

## THE TWO CLUB OPENING

An opening 2♣ bid is artificial, showing a strong two bid sort of hand or a notrump hand of 23 HCP or more.

The 2♣ opening promises at least four defensive tricks. Open 1♠ (or 4♦, if playing NAMYATS) with ♠KQJ98632 ♥AKQ ♦4 ♣3. If you open 2♣ and partner doubles a high level preemptive bid by an opponent, perhaps thinking you have better defense, you won't know whether to pass or bid. Besides, 1♠ is not going to be passed out.

A hand with four losers in quick tricks should not open 2♣ if there is another potential loser and the hand may not play in a major. With ♠QJ1092 ♥KQ ♦AKQ3 ♣A4 open 1♠, even at matchpoints. There are four quick losers, the fourth diamond may be a loser, and if partner insists on a diamond contract you could go down in game even if he has an ace.

When the opening is based on a minor suit, opener should have no more than three losers unless the hand is likely to take nine tricks at notrump. Open 1♣ with ♠A532 ♥void ♦KJ ♣AKQ9764, a hand that has too many losers for a 2♣ opening and is unlikely to play in notrump. But with ♠42 ♥A5 ♦A4 ♣AKQ7653 there is a good chance that the hand will make 3NT opposite a bust, so a 2♣ opening is okay. Don't open 3NT with that spade weakness and no holding such as Kx in a red suit to protect.

### Control Responses

Counting a king as one control, an ace as two controls, we use the following scheme for showing controls.

- 2♦ - 0 or 1 (king) control
- 2♥ - 1 ace or two kings (2 controls)
- 2♠ - 1 ace and 1 king (3 controls)
- 2NT - 3 kings
- 3♣ - 4 controls (2 aces, or 1 ace and 2 kings)
- 3♦ - 5 controls or more
- 3NT - 4 kings (once in a lifetime)

After the initial response, bidding proceeds naturally, except that opener's rebid of 2♥ over 2♦ is the Kokish Relay (see below).

### Higher Responses in a Suit

-- 3♥ or 3♠ shows a seven-card suit headed by the ace or king, or both, with or without the queen, and no ace or king outside. Opener can determine the exact nature of the suit by using Roman Key Card Blackwood.

-- A jump to the four level in any suit shows a solid suit headed by AKQJ, at least six long. AKQ10 is okay with seven cards. It denies an outside ace or king, and requires a balanced hand (i.e., 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-2 distribution). Opener takes charge. A 4NT or other game bid by opener is a natural signoff, since he knows responder's hand exactly. For instance, after a 4♠ response he would bid 4NT with ♠3 ♥KQJ ♦AKQJ987 ♣KQ in a matchpoint game. A passed hand may make this jump with a semi-solid (KQJ10, AQJ10) six-card suit. KQJ9 or AQJ9 is okay with seven cards (i.e., a fairly guaranteed one-loser suit).

### Rebids by Opener

Opener rebids in his main suit, bidding the higher ranking suit first when holding two suits of equal length. With a notrump type hand, he rebids the minimum number of notrump with 23-24 HCP. After a 2♦ response, opener bids 2♥ (Kokish Relay) with a 25-27 HCP notrump hand.

| Opener | Responder  |
|--------|--|
| 2♣     | 2♦   |
| 2NT    | - 23-24 HCP, not forcing                               |
| 2♥     | - Kokish Relay, 25-27 HCP notrump hand or a heart suit |
| 3NT    | - a signoff, usually based on a long solid minor       |

The 2♥ relay forces responder to bid 2♠ as a mark-time bid. If opener then bids 2NT, showing 25-27 HCP, that is forcing. If he bids 3♥, that constitutes a "rebid" of the heart suit, and responder may pass with a completely worthless hand. If he bids three of any other suit (forcing), he is showing a second suit with hearts the primary suit.

| Opener   | Responder                            |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 2♣       | 2♦                                   |
| 2♥       | 2♠ - forced by the Kokish Convention |
| 3♣/3♦/3♠ | - hearts and a second suit           |
| 3♥       | - a "rebid" of the heart suit        |

Opener has balanced hand, no singleton or void, if he would open Marvin 2♥ (strong with hearts or weak with spades) with an unbalanced hand. See section 6-3, Marvin Two Hearts. Similarly:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 2♣     | 2♦        |
| 2♠     | 2NT       |
| 3♥     |           |

Opener must have a 5-4-2-2 hand if an unbalanced hand is opened with 2♦ (weak with hearts or strong with spades) when the primary suit is spades. See section 6-2, Marvin Two Diamonds. If a 2♦ opening is being used for some other purpose, however, then opener could have an unbalanced hand in this auction.

If opener rebids 2NT, either immediately or after a 2♥ relay, the bidding starts all over again, as if the opening had been 2NT. See section 5-4, Two Notrump Opening, which is completely applicable to this 2NT rebid.

### Four-Club Rebid by Opener

After a control response at the two level, a 4♣ jump rebid by opener is conventional, asking for details about responder's controls (if any).

— After a 2♦ response, responder bids the suit of a king held, bids 4♦ with no king, 4NT with the king of diamonds.

