

Reviewing the 2-over-1 Aspect of the System

IN the October 2014 issue I looked briefly at some of the necessary aspects of attempting to play 2-over-1 game forcing. In this final article in my series (hurrah . . . I hear you say!) I will develop these ideas a bit further to give you some working knowledge of how to handle these vital auctions.

1. Rebidding the Major

- i) This nearly always shows a six-card suit. If not, you should generally be able to find another bid – bidding another suit, no-trumps or raising the responder's suit being the options available. Thus, holding Hand A:

Hand A
♠ K J 8 7 3
♥ A 7 4
♦ 2
♣ K J 6 2

After 1♠ – 2♣, bid 3♣ – a simple raise is all that is necessary.

But if the auction starts 1♠ – 2♦, I recommend rebidding 2NT (11-14), not 2♠ as you would have to in Acol. Holding a 5-4-3-1

shape with a singleton in partner's suit, it is quite acceptable to bid 2NT here. Provided of course that partner knows it is a possibility.

- ii) Occasionally you simply have no real choice but to rebid a five card suit. Thus, holding Hand B:

Hand B
♠ K J 8 7 3
♥ 4
♦ A 5
♣ Q J 7 4 2

After 1♠ – 2♥, this is very tough. The hand is far too unbalanced for 2NT and 3♣ overstates it somewhat, so here is a rare example of opener having to rebid a five card suit. 2♠ is

therefore the chosen action.

This leads us nicely on to . . .

2. Reversing as Opener after a 2-over-1 Response

Since the responder has already shown a decent 12+ High-card Points (HCP) there is really no need for a full 16+ HCP for a reverse (you can of course keep your reverses up to strength if you wish – just not my recommended treatment).

I recommend reversing with a *good* 14+ HCP. So, holding Hand C:

Hand C
♠ A Q 5 4
♥ K J 9 6 3
♦ Q 6
♣ 4 2

After 1♥ – 2♣, you should rebid 2NT (not strong enough for 2♠). But holding Hand D:

Hand D
♠ A Q 5 4
♥ K Q 9 6 3
♦ A 6
♣ 4 2

After the same start to the auction, it's fine to choose to reverse and bid 2♠.

3. Jumping in Your Major

This is the case when you open, say, 1♥ and after partner's 2♣ response you rebid 3♥.

This should be reserved for a hand with a *very good* suit (solid or one-loser at worst), plus of course a good hand (15+ HCP as a guideline). For example, Hand E:

Hand E
♠ A 4
♥ K Q J 10 8 3
♦ A 6 2
♣ Q 5

This hand and the heart suit are good enough to open 1♥ and jump-rebid 3♥ over partner's 2♣. But Hand F (overleaf):

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Hand F

♠ A 4
♥ K J 9 7 3 2
♦ A Q 2
♣ Q 5

Must just rebid 2♥ after 1♥ – 2♣ – due to the quality of the heart suit.

Auction (i) 1♥ 2♣
 2♦ 3NT

3NT shows 15-17 HCP, giving opener a chance to judge how to proceed.

In Auction (ii):

Auction (ii) 1♠ 2♣
 2♦ 2♠
 3NT

3NT here shows 15-17 also (obviously with five spades and four diamonds, as well as a heart stopper).

I extend this principle so that in *all game-forcing auctions* you ascribe the meaning of a jump to 3NT as 15-17 HCP. A typical example would be after partner has used Fourth Suit Forcing, which you should play as forcing to game.

6. A Jump in a New Suit

An example auction would be 1♠ – 2♣ – 3♦.

Hand H

♠ K Q J 8 2
♥ A 4 2
♦ 5
♣ A Q 7 4

This is *definitely* best played as a splinter, i.e. showing a raise in clubs with short diamonds. This method should already be in use for all Acoll experts, though in my experience most players do not seem to

play it this way. A hand such as Hand H would be perfect for the bid.

7. Bidding after Intervention

(a) The Opponents Double

Say that partner opens 1♥. If RHO doubles:

Redouble = Strong, usually 10+ HCP with fewer than three hearts; essentially penalty-seeking.

1♠ = Natural and forcing, can be quite light in practice.

1NT = 7-10 HCP, denying three hearts or four spades.

It is therefore very important to note the nuance here whereby rebidding your own suit does not automatically show a minimum hand as in standard methods.

4. The Waiting 2NT

Consider Hand G. After 1♠ – 2♦ – 2♥, what should your second bid be as responder?

Hand G

♠ J 7
♥ A 4 2
♦ K Q 7 3 2
♣ K 8 5

Since the auction is already game-forced (2-over-1, remember), a quiet 2NT is easily the best bid here. It allows opener to describe any extra feature of his hand economically and efficiently. This is obviously

superior to jumping to 3NT or introducing the fourth suit as you would have to do in standard methods.

