

Bridge Theory for the Practitioners

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38. 2/1 Game Force for a Serious Partnership, Part I

In the next few columns, I will provide you with a very useful structure for 2/1 GF. My presentation will be somewhat involved and is designed for a serious partnership. This is very timely given that Karen Walker has just started writing on 2/1 GF and Semi-Forcing NT (you might recall we talked about Semi-Forcing NT in Columns 26 and 30) in the ACBL Bulletin. You can then discuss various options with your serious partner and agree on some specific sequences that you want to work with. Please be aware that if you change something in the system structure I will provide you with, its effect is not just localized to the line you change but can impact the system in a global sense with unforeseen consequences.

Section I. Some General Guidelines before we start 2/1 discussions

A. General guidelines for opening on 1st or 2nd chairs

- We open all 13 count hands. 13 is a magic number. And it is a prime number. Hence.
- We open 12 count hands with a 5 card suit or with 7 losers (for discussions on loser counts, see Columns 14 and 17). In second chair, however, we open all 12 count hands with 4 Ss as partner would have trouble opening the hand 4th chair with very few S cards.
- We do not typically open 11 count hands with 1-any unless the hand is 5-5 shape or has a 6-card suit.
- We strongly consider opening 2M with an 11 count hand with 5-card Major unless the hand has a
 - 4 card OM (in which case we pass)
 - a 5- card minor (in which case we open 1M)
 - or a void (in which case we open 1M).

Various other considerations go into the decision to open 2M with a 5-card suit--- suit quality (the minimum suit quality is Qxxxx), vulnerability, number of cards in the OM, and overall shape of the hand. See Column #23 for further discussions on this topic.

- Our 1D opening guarantees 4+ Ds.

- **Our 1C opening could be as short as 2 cards but only with hands of 4=4=3=2 shape.** When partner opens 1C, we need to announce “**could be short**”.
- With 5 Cs and 4 Ds and a moderate hand (12-15) we open 1D. With the same hand shape and 16+ we open 1C and reverse into 2D.
- With 5-5 in the blacks we always open 1S.
- **With 5 card major and 6 card minor we open 1M irrespective of the strength of the hand. Thus if we open 1minor and then rebid the major twice, we must have a 7-5 hand.**
- With 6 Hs and 5 Ss we open 1H irrespective of the strength of the hand (11+).
- Our NT range is 14-17 and often will have a 5-card major if the hand shape is 5332. With 14 count balanced hand we will open 1N with a 5332 shape or with couple of tens. **With 17 count hands we open 1N only if the hand does not have a 5-card suit or both 4-card majors (also if we believe that game is possible with a good 7 count hand from responder, we will not open 1N with 17 points).** See Column #30 for further discussions.
- **Balanced hands in the range of 14-15 and with 5-card minor and 4-card Heart suit i.e. 2=4=5=2 or 2=4=2=5 shapes can be opened 1m or 1N depending on the quality of the short suits. Similar hands with a 4-card S suit should always be opened 1m as there is no rebid problem.**

B. Quick Summary of Semi-Forcing NT over 1M

When responder bids 1N over a major, semi-forcing, she would have 6-11 high card points (hcp) and only up to 2 cards in opener’s major. The Limit Raise hand is separated from the 1N semi-forcing hand and a structure was discussed in Column #26. Pass is recommended after a 1M – 1N auction when opener has a 5332 shape and 12 to bad 14 hcps.

C. Responses to 1 minor openings

These will be discussed in detail when we are ready to tackle the 1D -2C auction.

Section II. 2/1 GF when opener bid 1M and the auction proceeds uncontested

A. General Structure

- 2/1 responses typically show 12+ hcps.
- All hands with 4+ cards trump support and 12+ hcps, starts with Jacoby 2N and not a 2/1 response. I will discuss some options for a serious Jacoby structure in the future.
- 1S – 2H shows 5+ Hs and 12+ hcps. Responder might have up to 3 Spades.
- 1S – 2D shows 5+ Ds and 12+ hcps. Responder might have up to 3 Spades.
- 1S – 2C shows 12+ hcps and either a) a hand with 5+ Cs or b) a balanced hand with 2+ Cs. This bid must be alerted. Responder might have up to 3 Spades.

This bid categorically denies 5+Hs, 5+Ds, and 4+ Ss in responder's hand.

- 1H – 2D shows 5+ Ds and 12+ hcps. Responder might have up to 3 Hs and 4 Ss.

With 5+Ds and exactly 4S and a GF hand start with 2D over 1H and not with 1S.

- 1H – 2C shows 12+ hcps and either a) a hand with 5+ Cs or b) a balanced hand with 2+ Cs. This bid must be alerted. Responder might have up to 3 Hs.

This bid categorically denies 5+Ss and 5+Ds in responder's hand. Responder, however, can have 4Ss.

As the 1M - 2C structure proposed here is quite different from what many players are used to, I will spend considerable time on these sequences in future columns.