



Carmichael / Greenberg

System Notes

May 13, 2020



TaJ++ Precision

Carmichael/Greenberg System Notes

Tom Carmichael & Ari Greenberg

May 13, 2020

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Contents | ii |
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Code Snippets | 1 |
| 1.2 Notation | 2 |
| 2 To Do List | 3 |
| 2.1 Mad Scientist Labs | 3 |
| 2.2 8 Feb 2019 | 3 |
| 2.3 Miscellaneous Competitive Auctions | 4 |
| I Opening Bids | 5 |
| 3 System Summary | 6 |
| 3.1 Opening Bid Summary | 6 |
| 3.2 General Principles | 6 |
| 3.3 Relays | 7 |
| 4 1C | 11 |
| 4.1 Description & Response Summary | 11 |
| 4.2 1C-1D | 12 |
| 4.3 1C-1H | 14 |
| 4.4 1C-1S | 15 |

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 4.5 | 1C-1NT | 15 |
| 4.6 | 1C-2C | 15 |
| 4.7 | Other | 16 |
| 5 | 1D | 17 |
| 5.1 | 1D-1M | 18 |
| 5.2 | 1D-1NT | 19 |
| 5.3 | 1D-2m | 19 |
| 5.4 | 1D-2H | 20 |
| 5.5 | 1D-2S | 20 |
| 5.6 | 1D-2NT | 20 |
| 5.7 | 1D-3m | 20 |
| 5.8 | 1D-3M | 20 |
| 5.9 | 1D-3NT | 20 |
| 5.10 | Other | 21 |
| 6 | 1 Major | 22 |
| 6.1 | Intro | 22 |
| 6.2 | Response summary | 22 |
| 6.3 | Semi-Forcing NT | 22 |
| 6.4 | 2C TaJ | 23 |
| 6.5 | 2D Nat GF | 23 |
| 6.6 | 1S-2H | 24 |
| 6.7 | 2NT | 25 |
| 6.8 | 3NT | 25 |
| 6.9 | Jump Shift | 25 |
| 6.10 | Double Jump Shift | 25 |
| 7 | 1NT | 26 |
| 7.1 | Stayman Sequences | 26 |
| 7.2 | Jacoby Sequences | 28 |
| 7.3 | 2S Size Ask | 31 |
| 7.4 | 2NT Puppet Stayman | 31 |
| 8 | 2C | 32 |
| 9 | 2D | 33 |
| 10 | 2 Major | 34 |
| 11 | 2NT | 35 |
| 11.1 | Stayman Agreements | 35 |
| 11.2 | Transfer Agreements | 36 |
| 11.3 | 3S | 36 |
| 12 | 3-Level Preempts | 37 |
| 13 | 3NT | 38 |

| | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 14 | Other | 40 |
| II | Competitive Bidding | 41 |
| 15 | General Rules | 42 |
| 15.1 | General defenses | 42 |
| 15.2 | Misc | 43 |
| 16 | Defensive Bidding (They Open) | 45 |
| 16.1 | General Guidelines | 45 |
| 16.2 | Strong Club | 46 |
| 16.3 | Polish or Balanced Club | 46 |
| 16.4 | Precision 1D | 46 |
| 16.5 | Transfer response to 1C | 47 |
| 16.6 | Kaplan Inversion | 47 |
| 16.7 | 1NT | 47 |
| 16.8 | 2C Strong | 48 |
| 16.9 | 2C Precision | 48 |
| 16.10 | Flannery | 49 |
| 16.11 | Weak 2 | 49 |
| 16.12 | Gambling 3NT | 50 |
| 16.13 | Other | 50 |
| 17 | Interference Defense (We Open) | 51 |
| 17.1 | 1C | 51 |
| 17.2 | 1D | 51 |
| 17.3 | 1M | 53 |
| 17.4 | 1NT | 54 |
| 17.5 | 2m | 55 |
| 17.6 | 2M | 55 |
| 17.7 | Other | 55 |
| III | Carding | 56 |
| 18 | Leads | 57 |
| 18.1 | Opening vs Suits | 57 |
| 18.2 | Opening vs NT | 57 |
| 18.3 | Middle of the Hand | 58 |
| 19 | Signal agreements | 59 |
| 19.1 | Suit Preference | 59 |
| 20 | Examples from Play | 61 |
| 20.1 | Lost in Translation | 61 |
| 20.2 | Average hand | 62 |

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
| IV | Post Mortem | 64 |
| 21 | Post-Mortem Intro | 65 |
| 22 | 2018/2019 Monterey | 66 |
| 22.1 | Double fit! | 66 |
| 22.2 | Grand Ole Opry | 67 |

Introduction

Welcome to the latest attempt by Tom to use the \LaTeX family of tools to try to make system notes.

In this version, rather than using just my old macros from back in the day I am incorporating the Bridge Winners style file (with very slight modification). I also have a miniature version of my old macros in `bridge-mini.sty` that I am including in the project.

I'm using subfiles for the first time, my hope is that having separate files for different chapters of the notes will make management a bit easier, especially using a git repo. My expectation is the "to-do" section will be a list of items that we noted at the table. As things are added to the notes, we can remove them from the to-do list. Perhaps not perfect, but it's a reasonable first pass at managing the project on the whole.

The latest version of this file should be available at <https://github.com/tomc/systemnotes/blob/master/tom-ari.pdf>

1.1 Code Snippets

Throw some text as a test

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------|-----------|
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♠ |
| 1NT | 2 ♣ |
| 2 ♦ | ? |

You can reference bids such as 1 ♣ 2 ♦ 3 ♥ or 4 ♠ inline, or even cards such as ♣A ♦K ♥Q ♠J. This can be expanded to suit holdings such as ♠AKxx .

5-3-3-2 any 5332 pattern 5=3=3=2 5 ♠, 2 ♣, 3-3 in reds. This is from BW style, previously Tom used (5332) or 5332. (Note there is supposed to be a change of font - seems subtle in this version.)

Comments which are expected to be removed in the "production" version. Can be useful for development.

Testing the Ari version.

New!!

I've added a new environment, `bidtable`. It's similar to `tabular` so uses `&` to separate fields and double backslash to end lines instead of the `description/item` environment.

Sample:

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------|
| | 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ |
| | 7NT | ? |
| Pass | expected action | |
| XX | automatic if doubled | |

1.2 Notation

| | |
|-------------|--|
| R | Simple Raise |
| R+1 | One above a simple raise |
| DR | Double Raise |
| TR | Triple Raise |
| LMH | Low-Middle-High |
| LHB | Low-High-Both (Shortness relay after 10+ known cards.) |
| +1 | Next Bidding Step |
| M | Major. If one has been shown, it is the same one. |
| OM | Other Major. After a major is shown. |
| m,om | Minor, other minor. |
| JS | Jump Shift |
| DJS | Double Jump Shift |

To Do List

Items that we have identified in play that need to make it into the notes.

- To Do

2.1 Mad Scientist Labs

This is a section for crazy ideas that Tom has. While this may seem like a low priority item given we are starting the notes from scratch, some of these ideas may have broad implications for the system. In other words, this is a time to possibly reconstruct the system from the ground up, possibly changing things as we go.

A few examples:

- Hand Evaluation - possible reworking our opening bids and responses using something like ZZs or Zar. This may lead to better asking/showing sequences after shape is known.
- Replacing Stayman. Stayman is Wrong, but a common evil. I've researched other options and modified some of these ideas into something I like. Essentially, $2\clubsuit \rightarrow 2\diamond$. You lose weak majors, you gain getting out in $2\diamond$ and (main benefit) avoid revealing much about the 1NT opener's hand. One item I haven't fully considered is long minor + 4CM. Low priority item.

2.2 8 Feb 2019

- identifying VLMH relays vs LMH for better shapes
- CIRKLE ok, need better defs when applies, temp agreement below 4 of our trump suit
- modified SQUARE when asker has known shortness?
- 1M resp (Flannery?) ok with step based responses
- Other CIRKLE auctions, after 1d-1M-1x e.g.
- changing 1C stuff for new bal hands with 5332

2.3 Miscellaneous Competitive Auctions

(1♠)-X-(2♠)-X With some partners, I have played that this double is takeout, and 3♥ by doubler promises 5♥s while 2NT is artificial showing 4♥s.

See discussion:

<http://bridgewinners.com/article/view/1s-x-2s-x-minors-or-can-it-have-hearts/>

I don't think I've addressed this either in notes or in person. I don't have strong feelings in this area, although I wouldn't assume 2NT was Leb (like the link did). Good point of discussion for this week if we get a chance. 28 Nov 19

Part I

Opening Bids

System Summary

"TaJ++ Precision"

Strong Club system with 0+ 1 \diamond . No "Precision" 2 \diamond opener. Most 10 HCP hands opened NV, allowed to pass a 10 Vul. Lighter openers possible with shape.

3.1 Opening Bid Summary

| | |
|--|---|
| 1 \clubsuit | Strong, Forcing, Artificial. Typically 16+ HCP unbal or 17+ bal |
| 1 \diamond | 0+ \diamond , 10-15. Denies 5 card major unless 6+ \diamond . |
| 1 \heartsuit | 5+ \heartsuit , 10-15 |
| 1 \spadesuit | 5+ \spadesuit , 10-15 |
| 1NT | 14-16. 5 card major, 6 card minor, 5-4-2-2 common. |
| 2 \clubsuit | 6+ \clubsuit , 10-15. 5 card suit possible in 3 rd seat for lead direction. |
| 2 \diamond | 6+ \diamond , (8)9-12. 5 card suit possible in 3 rd seat for lead direction. |
| 2 \heartsuit/2 \spadesuit | 3-9, 5 card suit common NV |
| 2NT | 22-23 |
| 3x | Natural, aggressive |
| 3NT | Good Major preempt. (Namyats-like) |
| 4x | Natural, aggressive |

No special agreements for opening bids 4NT and higher.

3.2 General Principles

- Doubles unless otherwise defined are takeout
- All Strange Bids are Forcing (ASBAF). A general guideline to cover the unknown.