5. The Jump to 3NT

One of the criticisms I have often heard aimed at the whole concept of 2-over-1 is that both members of the partnership bid merrily away describing their shape without ever really exchanging further information after the first two bids on the actual strength of either hand.

I recommend a jump to 3NT from *either* member of a partnership to have a well-defined meaning.

The two most common treatments are:

1. 15-17 HCP.
2. Showing a minimum (fast arrival).

I strongly prefer option 1. above.

Thus in Auction (i):

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- 2♣/2♦ = Natural and forcing for one round (note: after the double these bids are no longer game forcing).
 2♥ = Weak raise, usually three trumps only.
 2♠/3♣/3♦ = Fit-showing jumps.
 2NT = Good raise: four trumps, 9+ HCP.
 3♥ = Weakish raise, at least four trumps.

N.B. There is plenty of room for individual partnerships to develop their own ideas here. Most particularly, adopting the use of *transfer responses* has an awful lot to recommend it. The following scheme illustrates the method. After partner's opening of 1♥ has been doubled:

- 1NT = Transfer to clubs (initially assume a 'weak two type hand', i.e. six clubs and 4-9 HCP). This *does not* promise another bid unless significantly stronger.
 2♣ = Transfer to diamonds (same as with the clubs above).
 2♦ = Shows a *good* raise to at least 2♥, three-card support and a good 9+ HCP.
 2♥ = Shows a weaker raise, typically with three-card support and 5-8 HCP.

Similarly, if partner opens 1♠ and the next hand doubles, then:

- 1NT = As above (transfer to clubs).
 2♣ = As above (transfer to diamonds).
 2♦ = Transfer to hearts. Again, the hand does not have to be strong; it could be weak with a six-card suit. You gain much space by being able to start both weak and stronger auctions with the same bid here.
 2♥ = Good spade raise.
 2♠ = Weak spade raise.

This method is just food for thought for aspiring partnerships. I thought I would pop it in here to give you some ideas for partnership development.

b) The Opponents Overall

A bid of a new suit is now natural and forcing, but again not to game. You might like to check back to Part V in this series (October 2014 issue, page 70) for details.



Let's see a variety of hands in action via a quiz.

Quiz for 2-over-1 Auctions

Problem 1
 ♠ 5 2
 ♥ A 7 4
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ A Q J 6 5 3

- A. You Partner
 1♠
 2♣ 2♥
 ?
- B. You Partner
 1♥
 2♣ 2♥
 ?
- C. You Partner
 1♠
 2♣ 3♥
 ?
- D. You Partner
 1♠
 2♣ 2♠
 ?

Problem 2
 ♠ K Q J 8 3 2
 ♥ A 5
 ♦ A 9 2
 ♣ 5 3

- A. You Opp1 Partner
 1♠ 2♦ 3♣
 Opp2 passes. Your bid?
- B. You Partner
 1♠ 2♣
 ?

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Problem 3

♠ J 7
♥ K 9
♦ Q 8 7 3
♣ A K 7 5 4

A.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♣
	2♦	?

Problem 4

♠ K 10 6
♥ Q 8
♦ Q 6 3
♣ A Q 8 7 2

A.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	2♦	?
B.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♣
	2♦	?
C.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♣
	3♣	?

Problem 5

♠ K 3
♥ 8 4
♦ A K 8 6 5 2
♣ A 5 4

A.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♦
	3♠	?

Problem 6

♠ J 6 2
♥ Q 9 5
♦ A 4
♣ K Q 7 5 4

A.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	2♠	?
B.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	3♥	?
C.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	2NT	?

Quiz Answers

Problem 1

♠ 5 2
♥ A 7 4
♦ K 2
♣ A Q J 6 5 3

A.	You	Partner
		1♠
	2♣	2♥
	?	?
B.	You	Partner
		1♥
	2♣	2♥
	?	?
C.	You	Partner
		1♠
	2♣	3♥
	?	?
D.	You	Partner
		1♠
	2♣	2♠
	?	?

A: 3♣. A rebid of 3♣ guarantees a decent six-card suit here. Who knows? A club game or slam may easily be your best bet – you can investigate efficiently without losing the ability to play in 3NT, which is still your most likely contract at this stage. Partner can obviously support clubs, describe his shape further by rebidding either major, bid no-trumps himself, or even introduce the fourth suit, when you will be happy to show your stopper.

B: 3♥. Partner has rebid his hearts – in principle showing at least six. You can make use of one of the main advantages of the 2-over-1 system by agreeing partner's suit easily and conveniently without the need for fourth suit or jumping. If partner has anything extra, he can now investigate a slam via a cue-bid, or, if minimum, simply raise to 4♥.

C: First, you must recognise that partner's 3♥ bid is a splinter agreeing clubs. This makes your hand enormous! I would now probably drive to slam – either by using Blackwood immediately or perhaps by going slower and bidding 4♣ (you're both still in a game-forced situation, remember) so that an exchange of cue-bids can be achieved.

