

MARVELOUS TWO DIAMONDS

One of the awkward rebids for a five-card 1♥ or 1♠ opener comes after a two-over-one response in a minor, when opener has support for the minor but lacks the extra strength implied by a minor suit raise. He must just rebid the major, which could result in a 5-1 or even 5-0 trump fit when a 5-3 or 6-3 fit is available.

A less serious situation occurs when the response to a 1♠ opening is 2♥ and opener lacks the extra values required for a 2NT rebid. He does not need extra strength to raise hearts, but he does need three-card support. If he must bid 2♠ with a 5-2-3-3 hand, responder might have to pass with six hearts, or a five-card minor, and spade shortness.

In fact, a two-over-one responder has problems with any two-suited hand that lacks sufficient strength to show the second suit (a forcing bid, by an unpassed hand):

Opener	Responder
1♠	2♦/2♥
2♠	?

Responder has five clubs, but not enough strength to make the forcing rebid of 3♣. The result could be a 5-1 spade contract when a 5-3 minor suit contract is available.

The Marvelous Two Diamond opening reduces these problems somewhat. It shows a minimum or near-minimum (good 12 to bad 14 HCP) opening bid with a five-card major suit, a doubleton in the other major, and support for both minors. The ideal hand has 5=2=3=3 or 2=5=3=3 distribution, but it's okay to have 4=2 or 2=4 in the minors if the four-card suit is very weak and the doubleton very strong (two of the top three honors).

The maximum strength for a 2♦ opening is a poor 14 HCP. Don't open 2♦ with a 14 HCP hand that could raise a two-over-one response in either minor or could rebid 2NT. It is permissible, for instance, to raise a two-over-one response in a minor with only 14 HCP when holding two of the top three honors in support. Open 1♠ with ♠Q8732 ♥62 ♦AQ5 ♣AQ3 and raise a minor suit response. You would rather not play 2♠ opposite a doubleton with that weak suit, and a minor suit raise is not too much of a stretch, nor is a 2NT rebid if the response is 2♥.

Similarly, rather than open 2♦ with ♠Q8732 ♥AQ ♦K87 ♣QJ8, open 1♠ and rebid 2NT after a minor suit response. In fact, a 2♦ opening tends to deny a holding of AQ or AK in the short major; responder will assume opener has at most one stopper in that suit.

The Marvelous Two Diamond opening is used in first or second seat only. Since a third or fourth seat opener can pass a two-over-one response (or three-over-two rebid), the convention is less valuable in these positions. For reasons shown later, the convention is not appropriate for a matchpoint contest. Use it only with International Matchpoint (IMP) or rubber bridge scoring.

Responses

-- A 2♥ response is a signoff. Responder is not interested in game, and sees no better place to play the hand if opener's suit is hearts. If opener has spades, he rebids 2♠ over 2♥. Responder then passes or otherwise places the contract.

-- A three-level suit response is also a signoff. Responder has six or more cards for a major, five or more for a minor, and no interest in game. Opener can raise a 3♥ or 3♠ response, however, if the bid happens to hit his suit. It might seem unnecessary to sign off with a 3♦ response, since 2♦ can be passed, but the 3♦ response may be preferred for preemptive reasons. The major suit three bids imply shortness in the other major, and the minor suit three bids deny as many as three cards in either major.

-- A 2♠ response is an artificial relay asking opener to indicate his suit:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♠?
2NT	- heart suit
3♣	- spade suit

Responder might pass 2NT if his response was based on spade support and 10-11 HCP or so. With a weaker 4-1-4-4 or even with a weak 5-1-3-4 or 5-1-4-3 hand, responder must bid 2♥ and hope opener bids 2♠ or an opponent bids. With six spades the response is 3♠, even with a weak hand, hoping no one doubles.

Suppose responder has a weak hand with spade support and a five-card or longer minor. If opener's suit is hearts, responder will sign off in the minor:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♠?
2NT	3♣/3♦ - signoff

With a stronger hand, responder could invite game with a 3♠, 4♣, or 4♦ bid:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♠?
2NT	3♠/4♣/4♦ - invitational

Opener will tend to accept a game invitation if his trump holding is better than might be expected (i.e., a strong doubleton support for spades instead of a weak doubleton, good support for a minor instead of three small). If opener chooses not to pass, he will usually just raise responder's minor suit invitation. He may, however, bid his major instead if it is playable opposite a weak doubleton (e.g., AKQxx, AQJxx, KQJxx).

A jump to 4NT after a 2♠ response is Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB):

Opener	Responder
2♦	2♠?
2NT/3♣	4NT - RKCB

The "agreed" suit for RKCB purposes is opener's major, even if responder does not intend to play in that suit.

