer redoubles, he is saying he is short in clubs and wants partner to bid another suit. Classic shape for this would be 4=4=4=1, similar to responding 2C Stayman and then passing whatever partner bids. And if advancer pulls 2C doubled to 2D, he is now saying he has two suits, diamonds and a major. If advancer runs to 2D, is doubled, and redoubles that, he is saying he has both majors and demands that the 1NT overcaller pick one of them. Don't forget to alert these 2C and 2D bids in this auction when appropriate. There is no need to alert runouts to 2H or 2S, as these are always natural.

The question of how to advance the auction when responder runs from 1NT doubled to 2C or higher is fairly complicated, so specific cases are discussed below. First, and serving as a base for similar auctions, is if responder runs to 2C.

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| (1NT)-X, 2C- | Pass: It does not matter what 2C means; to pass simply indicates lack of interest in buying the contract. It does not create a force.   |
| (1NT)-X, 2C- | Double: Shows invitational values at least, and acts as a Stayman equivalent. Intervenor can pass with good clubs. Note that this treatment is on regardless of whether 2C is "natural" or not. |



- (1NT)-X, 2C- 2D, 2H, 2S: All of these bids are natural and nonforcing, showing a five-card or longer suit. Importantly, they are also all invitational. I discovered the need for such a treatment while reviewing world championship hands. It turned out that when someone doubles a weak notrump, there were a great many hands opposite that would have something like 8-9 points, wanting to invite game. Getting to the three level to invite with these hands resulted in too many minus scores. The solution is to invite immediately at the two level, so that partner can get out low with an unsuitable hand. If you have a weak one-suited hand, you simply pass, and bid your suit at the next turn if appropriate (and if you get a chance!). This may seem like a strange way to play, but research suggests that it is right.
- (1NT)-X, 2C- 2NT: Natural, invitational.
- (1NT)-X, 2C- 3C, 3D, 3H, 3S: Natural, forcing. Any bid at the three level here is forcing.
- (1NT)-X, 2C- 4C, 4D, 4H, 4S: The bids in the major suits should be natural (it is desirable to put the notrump opener on lead). I have no use for the minor suit bids here.

At this point, it is appropriate to discuss the meaning of further doubles in these auctions. A typical example is (1NT)-X, (2D)-? Assume that 2D is natural and to play. What does it mean if advancer doubles, and what does it mean if 2D is passed around to the original doubler, who doubles again? For us, both doubles are negative, or takeout. At the two level, you can only penalize the opponents by passing their natural bid, and waiting for partner to double it (if he can). If you are afraid the hand will be passed out in their contract and that we will miss a game, just go ahead and bid the appropriate number of notrump. We do not play forcing passes at low levels. If the opponents run out of 1NT doubled, even to two of a minor, we are allowed to drop them there.

If you double 1NT and then bid 2NT next, on an auction like (1NT)-X, (2D)-P, (P)-2NT, it is natural. This shows extra values, and possibly a good lower-ranking suit.

- (1NT)-X, (2D)- Any: Here, the same principles apply as when they run out to 2C. Bids of 2H and 2S are invitational. Double of 2D, if it is natural, is takeout. If 2D is a transfer to hearts (many people play front-of-card after a double), double is cards, with willingness to defend 2DX if the opponents do not bid 2H. A 2H bid here would be

Michaels. Pass and double 2H when the transfer is accepted is takeout of hearts, and so is double followed by double; the difference is that the second sequence is stronger.

If the opponents run to a bid of 2H or higher, general principles apply. Now, we pretend that doubler has opened 1NT, and deal with the “overcall” appropriately.

(1NT)- 2C: This is for majors. In response, bids of a major by advancer at any level are obviously natural, with jumps to the three level being invitational. If 2C is doubled, both pass and redouble are to play. A bid of 2D over 2C (whether doubled or not) is used to ask for the longer major, since the 2C bidder will often have 5-4 shape. If you must play in diamonds, bid 3D over 2C. This applies even when 2C has been doubled.

(1NT)- 2D: This is a transfer overcall, showing hearts. We play transfer overcalls to the majors for two reasons. First, it puts the notrump opener on lead (when the transfer is accepted). Second, it lets the transferor show various hand types in two bids. Assuming partner bids 2H, showing he would have passed a natural 2H overcall, transferor can bid a second suit, or bid 3H to show extra strength, or even make a natural bid in notrump.

