



Convention of the Week

7th May, 2008

Weak Two Openings – Competition

After They Overcall

Not too much to say here. One time-honored rule is that when we preempt and an opponent bids a suit, then Partner's Double is very much a penalty Double ... no need to look at our hand in these situations, we just pass.

After They Double (McCabe)

Assume that Partner opens 2♠ and RHO doubles:

Rdbl: This is not part of McCabe, it's just commonsense ... that Redouble is not SOS, it's an announcement of strength ... those opponents may have just stepped into the wrong auction and we are inviting Partner's cooperation in penalizing them. If we did not seek Partner's cooperation we would just pass and then double later in the auction.

3♦: A bid of a new suit says "I could have raised you to 3♠, but instead, along the way, I thought that you might like to know that a Diamond lead would be a good idea against their contract"

4♦: More of the same ... we have a raise to 4♠ and along the way we want to send the same "Lead a Diamond message". How about 4♥ over the Double? Natural! You can make your Heart lead-director with 3♥, if you like, but should keep 4♥ free as a natural bid.

2NT: This says "I'm running from Spades!" Opener is expected to bid 3♣ and Responder will now pass or convert to his own long suit. Note that we are forced to escape via this 2NT mechanism, because the direct 3-level bids are lead-directing, as per the above.

McCabe is for escaping at the 3-level ... if, after a Double of 2♦ or 2♥, we can bid our own suit at the two-level, we do so directly. So, here, 2♠ is just escaping to what is hopefully a better spot.

After They Open a Weak Two

For the most part, bidding over their Weak Two just involves natural, commonsense bidding. Let's say that RHO opens 2♥:

2♠: A natural overcall, but no point in making it without a decent hand, so perhaps a good 10 or 11 is about as low as you should go, maybe: ♠ AKJT7, ♥ 72, ♦ QJT6, ♣ 83 would qualify as a minimum. If our overcall suit took us to the 3-level, we'd want to up the strength of the hand by a few points.

3♠: Once they have preempted, our own jumps are not preempts ... here, 3♠ is a value bid, showing a really good suit and looking for just a little help from Partner, perhaps: ♠ KQJT65, ♥ 7, ♦ AQJ4, ♣ A6 ... an Ace, or a minor suit King, should be enough of an excuse for Partner to take us to game.

2NT: Natural, with a good holding in Hearts and about 16-18. As a follow-up to 2NT, we suggest your usual follow-up to a 1NT overcall, which is usually the same as your 1NT system. If so, how would you play 3♦ (transferring into their suit)? Our suggestion is for it to show shortness in Hearts, with an eye on 5 (or 6) of a minor, depending on Partner's minor suit holdings, and especially on the nature of his Heart stop.

Dbl: Just a slightly sounder version of a one-level Double. There is a useful convention available to help us in the follow-up to a Weak Two doubled auction. It's called Lebensohl (see below).

3♥: Asking Partner to bid 3NT with a Heart stopper. A perfect hand for this bid might be ♠ A4, ♥ 54, ♦ AKQJ76, ♣ A7.

Leaping Michaels

After a Weak Two, Leaping Michaels uses the 4-level bids to show strong two-suited hands. Here are some examples after RHO has opened 2♥:

4♣: Shows Clubs and the other major, typically 5-5, for example: ♠ AK653, ♥ 5, ♦ K5, ♣ KQJ76. The bid shows a good hand, and it's best to play it as forcing, even if you don't necessarily quite have (as here) the values for game.

4♦: Same thing with Spades and Diamonds.

4NT: For the minors, perhaps with this hand: ♠ A3, ♥ --, ♦ KQJ76, ♣ AJT654.

4♥: A stronger version of the minors hand, maybe ♠ A3, ♥ --, ♦ KQJ76, ♣ AKJ654. In other words, a hand that doesn't need very much help from Partner to make slam.

Here are some other auctions:

2♠ 4♥ Natural, of course!

2♦ 4♣ Clubs and a major. To find out which major we hold Partner will bid 4♦.

2♦ 4♦ Both majors.

All of the two-suited bids discussed above should be at least 5-5, and in all cases they show a good hand, one that expects to make game given a little help from Partner.

Lebensohl

Suppose that the auction starts out this way:

2♠ Dbl Pass ??

Lebensohl, which was originally devised to cope with interference over our 1NT opening, also works well in this situation. To see why, consider these two hands opposite the Double of 2♠:

♠ 965	♠ A65
♥ 65	♥ 65
♦ Q9874	♦ KQJ87
♣ 853	♣ 853

In both cases, we may well belong in 3♦, notwithstanding the great disparity in the strengths of these two hands. In the first hand, we just want to play it in 3♦ unless partner has a really strong hand ... but, in the second hand, we would like to show Partner that we have constructive values, in case he has some extras of his own which are enough for us to make game. In other words, wouldn't it be nice if we had a way to show a bad 3♦ bid and an invitational 3♦ bid? Lebensohl provides us with precisely that:

2♠ Dbl Pass 3♦

This shows constructive values, something in the 9 to 11 range.

2♠ Dbl Pass 2NT

This bid is *artificial*, and is used whenever we have a weak hand which is just trying to get out at the 3-level. The Doubler usually bids 3♣ next, to see where we are headed.

2♠ Dbl Pass 2NT
Pass 3♣ Pass Pass

This is how we get out with a weak Club hand. By "weak", we mean a hand that is not good enough to make a direct 3♣ bid. something in the 0-8 range.

2♠ Dbl Pass 2NT
Pass 3♣ Pass 3♦

Getting out with a weak Diamond hand.

Unlike a 1NT opening, the Doubler's hand is unlimited, and he may be too good to accept the relay to 3♣, something which doesn't happen in the 1NT version of the convention.

2♠ Dbl Pass 2NT
Pass 3♦

Here, Partner bypassed our relay to 3♣, and he obviously has a very good hand, one which still harbors hopes of game opposite some hands in the 0-8 range. Why didn't he bid 3♦ directly over the 2♠ opening? No doubt he thought his hand was just too good, perhaps: ♠ 7, ♥ AJ5, ♦ AKT965, ♣ AQ5. In this sequence, when Partner has by-passed your relay, and you are in the top half of your "weak hand" range, then you should give Partner one more call. Of course, the ideal situation would be for you to have a Spade stop, how nice if you held something like this: ♠ QT54, ♥ T4, ♦ J76, ♣ J742. Yes, it's not much of a hand but well worth 3NT over 3♦.

No Trump Sequences

Consider these two sequences:

2♠ Dbl Pass 3NT
Pass 3♣ Pass 3NT

2♠ Dbl Pass 2NT

In the 1NT version of Lebensohl, most partnerships play that bidding 3NT directly over the Double shows the values for game, and *denies* a Spade stopper, and that going via the 2NT relay *shows* a Spade stopper. Our suggestion would be to play your Weak Two Lebensohl the same way, if only to keep things simple.

Balancing Doubles

In the auctions discussed so far, the Double has been in the direct seat. Simple is good, so rather than come up with special balancing methods, you could do a lot worse than to use the same methods as above. Another possibility is to use the Scrambling 2NT instead of Lebensohl, but that's a subject for another day.