— After a 2♥ response, responder bids the suit of an ace held, 4♦ with no ace (two kings), 4NT with the ace of diamonds. Over 4♦, opener can ask for the location of the two kings by bidding 4♥. Responder shows the kings using the CRaSh method, 4♠ with kings of the same color, 4NT with kings of the same rank (major or minor), and 5♣ with kings of the same shape (spades-diamonds or hearts-clubs).

— After a 2♠ response, responder bids the suit containing the ace, but bids 4NT with the ace of clubs. Opener's bid of the next higher denomination asks for location of the king.

— After a 2NT response, responder bids the suit lacking a king, but bids 4NT if lacking the king of clubs.

After a natural response, or a control response of 3♣ or 3♦, opener's 4♣ rebid is natural.

### Responder's Rebids

After a 2♦ response, the cheaper minor suit rebid (through 3♦) is a "second negative," denying as much as a king or two queens.

| Opener | Responder                           |
|--------|-------------------------------------|
| 2♣     | 2♦                                  |
| 2♠     | 2NT - at least a king or two queens |
|        | 3♣ - weaker than that               |

A five-card suit headed by king or ace is enough for a natural new suit bid.

If opener rebids 3♦, the second negative is 3NT:

| Opener | Responder             |
|--------|-----------------------|
| 2♣     | 2♦                    |
| 3♦     | 3♥/3♠/4♣ - natural    |
|        | 3NT - second negative |

When opener rebids in a suit, do not raise without adequate trump support, which in this case is Qx, Jxx, xxx, or better. With trump support and a fair hand, raise a major immediately. Delayed support of opener's major suit tends to imply trump support that is less than "adequate." A delayed jump raise implies singleton queen, king, or ace, or three small trumps.

An immediate jump raise shows four or more trumps, no ace or king, no outside void or singleton:

| Opener | Responder |
|--------|-----------|
| 2♣     | 2♦        |
| 2♠     | 4♠        |

Responder has ♠Q872 ♥654 ♦98 ♣J873. The immediate jump raise warns opener not to look for anything besides good trumps.

Responder's jump in a new suit is a splinter bid, showing more than adequate trump support for opener's suit and a singleton in the splinter suit:

| Opener | Responder     |
|--------|---------------|
| 2♣     | 2♦            |
| 2♥     | 3♠ - splinter |

Responder has ♠5 ♥Q874 ♦K985 ♣J432. With a weaker hand (four small hearts), or one less heart, he would just raise to 3♥.

When the response shows two or more controls, the bidding proceeds naturally.

### When the Opponents Intervene

If RHO overcalls a 2♣ bid with a natural bid, a double by responder shows a bust hand with length in the opposing suit. It warns partner not to go on unless he has game in his own hand. A pass is forcing. Natural bidding follows, with responder's jump raise to game having the usual meaning.

If RHO doubles 2♣ to show clubs, responder must pass with no club stopper, even with a good hand. This is in accordance with the general policy for action when an artificial bid gets doubled. See section 1-2, General Bidding Principles.

| South | West | North  |
|-------|------|--|
| 2♣    | Dbl  | Pass - probably no club stopper, may be quite strong |
|       |      | 2♦ - single club stopper, at least one control       |
|       |      | 2♥/2♠ - natural, single club stopper                 |
|       |      | Rdbl - double club stopper                           |

QJx (Qxx, Q10x, etc.) counts as a single stopper only, no matter how many cards in the suit. AJx and KJx count as double stoppers. If holding a club stopper and zero controls (e.g., ♣QJx), pass.

If RHO makes an artificial bid that shows two suits, the principles of section 12-7, Defense Against Two-Suited Conventions, apply. For instance, if RHO doubles 2♣ artificially to show both majors:

| South | West | North  |
|-------|------|--|
| 2♣    | Dbl  | Pass - no ace or king                              |
|       |      | Rdbl - wants to double 2♥, or 2♠, or either        |
|       |      | 2♦ - normal waiting bid, at least one control      |
|       |      | 2♥/2♠ - Unusual Over Unusual, showing a good minor |
|       |      | 2NT - top card (ace or king) in each major         |
|       |      | 3♣/3♦ - natural positive response, but poor suit   |

The 2♥, 2♠, 3♣, and 3♦ bids are in accordance with the principles of section 12-7: A 2♥ bid is a positive response in clubs and a 2♠ bid is a positive response in diamonds. Both responses promise a good suit. With a suit weak in high cards, the right response is 3♣ or 3♦.

A 2♣ opener can never make a takeout double:

| South | West | North                        | East |
|-------|------|------------------------------|------|
| 2♣    | 2♠   | Pass                         | Pass |
|       |      | Dbl - business               |      |
|       |      | 2NT - 23-24 HCP notrump hand |      |
|       |      | 3♣/3♦/3♥ - forcing           |      |

North's pass does not necessarily deny a good hand, since it is forcing.. She could have, for instance: ♠752 ♥AQ3 ♦K84 ♣9832. South's double of 2♠ is probably exposing a psych by West. If South later bids spades, he means it to play.