

# Optimal Point Count VS. Expert Judgement

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The Two over One (2/1) Game Force bidding system is an improvement over the Standard American (AS) System.

Many authors' claim that the primary advantage of the 2/1 system is that it allows the partnership to know that game is possible with only one single bid. **This is incorrect!** It is only true if the 2/1 bidder has 15 points, not 12/13 points since 25/26 points do not result in game whenever a singleton in one hand finds "wasted honor points" in partner's hand. Yet, most 2/1 bids only require 12/13 High Card Points (HCP).

Another flaw with the 2/1 approach is the fact that opening 1-level bids have a wide bidding range (12-21). To eliminate this flaw, the principles of Strong Club Systems may be applying with a new and improved hand evaluation method.

Finally, a major flaw of the Strong Club opening bids is that are based solely on 16/17 (HCP). Why not 18+?

The Optimal Point Count (OPC) developed by Patrick Darricades's "*Optimal Hand Evaluation*" (2019), explains why his method is superior to those developed by C. Goren/M. Work, Bergen's Adjust-3 Method, Zar points, and others.

The new point count method replaces the need for expert judgement and silly rules or laws like the rule of 15, 17, 20, 22, etc. and Law of Total Tricks, among others.

## COUNTING OPC POINTS VERSUS "EXPERT JUDGMENT"

Reading Augie Boehm's book "*Expert Hand Evaluation*" (2017), one finds a multitude of example deals that illustrate the value and validity of the **Optimal Hand Evaluation**. The purpose of his book is clearly to show that a strict point count is no substitute for "*Expert judgment*".

And the *traditional* way to count **honor** points certainly bears that out !

But that is **not** at all the case when counting points the "right" way, the Optimal hand evaluation way! Let's look at some of the examples he shows in his book.

- In one example, he shows the following two hands :

Hand A	♠ x x x	♥ x x x x	♦ Q x x x	♣ K x
Hand B	♠ Q x x	♥ Q J x x x	♦ x x	♣ A x x

And asks : "*Which of the above two hands would you rather bid with, after the following auction*" ? : 1 ♠      2 NT (minors)      3 ♠      ?

And makes the following comment : "*Hand A, by a wide margin. Imagine partner with a representative hand for this auction, such as :*

♠ x	♥ x x	♦ K J 10 x x	♣ Q J 10 x x
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*Matched with such a hand, hand B rates to go down two in 4 ♣ while the opponents could well make 4 ♠. Why goad the opponents into a potentially successful contract that they may not reach on their own, while risking a costly penalty double ? Best **pass**. With hand A, however, a diamond contract will make 8 tricks while the opponents almost surely have an easily makable 4 ♠, perhaps a slam. Bid 4 or 5 diamonds. A strict point count does **not** translate the "true" value of your hand and would be **no** substitute for this type of tactical analysis".*

In other words, you will be better off relying on "Expert judgment"...

Well, let's see : In Optimal Point Count, hand B is worth 9 HDF pts (no K)

Minus 2 pts for "*wasted honor pts*" in one of the two Majors = 7 pts. **Pass**.

While hand A is worth 10 ½ HDF pts (+1 for the K in partner's 5-card suit + 2 pts for no "*wasted honor pts*" in one of the two Majors. Bid 4 or 5 ♦.

*A strict point count does not translate the "true" value of your hand ?... Not so !*

And the OPC count saves you valuable time "at the table" not having to "imagine" partner's hand...

- In another example, he shows the following three hands :

Hand A	♠ K Q x x x x	♥ A K	♦ x x	♣ K 10 x
Hand B	♠ K J x x x x	♥ A K	♦ K x x	♣ J x
Hand C	♠ K x x x x	♥ A Q x	♦ Q J	♣ Q J x

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And asks : "What would you bid with each of these hands after this auction ?" :

1 ♠            2 ♦            2 ♠            3 ♣            ?

And makes the following comment : "All three hands count to 15 HCP, but hand A is best, by far, hand B is next and hand C is worst. The first hand does not have wasted honors in diamonds and its ♣ King seems favourably located **behind** East's 3 ♣ bid. Bid 4 ♠. Hand B has dubious values with the ♦ King located before Est's 2 ♦ bid and its ♣ Jack loses the totality of its value. Bid 3 ♠. As for hand C, its ♦ Q J are totally wasted and its ♣ Q J could likely be ruffed before the declarer of a spade contract could play trumps. Pass. Knowing the **value** of your points is more important than their number".

