



2/1 A Few Rules

by Spike Lay

It's been awhile since the last 2/1 article, but let's get started. If you are serious about learning 2/1 I would recommend that you visit Bernie Chazen's website (www.bernichazen.com). For just signing up on his mailing list you get access to his booklet "The Logic of 2/1 vs Standard." The booklet explains why 2/1 is superior to "Standard" and gives some principles of 2/1. It isn't all easy reading, but it is fairly succinct (26 pages) and well written. If you want to spend some money (\$19.95) you can sign up for Bernie's monthly publication, "Bridge Sense" and all the other things Bernie offers. He is a great teacher, and it is well worth the money, but you can get the 2/1 booklet for free.

There aren't any great books out there about 2/1 (that I'm aware of). Mike Lawrence has a program on cdrom that is pretty good. Marty Bergen wrote some articles many years ago about 2/1. I like Marty's approach. What I'm saying is that there are many differences in the details of various 2/1 systems. I'll tell you what I like with no further caveats about the different methods available. The important thing is that you and your partner are on the same wavelength.

Let's look at opener's rebids after the 2/1. Remember the 2/1 is forcing to game so there is no reason to jump around anymore just to show a good hand. When you do jump the bidding after a 2/1 you must be showing something specific; otherwise why are you taking up bidding space unnecessarily? For example, you hold AKJxx AKxx Ax xx. You open 1S and are pleasantly surprised to hear partner respond 2C. Resist the temptation to jump to 3H. Yes, you have a great hand, and yes, slam is very possible, but you don't know where you're going just yet, so take it easy. Bid 2H and hear more about partner's hand.

After partner's 2/1, both opener and responder bid naturally. This is a huge advantage of 2/1 vs "standard." For example, if you hold xx Kx Ax AKJ9xxx, and respond 2C to partner's 1S opening, what do you call after a 2H rebid by opener? In "standard" you can't bid 3C; it isn't forcing, so you must do something obnoxious - 3D? 3NT? 4C? Who knows? Playing 2/1 bid a descriptive 3C and await developments. Remember 2C forced your side to game.

Here are a few "rules" for opener's rebid after a 2/1. For the time being let's limit our discussion to auctions that begin 1M - 2Any where M stands for major and Any stands for any new suit that isn't a jump bid, e.g. 1S - 2D, 1H - 2C, 1S - 2H. We will discuss the auction 1D - 2C later; this is still a game force, but it requires different agreements. And it goes without saying that we are talking about 1st and 2nd seat openings. Passed hand bidding is a different animal. Rules:

(1) If opener rebids his suit he shows 6 except for 1H - 2D - 2H. There isn't much room here, and opener may have to rebid a 5-card suit, e.g. xx AQJxx Ax Jxxx.

(2) If opener bids a new suit at the 3 level he shows 5 (or maybe 4 that looks like 5, e.g. xx A9xxx Ax AKJ9). I wouldn't object to a 1NT opening with that hand.

(3) "Reverses" don't show extra values after a 2/1. So with AQxx KQ10xx xx xx open 1H and unashamedly (is that a word?) bid 2S over a 2C or 2D response by Pard. Yes, I know you Flannery players would have already described this hand.

(4) "Unnecessary" jumps always show something specific. Otherwise, don't waste the room. For example, 1S - 2C - 3D should be a splinter bid, e.g. AKxxx Kxx x Kxxx. This bid paints a pretty good picture of your hand, i.e. short diamonds and club support (4+ cards). Jumps in your own suit show "solid" suits, e.g. AKQJxx or AKQxxxx; they don't necessarily show extras. They do say "my suit is trumps."

(5) 2NT is a catchall bid. It doesn't promise a doubleton in partner's suit. For example, with AQxxx KJx x Kxxx rebid 2NT after 1S - 2D. You don't want to bid 2S (see Rule #1, and you don't want to bid 3C (see Rule # 2).

Of course, many hands don't fit neatly into any of the categories we have described. For example, with AJ1054 43 AK8 432 you open 1S and Pard bids a game-forcing 2C. Hmm! 2S promises 6; that's no good. We would like to have hearts stopped or at least slowed down for a 2NT rebid. I suppose we could raise clubs, but on 3 small? Yuk! Some of you that sit through my lectures are probably way ahead of me. What if that 4 of hearts accidentally got mixed in with your diamonds? Now your hand looks like AJ1054 3 AK84 432, and you have an easy 2D rebid. Of course, should you be unlucky enough to have to spread the dummy, you must feign surprise when you or an opponent suddenly notice that your 4 of diamonds is really the 4 of hearts. Even if you are too honest to resort to the tactics described above, 2D with just AK8 isn't such a bad bid. It's what Bernie calls "the best lie."