

Responding To Preempts II - Very Modified Ogust

Since we've started to think about preempts in terms of the # of tricks rather than the HCP and suit quality, how should we respond when partner invites us to game.

First and foremost the decision about whether or not to accept should be based on whether or not we are at the upper or lower end of our expected range for the # of tricks promised. After that, we might want to accept and tell partner about our hand.

The first response structure we learned was probably feature. This says if you bid a new suit you like your hand and have a feature there. Usually an ace or a king. This is helpful in telling partner about where our outside points lie and whether or not we like our hand. This has some limitations because we might like our hand without having an outside ace or king to show.

The second response structure many people learn is Ogust. This says roughly we will tell partner about our count and our suit. You can say Good hand or bad hand and good suit or bad suit. The classic definitions are:

Good Hand = 8-10 HCP, Bad Hand = 5-7. Good Suit = 2 of top 3, Bad suit = not. You might make some variations based on seat and vulnerability.

Response to 2N	Meaning	Suit Quality	HCP
3C	Bad hand, Bad suit	Not 2 of top 3	5-7
3D	Bad hand, Good suit	2 of top 3	5-7
3H	Good hand, Bad suit	Not 2 of top 3	8-10
3S	Good hand, Good suit	2 of top 3	8-10

Definitely an improvement on feature, but once again somewhat limited because HCP are often not the right way to describe a hand. Consider

1. ♠KQxxxx
 ♥xx
 ♦QJx
 ♣xx

2. ♠KQJxxx
 ♥x
 ♦Kxx
 ♣xxx

Classic Ogust would treat them the same and respond 3S to show good hand/good suit. Hopefully we all like #2 better than #1. However Feature would require you to bid 3S with 1 even though you might want to accept the game try.

Here's my suggestion. Since 2N is a game try, why not tell partner which game you want to accept?

Very Modified Ogust

Response to 2N	Meaning	Shape	Suit Quality	HCP
3C	Accept 4 of a major, not 3N	Shortness somewhere	Unclear	Typically 5-7
3D	Accept but suggest 3N as alternative to 4M	No shortness	Not solid, have outside cards	Typically 8-10
3 of other major	Accept any game	Shortness somewhere	At least 4 tricks expected opposite xx	Typically 8-10
3 of our major	Not accepting any game try	Unclear	Unclear	Typically 5-7

Especially in matchpoints, it's nice to be able to play 3N when you aren't going to take any extra tricks in the major. This system caters to that by telling you if there's any shortness in the responding hand. It also has the feature that the passable bid (i.e. 3 of our major) is in fact passable.

The more you experiment with non classical shapes for your weak 2's and thinking about tricks rather than length and HCP the more you are likely to appreciate the above concept.

Going back to the 2 hands from above

1. ♠KQxxxx
 ♥xx
 ♦QJx
 ♣xx

2. ♠KQJxxx
 ♥x
 ♦Kxx
 ♣xxx

You now get to distinguish between them with 3D on #1 to suggest HCP without shortness and 3H on #2 to suggest the HCP and the shape.