If advancer does not want to accept the transfer, he can make a cheap nonforcing bid in a new suit. However, a jump, such as 3S over 2D, would be forcing. A bid of 2NT is invitational, of course, as is 3H over 2D.

(1NT)- 2H: Transfer overcall, showing spades. Continuations are analogous to those over a 2D bid, above.

(1NT)- 2S: This is a special bid, and is alertable. It shows exactly four spades, and a longer minor. There is no other good way to bid such canapé hands. The bid is nonforcing, and advancer can bid 2NT to ask for the minor. New suits by advancer are NF. This setup may not be ideal, but I have learned through research that hands with four-card majors are very hard to show when an opponent opens 1NT. It is very dangerous to risk missing game in a 4-4 or 5-4 major fit.

(1NT)- 2NT: Both minors. Bidding proceeds as after other unusual notrump bids.

(1NT)- 3C, 3D: These show major-minor canapé hands in which the four-card suit is hearts, and the longer suit is the bid minor. Non-forcing.

(1NT)- 3H and higher: Normal preempts. A direct 3NT bid is to play, with a long minor suit. Use this bid when you think that a double of 1NT won't be left in.

#### **D. Sandwich Position**

(1NT)-P, (2C)- Double: Shows general strength, at least top of their notrump range or better. Shape tends to be balanced. It also tends not to be three-suited with a short major, as that hand can simply pass and wait to make a takeout double (if appropriate) of whatever they bid. Further bidding is natural, and the first-double-is-negative principle applies at the two level. So does the free-bid-is-invitational principle, as after (1NT)-X.

The above assumes that the 2C bid may be weak, simply showing a desire to run out from 1NT. If the opponents happen to play that 2C shows or strongly suggests invitational or better values, we revert to our methods over a strong 1NT opener (double shows clubs).

(1NT)-P, (2C)- 2D, 2H, 2S: Natural, opening bid strength or better, by a UPH. (If 2C is or may be weak.)

(1NT)-P, (2C)- 2NT: Any strong balanced hand would start with double, so this is a good hand with both minors. You are somewhat more likely than usual to hold such a hand in this auction, because the 2C bid suggests that responder has major suit length.

(1NT)-P, (2C)- 3C or higher: Natural; if 3D or higher, too strong to bid only two. (But when 2C guarantees or suggests a good hand, 3x is preemptive by us.)

(1NT)-P, (2D)- If this is natural, double is takeout, of course, and other bids are natural, except for 3D, which is Michaels. If 2D is a transfer, double is a good hand with some diamond length, probably balanced; immediate 2H is Michaels; and pass followed by double is takeout. If 2D is two-way Stayman and shows a game force, all bids are natural (except notrump, which is unusual) and double of 2D is lead-directing and/or save-suggesting.

(1NT)-P, (2H)- Similar to above for 2D response.

(1NT)-P, (2S)- Similar to above for 2D response.

Higher bids in response to 1NT are not discussed here; general principles apply.

**TWO CLUBS) (NATURAL):** This will apply when the opponents use a strong-club type 2C opening, as we do.

### **A. Direct Seat**

(2C)- Double: Takeout. Opening bid strength or better (less if a PH, of course). In response, bidding is natural except that a cuebid of 3C in response to the double is forcing, of course. Note that a 2NT response to the double is not any kind of lebensohl, since there is no need to puppet to 3C, the opponents' suit. 2NT is natural here.

If the double is redoubled, advancer must run unless he wants to play it in 2CXX.

(2C)- 2D, 2H, 2S: Natural. Further bidding is natural as well. The important question is when, and whether, new suits are forcing. I say new suits are not forcing at the two level, and that they are at the three level (by UPH).

(2C)- 2NT: Natural. Strength is 16 to 19. This is a dangerous bid, but you have to do something with these hands or risk missing games. Further bidding: As usual for us, when there is a natural 2NT overcall, partner's bids of three of a major are forcing, and three of a new minor (here, 3D) is not forcing.

(2C)- 3C: Michaels.