- In an auction where we've committed to a certain level and the opps interfere (including double), pass is generally more encouraging than bidding to the forced level. A common example is a cuebid (raise) being doubled, then rebidding our trump suit.
- We ignore most doubles by the opponent, bidding retains their meaning. One notable exception is 1 ♣-X
- Minimum responses to opening bids: while we pass 1 ♦ freely up to 9 HCP, we follow more standard approaches to responding to 1M: respond with an Ace, a King and a 5 count or any 6 count. Responding to 2m is a little different, passing is quite possible with 8 or so points, especially with no fit. Even 10 or 11 counts are possible over 2 ♦.

3.3 Relays

TaJ

TaJ relay as it currently exists. Used in both 1 ♣ auctions and 1M-[+2] auctions.

- Special** In auctions where responder is unlimited, first step shows extra values. Next step repeats TaJ and mirrors the limited relay.
- +1** 5-4-x-x Relay for 2nd suit LMH, then shape NLH. Immediately “zooming” past the 2nd suit LMH relay shows LMH void and 5-4-4-0
 - +2** 5-5-x-x or better. Secondary suit is always equal or shorter. Relay for 2nd suit LMH, then shortness LHB.
 - +3** 6-4-x-x. Primary suit can be longer, secondary always 4. Relay for 2nd suit LMH, then shortness LHB.
 - +4** 6+ card suit with shortness, denies 4 card side suit. Relay for short suit LMH.
 - +5** 5-3-2-2
 - +6** 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-2. This may also explode into further descriptive items, such as cuebids. *Or new relays...*

CIRKLE

CIRKLE — Carmichael's Improved Roman Keycard, Locating Everything (version 2.0)

Updated CIRKLE. KCs down to 2, using a mod 4 instead of mod 5. Hopefully more compressed to allow better space usage. This is closer to classical controls with KCs (K and Q) getting a bonus. Also, ABCD order tweaked from Game Order to Up-The-Line. (Noted in SQUARE)

What Replacement for RKC

- When** Typically after a suit is established but below game.
- How** Using slam points (RKC=2, Other=1), broken down into 5 buckets (mod 4)

CIRKLE is a asking bid about the typical slam cards: the 5 “Aces” that make up the typical RKC responses and the other 4 cards of primary interest: the Queen of trumps and the 3 side Kings.

At present, the KCs are worth 2 points each and the side cards are 1 each. I’ll call this your “slam points”.

When CIRKLE is used, responder computes his slam points and responds in one of 4 steps, each of those steps representing the slam points modulo 4. This is similar to RKC, which uses a modulo 3 system. (0/3, 1/4, 2/5). For us, the steps are simply increasing: 0/4/8/12, 1/5/9/13, 2/6/10/14, 3/7/11. (Max is 14.)

While it may seem at first that having 4 possibilities is too many, the auction and your hand is going to immediately eliminate some of the possibilities. The response to date in testing has always been no worse than 1 of 2. While that too may seem daunting, we follow up CIRKLE with another asking sequence, SQUARE (see below). That will uniquely identify the bucket as well as locate cards if they can’t be seen.

At present we do not zoom from the last step directly into SQUARE, but that may be considered going forward.

This is noted elsewhere in the notes as well, but adding here for the relay summary: there are situations where the CIRKLE bids are tight for room. The general rule is that CIRKLE is on when 4♣ is available as a bid to kick it off. In those situations, any bids below 3NT are CIRKLE in ABCD order. 4♣ puppets to 4♦ for any remaining CIRKLE bids (unless D is the only suit remaining, in which case 4♣ is CIRKLE D.)

4♦ puppets to 4♥ for sign off anywhere; bidding 4NT after the sign off puppet is an escape to RKC 1430.

Direct game bids are natural and NF but forward going.

SQUARE

SQUARE — Spiral Qbid Using Adaptive Relay Extensions

These notes are based on preliminary testing, the final form may still be different.

- What** Series of asking bids/responses about holdings in all the suits
- When** After CIRKLE
- How** Stop/Go for each suit. Even values are a “stop”, odd values are a “go”, reversed for singletons.

SQUARE is an idea incorporated in a few other relay systems, notably the Moss/Grue agreements as well as a few other sources.

The idea is after a hand has been limited some how in terms of values (HCP, controls, ZZs, whatever) you have a mechanism to locate the exact honors. For us, the limiting mechanism is CIRKLE - we identify the total slam points for the hand and then locate the honors specifically.

The “adaptive” part of SQUARE is the order in which the suits are asked about is dynamic, based on what is known about responders length in suits. Rather than having a strict LMH type order, the suits are ordered (ABCD) based on a few factors. Our priorities:

1. Trump suit is always “A”
2. Longer suits come before shorter suits. Lengths can be implied rather than specific.
3. Up The Line: ♣♦♥♠

I think for many partnerships employing these type methods the trump suit isn’t necessarily known. I also believe that they have a slightly different tie-breaker mechanisms. *Game order proved to be cumbersome for minors, we risked going past game too frequently. The ability to stop in 5 of a major makes up the line likely better. Worth testing.*

The “spiral qbid” part of SQUARE comes next. After we have identified the suit order ABCD, the asker uses the next step to ask about the “A” suit. Responder looks at the AKQ cards (for the “A” suit) or the AK cards (for “BCD”) in the suit and responds with how many of the high honors do they have in an even/odd parity. “Even”, 0 or 2, is the Stop, bidding the very next step. (We want to be able to slow the auction down if we get a zero response.) If responder has an “Odd” response, this is a Go - they look at the B suit and do a Stop/Go evaluation of that. A Stop would be bidding 1 above the next step (+2), a Go would have them look at the C suit, and so on.

After all the suits have been asked about the top 3 cards, we revert to asking about the Q for the BCD suits, then the J for the 4 suits preserving the ABCD order. Yes is Go, No is stop. (Still odd/even). Room permitting, asking for 10s, etc.

One interesting aspect of SQUARE is how it Zooms. Not only can responder “Zoom” after a Go response, but Asker can also “Zoom” the questions. Skipping 1 step of square skips 1 suit in the ask. This can be space preserving when Asker already knows the answer to the question. The simplest example would be skipping a suit where asker held AKQ.

“Sign off” bids are not asks. These are pretty obvious, but listed below in the special cases. One special note, if 4Maj is available for sign off then 5Maj would still be a step for asking. It’s only the lowest bid at a level (Game, Slams) that acts as sign off.

A few special cases:

- When a suit is known to be exactly a singleton, the Go/Stop responses are inverted. Generally speaking, having a high honor is less useful in a singleton than elsewhere, so the inverted response makes some sense.
- When a suit is known to be a void, there are no asking bids for that suit. (ABC only)
- 3NT, 6NT, the cheapest level of the trump suit and slams in the trump suit are never asking bids.
- 6NT is a hard stop, never make a response above 6NT.
- 5NT is also not an asking bid, it is a puppet to 6♣, then asker will place the contract. Most commonly used if the presumed trump suit is not the actual final contract.

At present we need to have a specific asking bid launch into SQUARE. We may incorporate a zoom into SQUARE coming from CIRCLE down the road.

1 ♣

4.1 Description & Response Summary

1 ♣ is our general forcing opening, showing roughly 17+ HCP balanced or 16+ unbalanced. The new ACBL convention charts allow for as low as 14 HCP for a forcing bid so long as it meets the rule of 24. (i.e., 10 cards in 2 suits). I don't know how much we will take advantage of the new rule, but it is worth noting.

Like all strong club systems, the strength of the system lies not within the 1 ♣ opening itself but rather allowing for all other openers to be limited. While we have some special sequences which allow for über max in TaJ sequences, most of our simple 1 level openings are going to be lighter than most people open. All of our invitational and competitive decisions revolve around that fact. This can be a factor in deciding between 1 ♣ and 1M, for example.

ALPHA

(8 Jan 20) Modifying the previous BETA notes, these are ideas I've bounced off Jenni. It's a combination of the old and new ideas; less exact shape relays, but more strength bids and CIRCLE tie ins. Writing this up to kick off discussion, can always be reverted in GIT if need be.

| | OPENER 1 ♣ | RESPONDER ? |
|-----|---|----------------|
| 1 ♦ | No change, still negative. | |
| 1 ♥ | (UPH) Extra values w/o hearts | |
| 1 ♥ | (PH) Clubs. | |
| 1 ♠ | 5+ Hearts unbal. This is unlimited, unlike the other GF responses. TaJ has the extra values step. | |
| 1NT | 5+ Spades unbal, no extras. 2 ♣ TaJ, 2 ♠ is natural clubs. | |
| 2 ♣ | (UPH) Clubs or Diamonds. 2 ♦ asks suit with LH & zoom into TaJ with ♦ | |
| 2 ♣ | (PH) Diamonds. 2 ♦ TaJ. | |
| 2 ♦ | 4 card ♥ bal | |
| 2 ♥ | 4 card ♠ without 4 ♥, bal | |

| | OPENER 1 ♣ | RESPONDER ? | continued... |
|----------------|--|----------------|--------------|
| 2 ♠ | No 4 card major, balanced | | |
| 2NT | 1=4=4=4 | | |
| 3 ♣ | 4=4=4=1 (bid sing) | | |
| 3 ♦ | 4=4=1=4 (bid sing) | | |
| 3 ♥ | 4=1=4=4 (bid sing) | | |
| 3 ♠ | “Gambling” hand, AKQxxxx or better. Typically no side cards. | | |
| 3NT-4 ♥ | 8+ card transfers, bust hand. No A or K. | | |

4.2 1 ♣-1 ♦

1 ♦ is the general negative bid. This is the only bid which does not set up a GF auction.

