

Interfering Over Artificial Two Bids

By Neil H. Timm

While there is a large bridge literature on when and how to interfere over the strong Precision 1♣* bid few have addressed what one should do over a strong 2♣/2♦* bid. Playing 2/1, the bid of 2♣ shows 22+HCP or some use the Rule of 44 (4 quick tricks and 4 or less losers) where *=alert.

The Benjamin 2♣ bid shows 23-24 balanced HCP or 20-22 unbalanced, or a 18-19 two suited 5-5 hand; and the 2♦* bid shows a 22-25 HCP balanced hand or an unbalanced 23+ HCP hand.

While the bid of 2♣ is forcing for one round, it is not forcing to game; however, the 2♦* bid is game forcing.

Interfering over a strong two-bid is like interfering over the bid of 2NT=20-21. When you interfere over 2NT one uses the same conventions employed over 1NT=15-17 (e.g., DON'T, Cappelletti, Meckwell, Modified Blooman, etc.). Instead of using the Rule of "8" one uses the Rule of 13 to decide when to interfere. One requires 11HCP to interfere in a suit if the sum of the two longest suits minus the number of losers is greater than 2 (i.e., 11+2 = 13 hence the rule) the make you bid.

Why bid? Clearly it may be for a lead or to interfere with the opponent's bidding. They may not bid game, end-up too high in their contract, or be in the wrong contract.

However, if responder passes over your bid or doubles you must consider if down two is better than the opponents' game with favorable vulnerability. The risk is clearly more with unfavorable vulnerability. How good are the honors in your bid suit? Will your suit and distribution produce many playing tricks?

Playing Tricks (PT)

Playing tricks are defined as the number of tricks expected, with no help from partner, given that the longest suit is trumps. Thus, for long suits the ace, king and queen are counted together with all cards more than 3 in the suit; for short suits only clear winner combinations are counted:

- A = 1, KQ = 1
- AK=2, KQJ = 2
- AKQ = 3, AQJ10=3

In natural systems like Two-Over-One a 2♣ bid requires 9/10 playing tricks for a major/minor.

Quick Tricks (QT)

Quick tricks are like, but not the same as, Honor Tricks in the Culbertson system. They are calculated suit by suit as follows:

- 2 quick tricks = AK in the same suit
- 1.5 quick tricks = AQ in the same suit
- 1 quick trick = A or KQ in the same suit
- 0.5 quick trick = Kx (never K singleton)

This method is used with artificial opening bids.

Honor Tricks (HT)

In the early days of contract bridge Ely Culbertson's honor trick system, assigned point values to combinations of honors, and was used for hand evaluation. AK is 2.0 honor tricks, AQ is 1.5 honor tricks, A or KQ is 1 honor trick, and Kx is 0.5 honor tricks. An opening hand required 2.5 honor tricks.

Interference over strong 2-level bids requires judgement since you are often bidding at the 3-level where book is 9 tricks. Hence you need at least 7 playing tricks for down 2 and 6 for down 3.

One interferes with a 5/6+card suit and at least need 2 playing tricks plus a Singleton/Void in another suit.

South opens 2♣ and as west hold the following hand ♠KQJ10984 ♥J94 ♦7 ♣63.
A clear 2♠ overcall.

South opens 2♣ and you hold ♠- ♥K987 ♦965 ♣KQ10543. While you have a 6-card suit and a void you have only one playing trick so DO NOT overcall 3♣.

South opens 2♣ and you hold ♠Q94 ♥K732 ♦AQJ1075 ♣-. With a 6-card suit and 3-playing tricks, bid 3♦.

The minimal requirements for interference are 3 playing tricks with a void

South opens 2♣ and as west hold the following hand ♠AKQ2 ♥QJ106 ♦J10843 ♣-
You have the required 3 playing tricks and a void. Overcall 2♠ for a lead with 13 optimal points.