(2C)- 3D and higher: Natural, hands that are too good to make a simple overcall. One exception: 4C directly over 2C would be Supermichaels.

### **E. Sandwich Position**

(2C)-P, (2D)- Bear in mind that the 2D response usually shows a good hand. For this reason, double here is both majors, not three-suited takeout. Bids of suits other than clubs are natural. 3C here would be Michaels, showing a better hand than double.

- (2C)-P, (2M)- This is played as natural in all systems I know of. Double shows the other two suits; bids of new suits are natural. I know of no standard meanings for cuebids in this auction. If it goes (2C)-P, (2S), I have never heard of anyone bidding 3C or 3S now. Actually, let's say that a 3C cuebid is the reds, with extreme shape, and 3S is natural (they psyched?).
- (2C)-P, (2NT)- Again, this is usually played as natural. If that is what it is, double is majors, but you had better have a good hand to do it. If this is played as showing diamonds, as we play it (Meckwell use this treatment too), double is, I suppose, takeout for majors. Cuebids of clubs or diamonds should now show something too – let's say clubs is 4=6 in the majors, and diamonds is 6=4, i.e. corresponding minor to show longer major.
- (2C)-P, (3C)- This raise is played as semi-preemptive by most, in which case double is takeout, 4C is Michaels, anything else is common sense.

Higher responses to 2C call for natural bidding by us.

**(TWO CLUBS) (ARTIFICIAL):** Against a standard SAF 2C opening, double is for majors and notrump is for minors. Of course, all bids are lead-directing and/or save-oriented. This Mathe treatment also applies to a 2D response to 2C, or to a 2H artificial negative response if the opponents play that method. Otherwise, standard bidding by us.

**(TWO DIAMONDS) (MULTI):** There are two ways for opponents to play this, one being that 2D is always a weak two in a major (in which case it is properly called Wagner rather than Multi), the other being that it can also incorporate certain strong hands (typically a strong three-suiter, or strong balanced, or both). In practice it does not matter, since if you have a strong hand you are going to assume they have a weak two in a major anyhow. We use a modified version of the Meckwell system for defending against Multi.

## A. Direct Seat

- (2D)- Double: Good 13 to a bad 16 HCP, relatively balanced hand. It is impossible to describe all auctions that can follow from here, but we have a guiding principle that makes it fairly easy to, at least, understand the defined meaning of various bids by doubler and advancer. That principle is as follows: Advancer simply pretends (assumes) that partner, for his double, has opened a medium 1NT bid of 14 to 16 high-card points, and

applies our usual 1NT opening/competitive auction techniques to the further bidding.

(2D)-X, (Pass)- When responder passes the double, we assume that partner has “opened” 1NT and that they have “overcalled” 2D. Of course, since we have already doubled 2D, we don't have a “negative double” available here; we have a “penalty” double, which is effected by passing 2D. If you don't want to defend 2DX, you can bid 2M to play, or 2NT or a higher bid as if partner had opened 1NT, in transfer lebensohl style.

Here, the opponents may have the agreement that if responder passes the double, opener will bid his suit (or opener may run to his suit anyway, with or without the agreement). In that case, the auction again continues as if doubler had opened 1NT. So an auction like (2D)-X, (P)-(P), (2S) is considered equivalent to 1NT-(P), P-(2S), with our notrump opening being shifted in range to 14-16.

(2D)-X, (2M)- Double: Negative. Remember, we assume that partner has opened 1NT, 14-16, and that the opponents have just made a natural overcall of 2M. While it is true that we do not know for sure that the suit responder has just bid is the one opener actually has, we pretend for the moment that it is. If you choose to pass as advancer, and opener (say) corrects a 2H response to 2S, both you and partner now proceed on the assumption that the opponents have made a natural overcall of 2S. This means partner can double 2S with a good original double, i.e. 15-16 HCP, and relative shortness in spades. Usually he will just pass. When 2S comes back to you, you also can bid as if the auction had gone 1NT-(2S) to you, meaning you can now double negatively, make a transfer lebensohl bid, cuebid as shortness Stayman, etc.