Meckwell style rebids except 2NT is 20-21.

| | OPENER 1 ♣ ? | RESPONDER 1 ♦ |
|---------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 ♥ | 4+ ♥, can have a longer minor, 1RF. Unbalanced or semi-balanced. Systemic rebid with 4=4=(4-1) | |
| 1 ♠ | 4+ ♠, can have a longer minor, 1RF. Unbalanced or semi-balanced. | |
| 1NT | 17-19 bal, can have 5CM or 6Cm. 5-4-2-2 also possible. | |
| 2 ♣/2 ♦ | Nat NF. Denies 4CM. Typically 6+ cards and unbalanced. | |
| 2 ♥ | Kokish Relay. Forces 2 ♠, Either GF with hearts or GF Bal. | |
| 2 ♠/3 ♣/3 ♦ | GF Nat, typically 1 suited. | |
| 2NT | 20-21 bal | |
| 3 ♥ & up | Undefined, although game bids are simply to play. | |

| | OPENER 1 ♣ 1 ♥ | RESPONDER 1 ♦ ? |
|------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 ♠ | 4+ ♠, any strength. Typically fewer than 4 ♥. Most rebids are natural NF, minor suits can be canapé. 2NT is an artificial big canapé (6+ m) 1RF. Jumps encouraging but NF with jump shifts being 5-5. | |
| 1NT | 0-5, no 4CM. Rebids as per over 1 ♠, except 2 ♠ is a natural reverse and 1RF. | |
| 2 ♣ | 0-2 ♥, 5+ to 7. 2 ♦ is waiting and scrambling, 2 ♥ is natural and NF. Other GF. 2NT is a non-canapé GF, 3m is canapé. | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER | |
|------------|---|-----------|--------------|
| | 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ | continued... |
| | 1 ♥ | ? | |
| 2 ♦ | Exactly 3 ♥, 5+ to 7. 2 ♥ NF, 3 ♥ Inv. 2NT GF asking for shortness NLMH. Other 1RF, usually canapé. | | |
| 2 ♥ | 4+ ♥, minimum. New suits are game tries, 2NT asks shortness NLMH. | | |
| 2NT | Best raise, nearly GF. 5+ ♥ common, 3 ♣ asks for shortness NLMH. | | |
| JS | 6+ nat, 5+-7 | | |
| DJS | Splinter with exactly 4♥ | | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|---|--------|-----------|
| | 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ |
| | 1 ♠ | ? |
| As per over 1 ♥, except 2 ♥ shows 5+ ♥, 5+-7. | | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| | 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ |
| | 1NT | ? |
| 17-19, systems on as per 1NT opening. | | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|---|--------|-----------|
| | 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ |
| | 2m | ? |
| Natural, NF, denies 4CM. No special follow ups. Jump Shift is a splinter. | | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| | 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ |
| | 2 ♥ | 2 ♠ |
| | ? | |
| | 2 ♥ is Kokish, forces 2 ♠. Either ♥ or bal, GF. No agreements about bids other than 2 ♠ by responder. | |
| 2NT | GF Balanced. Systems on as per 2NT opener. | |
| 3 ♣ | ♥ & minor, 3 ♦ for LH. | |
| 3 ♦ | One suited ♥ | |
| 3 ♥ | ♥ & ♠ | |
| Other | ? <i>Self Spl?</i> | |

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♦ |
| 2NT | ? |
| 20-21, as per 2NT opener | |

| Other Rebids |
|--|
| Other jumps are natural GF. No special agreements other than ...2 ♠-2NT is a spade raise, with 3 ♠ being the more waiting nothing-to-say type bid. Typically bal or near bal, 1-2 ♠. |

For responses at 2 ♦ or above, opener may skip the relay step to zoom into CIRKLE directly. The known length suit is “A” for this purpose, other suits are BCD in game order. (For 2 ♠, ♥ is A and ♠ is B, per normal rules.)

4.3 1 ♣-1 ♥

Good hand by unpassed hand, clubs by passed hand.

UPH

By an unpassed hand, this shows the “extra values” step we previously used mid-relay. Generally a good 12 or higher, although 5 control 11 counts (AAK) also are treated as extras. 12 can go high or low, 13 is always high.

We avoid this bid with primary hearts. 1 ♠ over 1 ♣ therefore still has an extra value step in TaJ. We can of course still have a heart suit if it “secondary”, i.e. 5 spades or 6+ minor. Nothing is perfect.

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|--|
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♥ |
| ? | |
| 1 ♠ | Waiting bid, all of responders bids are as per direct over 1 ♣, just stronger. Most common bid by opener, retaining captaincy. |
| 1NT | Hearts, inverted captaincy. Typically responder will bid 2 ♣ to get TaJ from opener or break relay and bid naturally. |
| 2 ♣ | Spades, inverted. TaJ |
| 2 ♦ | Clubs, inverted. TaJ |
| 2 ♥ | Diamonds, inverted. TaJ |

The inverted responses show an unbalanced hand by opener and a desire to describe rather than ask. This may especially make sense with hearts, as responder will be declaring that strain. Obviously possible with any suit.

Examples:

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------|-----------|
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♥ |
| 1 ♠ | 2 ♦ |
| ? | |

Balanced hand with exactly 4 hearts, extra values.

| OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------|-----------|
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♥ |
| 1NT | 2 ♣ |
| 2 ♥ | ? |

1NT showed hearts, 2 ♣ TaJ, 2 ♥ shows some 5-5 hand. If responder breaks relay, it is natural with our normal swaps where applicable. In this example, if responder bids 2 ♥ over 1NT he would show clubs.

PH

1 ♥ shows 5+ ♣, GF. 1 ♠ is TaJ, 2 ♣ is ♥(normal inversion), other natural.

There is an argument that 1NT should be TaJ to pick off the NTs, but I think that having that one off exception is too much memory work for the minimal gain.

4.4 1 ♣-1 ♠

5+ ♥, GF. By an UPH this bid still has the extra values step, as we avoid bidding 1 ♥ to try to avoid wrong siding and to allow the symmetry for responses. This is the only positive response which retains the extra values step for TaJ.

1NT is TaJ, other bids are natural. There is no need for a swap here. 2 ♥ is undefined.

4.5 1 ♣-1NT

5+ ♠, limited GF. 2 ♣ TaJ, 2 ♠ is clubs. Other bids are natural.

4.6 1 ♣-2 ♣

UPH

Either minor, GF. 2 ♦ relays to ask suit: 2 ♥ shows any hand with clubs, over which 2 ♠ is TaJ. With diamonds you immediately zoom into TaJ responses starting with 2 ♠ being the first step.

PH

Always diamonds, 2 ♦ is TaJ

4.7 Other

Balanced

2♦, 2♥ and 2♠ are balanced hands; similar to old 1♣-1♠-1NT responses. The primary difference is the responses to bids are updated to use CIRKLE instead of controls. *Anyone not using CIRKLE yet can retain the old structure.*

| | OPENER 1♣ ? | RESPONDER 2♦ |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| 2♥ | Agrees ♥, asks CIRKLE. | |
| 2♠ | Shows 4+ spades, asks for support. 2NT by responder shows 4+ ♠, over which 3♣ is CIRKLE. Bids above 2NT are suitless CIRKLE responses. | |
| 2NT | Denies a major, suitless CIRKLE responses. | |
| 3♣-3♦ | Natural | |
| 3♥ | No slam interest, 4 ♥, choice of games. | |
| 3♠ | No slam interest, exactly 4 ♠, COG. Rarely used. | |
| 3NT | To play | |

| | OPENER 1♣ ? | RESPONDER 2♥ |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2♠ | Agrees ♠, asks CIRKLE. | |
| 2NT | Denies a fit, suitless CIRKLE | |
| 3♣-3♥ | Natural | |
| 3♠ | No slam interest, exactly 4 ♠, COG | |
| 3NT | To play | |

3 suiters

2NT thru 3♥ are 3 suited hands with shortness in the bid suit. 2NT shows short spades. Over these 4x1 bids, every suit can be agreed below game. 3NT to play, agreeing a suit triggers CIRKLE for that suit.

3♠

“Gambling” type hand, AKQ 7th or better with nothing much on the side. Intended to be a picture bid. No special responses at this time. Probably should develop something, perhaps 4♣ asking for shortness. RKC/CIRKLE doesn’t seem to make much sense, only shape seems likely to matter.

1 \diamond

1 \diamond is our catch-all opening bid for hands with no 5-card major and fewer than 6 clubs. The range is 10-15 HCP if unbalanced or 10-13 HCP if balanced. 1 \diamond does not promise any diamonds at all; 4=4=0=5 hands are routinely opened 1 \diamond . The following hand types are included in the 1 \diamond opener.

- 10-13 HCP balanced
- 12-15 HCP, 6+ \diamond
- 10-15 HCP unbalanced, no 5-card major or 6-card minor

Like most of our system, we try to invite and get out as low as possible. The structure reflects this concept. We may lose some granularity in some auctions to support this style, but such is life.

| | OPENER 1 \diamond | RESPONDER ? |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------|
| P | 0-9. It is routine to pass with up to 9 HCP and no 4-card major | |
| 1 \heartsuit | 4+ \heartsuit , F1 | |
| 1 \spadesuit | 4+ \spadesuit , F1 | |
| 1NT (UPH) | 10-13 HCP, INV. No 4 card major | |
| 1NT (PH) | 8-9 HCP, No 4 card major | |
| 2 \clubsuit | 10+ HCP, 5+ \clubsuit , F1 | |
| 2 \diamond | 10+ HCP, 5+ \diamond , F1 | |
| 2 \heartsuit | Reverse Flannery, Non-invitational. 5+ \spadesuit , 4+ \heartsuit , typically 0-9 HCP | |
| 2 \spadesuit | Reverse Flannery, INV. 5+ \spadesuit , 4+ \heartsuit , about 10-13 HCP | |
| 2NT | Natural, GF. No 4-card major. 14-16 HCP or 19+ | |
| 3 \clubsuit | Natural, 6+ \clubsuit , Mixed (7-9). No suit quality requirements. | |
| 3 \diamond | Natural, 6+ \diamond , Mixed (7-9). No suit quality requirements. | |
| 3M | "Scrambled Splinter". Shortness in bid suit, at least 5-4 either way in the minors, GF. | |
| 3NT | 17-18 HCP Balanced | |

5.1 1♦-1M

1♦-1M is a standard response, showing 4+ cards in the suit bid and forcing 1 round. On very rare occasions we have been known to respond in a 3-card suit with a hand like ♠J ♥KTx ♦KJxx ♣98xxx. This sort of response is outside expectation and if responder chooses to do so they do at their own risk. Systemically this is a pass.

