



16th April 2008

Weak Two Openings – Follow-Up

Ogust & New Suits Forcing

After the Weak Two, 2NT asks and Opener responds:

- 3♣ Bad hand, bad suit
- 3♦ Bad hand, good suit
- 3♥ Good hand, bad suit
- 3♠ Good hand, good suit
- 3NT AKQxxx in the bid suit.

The problem with these responses can best be seen by looking at an example:

♠ 87	2♥	2NT
♥ KJ9432	??	
♦ A32		
♣ 92		

How do you assess this hand? Is the suit good or bad? No, it's somewhere in between. And the hand, is that good or bad? It's also in between. It seems arbitrary to classify it as "Good, bad", or "Bad, good", that's more fitted to one of these:

♠ 82	♠ 8
♥ KT9432	♥ KQT943
♦ AQ2	♦ 432
♣ J9	♣ 962

That's the Ogust part, on to the "New Suit Forcing" part, or, to put it another way "RONF", as in "Raise Only Non-Force". In other words, 2♥ 2♠ is forcing, whereas 2♥ 3♥ is purely preemptive.

2NT Asks For Feature

This is a simple enough method ... after the Weak Two, we bid 2NT asking Opener to show us a "feature" in a side-suit. Typically, a feature is defined as an Ace or a King, though you might choose to stretch that definition to include holdings such as QJx. The idea of the convention is to see if the hands fit well together, and, especially, to discover whether we have all the suits stopped for a 3NT contract. For example:

♠ AQ	♠ 954
♥ 82	♥ KQT654
♦ AKQJ654	♦ 82
♣ 72	♣ A6

A good hand for the system ... once Partner opens a Weak 2♥, we want to be in 3NT if only Partner has something in Clubs. And, if Partner does not have a Club feature? Well, we'll just have to hope that 4♥ makes.

A refinement of "Feature" is for Opener not to admit to the feature with a really bad hand (which would not work so well on the hand above where all that Responder cares about is a Club stop).

Modified Ogust (5666)

Actually, there are a few Ogust variations, and "5666" is our own favorite. After we open a Weak Two, and Partner bids 2NT, these are our responses:

- 3♣ 5-card suit, any strength (now 3♦ asks for strength, to which the responses are 3♥, 3♠, 3NT respectively for Bad, Medium, Good)
- 3♦ 6-card suit, bad hand
- 3♥ 6-card suit, medium hand
- 3♠ 6-card suit, good hand
- 3NT AKQxxx in the bid suit.

Here are three hands from before where we were agonizing whether to treat them as "Good, Bad" or "Bad, Good", or whatever. In a "Bad, Medium, Good" world, these are pretty straightforward:

Good	Medium	Bad
♠ 82	♠ 87	♠ 8
♥ KT9432	♥ KJ9432	♥ KQT943
♦ AQ2	♦ A32	♦ 432
♣ J9	♣ 92	♣ 962

New Suits Constructive

If you play that new suits opposite a Weak Two are forcing, then you are in the majority. But, consider also the alternative style of "new suits constructive", which shows the following hand type (after 2♥ 2♠):

- (a) Non-forcing, if Responder wants to insist on game he can jump to 3♠ or else bid a forcing 2NT. But he does have a pretty decent hand, he is seeking our help to bid game.
- (b) Not only is Responder unsure about playing in game, he may well be unsure about which strain to play it in ... it may be our suit, his suit, or No Trump.
- (c) Responder has 5+ cards in his own suit.

Examples (after Partner opens a weak 2♥)

♠ AQ765, ♥ A32, ♦ A87, ♣ 73

No need to waste time showing Spades here, we want to bid game if Partner has a decent hand. So, bid 2NT, in search of that “Bad, Medium, Good” response ... if it’s Medium or Good, we’ll try 4♥.

♠ Q7654, ♥ A32, ♦ K75, ♣ 74

Bid 3♥ here, furthering the preempt.

♠ AQJ76, ♥ 96, ♦ A753, ♣ K4

Not enough to go to game, and uncertainty as to where we belong ... so bid 2♠, non-forcing, but constructive.

♠ AQJ76, ♥ 92, ♦ AQT, ♣ KQT

Definitely not a 2♠ bid, way too good, and, anyway, we know where this one belongs. Yes, we bid 3NT.

Now we try some hands from the other side of the table. We have opened 2♥, Partner has bid 2♠, and it is our turn with the following:

♠ J5, ♥ QT9764, ♦ K87, ♣ 53

An easy one to start off with. Our hand is quite minimum, no reason to bid again. Partner’s 2♠ bid was not forcing, it was merely constructive.

♠ 7, ♥ KQJT94, ♦ 763, ♣ 853

We have a poor hand, shortness in Partner’s suit, and a very fine suit of our own. Bidding 3♥ here will convey that message. 3♥ is not forcing and says that we like Hearts more than Spades. Add a minor suit King to this hand and we would bid 4♥.

♠ J53, ♥ KJ9763, ♦ 652, ♣ 8

We were wondering how to explain this Weak Two bid to Partner, but now, after his 2♠ response, our hand has got better, we have 3-card support, and a singleton to boot. Despite our shortage of HCP’s, surely we owe Partner a raise to 3♠. Replace that K♥ with the Ace and we would advocate a 4♠ call.

♠ 84, ♥ AQ9765, ♦ KT7, ♣ 74

Here, we have a good hand, but we are not crazy about Partner’s Spades, and our own Hearts are nothing to write home about, either. But, we want to cooperate, and the best way of doing that is to bid 3♦. We are just bidding what we have, and hoping that this information allows Partner to bid 3NT. If not, we’ll be happy to play this one in 4 of a major, whichever one Partner prefers.

Recap

2♥ 2♠ Constructive bid, at least a 5-card suit, not forcing but trying for game.

2♥ 2NT An asking bid, with the responses as described above. Responder usually knows where this will be played (presumably Hearts or No Trump), it’s just a matter of how high.

2♥ 3♥ A preemptive move, making them guess one level higher.

2♥ 4♥ Yes, we want to play it in 4♥! But, we might have 4 small Hearts and out, merely seeking to obstruct the opponents’ auction ... or, we might have a good hand with Heart support and an expectation of making game. Partner won’t know which (and doesn’t need to), and neither will the opponents.

2♥ 3♠ This is the bid that we make when we want to force to game, and when we have a good suit of our own. For every time that this auction occurs, an auction that starts 2♥ 2♠ will surely occur a dozen times. It’s that frequency which makes the “New suits constructive” style so appealing.

2♥ 3♦ However, some partnerships make a distinction between new suits at the two-level (which they play as constructive) and new suits at the 3-level (which they play as forcing). That’s an OK treatment, in fact we recommend it, but, to be honest, it rarely seems to come up ... usually, with that hand type, Responder just charges into 3NT.

2♥ 4♣ Consider playing this as Roman Key Card. And, at the risk of adding too much clutter to your convention card, we would further suggest that you modify the responses somewhat. Just remember “01122”, by which we mean the following step responses:

- 0 Key Cards
- 1 Key Card without the Queen of trumps
- 1 Key Card with the Queen of trumps
- 2 Key Cards without the Queen of trumps
- 2 Key Cards with the Queen of trumps.

Yes, you could use the standard Roman Key Card responses but the modified ones are a definite improvement opposite a Weak Two bid.