

Five Card Major Stayman

So you pick up:

AKJ10x

KJx

AJ

KJx

and need to decide on your opening bid.

While a balanced 21 count is usually an automatic 2NT opening, it feels wrong to treat the spades as though they were a minor. But opening 1S with such a good hand feels wrong too, while an Acol 2S opener is a long way short of 8 playing tricks.

Wouldn't it be nice to open 2NT and have the system bids to allow partner to find our 5 card major if they so wished.

If responder has:

xxx

Axx

xx

Qxxxx

Then with the normal Stayman and transfers system this is a simple raise to 3NT. On a diamond lead you need a miracle to make, while 4S is pretty much odds on.

As always there is a price to pay for this extra facility – a bit of memory work and occasionally the weaker hand will play a major suit contract.

3C is used, as before, to find a 4-4 major suit fit. It is also used when holding one or two 3 card majors (as the example above) and when holding 5 spades and 4 hearts.

The latter holding is awkward to show normally; do you transfer to spades and ignore the hearts or use Stayman and perhaps miss a 5-3 spade fit. 5 card major Stayman comes to the rescue.

If you have 5 hearts and 4 spades the transfer to hearts then bid spades shows the hand below 3NT very efficiency.

This is how it works.

2NT - 3C

3D = No 5 card major; may have one or both 4 card majors or not 3 spades.

3H = 5 card suit

3S = 5 card suit

3NT = 3 spades precisely.

Responder bids 3C when holding 3 cards in one or both majors.

Over 3D responder bids 3NT if just looking for the best game.

Over 3H or 3S responder will know if a 5-3 fit exists and acts accordingly.

Over 3NT responder passes if just looking for the best game.

Responder bids 3C when holding 4 cards in one or both majors.

Over 3D responder bids 3H; opener raises to show 4 hearts
bids 3S to show 4 spades and
3NT otherwise (which will deny 3 spades).

Over 3D responder bids 3S; opener will raise with 4 spades or bid 3NT.

Over 3H or 3S responder will know if a 5-3 or 5-4 fit exists and acts accordingly.
 Over 3NT responder passes if just looking for the best game.

Responder bids 3C when holding 5 spades and 4 hearts.

Over 3D responder bids 3H; opener raises to show 4 hearts
 bids 3S to show 4 spades
 and 3NT otherwise (which will deny 3 spades)

Over 3H or 3S responder will know about a 5-4 or 5-5 fit and acts accordingly.
 Over 3NT responder knows of a 5-3 spade fit. (Could use 4H here as a transfer to 4S).

If we look back to the hands that started our discussion, they would be bid:

2NT - 3C

3S - 4S

P

As easy as that!

1	AJx KQx AJ10x KQJ	(a)	K10xxx Jxxx x xxx	(b)	KQxx J10xxx x xxx	(c)	K10xx xxx Kx xxxx
			2NT – 3C 3NT - 4S (or 4H transfer) P Opener denies a 4 or 5 card major. Shows 3 card spade suit. Responder plays in the 5-3 fit.		2NT – 3D 3H - 3S 4H Responder transfers to hearts and bids 3S to show 5-4. Opener plays the 5-3 fit.		2NT – 3C 3NT – P Opener denies a 4 or 5 card major. Shows 3 card spade suit. Responder passes 3NT
2	AJxx KQx AJ10 KQJ	(a)	K10xxx Jxxx x xxx	(b)	KQxx J10xxx x xxx	(c)	K10xx xxx Kx xxxx
			2NT - 3C 3D - 3H 3S - 4S P 3D denies a 5 card major. and 3S shows 4 spades.		2NT - 3D 3H - 3S 4S - P After the transfer sequence opener chooses the 4-4 fit.		2NT - 3C 3D - 3S 4S - P Responder shows 4 spades and opener raises.
3	AJ10xx AJ KQx KQJ	(a)	Qxx xxx xx Axxxx	(b)	xxx K10xx x Axxxx	(c)	xx KQxx Jx 10xxxx

2NT - 3C
3S - 4S
P

Opener shows 5 spades.
Responder chooses the
5-3 fit.

2NT - 3C
3S - 4S
P

Opener shows 5 spades.
Responder chooses the
5-3 fit.

2NT - 3C
3S - 3NT
P

Opener shows 5 spades.
Responder settles for
the Notrump game.

4 AKx
KQx
AQ10x
K10x

(a) Qxxxx
Jxxx
xxx
x

(b)

xxx
Ax
Kxxx
xxxx

(c) Jx
Jxxx
Jx
QJxxx

2NT - 3C
3NT - 4S (or 4H transfer)
P

Once opener shows 3 spades
and no 4 or 5 card major it
is easy to choose spades.

2NT - 3C
3NT - P

Once opener shows 3
spades and no 4 or 5
card major it is easy to
choose the Notrump
game

2NT - 3C
3NT - P

Once opener shows 3
spades and no 4 or 5
card major it is easy to
choose the Notrump
game

5 AJx
KQxx
AJ
KQJx

(a) K10xxx
Jxxx
x
xxx

(b)

KQxx
J10xxx
x
xxx

(c) K10xx
xx
Kxx
xxxx

2NT - 3C
3D - 3H
4H - P

The heart fit is quickly
found

2NT - 3D
3H - 3S
4H - P

The heart fit is quickly
found

2NT - 3C
3D - 3S
3NT - P

The lack of a fit is
quickly found

So there you have it, another bit of system to help you progress your Acol into the 21st Century.