After 1♦-1♥ opener is expected to bid 1♠ any time they have 4 spades.

| | OPENER 1♦ ? | RESPONDER 1♥ |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| 1♠ | 4 ♠. Opener is never expected to bypass a 4-card spade suit. Judgement allowed of course, but rarely would be seen outside 4=3=3=3. | |
| 1NT | 10-13 BAL. 3-1-(-4 is common as well. | |
| 2♣ | 5+ 4+ in the minors, either could be longer. | |
| 2♦ | 6+ ♦, 12-15 HCP | |
| 2♥ | Simple raise, usually 4 ♥. 10-13 HCP if balanced or 10-14 HCP if unbalanced. | |
| 2♠ | Natural, shapely. 5-6 or better 13-15, NF. | |
| 2NT | 6 ♦ 3 ♥ <i>OR ? No 'or' I think. 3♦ may be likely with 6-4 min.</i> | |
| 3♣ | 5+ ♦ 5+ ♣ (13)14-15 HCP, NF | |
| 3♦ | 6+ ♦, good hand. Note that 2♦ is already more than a minimum, so this is a very strong hand/suit. | |
| 3♥ | 4 ♥, unbalanced, typically (13)14-15 HCP | |
| 3♠ | ??? <i>spl?</i> | |

Opener's rebids after 1♦-1♠ are similar:

| | OPENER 1♦ ? | RESPONDER 1♠ |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1NT | 10-13 BAL. Singleton spade is common as well. | |
| 2♣ | Typically 5+ 4+ in the minors, although 1=4=x=x is possible with x ranging from 3 to 5. | |
| 2♦ | 6+ ♦, 12-15 HCP | |
| 2♥ | Natural, shapely. Typically 5-6 or better, 13-15 NF. <i>Many pairs play this as a 3 card raise to avoid NT rebids offshape and be explicit. Meckwell have it overloaded as showing a few different strong hands.</i> | |
| 2♠ | Simple raise, usually 4 ♠. 10-13 HCP if balanced or 10-14 HCP if unbalanced. | |
| 2NT | 6 ♦ 3 ♠ <i>OR ? No 'or' I think. 3♦ may be likely with 6-4 min.</i> | |
| 3♣ | 5+ ♦ 5+ ♣ 14-15 HCP | |

| | OPENER 1 \diamond ? | RESPONDER 1 \spadesuit | continued... |
|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 3 \diamond | 6+ \diamond , good hand. Note that 2 \diamond is already more than a minimum, so this is a very strong hand/suit. | | |
| 3 \heartsuit | Splinter, 4 \spadesuit , 0-1 \heartsuit , typically 14-15 HCP | | |
| 3 \spadesuit | 4 \spadesuit , unbalanced, typically (13)14-15 HCP | | |

5.2 1 \diamond -1NT

1NT is game invitational, 10-13. This is an attribute of TaJ that is quite dissimilar from most strong club systems.

Generally speaking most auctions will end up either in 1NT or 3NT, but there options to handle other hand types.

| | OPENER 1 \diamond ? | RESPONDER 1NT |
|----------------------------------|---|------------------|
| 2 \clubsuit | To play, does not imply diamonds. | |
| 2 \diamond | To play, presumably only 5 diamonds (no 2 \diamond opener) | |
| 2 \heartsuit | Art GF, unbalanced. Typically 5 clubs with 5-4-3-1 or 5-4-4-0. Also includes any 4-4-4-1, including singleton club. | |
| 2 \spadesuit | Art GF, 5+ diamonds unbalanced. If 6+ diamonds then no other 4 card suit. | |
| 2NT | Re-invite. Typically 12-13 bal. | |
| 3 \clubsuit | 5-5 minors, GF. | |
| 3 \diamond | 6-4 minors, GF. | |
| 3 \heartsuit | 6-4 natural, GF. | |
| 3 \spadesuit | 6-4 natural, GF. | |
| 3NT | To play. | |

Over 2 \heartsuit , 2 \spadesuit asks. 2NT shows any 4x1 (3 \clubsuit asks $\clubsuit \diamond \heartsuit \spadesuit$) otherwise LMH shortness.

Over 2 \spadesuit , 2NT asks LMH shortness.

5.3 1 \diamond -2m

A 2 \clubsuit /2 \diamond response are both similar, natural and forcing 1 round, typically 10+. (Inv+)

We play a modified Mechwell structure, using artificial rebids. Other than 2 \heartsuit , all bids promise a non-minimum.

| | OPENER 1 \diamond ? | RESPONDER 2m |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 2 \heartsuit | Any minimum. (Different from Meckwell) Over this 2 \spadesuit is “Lebensohl”, requesting 2NT for sign off there or in a minor. | |
| 2 \spadesuit | GF, Unspecified splinter raise of responder’s minor. 2NT asks LMH. | |
| 2NT | Typically 12-13 bal. 3m rebid non-forcing. | |
| Other m | Natural, non-min. | |

Generally speaking, rebidding the minor by responder is NF. The exception is over the 2 \heartsuit minimum bid, where 2 \spadesuit starts all weak sequences and 3 of a minor directly (new or old) is forcing.

5.4 1 \diamond - 2 \heartsuit

5+ spades, 4+ hearts, less than invitational.

Generally either passed or corrected to 2 \spadesuit . Extreme hands might invite with 3M. No discussion about other bids, 3m is presumably non-forcing.

5.5 1 \diamond - 2 \spadesuit

5+ spades, 4+ hearts, invitational. 2NT is “Pref-Lebensohl”, responder bids the minor they prefer. Direct 3 level bids are forcing (minor) or forward going but NF (major).

5.6 1 \diamond - 2NT

GF balanced. No special methods at this time. 13+ to 16 or 19+. 4 \clubsuit is Gerber.

5.7 1 \diamond - 3m

Mixed strength, 6+ cards.

5.8 1 \diamond - 3M

Splinter with both minors, at least 5-4 either way. GF.

5.9 1 \diamond - 3NT

17-18 balanced. No special methods. 4 \clubsuit is Gerber.

5.10 Other

4M natural and to play.

4m currently undefined, perhaps it should be South African?

1 Major

6.1 Intro

12 Jan 2020: Reverted to what we decided by the end of SF. This reflects playing 1♥-1♠ as natural rather than a relay.

6.2 Response summary

Bids where they differ will be noted, but for the most part they retain the same meaning for both 1♥ and 1♠.

| | OPENER 1M | RESPONDER ? |
|------------|---|----------------|
| 1♠ | "Standard", 4+ cards forcing 1 round. | |
| 1NT | Semi-Forcing NT | |
| 2♣ | 1 of 3 hand types: LR+, GF ♣, GF balanced. Respond as per TaJ. | |
| 2♦ | Natural GF. Allowed to bid either 2♣ or 2♦ with 5332 no fit. | |
| 2♥ | (After 1♠) Natural GF | |
| 2♠ | (After 1♥) Natural, Inv <i>Was mixed under the artificial 1♠ world, but changing to inv to match other jumps.</i> | |
| 2NT | 5-5 minors, Mixed+. Open to other meanings if useful. Strength open to discussion. | |
| 3NT | Bal with M, choice of games. No slam interest. | |
| R | Simple raise, less than inv. | |
| 3x | Natural, Inv | |
| 3M | Mixed | |

6.3 Semi-Forcing NT

2 minor bids are generally natural 4+ cards. Can be short if no other bid appeals and too strong to pass. (i.e., 2♦ on 5=3=3=2). Rebidding the other major is always natural; non-reverse can be any strength, reverse shows 5-6-x-x non-min, like a jump shift.

3 of a new suit is a 5-5 jump shift, non-forcing but maximum. 6-4 jump shifts are handled via 2NT. Over that, 3♣ is pass or correct, 3♦ asks LMH (GF).

Simple rebids and jump rebids in the major are both standard, 6+ NF.

6.4 2♣ TaJ

This is the primary relay step. It is inheriting the response structure from TaJ, but doesn't guarantee a fit the way TaJ does. It is intended to be general purpose, which makes the bid mostly fall into 1 of 3 hand types: a classic TaJ hand (LR+), any GF bal or other that feels like relaying, any GF in clubs. The club hand can be shown by breaking relay and bidding 3♣. The only danger is that partner bids an Über step 2NT or higher, but we are likely in a slam position so it may not matter much.

The responses are as per TaJ, shifted down. 1st step is any min, 2nd step is any medium "I would accept a LR" type hand, steps above that are Über good and break into TaJ steps.

Over the more common +1/+2 responses, retreating to 2M is the weakest action, showing the LR type hand. In the case of +2, this becomes the "Are you sure?" bid instead of raising to the 3 level.

The cheapest bid that isn't 2M is the TaJ relay, as per 2NT in the old system. Once we have relayed fully, we can advance into CIRCLE/SQUARE. 3NT is never an asking bid in relay auctions, it is always an attempt to play there. As in other auctions, when space is tight for CIRCLE then 4♣ becomes a puppet for any remaining CIRCLES that can't be bid directly, 4♦ is a puppet to sign off anywhere, and direct game bids above 3NT are NF but encouraging.

A relay-then-3NT auction loses its previous meaning of a Choice of Games, so the direct 1M-3NT responses have become that. The new meaning of relay-then-3NT is simply no slam interest opposite partner's strength, NF.

Does it make sense to have a bail option to go straight to CIRCLE rather than needing to fully TaJ out? I can imagine, for example, hearing that partner is 54xx and not caring about the details, or even uncovering the 4 card suit and then bailing. Sample auction might be something like 1♠-2♣-2♦-2♥-2♠-2NT-3♣-3♥.

6.5 2♦ Nat GF

GF with 5+ diamonds. You may choose to relay instead of showing diamonds, this is up to the responder. 2NT is the default response with nothing descriptive to say.

Some people I play with like inverting 2M an 2NT here, making 2NT show 6+M and 2M be waiting. Thoughts?

6.6 1♠-2♥

GF with 5+ hearts. You may choose to relay instead of showing diamonds, this is up to the responder.

I would like to add some structure here. I played a structure with Steve Beatty in a standard context where the simple rebids by opener were 2♠ denying 3 hearts and 2NT showing 3 hearts. Direct 3 bids can be used to show special hand types, such as 5-5s, 4 hearts, etc. There were considerations he and I needed to worry about because of standard that don't apply to us, which should make it even simpler. Everything in the PROPOSAL section will be considered a non-agreement until I hear otherwise.

