

SOME OF MY ISSUES WITH PUPPET OVER 2NT, et. al.

My issues with Basic Puppet, or many hyped up versions of Puppet over 2NT, are briefly explained below:

Partner opens 2NT, or rebids 2NT after opening 2♣:

You hold: ♠Axxxx, ♥Kxxx, ♦x, ♣xxx

| | |
|-----|-------------------|
| 2NT | 3♣ (Basic Puppet) |
| 3NT | ? |

3NT says no five- or four-card major. As responder, now what? If you pass, it would truly be unfortunate to find partner with ♠KQx, and ♦Jxx! If you guess to bid 4♠, it would be equally unfortunate to find partner with ♠Jx, and diamonds well stopped!

In my system, I would bid normal Stayman and raise if partner hits a major. Otherwise, bid Smolen over a 3♦ response.

Yes, occasionally we miss a 5-3 major suit fit, & sometimes the 5-3 fit was better, but many times 3NT was superior despite the fit.

IT'S ALL ABOUT FREQUENCY!

CHOICE OF GAMES VERSUS A SLAM TRY

1) ♠QJTxx, ♥QJTxx, ♦xxx, ♣—

My auction:

| | |
|-----|----|
| 2NT | 3♥ |
| 3♠ | 4♥ |

We play this as pass or correct, with zero slam interest.

2) ♠AKxxx, ♥KJxxx, ♦xx, ♣x

| | |
|-----|----|
| 2NT | 3♦ |
| 3♥ | 3♠ |

This auction is 5-5 in the majors with at least mild slam interest. If you really want to get techy, opener can bid 4♣ to confirm heart slam interest, and 4♦ to confirm Spade slam interest.

PUPPET OVER INT - THE RIGHT WAY

(better called - Five-Card Major Stayman)

- 1) If you are 4-4 in the majors, bid normal Stayman. A 3♣ response to 1NT typically shows exactly three cards in one major, and may or may not have four in the other.

Correctly played, the 3♦ response only says, “I do not have a five-card major”.

Using it to deny a five-card major plus guaranteeing at least one four-card major (which is the wrong way to play) can only be useful to the opponents and never you! Played incorrectly:

| | |
|-----|-----|
| 1NT | 3♣ |
| 3♦ | 3NT |

With your partner's 3NT bid, responder obviously did not have interest in a four-card major, otherwise over 3♦, he'd have bid the major he did not have, to investigate. The opponents now know that opener has at least one four-card major.

INT 3♣
 3♦ 3♥*
 3NT

- If 3♦ guarantees a major, and 3♥* by responder shows 4♠, now the opponents know opener has a four-card heart suit. That information can only help the defenders.

In the better methods, the 3♦ bid simply denies a five-card major. If a 5-3 fit does not exist and responder has interest a possible 4-4 fit, he bids the major he does not have ... Smolen-like. You can always get to a 4-4 fit if one exists without the opponents knowing whether opener holds the other one or not.

Never provide information which can only help the defencers.