



Convention of the Week

21st May 2008

JACOBY 2NT

Partner opens 1♠, how do you proceed with each of the following?

A:	♠ KT765	B:	♠ KQ765
	♥ 752		♥ A7
	♦ JT43		♦ AJT4
	♣ 5		♣ 85

With Hand A, we have lots of trumps and no defense. It's a preemptive hand, of course, and we bid 4♣ directly, crowding the opponents' auction. We don't know if 4♣ will make, and, if Partner has a shapeless minimum, it surely won't. But we do have 10 trumps between the two hands, and it would be feeble not to go to game immediately on these cards, regardless of the vulnerability.

Next consider Hand B. This one we'll also take to game, but this time we don't need to preempt the auction ... our side has the majority of the HCPs, by far. Better to take things slowly, giving ourselves the chance to investigate slam below the level of game. This is the purpose of the Jacoby 2NT convention, which allows Responder to utilize 2NT as game-forcing and fit-showing for Partner's one-of-a-major opening.

Requirements

There are 5 basic conditions required to make a Jacoby 2NT bid:

- The opening bid is 1♥ or 1♠.
- Responder has game-going values (in other words, an opening bid of his own).
- Responder has trump support for Opener (usually 4 or more).
- Responder is not a passed hand.
- There is no enemy interference.

Standard Follow-Up

After 1♠ 2NT, the "standard" responses are:

3♣, 3♦, 3♥	Each shows a singleton or void in the bid suit.
4♣, 4♦, 4♥	Each shows a good 5-card holding in the bid suit.
3♠	A good balanced hand.
3NT	A decent balanced hand.
4♠	A bad balanced hand.

Note that, when we have a balanced hand, the less we bid the more we have ... 3♠ is better than 3NT, which is better than 4♠.

♠ AKJ53	♠ QT72
♥ T95	♥ AK
♦ 8	♦ 763
♣ KJ64	♣ AQ32
1♠	2NT
3♦	4NT
5♥	6♣
Pass	

That 3♦ response, showing shortness, greatly improves Responder's hand. Now, the honors in the two hands are working well together, and he can charge to slam. The 4NT in this auction was Roman Key Card Blackwood, and the 5♥ response showed 2 Key Cards without the Queen of trump.

More on Shortness

Let's tweak that hand:

♠ AKJ53	♠ QT72
♥ T95	♥ 763
♦ 8	♦ AK
♣ KJ64	♣ AQ32

We've switched Responder's Hearts and Diamonds around, so that Opener's Diamond shortness now faces the AK♦ ... this is not good! Shortness opposite strength means wasted values. So, after 1♠ 2NT, 3♦, Responder should abandon the slam hunt and go straight to 4♠. The two hands may have the same shapes and high-card values as before, but now they just don't match up well together.

The second tweak of our original deal, moves the K♠ into the short Diamond hand as follows:

♠ AKJ53	♠ QT72
♥ T95	♥ AK
♦ K	♦ 763
♣ J864	♣ AQ32

More wastage! What was the highly valuable K♣, has now become the K♦, a quite useless card opposite three small. This raises the issue of whether or not we should own up to shortness when that shortness is a singleton Ace or King. We recommend that you don't show shortness in these cases, just as we advise against making Splinter bids with a singleton Ace or King. It's just too misleading ... Partner will expect working points in the other suits, and won't be happy to see them wasted in the short suit.

Problems Arising

The standard responses are easy to memorize, but they could stand improvement. The biggest defect is that leap to 4 of the major by Opener to show a rotten hand. This can be a real party-pooper to a Responder who has an especially good hand and who still wishes to investigate slam, he's just been preempted in a slam auction by his own partner!

A Better Method!

There are a number of methods out there, superior alternatives to the standard responses outlined above. Many of them have a common theme, which is that (after 2NT) 3♣ shows a bad hand, and other bids show values. For example, after 1♠ 2NT:

- 3♣ Minimum (with or without shortness)
- 3♦ Extras, without shortness
- 3♥ Extras, short ♣s
- 3♠ Extras, short ♦s
- 3NT Extras, short ♥s

So, 3♣ with a minimum, the other bids all show extras. The 3 shortness bids are easy enough to remember ... just up the line, with the lowest bid being the lowest ranking shortness, and so on. 3NT is the highest ranking shortness, and shows the other major, which is Hearts in the example above.

In fact, 3♥, 3♠, and 3NT can also show shortness via this sequence:

- 1♠ 2NT
- 3♣ 3♦
- 3NT

Here, after the minimum-showing 3♣, Responder's 3♦ asks for shortness. In the example, he shows shortness in Hearts. Without shortness, Opener can cue-bid at the 4-level.

It's a pretty simple method ... Opener can show shortness one of 2 ways, depending on the strength of his hand. Here's the convention in action:

Opener	Responder
♠ AK765	♠ QT43
♥ 7	♥ AQJ6
♦ AKQ7	♦ 63
♣ JT3	♣ A65
1♠	2NT
3NT	4♣
4NT	5♠
5NT	6♠
Pass	

3NT was extras and shortness in "the other major". Now, the 4♣ cue-bid was enough encouragement for Opener to try Roman Key Card. 5♠ was "Two With", 5NT was the King Ask, 5♠ denied a King.

Examples

Opener	Responder
♠ AK765	♠ QJT8
♥ 653	♥ J74
♦ 76	♦ AKQJ
♣ KQ6	♣ AJ
1♠	2NT
3♣	3♦
4♣	4♦
4♣	Pass

In this auction, 3♣ is a minimum. Notwithstanding that, Responder persists in the slam hunt with an artificial 3♦ bid, asking for shortness. Opener has no shortness, but, as minimums go, his hand is not too shabby, all the points are working ... so he feels free to show something in Clubs with a 4♣ bid. When it becomes apparent that neither player can bid Hearts, the auction subsides in 4♣.

Opener	Responder
♠ AK765	♠ QJT8
♥ KQ6	♥ J74
♦ 76	♦ AKQJ
♣ 653	♣ AJ
1♠	2NT
3♣	3♦
4♥	4NT
5♥	6♠
Pass	

Here, Opener shows a minimum, then no shortness but something in Hearts, after which Responder checks on controls and bids the slam.