This style does mean that some of the time, you will bid 3NT over a 2M bid without knowing for sure which suit the opponents really have. Try to have something in both major suits when you do this. If the look of your hand tells you that the opponents are probably in the “wrong” suit for the moment, you can always pass in the expectation that opener will bid again. This will allow you to proceed with the auction with both you and partner knowing which

suit the opponents really have, so that you can double negatively, look for stoppers, etc.

- (2D)-X, (2H)- 2S: Natural, to play. But remember that partner is assumed to have “opened” a 14-16 1NT, so he may have only a doubleton spade, and you therefore need five spades to make this bid (it is assumed for the moment that hearts is the opponents’ actual suit).
- (2D)-X, (2M)- 2NT: Transfer lebensohl, based on the assumption that whichever suit responder bid is the suit they actually have.
- (2D)-X, (2M)- 3C, 3D, etc: Whatever the defined meaning is in the transfer lebensohl scheme.
- (2D)-X, (2M)- 3M: Cuebid (i.e. advancer bids three of the same suit responder bid). Same as in the auction 1NT-(2M), 3M. That is, shortness Stayman.
- (2D)-X, (2M)- Pass: If advancer passes the runout to 2H or 2S, he is (for the time being) indicating weakness; this is not a forcing pass auction.
- (2D)-X, (2NT/3x)- If responder bids something other than 2H or 2S after the double, advancer’s bids are all the same as in similar auctions where partner has opened 1NT and the opponents have bid 2NT or higher. The most common three-level bid from the opponents here is 3H, with responder having a fit for both majors and wanting opener to pass or correct. When this bid is made, as usual we start by assuming that the opponents actually have the suit responder has just bid (here, hearts) and proceed accordingly. If as advancer you suspect from the look of your hand that opener actually has spades and is about to bid 3S, you have two choices. You can pass and wait, or bid something that ignores the opponents (usually this would be 3NT).
- (2D)- 2M, 3C, 3D: Natural, opening bid strength or better. As usual, new suits by partner are forcing if he is a UPH. We play that when the opening bid is 2D and you have a good hand with a five-card or longer major, you simply assume that opener has the other major and bid yours right away. If you have a long suit but not a good enough hand to bid right away, you pass and hope to bid your suit cheaply at the next turn.

- (2D)- 2NT: 16 plus to 19 HCP. Further bidding follows our basic principles, with one exception: since the opponents do not have a known suit that can be cuebid here as a Stayman substitute, 3C is Stayman (simple Stayman, not our system for responding to a 2NT opener). If you pass in direct seat over the 2D bid and bid notrump later by yourself, that is always unusual; all balanced hands with 13 or more points act directly, so there is no need for you to balance with a natural notrump. Of course, if partner bids first, your notrump bids are natural.
- (2D)- 3H, 3S, 3NT, 4C, 4D, 4H, 4S: Natural, too strong not to jump.
- (2D)- 4NT: Minors.

## **F. Sandwich Position**

- (2D)-P, (2H)- Pass: Usually just a weak hand, but it can be a good three-suited hand short in spades. 2H by them is a “pass-or-correct” bid, so if you are short in spades, you assume they are going to get to 2S, and you can double that for takeout later.
- (2D)-P, (2H)- Double: Here you are assuming that hearts is opener’s real suit, and you double for takeout now, since if you pass the auction could end in 2H. In response to this, if opener passes (showing hearts), partner pretends the 2H bid was a natural opening of 2H and advances the double appropriately, using 2NT as lebensohl. (Of course, both partners will bear in mind that the hearts are actually on the other side of the table from where they usually are.)
- If opener rebids 2S, double now is penalty (this is not a “first-double-is-takeout” situation, since partner has already shown spades by making a takeout double of their presumed heart suit), 2NT natural, 3m competitive. 3H would be natural, but what hand would want to bid it now is a good question. You couldn’t overcall 2D with 2H, which is natural for us, and partner has suggested shortness, not length, in hearts. You should have a good six- or seven-card heart suit, but too weak to overcall 2H the first time. Something like xx/QJ109xx/AJx/xx sounds about right. Finally, a cue-bid of 3S over the 2S rebid asks partner to bid 3NT from his side (to protect his presumed stopper against the opening lead).