Alternatively, see the 2♦ section above about 2♠/2NT inversion. I could even see combining the ideas somehow.

PROPOSAL

Work in Progress

| | OPENER 1♠ ? | RESPONDER 2♥ |
|--------|---|-----------------|
| 2♠ | 0-2 hearts, denies 5-5 or 6-4. | |
| 2NT | 3 hearts, usually exactly. | |
| 3♣/3♦ | Natural, 5-5 or 6-4. | |
| 3♥ | 4+ hearts maximum, +1 relay for NLH shortness or +2 for CIRCLE in ♥. | |
| 3♠ | 0-1 loser spades, sets trumps. | |
| 3NT-4♦ | 4+ hearts minimum, NLH shortness. <i>Fast arrival</i> +1(not 4♥) is CIRCLE. | |
| 4♥ | 5=4=2=2 with no interest in 3NT. Typically a “picture” hand, nothing in the minors. | |

After 1♠-2♥-2♠, 2NT is a shape relay. Typically this is a more balanced heart hand, but can be shapely with extra strength. (i.e., normal relay considerations). Other bids are natural. (3♥ promises 6+.)

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| | 1 ♠ | 2 ♥ |
| | 2 ♠ | 2NT |
| | ? | |
| 3 ♣/3 ♦ | Natural, 5/4. +1 agrees the minor and relays for NLH, then CORKLE. +2 "Optional CORKLE" in hearts: first step is 0-1 hearts, other steps are CORKLE for ♥. Over +1, 4 ♣ is CORKLE anyway. | |
| 3 ♥ | 6+ ♠, max. 3 ♠ relay for NLMH, 3NT NF, 4 ♣ CORKLE ♥, 4 ♦ CORKLE ♠. 4M NF. | |
| 3 ♠ | 6+ ♠, min. 3NT relay NLMH, 4 ♣ CORKLE ♥, 4 ♦ CORKLE ♠. 4M NF. We lose the ability to play 3NT here. | |
| 3NT | 5=2=3=3 | |

6.7 2NT

Both minors? Really a place holder agreement, I'm open to anything. Mixed+? Other meanings might be better still, but I'm currently at a loss for finding a "good" use for this bid. Could be CORKLE for M I suppose.

6.8 3NT

Choice of games, promises 3 card support for M.

6.9 Jump Shift

Natural, game invitational. 3M rebid by opener NF.

6.10 Double Jump Shift

Void Splinter. Singleton splinters start with TaJ. (2 ♣)

1NT

Our 1NT opening shows 14-16 HCP. 5422 hands and 5332 hands with a 5-card major are routinely opened 1NT. 5422 hands with a 5-card major and balanced hands with a 6-card minor can be opened 1NT as well.

| | OPENER 1NT | RESPONDER ? |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| 2♣ | Stayman. Promises at least one 4-card major. Does not promise any values. | |
| 2♦ | 5+ ♥ | |
| 2♥ | 5+ ♠ | |
| 2♠ | Range ask. Includes hands with interest in ♣. | |
| 2NT | Puppet stayman. | |
| 3♣ | 6+ ♦ | |
| 3♦ | 5+ ♦, 5+ ♣, GF | |
| 3♥/3♠ | 3=1=x=x/1=3=x=x, 5-4 minors, GF. | |
| 3NT | To play | |
| 4♣ | Gerber (1430) | |
| 4♦ | Transfer to ♥ | |
| 4♥ | Transfer to ♠ | |
| 4♠ | Both minors, balanced, Quant or better | |

7.1 Stayman Sequences

| | OPENER 1NT ? | RESPONDER 2♣ ? |
|-----------|---|----------------------|
| 2♦ | No 4-card major | |
| 2♥ | 4+ ♥, could have 4 ♠ | |
| 2♠ | 4+ ♠ | |
| | <i>I usually prefer 2♠ does not deny 4 hearts</i> | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♣ |
| | 2♦ | ? |
| | ? | |
| 2♥ | Weak hand with both majors. Pass or correct. | |
| 2♠ | Exactly 5 card ♠, invitational. All invites with 5 ♠s go through this sequence. | |
| 2NT | Invitational. Promises at least one 4-card major. | |
| 3♣/3♦ | 5+ m, GF. | |
| 3♥/3♠ | Smolen. 4M, 5+ OM, GF. | |
| 4♣ | Gerber(1430) | |
| 4♦ | Delayed Texas. 4 ♠, 6+ ♥ | |
| 4♥ | Delayed Texas. 6+ ♠, 4♥ | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|--|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♣ |
| | 2♦ | 2♠ |
| | ? | |
| P | Minimum, 2 or 3 ♠. With exactly 2, 2NT is an option as well. | |
| 2NT | Minimum, 2 ♠. 3m rebids by responder are nat, inv, NF. | |
| 3♣ | Maximum with 2 ♠, GF. Responder may show 2 suited hands LMH via the next 3 steps. 3NT by responder is NF, typical response. | |
| 3♦ | Maximum with 3 ♠. Responder can bid 3NT to offer choice preferring NT, 3♠ to show a spade preference, or 4♠ to sign off. Other bids are unusual, but possible with 2 suited hands. | |
| 3♠ | Minimum, 3 ♠. Better than pass, not enough to commit to game. | |
| 3NT | Probably a 2-card maximum that forgot to bid 3♣. | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|---|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♣ |
| | 2M | ? |
| 2♠ | (Over 2♥). 5 ♠, inv. Same follow ups as over above. | |
| 2NT | Invitational. Promises 4 cards in OM. | |
| 3♣ | 5+ ♣ OR 5+ ♦, GF. 3♦ asks for the minor, LH. Other bids are natural, including bidding the other major to confirm a fit there. | |
| 3♦ | Artificial, confirms a fit in M, typically no shortness. Opener can bid 3M to suggest playing in M, 3NT to suggest playing there, or 4M to insist on M, denying slam interest. Other suit bids are cuebids with hands well suited for slam. | |
| 3M | Invitational | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER | |
|------------|---|-----------|--------------|
| | 1NT | 2♣ | continued... |
| | 2M | ? | |
| 3OM | Unspecified splinter. Next step asks, LMH. | | |
| 3NT | To play | | |
| 4♣ | “Delayed Texas”; 4 M, 6 OM, slam try. Opener’s 4OM rebid is an offer to play. 4♦ asks shortness LHLH (sing, void) | | |
| 4♦ | RKC for M <i>Is CIRCLE better?</i> | | |
| 4NT | Quantitative | | |
| 5NT | Forcing, choice of slams. | | |

7.2 Jacoby Sequences

1NT-2♦

1NT-2♦ shows 5+ ♥, any strength. The only defined super-accept over this bid is 3♥, which shows a maximum with 4+ ♥.

Over 1NT-2♦-2♥ we play “transfers over transfers”, starting at 2NT. Most invitational sequences start with 2♠:

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|---|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | 2♥ | ? |
| 2♠ | Artificial, shows an invitational hand with exactly 5 ♥OR 5+ ♥, 5+ ♠ invitational or better. | |
| 2NT | GF Transfer to ♣. 5+ ♥, 4+ ♣ | |
| 3♣ | GF Transfer to ♦. 5+ ♥, 4+ ♦ | |
| 3♦ | Inv+, “Transfer” to ♥ showing good hearts. 6+ ♥with 2 of top 3 honors | |
| 3♥ | Inv, 6+ ♥. Denies 2 of top 3 heart honors. | |
| 3♠ | Unspecified splinter slam try. 3NT relays for LMH. Neither promises nor denies 2 of top 3 heart honors. | |
| 3NT | Choice of games. | |
| 4♣ | Serious slam try, 6+ ♥, no shortness. Denies 2 of top 3 heart honors. | |
| 4♦ | RKC for ♥. <i>CIRCLE?</i> | |
| 4♥ | Mild slam try. Opener is expected to pass, but allowed to bid on with a good fitting hand. | |
| 4NT | Quantitative with exactly 5 ♥. | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--|--|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | 2♥ | 2♠ |
| | ? | |
| Opener's responses over 2♠ are similar in nature to 1NT-2♣-2X-2♠ | | |
| 2NT | Minimum, 2♥ | |
| 3♣ | Maximum, 2♥. | |
| 3♦ | Maximum, 3+♥ | |
| 3♥ | Minimum, 3+♥ | |
| 3NT | Does not exist. Probably a 2-card maximum that forgot to bid 3♣. | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|---|------------------------------------|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | 2♥ | 2♠ |
| | 2NT | ? |
| Over 2NT, responder can show a 5-card minor or 5-5 majors with various strengths. | | |
| 3♣ | 5+♥, 5+♣, invitational | |
| 3♦ | 5+♥, 5+♦, invitational | |
| 3♥ | 5+♥, 5+♠, invitational | |
| 3♠ | 5+♥, 5+♠, GF without slam interest | |
| 3NT | 5+♥, 5+♠, GF with slam interest | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|-----------------|---|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | 2♥ | 2♠ |
| | 3♣ | ? |
| 3♦/3♥/3♠ | 5+♥, 5+ second-suit, LMH | |
| 3NT | To play | |
| 4m | Cuebid with 5+♥, 5+♠ <i>Is cuebid or shortness more useful?</i> | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♦ |
| | 2♥ | 2♠ |
| | 3♦ | ? |
| 3♥ | COG preferring ♥ | |
| 3NT | COG preferring NT | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------------|
| | 1NT | 2♦ | |
| | 2♥ | 2♠ | continued... |
| | 3♦ | ? | |
| 4♥ | To play | | |

1NT-2♥

1NT-2♥ shows 5+ ♠, any strength with caveats. Note that with exactly 5 spades and exactly invitational values we start with Stayman, not a transfer, and INV+ hands with 5-5 in the majors always start with 2♦.

As per hearts, we generally do not super accept. The only defined super accept is 3♠, showing a maximum with 4+ ♠.