Right he is on his last sentence ! And he could certainly use some help himself there... Of course, in the Optimal point count, these three hands do **not** count to 15 HCP !

Hand A has **19** HLD pts (+ 1 for 3 Kings but -1 pt for the ♥ A K doubleton) -1 for 3 cards in clubs, to which 1 Fit point should be added for the 6th spade that his partner does not know about. 19 + 10 = 29. Bid 4 ♠. No need for "Expert judgment"...

Hand B has **16 ½** HLD pts (3 Kings but no Q) -1 for 3 cards in diamonds, -1 for the lone ♦ King, to which 1 Fit point should be added for the 6th spade that his partner does not know about. 15 ½ + 10 = 25 ½. Bid 3 ♠. No need for "Expert judgment"...

Hand C has 15 ½ HLD pts -2 pts for the useless diamonds = **13 ½** pts and the value of the ♣ Q J x is highly questionable. **Pass** is far better than 3 ♠.

- In another example, he shows the following two hands :

Hand A	♠ K x x	♥ K x	♦ Q x	♣ A Q x x x x
Hand B	♠ x x	♥ A x x	♦ x	♣ K Q J x x x x

And asks : "Would you intervene with either of these hands after this auction ?" :

1 ♠            pass            2 ♦ (GF)            ?

And makes the following comment : "Even though Hand B has far fewer points than hand A, to overcall with the first hand is much riskier than with the second. Hand A is more defensive than offensive and its ♦ Queen is worth nothing in offense. While hand B is more offensive than defensive and should induce you to bid 3 or 4 clubs. Once again, a point count is likely to lead you astray".

But hand A is far from having more points than hand B ! It has 16 ½ HLD pts -2 pts for 3 cards in the opponents' suit and its lone King = **14 ½** HLD pts. Pass, certainly! While hand B has **18 ½** HLD pts. Of course, bid 3 or 4 ♣.

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– In another example, he shows the following two hands :

Hand A    ♠ x x        ♥ Q x        ♦ K J 10 x x x        ♣ Q x x

On your partner's opening of 1 ♣, the bidding has been :

1 ♣	1 ♦
1 ♥	2 ♦
2 NT	?    And he asks : "Your turn. What now?".

Follows a lengthy discourse along these lines : "Partner is inviting game with 16 to 18 pts. To bid over 2 NT you must have a sense of the context of your 2 ♦ bid. Partner expects 6 to 10 pts from you. It is now up to you to judge whether your hand is minimum, maximum or mid-range. Your point-count is average-plus but dig a little deeper. Partner rates to have 5 clubs and your Queens are located in partner's bid suits and the strenght of your long diamond favour a 3 NT contract. Reaching the "right" decision is **not** a question of raw **points** ; it's holding features that are a source of tricks".

Well, that is precisely what the Optimal point count aims to do : translate key features into points. it's not that complicated, and much less time-consuming, if you count your points "right" : your hand has 9 ½ HL pts – already at the maximum of your point-range – to which 2 pts should be added for the ♣ Fit with the Queen = 11 ½ HL pts. *Where is the problem ?*  
Bid 3 NT.

– One last example. He shows the following hand :

♠ K Q J x x x        ♥ ---        ♦ 10 x x        ♣ A J 10 x

And comments : "You open 1 ♠ and the bidding then proceeds as follows" :

1 ♠	2 ♦	3 ♠ (weak)	4 ♦
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"Visualizing an obvious diamond shortness in partner's hand, you should happily bid 4 ♠. Hands like these have **no relation to point-count** ; Distribution clearly overrides. All you need in partner's hand to make 4 ♠ is four small trumps and a ♦ singleton ; the ♣ Queen or a ♦ void would be a bonus!".

But **the relation to point-count** is crystal clear when you count points "right": You have 20 ½ HLD pts + 2 pts for no "wasted honor pts" in diamonds, and 4 trumps and a ♦ singleton in partner's hand would equate to 5 HDF pts ! (2 pts for the 9-card Fit + 3 for the singleton with 4 trumps).  
22 ½ + 5 = 27 ½ HLDF pts. Of course bid 4 ♠ !

The bottom line is : an **accurate** point count is, often, a great substitute for "Expert judgment !".

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