- (2D)-P, (2H)- 2S, 2NT, 3C, 3D: All natural. 2NT now has an expanded point range, since notrump hands cannot be split up into 13-16 and 16-19 ranges on this auction. Now 2NT is natural, 15+ to 19. Again, since the opponents have no known suit, a 3C continuation is Stayman.
- (2D)-P, (2H)- 3H, 3S, 3NT, 4C, 4D, 4H, 4S: All of these bids have the same meaning that they would have in direct position over a natural 2H bid; that is to say, we are assuming that hearts is opener's real suit. So a 4C bid here would show clubs and spades. (With clubs and hearts, you can pass, waiting for opener to rebid 2S.)
- (2D)-P, (2S)- Pass: Again, the opponents have made a pass-or-correct response, so pass can be with short hearts, waiting for them to get to 3H so you can double for takeout.
- (2D)-P, (2S)- Double: Takeout of spades.
- (2D)-P, (2S)- 2NT, 3C, 3D, 3H, 3S, 3NT, 4 anything: All as if they had opened a natural 2S. 2NT is 15+ to 19.
- (2D)-P, (2NT)- Pass: As usual, pass followed by a double of whatever suit they settle in is takeout. Bear in mind here that 2NT is usually a good hand for them. It is only when it is a psych that it is likely we belong in the auction, so have a good hand.
- (2D)-P, (2NT)- Double: Good hand. 14 to 16 balanced is typical. If you double and then double again, you have something like 20 HCP.
- (2D)-P, (2NT)- 3NT: Natural. Whatever you think justifies driving to game.
- (2D)-P, (P)- The opponents are allowed to try to play in 2D. If they do, double of 2D is balanced, showing about 13 to 16. (It is not three-suited takeout as the opponents are presumed to have at least two suits we cannot play in, diamonds and opener's major. I realize that some people will pass 2D with random weak hands, especially when NV against V, but there is not much you can do about this except hope that you have enough to bid something when it happens.) Any other bid is natural. 2NT would show a stronger hand than double.

**(TWO DIAMONDS) (FLANNERY):** We will use the standard defense against Flannery. Double is a strong notrump, 2H is takeout for the other suits, 2NT is for minors, and 2S, 3C, and 3D are natural. Jumps in suits or notrump would show hands too strong to make a simple overcall. If responder bids 2H or 2S to play, a double in sandwich position still shows a strong balanced hand, and minor suit bids are natural. A cuebid of one of their suits (rare) would show a stopper in that suit and ask for a stopper in the other. Common sense on all other auctions.

**(TWO DIAMONDS) (WEAK):** Standard defensive techniques. Double is takeout, cuebid is Michaels (Supermichaels if the bid is 4D). A 2NT response to a double is regular lebensohl.

**(TWO DIAMONDS) (PRECISION):** Double is balanced 13+ to 16; 2NT is 16 to 19. Bids of any suit at any level are natural, with one exception: a 3C bid shows a diamond suit, and a stronger hand than a direct 3D bid. (This treatment is recommended by David Berkowitz in the book *Precision Today*.) All of this applies to balancing seat (or, as it might be called, pre-balancing seat, since when responder bids 2M, the auction is going to end unless one of us does something) as well, when responder has bid 2M to play. Balancing (or pre-balancing) bids by a PH are the same with adjusted point ranges, except that all NT bids are unusual, and a 3C balancing overcall now reverts to being natural, since there is no need to split the range for diamond hands when you are already known to have less than an opening bid.

**(TWO HEARTS) (FLANNERY):** Same defense as to 2D Flannery, except that double of 2H is for takeout, and the 2NT overcall is now natural. There is no bid to show minors, except a jump to 4NT.

**(TWO HEARTS) (WEAK):** Again, more or less standard. An immediate cuebid of 3H is stopper-asking, since four of a minor is available with Michaels-type hands. A 2NT response to a takeout double, in either seat, is regular lebensohl. Jump overcalls to 4C or 4D are that suit and spades, not forcing. If your hand is not strong enough to do this, just overcall 2S. As for takeout doubles, we play that immediate or balancing doubles of 2H are takeout, and in the auction (2H)-X, (3H)-X, the second double is responsive, cards, saying “do something intelligent;” it does not guarantee or deny a four-card spade suit. (But with five spades you would presumably always bid some number of spades.) Also, in this particular auction, with four spades and a minor suit on the side you can cuebid 4H as COG-Q, asking partner to choose between 4S and 5m.

