

# Interfering Over Notrump

By Neil H Timm

Playing the 2/1 Game Force System, the strong notrump range is most often either 15-17 or 14-16. In general, any range that includes 15 is considered a strong notrump range. The weak notrump range is 12-14 and the mini/precision range is 10-12. The average number of points for each of these ranges are 16, 13 and 11, respectively. Assuming partner has on average 9 HCP, one can expect about 8+, 7 and 6+ tricks for each of these ranges. Thus, if on average if your partnership can take 6,7, or 8 tricks for each of the ranges, strong, weak, and mini, you want to interfere/compete over the notrump bid.

To interfere over each range requires a rule on when to compete and a convention on what do bid. I will try to address each of these in turn.

## Interference over the strong notrump bid

When the opponents open a strong notrump, Mel Colchamiro's Rules of 8 and 2, based on average expected tricks are often used.

**Rule of 8** says you need 6 HCP and after adding the number of cards in your two longest suits and subtracting the number of losing trick count (LTC). Then compete/interfere if the number is 2 or more, in the Direct Seat.

**Rule of 2**, used in the **balancing**, says if you have at least two shortness points, independent of HCP – then compete/interfere over notrump.

Having applied the rule with judgment, what convention should you employ? The one you remember! Seriously, the most used “Interference over strong notrump conventions” played by 2/1 Game force players in the United States are D.O.N.T and Cappelletti called Hamilton on the West coast. **These are used in either the Direct Seat or Balancing Seat.** However, some play Natural bids in the Balancing seat; so this should be discussed with your partner.

## DON'T (Marty Bergen)

- Double – shows any single suit (6 or more cards); partner bids 2♣\*, after which overcaller corrects to his actual suit
- 2♣\*, 2♦\*, 2♥\* – shows the bid suit and any higher-ranking suit (usually 5-5); advancer bids next cheapest suit to find higher ranking suit
- 2♠ – shows spades (6 or more cards)

There is disagreement as to the use of the 2♠ bid. Some treat it as weaker than the sequence of a double followed by 2♣; others play it as showing a solid spade suit, and there are other agreements possible.

Finally, many have added to the original convention that 2NT\* is for the minors.

**Cappelletti** (Mike Cappelletti) also called Hamilton (Fred Hamilton)

- Double – PENALTY
- 2♣\* shows a one-suited hand (usually 6 or more cards). Partner is expected to:
  - bid 2♦\* with a weak hand, which the overcaller can correct to his long suit, or
  - bid 2 of a Major if he has a good 5 or 6 card suit, or
  - bid 2NT\* with a strong hand, (overcaller bids the suit)
- 2♦\* shows both majors (usually 5-5 – some play it 5-4)
- 2♥\* shows hearts and a minor (usually 5-5 – some play it 5-4)
- 2♠\* shows spades and a minor (usually 5-5 – some play it 5-4)
- 2NT\* shows both minor at least 5-5

Observe that these conventions are geared toward two suited hands; however because one-suited hands are more common they have been modified.

Modified DONT (Meckwell) By Jeffrey (*Jeff*) John Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell

Bid	Meaning
Double*	Shows a single minor or both majors; partner bids 2♣*, after which the overcaller corrects to his actual suit if a minor, or hearts if holding both majors
2♣* or 2♦*	Shows the bid suit and a major, as in <b>DON'T</b>
2♥ or 2♠	Shows the bid suit
2NT*	Shows the minors

Modified **Cappelletti** (Origin unknown, see bridgeguys.com)

Bid	Meaning
Double*	Penalty- some play double as takeout
2♣*	Shows a single long minor or a Major and a Minor; partner bids 2♦*, after which the overcaller bids his major; the advancer can next bid 2NT for the minor
2♦*	Shows both majors as Cappelletti
2♥ or 2♠	Shows the bid suit
2NT*	Shows the minors

\*=**ALERT** (Note that natural bids are not alerted)

While many players of the 2/1 Game Force System play either DON'T or Cappelletti or their modifications, a major disadvantage is that they are both geared toward two-suited hands and if the contract is played in a suit the notrump bidder is often NOT on lead.