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|--|---|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♥ |
| | 2♠ | ? |
| Over 1NT-2♥-2♠ we play transfers starting at 2NT | | |
| 2NT | GF Transfer to ♣. 5+ ♠, 4+ ♣ | |
| 3♣ | GF Transfer to ♦. 5+ ♠, 4+ ♦ | |
| 3♦ | Inv+, "Transfer" to ♠ showing good spades. 6+ ♠ with 2 of top 3 honors | |
| 3♥ | Unspecified splinter slam try. 3♠ relays for LMH. Neither promises nor denies 2 of top 3 spade honors | |
| 3♠ | Inv, 6+ ♠. Denies 2 of top 3 spade honors. | |
| 4♣ | Serious Slam try, 6+ ♠, no shortness. Denies 2 of top 3 spade honors. | |
| 4♦ | RKC for ♠. | |
| 4♠ | Mild slam try. Opener is expected to pass but is allowed to bid with a good fitting hand. | |
| 4NT | Quantitative with exactly 5 ♠. | |

1NT-2♥-2♠-2N-3♥ shows 5 ♥ in an attempt to find a fit.

This is fine, although I know that Meckwell play +1 agrees the minor and +2 agrees the major with optional shortness follow ups by responder. I had thought we might do the same, I think it was even in some version of notes I had at some point. That's probably a better structure long term. Doesn't even preclude the 5 card OM necessarily, we could play +3 as 5 OM. That would even be this example, but over the

diamond transfer it would be 3♠.

7.3 2♠ Size Ask

1NT-2♠ is first and foremost a size ask, checking if opener has a minimum or a maximum. It also includes hands that would normally transfer to ♣.

Opener must bid either 2NT with a minimum or 3♣ with a maximum. With an in-between hand, opener can use their club holding as a tie-breaker of sorts.

Note that you are allowed to bid 2♠ on a variety of hands, including quantitative slam tries as well as game tries.

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|---|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2♠ |
| | 2NT/3♣ | ? |
| 3♣ | To play 3♣ | |
| 3♦ | 6+ ♣, either balanced or diamond shortness. If balanced, should have some slam interest. 3♥ asks for clarification, NL. | |
| 3♥ | 6+ ♣, shortness in ♥. | |
| 3♠ | 6+ ♣, shortness in ♠. | |
| 3NT | To play. Over 2NT, it is implied that responder had slam interest. | |
| 4♣ | Gerber 1430 | |
| 4♦ | RKC for ♣. <i>CIRKLE?</i> | |

7.4 2NT Puppet Stayman

1NT-2NT is GF Puppet Stayman, asking for a 5-card major. We primarily use this bid when we don't have slam interest and want to assess what our best game option is.

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|--|-----------|
| | 1NT | 2NT |
| | ? | |
| 3♣ | No 5 card major. Says nothing about 4 card majors. | |
| 3♦ | 5 ♥ | |
| 3♥ | 5 ♠ | |
| 3♠ | 4 ♠ + 5 ♥ | |
| 3NT | 5 ♠ + 4 ♥ | |

2♣

Our 2♣ opener shows about 10-15 HCP with 6+ ♣. Good 9 HCPs with some extra shape are acceptable as well, especially in 3rd seat. Four-card or even five-card majors are possible as well. In 3rd seat, opening a good five-card club suit is allowed as well for lead direction/preemptive purposes.

| | OPENER 2♣ | RESPONDER ? |
|----------|---|----------------|
| 2♦ | Artificial asking bid, promising INV+ | |
| 2♥/2♠ | NF constructive, usually about 7-11 HCP, 5+ card suit | |
| 2NT | Puppet to 3♣, showing either a weak raise in ♣(most common) or a GF 5+ 5+ hand without ♣. | |
| 3♣ | Constructive up to a mild invite, usually around 8-11 | |
| 3♦/3♥/3♠ | Nat, 6+ card suit, GF. | |
| 3NT | To play. | |
| 4♣ | Preemptive | |
| 4♦ | RKC ♣ <i>CIRKLE?</i> | |
| 4♥/4♠ | To play. | |

| | OPENER 2♣ ? | RESPONDER 2♦ |
|-----|--|-----------------|
| 2♥ | 4 cards in either major. 2♠ asks, ♥ min/♠ min/♥ max/♠ max. | |
| 2♠ | Maximum, no 4-card major, unbalanced or unsuitable for declaring NT. | |
| 2NT | Maximum, interest in declaring NT. Bal or 6-3-3-1 with stiff K. | |
| 3♣ | Minimum, no 4-card major. | |
| 3♦ | Maximum, 4+ ♦ | |
| | Higher bids are undefined. | |

2♣-2♦-2♠-2NT asks for shortness, NLMH.

2♦

Our 2♦ opener is somewhat similar to our 2♣ opener, but weaker. The nominal range for 2♦ is 9-12, but some 12s are going to be too good and some 8s will likely be upgraded. The structure here is similar in nature to 2♣. Most NF bids have been bumped 1 HCP.

| OPENER 2♦ | RESPONDER ? |
|--------------|--|
| 2♥ | Artificial asking bid, promising INV+ |
| 2♠ | NF constructive, usually about 8-12 HCP, 5+ ♠ |
| 2NT | NF constructive in ♣ or ♥. 3♣ is pass or correct, 3♦ suggests no interest in playing in ♣; says nothing about ♥. |
| 3♣ | Puppet to 3♦, showing either a weak raise in ♦ (most common) or a GF 5+ 5+ hand without ♦. |
| 3♦ | Constructive up to a mild invite, usually around 9-12 |
| 3♥/3♠/4♣ | Nat, 6+ card suit, GF. |
| 3NT | To play. |
| 4♣ | RKC ♦ <i>CIRKLE?</i> |
| 4♦ | Preemptive |
| 4♥/4♠ | To play. |

| OPENER 2♦ ? | RESPONDER 2♥ |
|-------------------|--|
| 2♠ | 4 cards in either major. 2NT asks, ♥ min/♠ min/♥ max/♠ max. |
| 2NT | Maximum, interest in declaring NT. Bal or 6-3-3-1 with stiff K. |
| 3♣ | Maximum, no 4-card major, unbalanced or unsuitable for declaring NT. |
| 3♦ | Minimum, no 4-card major. Higher bids are undefined. |

2♦-2♥-3♣-3♥ asks for shortness, NLMH. *Awkward but symmetrical.*

2 Major

Weak 2s, fairly undisciplined. Non-vul 5 card suits are common, vul they are unexpected. (7 card suit possible.) The range is 3-9 HCP. Note that many 9s with 6 card suits are opened on the 1 level.

New suits are natural and forcing. 2NT is a modified Ogust system I've named "5/7 Ogust".

| | OPENER 2M ? | RESPONDER 2NT |
|------------|--|------------------|
| 3♣ | An odd number of trumps, 5 NV or 7 Vul. 3♦ asks strength as per below. | |
| 3♦ | 6, bad opener | |
| 3♥ | 6, medium opener | |
| 3♠ | 6, good opener | |
| 3NT | 6, 4 in other major. Good enough to commit to game. | |

Preempt RKC:

| | OPENER 2M ? | RESPONDER 4♣ |
|------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 4♦ | 0 KC | |
| 4♥ | 1 KC, no trump Q | |
| 4♠ | 1 KC, trump Q | |
| 4NT | 2 KC, no trump Q | |
| 5♣ | 2 with Q in theory, unlikely response | |

2NT

22-23 balanced or whatever passes for it these days.

Responses:

| | OPENER 2NT | RESPONDER ? |
|------------|--|----------------|
| 3♣ | Extended Stayman | |
| 3♦ | Xfer | |
| 3♥ | Xfer | |
| 3♠ | Puppet to 3NT for minor suit hands. | |
| 3NT | To play | |
| 4♣ | 1430 Gerber | |
| 4♦ | Xfer | |
| 4♥ | Xfer | |
| 4♠ | Both minors balanced (typically 4-4), quant or better. | |
| 4NT | Quant. New suits are 5+ card suits. | |
| 5NT | Forcing, invites 7. New suits are 5+ card suits. | |

11.1 Stayman Agreements

Some of this may be new to you, I don't recall if I've talked about this at all. See 3♠ and 3NT responses as well as 3♥ extensions.

| | OPENER 2NT ? | RESPONDER 3♣ |
|-----------|--|-----------------|
| 3♦ | No 4 card major. 3M rebid over this is Smolen. 4m is natural and forcing. There are no delayed Texas type sequences directly, go through Smolen. | |
| 3♥ | 4+ ♥. 3♠ asks about heart length and/or is a heart slam try. Opener bids 3NT with only 4, (over which a new suit is a cuebid slam try for ♥) or bids 4♥ or cuebids a minor with 5 ♥. Responder doesn't promise a slam try, they can simply be trying to confirm a 5 card suit. | |

| | OPENER | RESPONDER | |
|------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| | 2NT | 3♣ | continued... |
| | ? | | |
| 3♠ | 4♠. 4♥ agrees ♠ with slam interest, new suits are natural (not cuebids). | | |
| 3NT | 5♠. 4♥ agrees ♠, new suits are natural. | | |

11.2 Transfer Agreements

3♥ then 4♥ shows 5-5 majors without slam interest. 3♦ then 3♠ shows 5-5 majors with slam interest.

4m rebids are natural and forcing.

Jacoby then 4NT: Quant Texas than 4NT: RKC Texas than new suit: Exclusion

11.3 3♠

Puppet to 3NT for minor suit hands.

| | OPENER | RESPONDER |
|------------|--|-----------|
| | 2NT | 3♠ |
| | 3NT | ? |
| 4♣ | ♦. Responder bids next step (4♦) with any hand that doesn't like the idea of slam, otherwise responds RKC for ♦. | |
| 4♦ | ♣. Responder bids next step (4♥) with any hand that doesn't like the idea of slam, otherwise responds RKC for ♣. | |
| 4M | Shortness in bid M, 5-5 minors with slam interest. | |
| 4NT | 5-5 minors with no slam interest. | |

3-Level Preempts

Aggressive, does not promise any quality.

I have a joke about my preempts: I strictly follow the rule of 500, so long as the opponents promise not to double.

White/Red there probably isn't a hand which contains a 7 card suit that I would pass.

New suits are forcing, 4♣ is Preempt RKC (or 4♦ over 3♣). 0, 1 w/o Q, 1 w/ Q, 2.