Please note here that if the opponents play a two-suited two-bid, such as the one where 2H shows five or more hearts and an unspecified five-card minor, we treat it as a weak

two and use the same methods. The assumption is that if we end up in a minor suit, it will not be the one the opening bidder is long in.

**(TWO SPADES) (WEAK):** Analogous to defense to weak 2H. If the response to a weak two is the nominally strength-showing 2NT, our defenses are still on as if to a weak two in direct seat, because this 2NT bid is sometimes psyched.

**(TWO NOTRUMP) (MINORS):** We assume that we cannot play in a minor suit after they bid this. Direct cuebids of 3C and 3D are for both majors; the one you bid depends on which major is longer or stronger. 3C suggests better hearts, 3D is for spades. Direct overcalls of 3H and 3S are natural. If you have a major suit but not a good hand, pass and expect to be able to balance into your suit after the opponents settle into 3C or 3D. Double of 2NT is a strong balanced hand, and all doubles after that are penalty oriented by either of us. If you pass and then double the runout to 3C or 3D, that is takeout for majors also, but with a relatively weak hand.

After responder attempts to sign off in 3C or 3D: When the bid is 3C, 3D by us is available for majors, so double is a strong balanced hand. When they bid 3D, double is takeout for majors.

**(TWO NOTRUMP) (NATURAL):** A double of this bid is for majors. If they respond 3C, or a transfer bid of 3D, 3H, or 3S, double is lead-directional.

**(THREE OF A SUIT) (NATURAL):** Our defensive methods to natural preempts at the three level are mostly standard. Cuebids of 3m openings show both majors; 4H over a 3H opening is Supermichaels; 4S over 3S is also Supermichaels (bid 4NT with both minors).

**(THREE NOTRUMP) (GAMBLING):** The most often used intervention against this bid will, of course, be a double. This shows one of three basic hand types: (1) Strong balanced, which is the type partner will initially presume. With this you will pass subsequently unless invited back into the auction somehow. (2) Strong three-suited, short in a minor (presumably). With this, you expect the opponents to run. (3) One-suited with diamonds. With this hand, you double and then bid 4D after the opponents run to 4C (you hope).

If you don't double 3NT, you can of course overcall four of a major, natural. If you have a long major suit and for whatever reason don't want to bid it right away, you can pass and hope that the opponents run to 4m, then bid it later. Probably you would have a weak hand to do this. Or you can double and then bid your major suit, showing that you

have more in high cards and less in your long suit, relatively speaking, than a direct 4M overcall.

Now we come to the more interesting parts of our methods here. A bid to show both majors is necessary, I think. For us, that bid will be 4D. Why 4D and not 4C? Because if you have long clubs, the only bid available is 4C! You want to show your suit before the opponents get to 4D, preventing you from showing it at the four level. You do not have the same problem with diamonds, since you can double (or pass, if not strong enough to double), and then try 4D when and if the opponents pull to 4C.

All of these bids have the same meaning in balancing seat, if responder passes 3NT. If he pulls to 4C, fourth hand can double for takeout of clubs. If he is short in diamonds and long in clubs, he passes, expecting the opener to run back to diamonds, which he will double for takeout next time around. A 4D bid over the 4C response still shows both majors.

(3NT)- Double: The most often used intervention against this bid will, of course, be a double. This shows one of three basic hand types, as described above. Of the three, the first (strong balanced) is the type partner will initially presume. With this, you double and then wait for partner to do something; you will usually pass next unless invited back into the auction in one way or another.

(3NT)-X, (4m)- Double: The opponents will often run to four of a minor. When advancer doubles this, he shows general values. Opener is allowed to pull with, say, a five card major. He knows advancer is not doubling on trump tricks since presumably he does not have any. If advancer takes no action when the opponents run, doubler can pass.

