

Stage 2 Conventions



by Neil Rosen

Lebensohl

THE LEBENSOHL convention came in as a means to deal effectively with intervention after a 1NT opening bid.

It has also now been extended to cover various other situations. In my next article I will deal with using it as an invaluable aid to defending against Weak Two opening bids and the Multi 2♦.

Dealing with Intervention after 1NT

Lebensohl allows room to make both forcing and non-forcing bids after intervention over our 1NT opening bid.

So if we open 1NT and they overcall:

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♥	?	

Then a new suit at the two level is obviously to play in anyone's system. But what about a new suit at the three level?

Classically this is just to compete (non-forcing). This is all well and good but what happens if you wish to make a forcing bid instead? Say you hold Hand A and the auction starts:

Hand A
♠ 7 2
♥ A K 6 5 3
♦ K 9 4
♣ K 8 2

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♣	?	

To bid 3♥ (non-forcing) would clearly be silly as game would be missed. But what should you bid? Guessing to bid 4♥ could be absurd but so could bidding 3NT!

The obvious solution, available playing Lebensohl, is to use a new suit at the three level as forcing to game. If instead you have a weaker hand which wishes to compete, you start by bidding an *artificial* 2NT instead. This is alertable and initially asks partner to bid 3♣. When he does this, if clubs is your suit you pass, otherwise you correct to your own suit which is now *non-forcing*. E.g.

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♥	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	Pass ¹	

¹ At least five clubs, approx. 6-10 points, non-forcing

Or:

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♥	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦ ¹	

¹ At least five diamonds, approx. 6-10 points, non-forcing

Sometimes you actually have three options rather than two, depending on the order of the suits. Thus:

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♣/♦/♥	?	

Now you have a choice of:

2♠ = to play (at least five spades, weakish)

3♠ = at least five spades, game-forcing
2NT, then 3♠ = at least five spades, game-invitational

Here are a few example hands to demonstrate:

Hand B
♠ A Q 7 5 2
♥ 8 5
♦ 8 4 2
♣ J 6 2

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♥	?	

Bid 2♠, to play.

Hand C
♠ A Q 7 5 2
♥ A 9
♦ A 7 2
♣ 8 6 2

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♥	?	

Bid 3♠, natural, game-forcing, showing at least five spades.

Hand D
♠ A J 10 7 5 2
♥ 9 3
♦ A J 2
♣ 8 6

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♦	?	

Bid 2NT, then 3♠, invitational.

Hand E
♠ 5 2
♥ A 9 3
♦ A 2
♣ A Q J 7 6 3

Partner	Oppo 1	You	Oppo 2
1NT	2♣	?	

Bid 3♣, forcing to game. Using Lebensohl you do not need to guess whether to bid 3NT or 5♣ on your first round of bidding – you can explore both contracts at some leisure!

SILVER PLATE: Congratulations to Mike Tedd, Tony Disley, Patrick Jourdain, Roger Penton, Tony Ratcliff and John Salisbury who have won the 2011-2012 British Silver Plate. In the final, they beat Nick Stevens, Paul Bowyer, Duncan Happer, David Jones, Jim Mason, Garry Watson by 30 IMPs.

Doubling the Opponent's Intervening Bid

Opinions differ as to the best treatment here. When Lebensohl first started, there was a split panel between using the double for penalties or to show the values for 2NT (11-12 approx). The ability to bid a natural 2NT is the one major loss that playing Lebensohl will bring you (in my humble opinion, the swings far outweigh the roundabouts though, provided you are prepared to put a bit of effort in by reading articles on the subject!)

This is my article, however, and I strongly recommend playing double for take-out after natural overcalls.

If the overcall is conventional, though, (Astro, Multi Landy, etc.) then I recommend using the double just to show general values (approx. 11+ points).

Showing or Denying Stoppers

If your partner opens 1NT, the opponents overcall in a suit and you have a bash at 3NT, nothing is more humiliating than finding that they then proceed to run off their suit leading to swift defeat and egg on face. The need for a stopper is vital.

With Lebensohl, following an overcall a *direct 3NT bid guarantees* a stopper, whereas bidding the artificial 2NT first (forcing partner to bid 3♣, remember), then *bidding 3NT denies* a stopper. Some people refer to this as FASS (Fast Arrival Shows Stopper).

Bidding the Opponent's Suit

This acts as Stayman. A direct cue-bid *shows* a stopper in the opponent's suit, whereas a cue-bid after the artificial 2NT *denies* a stopper. E.g., holding Hand F:

Hand F

♠ A Q 7 4
♥ 8 2
♦ K 9 5 3
♣ A 6 3

If partner opens 1NT and the opponents overcall 2♥, you could either double for

take-out, or bid 2NT then 3♥ to act as Stayman (i.e. showing four spades but *no* heart stopper)

Problem Hand Types

Clearly, as I mentioned earlier, holding a balanced 11-12 point hand where you would wish to bid a *natural* 2NT is the main problem hand type. Your options are basically to double for take-out or to sometimes pass and defend against the opponents' contract.

When Does Lebensohl Apply?

The primary use of this mighty fine convention is to establish whether the partnership has *game-going values* or not. If this is impossible, then Lebensohl does not apply.

The main applications are when your side either *opens* or *overcalls* 1NT and the opponents then intervene. Thus in the auction:

Oppo 1	Partner	Oppo 2	You
1♠	1NT	2♠	?

Lebensohl would now apply here too!

Exactly the same philosophy is used, i.e. a new suit at the three level is forcing to game, double is take-out, 2NT the start of a weaker auction etc.

Dealing with Jump Intervention (Usually at the Three Level)

If those horrible opponents make a jump overcall (usually at the three level in practice, I find), then while Lebensohl as such does not apply, it is important to have some agreements.

I recommend quite simply:

- A new suit is natural and *forcing*;
- A double is for *take-out* and not for penalties.

I hope this has given you some ideas on sharpening up your methods. Next time I will develop these ideas a little further with reference to how to defend more competently against the dreaded Multi and Weak Two bids. □

2013 CAMROSE TROPHY: England lead the field after the first half of the Camrose Trophy, held in January in Belfast. They didn't lose a match and are 5 VPs ahead of Northern Ireland. Congratulations to Frances Hinden, Graham Osborne, Jeffrey Allerton, Chris Jagger, David Price and Colin Simpson with NPC David Burn. Full report in the next issue.

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