-- A 2NT response shows a heart raise and at least some interest in game; just bid 2♥ with no game ambitions. When you have responded 2NT, opener will bid 4♥ over an opponent's 3♠, 4♣, or 4♦ overcall if he likes his hand, so you had better have some game interest.

If opener has spades, he passes 2NT. With hearts, he clarifies his hand:

Opener	Responder
2♦	2NT - heart raise
Pass	- spade suit
3♣	- good hand, heart suit, clubs stronger than diamonds
3♦	- good hand, heart suit, diamonds stronger than clubs
3♥	- heart suit, minimum

With ♠6 ♥Q1087 ♦AQ83 ♣K964, respond 2NT, a heart raise. If partner has hearts, he will bid. If partner has spades, he will pass 2NT. If the hearts and spades were reversed, you would respond 2♠ and pass if opener shows hearts by bidding 2NT. With 5-3 in the minors, you would respond 2♠ and sign off in the five-card minor if opener shows hearts (safer than passing 2NT).

Don't bid 2NT with heart support and no hope for game; just bid 2♥. If opener bids 2♠ you can pass, bid 2NT, or three of a minor, according to your hand. Opener must pass any further bid you make.

Don't bid 2NT if you want to be in game no matter which major opener has, because opener will pass 2NT with five spades. Respond 2S with game-going or better hands if you can't place the final contract immediately.

-- A response of four in a major is a signoff but is unlikely to be weak. Why preempt in a major when opener no doubt has the other major and may have a good 3-3 in the minors besides?

-- A response of 4NT to the 2♦ opening is unusual notrump, asking opener to take a choice between the minors. Opener bids 5♣ with equal length, disregarding any difference in honor strength. To use Roman Key Card Blackwood (see section 6-6), respond 2♠ first and then bid 4NT (but opener's major will have to be the "agreed" suit).

-- A response of 5♣ or 5♦ is a signoff. To invite slam, bid 2♠, then five of the minor.

To summarize:

Opener	Responder
2♦	Pass! - five or more diamonds
	2♥ - pass or correct, weak
	2♠ - artificial relay
	2NT - heart raise
	3♣/3♦/3♥/3♠ - signoff
	4♣/4♦ - invitational
	Game bids - signoff
	4NT - asks for minor preference

If responder has a hand such as ♠K2 ♥42 ♦J8732 ♣AK97, he has a problem. He can either pass 2♦ (no need to preemptively bid 3♦, with this good hand) or bid 2♥. He probably should go for a sure plus and pass. Hands like this are why the Marvelous Two Diamond opening should not be used in a matchpoint game. There is too good a chance that a better result could be obtained in a major suit or notrump partscore. At IMP or rubber bridge scoring the difference is unlikely to matter, and a diamond contract is safer.

If Two Diamonds Gets Doubled

If the 2♦ opening is doubled, any bid by responder is natural and non-forcing, and a redouble is to play. If not sure what to do, he can pass the double around to opener, who must bid his major.

If Two Diamonds Gets Overcalled

If the overcall is in a major or in notrump, then a double is for business. If in a minor (through 4♦), a double is negative--asking opener to bid his suit. All new suit bids are non-forcing and there are no artificial responses:

South	West	North
2♦	2♠	Dbl - business
		2NT - invitational
		3♥ - heart raise
		3♠ - cue bid, strong
		3♣/3♦ - signoffs
		4♣/4♦ - invitational

The 3♠ cue bid doesn't exactly ask for a spade stopper, but opener will no doubt bid 3NT with spades stopped.

The free 2NT response will usually be based on a long minor and a single stopper. Opener should not raise unless he has a strong spade doubleton or good support for both minors. The raise to 3♥ is strictly competitive and should be passed. Responder must bid 4♥ with game interest, a bid that may push the opponents into a phantom save.

South	West	North
2♦	2♥	Dbl - business
		2NT - invitational
		2♠ - weakish spade raise
		3♣/3♦ - signoff
		3♥ - cue bid
		3♠ - invitational spade raise
		4♣/4♦ - invitational

South	West	North	East
2♦	3♦	Dbl*	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠ - invitational	
		4♣ - signoff	

* Negative

North would bid 3♠ immediately with a non-invitational hand that lacks heart support.

Further Advantages of the 2♦ Opening

Besides avoiding a rebid problem, the 2♦ opening has some preemptive value. It also has the merit of describing a hand pretty well in one bid, which is always good. Occasionally it will result in a good contract that is unreachable by standard methods. Since the bid is not weak, there are good possibilities for penalizing the opponents if they enter the auction.

Disadvantages

The main disadvantage is that it uses up a bid (2♦) that could be used for other, more frequent purposes. It also prevents the hand from being played in one notrump, often a good contract for hands of this type. This is another reason that the convention is unsuitable for matchpoint contests.