

## Bidding strong hands playing Benji Acol

( a reminder )

### Requirements for an opening bid of 2♦:

Any hand of 23 or more points **OR** Any hand which is "game forcing", i.e. you know you will be able to make at least game if partner has a Yarborough with poor support for your suit.

(NB: You can no longer play 2♦ as a weak two opening)

### Requirements for an opening bid of 2♣:

Any hand of 21 - 22 points balanced **OR** Any hand which has 8 playing tricks if a particular suit is trumps, with 14+ points.

Why 14+ points? Hands with less than 14 points but with eight playing tricks tend to have little use in defence and are often best opened with a pre-emptive bid.

## Balanced hands

- 12 - 14     Open 1NT
- 15 - 16     Open 1 of a suit and rebid NT at the lowest level
- 17 - 18     Open 1 of a suit and rebid NT with a jump
- 19 - 20     Open 2NT
- 21 - 22     Open 2♣ and over partner's 2♦ rebid 2NT
- 23 - 24     Open 2♦ and over partner's 2♥ rebid 2NT
- 25 - 26     Open 2♦ and over partner's 2♥ rebid 3NT

What are "certain" tricks (if opening 2♦) and what are "playing tricks" (if opening 2♣)?

If you are opening 2♦ as game forcing you must assume partner has nothing and you can make game in your own hand. Don't assume you can reach dummy. Don't assume a suit will break well for you - in fact assume it is likely to break badly.

If you are opening 2♣ as eight playing tricks you can assume that you can reach partner's hand for a finesse and that suits are likely to break not too badly.

So how many tricks should you be counting from various combinations?

K Q J T

How many certain tricks is this? (2♦ opening)

How many playing tricks is this? (2♣ opening)

Ans: 3 "certain" tricks and 3 playing tricks

K Q T

How many certain tricks is this? (2♦ opening)

How many playing tricks is this? (2♣ opening)

Ans: 1 "certain" trick and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  playing tricks

A Q 6 4 3

How many certain tricks is this? (2♦ opening)

How many playing tricks is this? (2♣ opening)

Ans: 1 "certain" trick and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  playing tricks

A K 6 3 2

How many certain tricks is this? (2♦ opening)

How many playing tricks is this? (2♣ opening)

Ans: 2 "certain" tricks and about 3 playing tricks

K J 8 6 3

How many certain tricks is this? (2♦ opening)

How many playing tricks is this? (2♣ opening)

Ans: Zero "certain" tricks and about 2 playing tricks

A Q J T 6 4

How many certain tricks is this? (2♦ opening)

How many playing tricks is this? (2♣ opening)

Ans: About 4 "certain" tricks and about 5 playing tricks (nearly  $5\frac{1}{2}$ )

So how should I open and bid some good hands?

♠ A K Q 3

♥ K 9 2

♦ A Q 8

♣ K Q 7

Open 2♦ and rebid 2NT (23 - 24 balanced). Partner can bid Stayman and transfers over this if he wants to.

♠ A K Q 8 4 3

♥ A K 6 5

♦ A 4

♣ 6

Open 2♣ and rebid 2♠ (8 playing tricks). If partner bids again, then bid Hearts on the next round.

♠ A K 5

♥ K 9 2

♦ A 8

♣ K Q 7 4 2

Open 2NT (19 - 20 balanced). Partner can bid Stayman and transfers over this if he wants to.

♠ A K Q 5 3

♥ A K 5

♦ K Q J 8 2

♣ void

Open 2♦ and rebid 2♠. Then bid diamonds. Near certain game here if partner has three card support for one of your suits.

♠ A 3

♥ K Q J 5

♦ A Q 8 3

♣ K Q 4

Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT (21 - 22 balanced). Partner can bid Stayman and transfers over this if he wants to.

♠ 4

♥ A K Q J T 8 5

♦ A K

♣ A Q 3

Open 2♦ and rebid 3♥ over partner's 2♥. There is a near certain game here whatever partner has.

♠ 3

♥ A K Q J T 4 2

♦ A K

♣ Q 7 3

Open 2♣ and over partner's 2♦ you can bid 3♥ to show your 9 playing tricks. You only need partner to hold an Ace or the King of Clubs for game.

♠ A K J 5

♥ void

♦ A K J 8 4 3

♣ A Q 6

Open 2♣ and over partner's 2♦ you can bid 3♦. If partner bids again (surely he will bid hearts!) you can bid 3♠, which should allow partner to find the best contract.

♠ A 5

♥ 8 2

♦ A K Q T 9 7 4 3

♣ 7

Yes there are eight playing tricks, but you haven't got 14 points and have little in defence if the opponents play the contract (the diamonds may be useless). Opponents may well have a fit in one of the other three suits and a diamond shortage somewhere. They may have a major suit game on. Best to open this hand pre-emptively. Probably 4♦ is best.

And what about responder?

If partner opens 2♣ you should **ALWAYS** respond 2♦

If partner opens 2♦ you should **ALWAYS** respond 2♥

Over a 2♦ opening you **MUST** keep the bidding open until game is reached (unless the auction goes 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT)

Don't be afraid to bid even if you have zero points. Partner has game in his own hand. Support partner's suit if you can, and don't be afraid to bid your own five card (or more) suit. Partner will know you are likely to have very little but he needs to know what you have got.

Over a 2♣ opening partner's rebid is not forcing and you can pass it. But try and keep the auction going if you can. Often as little as five or six points may be enough for game.

Bid naturally and support partner's suits where possible. Again partner wants to know what you have got.