Default Agreements

Before we begin let’s look at our preferred style of 2/1:

- **(Lawrence)** Opener’s 2M Rebid is default for unspecified minimum hands and only promises 5 trumps (Lawrence Style). Reverses and 3-level new suits show extra values. 2N promises stoppers or honors in the unbid suits.
- **(Bergen)** Opener’s 2M rebid shows 6+ card suit (Bergen Style). Opener’s 2N rebid is default for balanced minimums and promises no specific holding in unbid suits. Reverses and 3-level rebids promise no extra values.

**Default Summary**

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Showing 6-card suits early has a major advantage. Knowing we have a 9 or 10 card fit enables better constructive and competitive bidding. The need for right-side NT is important. Knowing when opener has extra values matters. Can we have the benefit of knowing partner’s 6-card suit without sacrificing stoppers for 2N and extras for reverses (high reverses – 3-level rebids)? You bet!

**1) How Opener Shows a 6-Card Major**

Opener’s simple rebid of 2 of their major shows 6 or more cards in Bergen’s style. In some sequences this might not be clear until the 3 or 4-level in Lawrence’s approach. Here’s how 6-card suits and extra values can be shown:

**Option 1 – The Schuler Shift:**

a) Allow a 2 level rebid on all 5 card suits in minimum range, including balanced 5332’s with or without stoppers in unbid suits. Include any hands with a 6-card major that is willing to play 3N (say, ♠AQ6543 ♥4 ♦98 ♥KQ32, in the auction 1♠ - P - 2♠ should rebid 2♣ not 2N).

b) Assign the rebid 2N to show any hand with 6+ card Major that will play better in 4 of the Major than 3N. This suffers from potentially missing minor suit contracts when opener holds ♠3 ♥AKJ2 ♦K32 ♣QJ2 and the auction is 1♥ - P - 2♠ - P - 2N(6 ♥s) – P - 3N – P - ?? Could we be missing a slam in ♥s? A lot depends on what 2♠ means.

**Option 2 – The Martel Shift:**

a) Opener’s simple rebid of the next strain (Step 1 rebid) show all minimums with 5-card suits or 6 cards holdings unsuitable for play in NT. 1♠ - P - 2♠ - P - 2♣ says nothing about ♥s, but guarantees a minimum hand with 5 or 6 trumps.

Discuss a new convention in detail with partner including 2 and 3rd round rebids and areas of ambiguity before adopting it.

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b) Responder’s bids the Step 1 strain to ask which (5-card minimum or 6+ Cards). 1♦ - P – 2♦ - P – 2♦ - P – 2♥ asks. 2♠ shows 6+ cards while 2N shows flawed minimum hands with only 5 cards in the Major.

c) Responder’s rebid of the Major now takes the place of the Step 1 suit! So 1♠ - P – 2♠ - P – 2♠ shows ♠♣, the bid that the 2♠ artificial rebid had eliminated ← the (Chip) MARTEL SWITCH!

2) **RESPONDERS STRONG BALANCED HANDS**

Current practice has us bidding 1NT with a balanced 11-12, 3N with a balanced 13-15 and a 4-card minor with 16+ HCP. Sometimes we have to make due with 2♣ on a 3-card suit (Partner opens 1♣ and you hold ▪K2 ♥KJ9 ♦AJ3 ♣K32 you will likely call 2♣ then jump to 3N or 4N). Why not put all balanced GF hands in 2♣, freeing 3N for other duty? 2♣ shows ♣ or balanced GF. This has the benefit of keeping the auction low and allowing more space for exploration. This also allows 2♣ by responder to promise a 5-card suit. To do this:

a) Opener rebids 2♣ on a 5 and 6-card minimums. Responder then shows a GF balanced hand by rebidding 2N or real ♣ by rebidding anything else.

b) Some simplify the 1NT forcing bid by including the 3-card limit raise in the 2♣ response (optional). Thus when opener rebids 2♣ (waiting), responder can rebid 2♣ to show the limit raise hand. This does not allow the rebid on 2 cards, but gains other advantages. Now opener can safely pass 1N with many minimum hands.

c) Typically opener’s balanced 12+’s and 18-19 rebid 2N while 15-17 rebids 3N. If you have 20+ HCP you don’t have a bidding problem 😊.

3) **MINI – MAXI SPLINTERS BY RESPONDER**

Since 2♣ response shows all balanced game forces to 1♥/♠, what do we do with 3N? The best idea is to fine-tune our splinter raises. We can now afford to show 9-11 HCP splinters and 12-14 HCP Splinters. Holding fewer HCP we want to share less specific information with defenders. Holding more strength (approaching Slam) we can be more overt.

**NOTE:** The HCP ranges assume all are WORKING – do not count singleton HONORS EVER!

a) Bid 3N with 4 trumps, a singleton or void, and no worse than 7 losers. All HCP must be working (NO SINGLETON HONORS). If partner has enough to consider slam they will ask for the short suit by bidding 4♥ (responses show the suits up the line: ♣, ♠, Other Major).

b) Bid 3♣, 4♣, 4♥, 4♦ with the stronger hands. This makes it very easy for partner to assess slam potential.

c) With 15+ WORKING HCP and 4-card support, start with a 2/1 bid then continue strongly.

d) With a stiff A/K/Q, be sure to hold the HCP range in the other 3 suits – do not count the stiff honor.

4) **FIT JUMPS REPLACE WEAK JUMP SHIFTS**

Weak Jump shifts? They wrong-side the contract and give defenders a clear blueprint for an effective attack. Andrew Robson made an important contribution to constructive and competitive bidding advocating fit jumps. A fit jump shows invitational or better values, is forcing at least one round, and promises 1) 4-cards trump support for opener’s Major and a 5+ card 1-loser suit. If partner opens 1♥, a minimum 3♥ response would look like 3♥ ♦QJ84 ♣QJ54 ♤Kx. Responder can have more, so the Fit Jump is forcing 1 round. If opener or responder rebids a new suit, it is a control bid and forces game / seeks slam. Fit Jumps show source of tricks raises, complementing Jacoby 2NT (Balanced) and 3-suit GF Raises (Splinters).

5) **FAST ARRIVAL AND PICTURE BIDS**

Experts play fast arrival in suits and slow arrival (jumps show extras) in NT. One important refinement is to not allow either partner to make a fast arrival jump to game if partner is UNLIMITED (partner has not narrowly limited their hand). 1♠ – P – 2♠ – P – 2♣ – P – 4♠ is not Fast arrival. Rather it is a good raise with prime values in the bid suits and NO CONTROLS in the unbid suit (honors or singletons). Something like ♠KJ84 ♥98 ♦104 ♣AKJ64. Picture bids help opener assess slam opportunities. Does this mean there are no fast arrival bids? No, we just delay them 1 round. 1♠ – P – 2♠ – P – 2♣ – P – 2♣ – P – 3♠ – P – 4♠ = fast arrival! Experts also use responders Jump Raise as a serious slam-try asking partner to begin to control bid: 1♣ – P – 2♣ – P – 2♥ – P – 3♣ set ♣ and asks for control bidding.

Opener’s single/double jump shifts show shortness (you decide whether min/max or singleton/void).

These expert approaches are gaining adherents. Consider adopting what you find worthwhile. Remember to ALERT!


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