3NT

“Namyats”, good major preempt. 3NT is a forcing call. Typically responder bids one of 4♣ or 4♦, but there are meanings for other bids which likely have not been seen by Ari before. I’m going to write them out, but they literally have never come up in any partnership I have “agreed” these bids since I came up with them 25 years ago.

| | OPENER 3NT | RESPONDER ? |
|--|---------------|---|
| 4♣ | | Requesting partner transfer to their major. Cuebids and RKC. |
| 4♦ | | Requesting partner bid their major. Cuebids and RKC. |
| Herein lies doom. Everything below is a specific sort of asking bid/relay. | | |
| 4♥ | | Asking for suit and about control in the off major. Passable! |
| 4♠ | | Asking for ♣ control. |
| 4NT | | Asking for ♦ control. |
| 5♣ | | Asking for ♣ high card control only. |
| 5♦ | | Asking for ♦ high card control only. |

Over 4♥, responses are alternating ♥/♠ with the first step being *Pass*, the groups being no control, sing/void, High Card control.

Over 4♠/4NT, responses are alternating ♥/♠ with the groups being No control, sing/void, HC control.

Over 5♣/5♦, as above with no sing/void groups.

Example auctions:

3NT-4♥-Pass would show ♥ with no ♠ control. This specific response lets us get out in 4M with no control in the other major. This is the most likely bid to make when responder can’t actually tell which major opener has but still has slam interest.

3NT-4♠ - 5♣ would show ♠ with no ♣ control.

3NT-5♣ - 5♠ would show ♥ with a high card ♣ control.

Other

4 level preempts are natural.

4NT opening is specific Ace Blackwood:

| OPENER 4NT | | RESPONDER ? |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 5♣ | No Ace | |
| 5♦ | A minor suit Ace | |
| 5M | Bidding your Ace | |
| 5NT | 2 Aces of the same color | |
| 6♣ | 2 Aces of the same rank | |
| 6♦ | 2 Aces of the same shape | |

5M openers ask partner to raise 1 level for each high honor in trumps.

Part II

Competitive Bidding

General Rules

Some rules in no particular order.

- **Relays Off** Most relay auctions bail in competition, we don't tend to try to continue to relay when the opponents are interfering. The only exception is double, which is generally ignored. (Not true for 1 ♣ opener responses.)
- **Late Doubles** In most extended auctions doubles are ignored and our responses remain the same. This is notably true over RKC style bids; there is no ROP1 or the like. Initial doubles by the opps can and often does change our response structure.
- **Fast arrival** When we are forced to a certain level (say after a cuebid), bidding that level is the weakest action. This is true even over something like a double, where pass is more encouraging than retreating.
- **Jumps** Most single jump shifts in comp are fit showing. Most jump raises are weak. Double jumps where available are splinters, but are lower precedence than Fit when only 1 jump available. Double jump cuebid is mixed when available.
- **Cuebids** Our direct cuebids in response to partner's call generally show support, although it is possible that some one off cases may exist where you need to force with no good options. Delayed cuebids are probing / generally ask for stoppers. When 2 opponent suits are available, we cuebid what we have not what we are looking for.
- **2x Cuebid** As a psyche protection in 1 ♣ auctions, if we cuebid the opps suit twice that is *natural*. This has come up in play and has proven useful.

15.1 General defenses

- **2 Suiter, known** We play lower cuebid for our lower suit, higher for higher. Double is a good hand, with a second double being penalty.

In general the cuebid is the stronger action; the only exception is when the high cuebid is below our low suit, then the bidding the high suit is stronger than the cuebid. In common practice, the only time this is relevant is over 1 ♥-(2NT),

where $3\spadesuit$ showing spades but not strong (less than GF) allows for a $3\heartsuit$ rebid (NF). $3\spadesuit$ in that instance is forcing.

- **2 Suiter, 1 unknown** We treat this auction as if they had bid the one known suit. Cuebid is support for opener, new suits forcing, etc.
- **2NT** In competition, 2NT might mean many different things depending on context. When the bidder is “forced” (i.e., responding to a takeout style double) the default meaning is Scrambling. When 2NT is a free bid it is most commonly Good/Bad; one notable exception is when 2NT is the first bid by responder, in which case it is natural except where otherwise defined. (i.e., 1M-Dbl).

One other possibility in “Good/Bad” sequences where Good isn’t possible (hand already limited severely): secondary but higher ranked suit. These need to be better defined.

15.2 Misc

This section is for items which don’t fit elsewhere.

XX of cuebids

When does XX promise 1st round control? Does it matter if last train is in play?

Auction (with Jenni)

| West <i>Jenni</i> | North | East <i>Tom</i> | South |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| — | — | $1\spadesuit$ | $1\heartsuit$ |
| $2\heartsuit$ | $3\heartsuit$ | $3\spadesuit$ | Pass |
| $4\clubsuit$ | Pass | $4\spadesuit$ | Pass |
| $4\heartsuit$ | Double | Pass | Pass |
| Rdbl | Pass | $4\spadesuit$ | Pass |
| 4NT | Pass | $5\spadesuit$ | Pass |
| $6\spadesuit$ | Pass | Pass | Pass |

First, Jenni was uncertain that $4\clubsuit$ was Serious/Non-Serious. I think since we aren’t in a GF that NS is off, but it is ambiguous.

Second, my pass over $4\heartsuit$ -Dbl was clearly encouraging, i.e. last train. What does that mean, if anything, for the XX? 1st? Counter last train?

Slam was good today, but hardly the point.

Jenni

♠ A98764

♥ 2

♦ KJ5

♣ AQ4

♠ 52

♥ A763

♦ 832

♣ K987

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | |
| W | | E |
| | S | |

♠ J3

♥ KQT95

♦ 97

♣ T652

Tom

♠ KQT

♥ J84

♦ AQT64

♣ J3

Jenni was concerned about her trumps, I liked my hand but felt I had little I could do with nothing left to cuebid other than pass to encourage. She eventually decided that my pass must mean my trumps are good enough and bid RKC. I suspect her XX is flawed on this particular deal, but it does bring to question whether last train should overrule the general rule about showing 1st.

Defensive Bidding (They Open)

16.1 General Guidelines

Overcalls can be light and can be 4 cards. The latter happens most often with length in the opening suit and the inability to make a takeout double due to shape (i.e., doubleton in a major). It often has opening strength or close to it.

Takeout doubles can be mildly offshape. Doubletons in unbid minors are common. Doubletons in unbid majors are forbidden except for double-and-bid hands.

Bidding tends to be for lead direction when light.

2 level minor overcalls are often 6, occasionally 5 sound when no other call is reasonable. It is common to double instead of overcalling with (---5332).

Direct NT overcalls are sound, (15+)16-18. In the sandwich position we bump this up by a point to a nominal range of (16+)17-19. Tom has made simple 1NT overcalls on bad 19 counts as well.

If the opponents make an invitational or better artificial bid, our double is lead directing. (Example: 1M-3♦ Bergen). If the artificial bid can be less than Inv values then our double is takeout. (Example: 1M-3♣ Bergen). Note for Tom: I think we agreed that this principle applies over Drury as well, even though I typically play double of Drury as lead directing. *Verify? We could encapsulate the principle by saying this applies if it is our first turn to make a call. If we have previously passed then it is always lead directing.*

Balancing

While most balancing actions after 1x are still natural, it is worth calling out some differences.

Jumps are good hands and good suits, the higher the jump the better the hand. I recently balanced with 4M and had 8 good and a side Ace. That feels about right to me.

1NT balance is wide ranging if they open a major, about 11-16 or so. Our 2♣ becomes a Size-ask Stayman, with normal responses showing 11-14 and 2NT showing any 15-16. Over the 2NT rebid, 3♣ is re-Stayman.

1NT balance over a minor is 11–14 with little system. Cuebid is Stayman, no transfers. This auction is NF signoff:

| West | North | East | South |
|--------------|---------------|------|-------|
| 1 \diamond | Pass | Pass | 1NT |
| Pass | 2 \clubsuit | Pass | Pass |
| Pass | | | |

16.2 Strong Club

Suction at all levels: Every bid is either the next higher (transfer) or the 2 remaining suits (2 lower). Double takes the place of the suit bid in the system; for example, (1 \clubsuit)-Dbl is \diamond or (\heartsuit & \spadesuit). In general, the higher you bid the more distribution you have.

We will often start with pass with a decent hand. Immediate bids tend to be destructive.

NT bids show “shape”: (\diamond & \spadesuit) or (\clubsuit & \heartsuit).

Responses in general are pass or correct. Raising the suit bid is a “cuebid” showing a good hand for the possible combinations and game interest. NT bids turn off the pass/correct signal; they generally ask overcaller to bid clubs over which all bids by advancer are natural, not pass/correct.

If Overcaller bids NT after a pass/correct bid that shows a secondary 4 card suit with 6+ in the “transfer” suit. In other words, 1 suited by only kinda-sorta. This is 100% optional on the part of overcaller.

Suction is on directly over the 1 \clubsuit bid as well as any artificial response which does not indicate shape, only values.¹

16.3 Polish or Balanced Club

No special methods, other than double can have any minor suit distribution.

I think this is correct. I actually like Suction here too, but I seem to recall that you do not. When I do play Suction I play it constructive on the 1 level with double being takeout, not suction.

16.4 Precision 1 \diamond

Regardless of promised length, we play 2 \diamond as natural, 2 \heartsuit as weak (NF) Michaels and 3 \diamond as strong Michaels. 2NT is still \heartsuit & \clubsuit . If we bid 2 \diamond naturally, \clubsuit becomes

¹Minor inferences about distribution are allowed. For example, a 1 \heartsuit bid which shows 8–11 without 5 spades would be considered a suction eligible bid. A 1 \heartsuit bid which is a transfer to spades would not.

the “cuebid” suit.

As per balanced 1 ♣, takeout doubles are random with respect to minor suit distribution.

16.5 Transfer response to 1 ♣

After (1 ♣)–Pass–(1 Red) xfer we play that double is a normal takeout double (♦ & OM) and accepting the transfer is the weird takeout double (♣ & OM). 2 of the transfer suit is natural, just as the standard (1x)–P–(1M)–2M would be.

After (1 ♣)–Pass–(1 ♠) it may depend on the meaning of 1 ♠. Most play that as diamonds (I think), in which case double is just takeout for the majors. I suspect that’s a reasonable agreement for most 1 ♠ meanings but it is possible we may run across something which is worth having a separate agreement.

