

What is a Very Strong Hand?

By Neil H. Timm

The ACBL has defined a very strong hand as a hand with:

- (1) at least 20 HCP; or
- (2) at least 14 HCP and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.
- (3) at least 5 Control Points and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.

What does this now mean for the strong artificial 2♣ playing 2/1?

The bid of 2♣ is any hand with 20+ HCP or any hand 18+ HCP with 4 quick tricks and 4 or less losers.

Or playing 1NT=15-17 HCP, the bid of 2♣ is any 18-21 balanced, or GF force hand. This allows one to define the bid of 2NT as any balanced hand with 22-24HCP playing 2/1.

Yes 2♣ need not show a strong hand with 22-24HCP playing 2/1 or Standard American!

Here are some bidding sequences:

2♣ - 2♦; 2♥*=18-19 or 5+Hearts/2♠; (no need for Mexican/Karosel conventions)

2♣ - 2♦; 2NT=20-21 (no need to open 2NT)

2NT = 22-24 (no need for 2♣- 2♦- 2NT sequence)

2♣ - 2♦ - 3NT=25+

These bids improve upon the 2/1 bidding system.

You hold the hand: ♠AK ♥Kx ♦AKJxxx ♣xx

Yes open 2♣ not 1♦.

What about: ♠AK ♥Kx ♦AK10xxx ♣xx

Yes open 2♣ not 1NT!

Yes, the times they are a-changing so change with them!

Summary of responses to the bid of 2NT opening bid (22-24)

| | |
|-------|--|
| 3♣ | Puppet or Muppet Stayman (asking for 4+majors) |
| 3♦ | Shows 5+ Hearts |
| 3♥ | Shows 5+ Spades |
| 3♠* | Shows both minors 5-5/5-4 |
| 3NT | To Play |
| 4♣/4♦ | Transfers to Hearts/Spades |
| 4♥/4♠ | Transfers to Clubs/Diamonds |
| 4NT | Invitational |
| 5NT | Invitational to 6NT, asks for any 5-card suit |

Summary of responses to 2♣ opening bid

| | |
|----------|---|
| 2♦ | Waiting so that opener's 2♥* response becomes a 2-way bid: |
| 2♥* | 18-19 or 5+ Hearts With a 0-4HCP hand 2♠* to show a long minor |
| 2♠ | GF with 5+ spades |
| 2NT | Balanced 20-21 |
| 3♣/3♦ | GF in bid minor |
| 3♥/3♠ | Set trump suit slam interest |
| | 3NT no controls cue bid |
| 3NT | 25-26 |
| 2♥/2♠ | 0-4HCP and 5-card major suit |
| 2NT* | 0-4HCP with 5+ minor |
| 3♣/3♦ | Pass/correct |
| 4NT | asks responder to bid minor |
| 3♣/♦/♥ | Honor in next suit and no other A/K |
| 3NT | AKQxxx(x) in any 6+ card suit (transfer) |
| 4♣/♦/♥/♠ | 2 of top 3 honors in next 6+ card suit (transfer) |

If opponent interfere over 2♣ bid then DOPI=no A/K and Pass shows A/K and over ROPI over a X by the opponents.