(3NT)-X, (P)-P; 4m- Double: Strong three-suited, short in opener's minor (presumably). Normally, opener will stay in 3NT when responder passes the double, but not all opponents play this way, so the given auction is possible. It is also possible for responder to run to four clubs, passed by opener (opener's suit is clubs) or converted to 4D (opener's suit is diamonds). Responder may also pull to 4D himself, indicating that he can tell by looking at his hand that opener's suit is diamonds. In all of these cases, a second double by the original doubler is takeout, revealing the three-suited nature of your hand, with shortness in opener's suit. Sometimes, of

course, you won't actually be short in opener's suit. In such cases, you just do the best you can.

(3NT)-X, (4C)-P, (P)- 4D or  
(3NT)-X. (P)-P; 4C- 4D: Single suiter with diamonds. A direct 4D over 3NT would be artificial showing the majors.

(3NT)- 4C, 4M: Natural.

(3NT)- 4D: Artificial. Both majors. Presumably at least 5-5. (With 5-4 in the majors, you would almost always have a singleton or void in opener's suit, and would thus have 5440 or 5431 shape; such hands would be treated as three-suiters. In the unlikely event that you get a 5422 with 5-4 in the majors, use your judgment. Best, probably, is to treat the hand as balanced, meaning Type 1.)

### **Balancing Seat:**

(3NT)-P, (P)- All bids have the same meaning as in direct seat. 4D = majors, etc.

(3NT)-P, (4C)- Double is takeout of clubs. 4D still shows both majors. With a club suit, pass expecting opener to correct to 4D, which you can double for takeout when it comes back to you, or you can bid 5C either immediately or later.

**(THREE NOTRUMP) (NAMYATS):** If 3NT shows a broken minor, our defensive methods are the same as if it were a gambling 3NT, showing a solid suit.

**(THREE NOTRUMP) (SOLID MAJOR):** Since we play this treatment ourselves, we should have a defense to it if someone else plays it too. Methods are similar to when 3NT shows a minor: double is strong balanced or three-suited, with a repeat double tending to show a takeout double of a 4M opening (this is especially true if they get to 4H). Direct or delayed overcalls are natural. 4NT shows minors.

**(FOUR CLUBS) (NAMYATS):** We use the Goldman-Soloway method, as described in *Preempts from A to Z*.

(4C)- Pass: Usually a weak hand, of course, but you can pass with a good hand, expecting the opponents to end up in 4H, their real suit. If you pass and then double, it is penalty-oriented, a strong notrump or better.

- (4C)- Double: Takeout of their real suit, which is hearts here. An initial double does not have to be very much in high cards; since presumably 4C is an unplayable contract for them, it is not dangerous to double here. Therefore, you can double with as little as a takeout double of a 1H opening. If you double and then double again, it is still takeout, but with a better hand.
- (4C)- 4H: Michaels.
- (4C)- 4S: Natural. A delayed 4S bid would be weaker.
- (4C)- 4NT: Minors. A delayed 4NT bid would be weaker.

If you are in fourth seat and the auction goes (4C)-P, (4H) to you, defend exactly as if there had been an opening bid of 4H. If the responder to the 4C opening bids 4D, which is usually played as some kind of asking bid, double is lead-directional/save-interested (NV vs. V, the save implication is much stronger).

**(FOUR CLUBS) (NATURAL):** Standard. The only question is what a 4NT overcall should be. I have seen Blackwood, natural, and two-suited suggested. I say natural. Also, a direct cuebid of 5C should be two-suited, but with the suits unspecified.

**(FOUR DIAMONDS) (NAMYATS):** Analogous to auctions starting with 4C Namyats. A cuebid of 4S is Michaels, showing hearts and a minor, although obviously you need a very strong hand to bid this instead of just overcalling 4H.

**(FOUR DIAMONDS) (NATURAL):** Analogous to natural 4C opening, except that a 5D cuebid would be both majors.

**(FOUR HEARTS) (NATURAL):**

- (4H)- Pass: Usually just a weak hand, but can be good defensively, since double here is takeout, not penalty.
- (4H)- Double: Standard takeout.
- (4H)- 4S: Natural, but can be a very wide variety of hands. As advancer, be careful about trying for slam, as the 4S bid in no way promises a good hand, just spades and some shape.

