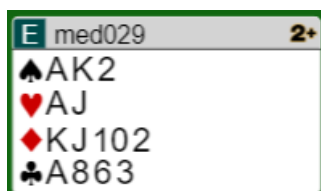


15/06/2020 Hand of the Week 18: Responding to weak 2 opens

We have played 2 more rounds of the YCBA Yorkshire Swiss Pairs. After a close 9-11 loss in the third round we had a 20-0 win in round four, to leave us on 48 points out of a possible 80. This is one of the hands that came up in the fourth round. I was preparing to open 2NT, but Martin gets in first with a weak 2♠:



The weak 2 open should have a 6 card suit with 6-10 points and at least 2 honours in the suit, most pairs would count the 10 as an honour. With a 6 card suit headed by AKQJ I would probably open 1 of the suit, not a weak 2.

There are a number of systems for responding to a weak 2 open in the majors. Generally, all suit bids are to pass and 2NT is constructive and asks the opener to describe their hand in more detail. The system that seems to be played most at the club is to bid a 'feature' at the 3 level. This generally means bidding a suit with an A or K. This can help responder find stops in their weak suits with a view to going to 3NT or 4 of the major.

An alternative system is the one myself and Martin play, the responses to 2NT are:

♣	Weak suit, weak points	6-8 points, with 2 honours (+/- 3 honours including the 10)
♦	Strong suit, weak points	6-8 points, with 3 honours
♥	Weak suit, strong points	8-10 points, with 2 honours (+/- 3 honours including the 10)
♠	Strong suit, strong points	8-10 points, with 3 hours

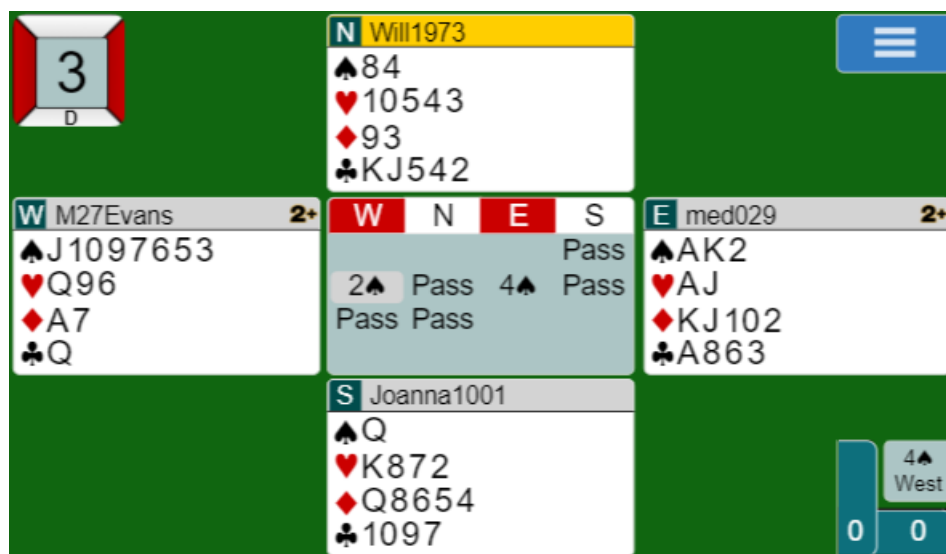
Note that there is some overlap, with 8 points you should take other things into consideration like intermediate values and shape e.g. singletons or voids. There are pro's and con's to both systems. The benefit of the first system is that you get specific information about a suit, e.g. a response of 2♦ shows strength in that suit and denies strength in ♣. This can be helpful when looking for specific stops for 3NT, for example.

The system myself and Martin play gives more information about the hand but won't help find a holding in particular suit.

So what to do with this hand? We can expect 6 spade winners and 2 Aces. There is a good chance of developing tricks in diamonds, but the hand looks vulnerable to a club lead.

Should I settle for 4♠ or go looking for a slam? The weak 2 open is likely to only have 1 winner in outside suits, otherwise they would be opening 1 of the major, and even with my strength it looks like a slam might be a step too far. In fact Martin has given me all the information I need about his and so in this case I just went straight to 4♠

The full hand:



The board was played 16 times and 5 pairs went to slam. There was a fairly even split for opens by west including pass (4 times), 1♠ (2 times), 2♠ (4 times) and 3♠ (6 times). On balance, I think I would have opened 3♠ showing the 7 card suit, as that is the most accurate description. Does that help East? You can now count 7 spades, plus the Aces- you are going to need cards in the right place with partner but it is probably worth a slam try and you can always stop in 5♠.

4 pairs bid 6♣, one pair got overexcited and went to 7♠, all making 12 tricks. Can the slam be beaten?

I think the most likely lead is a trump or a heart. On a heart lead the defence can take the K♥ but this sets up declarers Q♥ for the 12th trick. On a trump lead declarer can safely take the finesse in hearts or diamonds themselves. A diamond lead gives declarer the finesse straight away.

What about clubs? North would be highly unlikely to underlead a K against a slam, and opposite a singleton it is a fairly straight forward decision to go up with the A♣. Clubs are now stopped with the void in hand, so declarer can safely take one of the finesses. The small slam should always make.

Talk to you partner about your responses to weak 2 opens!

I will send the final results of the swiss pairs out with next weeks Hand of the Week.