

# STAYMAN - Revisited

By Neil H. Timm

Playing 2/1, a strong club, precision, or the acol bridge system, among others, all pairs use the Stayman convention over their partners balanced bid of 1NT when they have at least one 4-card major to see if one can find a major suit game or if not a game in NT.

A common 1NT agreement playing the 2/1 system is to have 15-17HCP. How many points are required to make game?

Simulations have shown that a NT game succeeds with 25HCP between two bridge hands 40 to 45% of the time. With **26HCP** the percentage increases to 50 to 55% of the time, and with 27HCP the percentage increases to 60+%.

For a suit major suit game with an 8-card major fit, the corresponding values are respectively 26, 27, and 28HCP with the above corresponding percentages for success.

**These observations suggest that to investigate game in NT or a suit contract, partner needs about 8/9HCP to investigate game (use Stayman with a 4-card major) since game is likely with about 10 total points counting both high-card values and suit length.**

The Stayman Convention goes:

**Stayman: 1NT - 2♣\*- ?**

2♦	=	No 4-card major
2♥	=	4/5 hearts or 4-4 in the majors
2♠	=	4/5 spades and denies 4-hearts
2NT	=	4-4 in the majors 15HCP
3♣*	=	4-4 in the majors with 16-17HCP

If opener bids 2♦, with a weak non-forcing (NF) hand and no game interest some play garbage Stayman with 4441 distribution and pass. When 4-4 in the majors some play Crawling Stayman where now the bid of 2♥\* asks partner to pass or correct to spades with 3-cards in a major, and others playing the Weissberger Convention and bid 3♦\* as an artificial bid which asks partner to pick a major; others may use the 3♦ as a natural game-force (GF) bid with 6+ diamonds. These are partnership agreements where \*=alert.

The bid of 3♣, usually shows 6+clubs and is a GF bid, while the 2NT bid is invitational to game in NT.

Playing the Smolen Convention, 3♥\* shows 5-spades and 4-hearts and 3♠\* shows 5-hearts and 4-spades are GF bids while the bids of 3NT, 4♥, and 4♠ are usually to play.

The bid of 4NT is quantitative and invites a small slam. Simulations show that a NT slam requires 33, **34**, or 35 HCP with success of about 50% with 33 points, 55-60% with **34 points**, and 65% with 35 HCP, respectively. The corresponding values for a suit major suit contract with an 8-card fit are respectively: 32, **33**, and 34HCP.

**With a weak NF hand and 4-4 in the majors, one may also use the Rule of 88 to invoke the Stayman Convention. It requires 8HCP and 8+cards in all suits with values greater than 8 (e.g., 9, 10, J, Q, K, A).**

Other agreed conventions use the response of 2♣ as Puppet Stayman or perhaps 5-card Major Stayman by agreement.

What is one to do with less than 8HCP?

With less than 8HCP, one needs a hand with 5-diamonds, a hand that is 5-4 in diamonds with an unknown 4-card major, or a hand that is 4-4 in the majors. And without these hand shapes partner must **pass**.

With the correct hand shape, partner may pass 2♦ with 5-diamonds or accept the major bid and pass. Without the correct major one may use the bid of 2♥ (crawling Stayman) which says pass or correct to play at the 2-level in a 4-3 major suit fit.