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D: Close between 2NT and 3♣ here. There is no need to support the spades at this stage holding two measly small ones with stoppers everywhere else. I would probably vote for 2NT.

Problem 2

♠ K Q J 8 3 2
♥ A 5
♦ A 9 2
♣ 5 3

- A. You Opp1 Partner
 1♠ 2♦ 3♣
 Opp2 passes. Your bid?
- B. You Partner
 1♠ 2♣
 ?

A: Bid 3♠. Despite 3♣ *not* being forcing to game, since the opponents have intervened, my preferred treatment (expert partnerships please take note) is to play that 3♠ is now forcing, i.e. *the auction is forcing for an extra round once responder bids at the three level in a competitive auction*. This clearly removes the need for opener to have to bash 4♣ sometimes to show his extra values on a dubious suit. This often finds partner with inadequate support...

B: 2♠. Despite the nice spades and decent 15 HCP, you should refrain from showing strength by jumping to 3♠. The reason is the suit quality: you need, as previously explained, a solid suit or one with one loser at worst. This hand is lacking the ♠10 – which, if held, would make it a perfect 3♠ jump-rebid.

Problem 3

♠ J 7
♥ K 9
♦ Q 8 7 3
♣ A K 7 5 4

- A. Partner You
 1♠ 2♣
 2♦ ?

A: 3♦. This should be feeling nice and easy by now. You are in a forcing-to-game auction so it is again economic and efficient simply to raise the diamonds holding a fit.

Consider Hand I as a possible hand for partner. A possible auction that might ensue could well be something like this:

Partner	You
1♠	2♣
2♦	3♦
3♥	3NT
4♦	4♥
6♦	Pass

Hand I

♠ K Q 10 9 6
♥ A 5
♦ A K 9 2
♣ 6 3

Standard methods would not allow this. The auction would be much more likely to develop as:

Partner	You
1♠	2♣
2♦	2♥ (fourth suit)
?	

The choice now might be 3NT (or possibly 3♥ if you play it as 'too good to limit'). Either way, the decision as to whether to move on past 3NT would lie with the 13-count responder. I feel that the bidding might well end at this stage.

It is so much more efficient for the opener to learn that his partner has an opening hand (2-over-1 response) followed by diamond support. A slam becomes a much easier proposition to get to.

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Problem 4

♠ K 10 6
♥ Q 8
♦ Q 6 3
♣ A Q 8 7 2

A.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	2♦	?
B.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♣
	2♦	?
C.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♣
	3♣	?

Problem 6

♠ J 6 2
♥ Q 9 5
♦ A 4
♣ K Q 7 5 4

A.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	2♠	?
B.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	3♥	?
C.	Partner	You
	1♥	2♣
	2NT	?

A: 2NT. This shows a hand *outside* the 15-17 HCP range (usually 12-14, occasionally 18-19 or off shape somewhat).

B: 2♣. Showing three-card spade support economically. A jump to 3♠ at this stage instead would show some real slam prospects (typically a good 15+ HCP).

C: 4♣. With real spade support but a relatively minimum point-count (also poor controls), here it is prudent to describe a minimum hand with primary support. The opener would then need significant extras to continue the slam search. A 3♠ bid here instead of 4♣ would show either extra values or some slam suitability (good controls).

Problem 5

♠ K 3
♥ 8 4
♦ A K 8 6 5 2
♣ A 5 4

A.	Partner	You
	1♠	2♦
	3♠	?

A: 4♣. This is an unambiguous cue-bid. If opener can now bid 4♥, you are off to the races. Partner is known to have lovely spades; you have the magnificent king of spades and a real source of tricks. A grand slam is a real possibility.

A: 4♥, again describing a minimum 2-over-1 without marvellous controls. Remember, partner's 2♣ is 14+, not necessarily a full reverse.

B: 4♦. Partner has shown a great hand with good hearts. With the fitting ♥Q you need to show some signs of life. You are well worth a cue-bid here. After this, any further slam overtures will need to come from partner.

C: 4♥. Partner will now pass with 12-14 but bid on with 18-19. An alternative would be to raise to 3NT instead; however, I would generally only suppress three-card support if 4-3-3-3 – or if shooting for tops in a pairs tournament!

★★★★★

This concludes my series on the art of playing Five-card Majors, Strong No-trump and 2-over-1 Game Forcing. Like any series of this length it is impossible to expect or even hope that you will attempt to take on all aspects covered. The idea is to provide you with plenty of material which you can read and, I hope, re-read at some stage. You can add chunks to your system agreements any time you like and then keep on adding whenever you feel comfortable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the readers who have persevered with this series to the end (both of you!) and would also like to thank all those who have sent emails and comments about the series. I hope that the opportunity for in-depth articles that the online version of the magazine has allowed has been welcomed by many. □