- (4H)- 4NT: Takeout, but almost always for minors. Almost all hands that have spades would start with either a double or a 4S overcall.
- (4H)- 5C, 5D: Natural. Of course, at favorable these can be straight saves or save/make hands, so don't bid a slam on the assumption partner has something.
- (4H)- 5H: I am not sure it is worth the trouble to define this bid, but let's say it is Michaels.

### **(FOUR SPADES) (NATURAL):**

- (4S)- Any: Analogous defense to 4H opening. However, a 4NT overcall of 4S is more common, because it covers heart/minor two-suiters, not just both minors as is the case when the opening bid is 4H. We do not play the old-fashioned treatment of doubling 4S for penalties, and 4NT for takeout.

If the opponents open 4NT or anything higher, we play standard methods, whatever those are.

### **BALANCING SEAT**

We will have special agreements, at first at least, only for auctions where there is a possibility of balancing against an opening bid that has been passed out. There are just too many possible multi-bid auctions to start cataloging them.

The major difference between our direct overcalls and our balancing ones is that when the opponents have opened one of a suit, passed around, a bid of one of a suit is more likely to be only four cards (although it is still pretty unlikely). We play all the same two-suited bids as we do in direct seat. Jumps that would normally be preemptive now show good hands, and 2NT is natural, not unusual.

Balancing bids of one of a major are not very different from the same overcalls in direct seat. In both positions they can be relatively weak. The main difference is that the balancing bid is more likely to be on a four-card suit. (This is because in direct seat, you can pass with some awkward hands in hopes that you will get another chance. In the passout seat, there are some hands that are strong enough so that they have to bid, and which have no reasonable bid except a four-card suit. With AQJ10/Axxx/xxxx/x, there is no bid at all after (1H)-P, (P) except 1S.) The point ranges for all of partner's actions are the same as they would be if the overcall came in direct and the advance came in fourth seat. We do not use the theory of the "transferred king" or anything else

that says that the rules for raising, etc. a balancing overcall are different from what they are for raising a direct overcall. This idea was created by players of another era who used sound overcalls in direct seat, and who had to overcall much lighter in balancing seat to protect partner. We don't bid that way.

The balancing bid of one notrump is, of course, not the same as a direct 1NT bid. We play that if the opponents have opened one of a minor, 1NT shows 12 to 15 points. If they have opened one of a major, it is 13 to 16. We play our usual set of responses, adjusted of course for point ranges – cuebid is the only force, otherwise natural at the two level, etc. Since these ranges equate to hands that would have opened the bidding (balancing 1NT with 10 or 11 points is for heroes, not for us), the question arises, what is a balancing 1NT bid by a passed hand? If the opening bid was one spade, the answer is easy. It is a Michaels notrump, showing five-five hearts and a minor. This hand type is twice as common as both minors. So 1NT over 1S is hearts and another, and a runout to 2m (or 3m, if the opponents push you that high) is pass-or-correct.

I suspect that there is no such thing as a 12-point hand that wants to balance over an opening bid of 1H that cannot make a takeout double or bid a suit. If you hold Qx/A10xx/Kxxx/QJx and an opening bid of 1H comes around to you, and you are a passed hand, it seems wrong to me to bid 1NT. Accordingly, we will play 1NT here as Astro.

Against an opening bid of 1C or 1D, a 1NT balance by a passed hand means that you have exactly a twelve count and have decided to show it now.

A balancing bid of 2NT is natural. The point range depends on what the point range for a balancing 1NT would have been. Against a minor, you balance 1NT with 12 to 15, double and then bid notrump with 16 to 18, bid 2NT with 19 to 20, double and jump in notrump with 21 plus. Against a major, the ranges are 13-16, 17-19, 20-21, 22 plus. A balancing bid of 2NT by a passed hand perhaps does not exist, but if it does, it shows 6-5 or better in the two lower unbid suits.

A balancing jump cuebid is a stopper-ask for notrump. Again, this does not exist by a PH.

Balancing jumps to the four level (in a suit different from opener's) are natural. I have heard that some people play NAMYATS-type transfers in this position, to cater to slam auctions, but I think it is better to play the bids as natural, so that the opening bidder will always be on lead and so that his partner has less chance to get back into the act.



As for balancing against opening bids at the two level and higher, I do not know of any auctions that require special discussion. We will just apply the same methods as in direct seat in those auctions.