Looking at Hand and Suit patterns, two-suited 5-5 hands occur far less frequently than one-suited hands and cards with SIX cards are three times more frequent. The 5-5 patterns occur about 3% of the time, while a 6-card pattern occurs more than 15% of the time. Thus, we need a convention that shows SIX cards and has the notrump bidder (opener) on lead. One such convention is what I have called Modified Blooman. It is a modification of BLOOMAN devised by Robert (*Bob*) Hoffman of Boynton Beach, Florida, United States, and Irv Bloom of West Palm Beach Florida. And published in the "Bridge Bulletin", March 2006, page 28.

### Modified Blooman (Direct Seat)

Bid	Meaning
Double**	Relay to 2♣ then apply Capp
2♣*	Transfer to 6-card diamond suit
2♦*	Transfer to 6-card hearts suit
2♥*	Transfer to 6-card spade
2♠*	Transfer to 6-card clubs suit
2NT*	Shows the minors (usually 5-5)

\*\* Where now you are 5-5: 2♦ = Majors, 2♠ = Spades and a Minor, and 2♥ - Hearts and a minor because if you are one suited you would use the transfer bid. All bids are alerted.

If you win the contract, the notrump bidder is usually on lead; in the balancing seat bid your 6-card suit, double with both majors, and use 2NT\* to again show the minors.

### Interference over weak/mini notrump bids

Many play the same convention over strong or weak notrump bids by partnership agreement. However, a commonly used convention is **Landy** (played in both seats). Then Double\*=penalty; 2♣ is Stayman, 2-level bids are natural, and 2NT\*=minors.

Consistent with Modified Blooman – I recommend a convention I have called Modified Meckwell, following Blooman. With the weak range it does not matter who is on lead.

### Modified Meckwell (Direct Seat/Balancing Seat)

Bid	Meaning
Double*	Shows equal values – if the opponents bid 2♣ make a jump bid over their bid where 3♥/3♠ show a 6-card suit and 2NT shows the minors (5-5)
2♣*	Spades or a rounded suit (hearts or clubs); advancer bids 2♦*
2♦*	Unspecified Major
2♥	6-card heart suit
2♠	6-card spade suit

2NT\* Long minor, advancer bids 2♣; partner passes or corrects

**When you cannot interfere over notrump and the bidding has gone 1NT-3NT, what is your best lead?**

I recommend following the advice provided by Bird and Anthias (2011) based on a computer analysis of over 100,000 simulations in their book "Winning Notrump Leads".

1. Lead your shortest major (from 1 or 2) even if you have 4 cards in the other major. Try to find partner's suit.
2. When you have a 4-card and 3-card major, lead the 3-card major and use the rule of 12. Do not lead your long minor.
3. Do not lead from a four-card suit, headed by one or two honors. You give away half a trick leading away from any suit headed by an ace, king, or queen.
4. Lead the top honor from strong 3-card suit AKx, KQx rather than 4<sup>th</sup> best from a weak 5-card suit headed by a jack or a queen

This advice also applies to 1NT contract. **SURPRISED ---I HOPE SO.**

Finally, what do you do over the Precision club? Many play Mathe where Double = the majors (5-5), 1NT=Minors (5-5) and natural bids show a 5+card suit. This does very little to interfere! Can you use Modified Mathe? Yes, use 1NT for the Majors and 2♣ for the minors; again 5-5. This allows partner to bid at the 2-level. Or, you may again use Modified Blooman.

**Modified Blooman (Direct Seat)**

<b>Bid</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Double**	Relay to 2♣ then apply Capp
2♣*	Transfer to 6-card diamond suit
2♦*	Transfer to 6-card hearts suit
2♥*	Transfer to 6-card spade
2♠*	Transfer to 6-card clubs suit
2NT*	Shows the minors (usually 5-5)

\*\* Where now you are 5-5: 2♦ = Majors, 2♠ = Spades and a Minor, and 2♥ - Hearts and a minor because if you are one suited you would use the transfer bid. All bids are alerted