16.6 Kaplan Inversion

After (1 ♥)–Pass–(1 ♠), double is a light spade overcall and 1NT is takeout. 2 ♠ is natural and sound, a hand that would have bid 2 ♠ over standard 1NT response.

After (1 ♥)–Pass–(1NT), double is takeout for the minors.

16.7 1NT

Over their 1NT opener we play Woolsey: 2 ♣ Majors, 2 ♦ Multi, 2M M+min.

Over strong NT, double is a 4 card major, longer minor. Over weak NT it is penalty when possible. (Passed Hand = ?)

It may be worthwhile treating all 3rd seat 1NT openers as weak.

| | Opener 1NT | Overcaller 2 ♣ | Responder Pass | Advancer ? |
|------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 2 ♦ | Equal length in majors | | | |
| 2M | NF | | | |
| 2NT | Limit+ raise. 3 ♣ all min, 3 ♦ equal length non-min, 3M shorter major non-min. | | | |
| 3M | Mixed Raise | | | |

| | Opener 1NT | Overcaller 2 ♦ | Responder Pass | Advancer ? |
|------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 2M | Pass or Correct | | | |
| 2NT | Limit+ raise. 3 ♣ all min, 3Red = xfer. Over 3 ♣, 3M Pass or Correct | | | |

| Opener | Overcaller | Responder | Advancer | continued... |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|
| 1NT | 2♦ | Pass | ? | |
| 3M | Pass or Correct, Mixed | | | |
| 4♣ | Please xfer to your suit | | | |
| 4♦ | Please bid your suit | | | |
| 4M | To play, <i>not</i> pass or correct | | | |

| Opener | Overcaller | Responder | Advancer |
|------------|--|-----------|----------|
| 1NT | 2M | Pass | ? |
| 2NT | Asks minor, shows game interest | | |
| ♣ | Pass or correct for minor any level | | |
| ♦ | Good raise of Maj, any level. 4♦ sets up a forcing pass. | | |

Advances over 2♣/2♦ are different if the opps double the bid.

| Opener | Overcaller | Responder | Advancer |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| 1NT | 2♣ | Double | ? |
| Pass | ♣, NF | | |
| 2♦ | ♦, NF | | |
| XX | Equal length, overcaller to choose | | |
| Other | No change | | |

| Opener | Overcaller | Responder | Advancer |
|--------------|--|-----------|----------|
| 1NT | 2♦ | Double | ? |
| Pass | ♦, NF | | |
| XX | Bid your suit | | |
| 2M | Natural, not pass or correct | | |
| Other | No change, including 3M bids still being Pass or Correct | | |

16.8 2♣ Strong

Suction, as per Strong Club

16.9 2♣ Precision

Not sure if this is discussed. I like playing that 2♦ is an artificial limited takeout, something like 9-13 with 2 or 3 suits. Dbl becomes 14+ takeout.

16.10 Flannery

Vs. 2♦ Flannery:

| | Opener 2♦ | Overcaller ? | Responder | Advancer |
|------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| X | Bal 13-15 bal or 19+ any | | | |
| 2♥ | 3 suited takeout | | | |
| 2♠ | Natural | | | |
| 2NT | 16-18 bal | | | |
| 3m | Natural | | | |

Vs. 2♥ Flannery:

| | Opener 2♥ | Overcaller ? | Responder | Advancer |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| X | 3 suit takeout or 19+ any | | | |
| 2♠ | Natural | | | |
| 2NT | 16-18 bal | | | |
| 3m | Natural | | | |

For both options here, we don't have a bid to show both minors. Some play the 2♥ takeout bid as either 2 (minors) or 3 suited, which might be worthwhile to explore.

Kit had an interesting comment, he rejects the standard defense style and plays initial double as light takeout and pass-then-double as strong takeout with (I think?) the 2♥ cuebid as Michaels. I'm not sure I agree with all of that, but having light vs sound takeout seems like a plus.

See <https://bridgewinners.com/forums/read/intermediate-forum/defenses-to-flannery/>

16.11 Weak 2

Mostly normal stuff, but a few slightly different agreements.

Preferensohl

Modified Leb; after 2NT the doubler bids their preferred minor instead of auto-puppeting to 3♣. Other bids are as per Lebensohl with Fast Denies.

Upside: get to a better 3m contract when advancer has no where to go.

Downside: Forces us to 4♣ rarely when advancer only wants to play clubs.

Soloway

Soloway over 2M-2NT (note, not over 2♦):

| | Opener 2M | Overcaller 2NT | Responder Pass | Advancer ? |
|------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 3♣ | Puppet to 3♦ for sign off anywhere | | | |
| 3♦ | Xfer to other major, Inv+. Opener can accept by bidding game or Q. | | | |
| 3M | Stayman | | | |
| 3OM | Puppet for minor hands as per 2NT opener. | | | |

Leaping Michaels & Direct Cuebids

We do play Leaping Michaels (GF). Over 2M openers, 4m is that minor and OM, 4M Q is both minors and stronger than 4NT.

Over 2♦ weak, 4♣ is ♣&♥, 4♦ is ♣&♠, 3♦ is majors.

2M-3M is a lighter Michaels. We are allowed to play a partscore. We do not play the stopper ask that is commonly played alongside Leaping Michaels.

16.12 Gambling 3NT

There are 2 common defenses to Gambling, I am not certain which we play. Calling this out so that we select an option.

Option 1: Shorter minor takeout. 4♣/4♦ is your shorter minor (defaulting to clubs with equal, although typically you can tell which is the solid suit). Other bids are natural.

Option 2: Woolsey. 4♣ both majors, 4♦ 1 major, 4M = M+minor.

In both of these treatments, double is balanced strength / penalty and 4NT is undefined.

16.13 Other

Currently no special defense to 2♦ Precision (short ♦) or (Mini)Roman. I know there are some out there, but not worrying about it for now.

For most artificial preempts we follow the provided defense. For multi we use “option 2”, where bids are natural and pass then double is takeout.

Interference Defense (We Open)

17.1 1♣

2♠ and Below

Over direct interference below 2♠ we play transfers, every suit bid showing the next suit with 5+ cards and 5+ HCP (good 4 ok). Over spade bids by the opponents, NT becomes a transfer to ♣. NT bids aren't well defined over non-spade bids by the opponent.

Notably, transfers into suits the opponent have shown are still natural. We take the general approach the opponents are extremely untrustworthy here, where psyches and misbids are so common. Therefore we just bid our hands without worrying about what they are showing.

Doubles show values with no suit to show. We are allowed to have a 5 card suit that we don't wish to show, but generally this is a more balanced hand.

It is worth noting that all of this applies over double as well. We assume that the auction will likely become more competitive and therefore do not try to relay and what not.

2NT and higher

When the interference is at 2NT or higher, our bids revert to natural and GF. Double is values, either invitational (6-7) or a GF with no direction. Cuebids are generally 2 suited hands, GF. (Not available below 3NT, so stopper ask doesn't make much sense. Those hands start with double.)

17.2 1♦

Low Level Interference

Over 1♦ -(Dbl or 1♥) we play a similar transfer based system.

| | Opener 1 \diamond | Overcaller Double | Responder ? | Advancer |
|---|--|----------------------|----------------|----------|
| XX | 4+ \heartsuit , any strength | | | |
| 1 \heartsuit | 4-5 \spadesuit | | | |
| 1 \spadesuit | Balanced or both minors. Responder pulls 1NT to show minors. | | | |
| 1NT | Single minor, competitive. 2 \clubsuit is pass or correct. | | | |
| 2 \clubsuit/2 \diamond | Natural, forcing 1 round | | | |
| 2 \heartsuit | 6+ \spadesuit , any strength | | | |
| 2 \spadesuit | Both minors, mixed strength | | | |
| 2NT | Natural GF, rarely used. | | | |

Bids over 1 \heartsuit overcall are the same except for XX & 2NT. There is no redouble to show hearts, but it isn't needed. 2NT is natural and invitational.

Other suit overcalls

Fairly standard methods. Negative doubles (no upper limit, high level doubles are about strength more than shape)

1NT overcall

15 Apr 2020 - Adding what I typically play, not sure if we have discussed.

"Reverse Capp":

| | Opener 1 \diamond | Overcaller 1NT | Responder ? | Advancer |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|----------------|----------|
| Dbl | Penalty | | | |
| 2 \clubsuit | Single suited minor or Minor+Major 2 suiter | | | |
| 2 \diamond | Both Majors | | | |
| 2 \heartsuit | \heartsuit | | | |
| 2 \spadesuit | \spadesuit | | | |

Misc

1 \diamond -(Pass)-1M-(1NT), Dbl is still support.

Example From Play

For now moved from unsorted.

| West | North | East | South |
|--------------|-------|------|----------------|
| 1 \diamond | Pass | 1NT | 2 \spadesuit |
| ? | | | |

Opp interfered RW into our invitational sequence. There are lots of approaches here that are possible, but we decided to play:

Pass Non-forcing. Expectation is the 1NT bidder will not reopen unless they have a 5 card suit.

With Jenni recently I had this auction as the 1NT bidder, I balanced double for takeout. She bid 2NT scrambling. That seems like a fine agreement, I don't see the need to force responder to pass.

Dbl Penalty

2NT Mod. Lebensohl: Not a puppet, but instead the 1NT bidder bids their better minor. We may lose out when opener has only clubs, but we will win when they have a 2 suited hand.

3x Nat GF

After we make a support double, new suits are NF. Jump or Q to force.

17.3 1M

Takeout Double

Over 1M-Dbl we play:

| | Opener 1M | Overcaller Double | Responder ? | Advancer |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1 \spadesuit | Natural (over 1 \heartsuit) | | | |
| 1NT | Xfer to \clubsuit . All xfers promise 5 cards in the suit bid, but can be preparing to raise the major as well. | | | |
| 2 \clubsuit | Xfer to \diamond | | | |
| 2 \diamond | Xfer to \heartsuit (over 1 \spadesuit) | | | |
| R-1 | UPH: Limit Raise or better with Min/Max TaJ PH: Good Raise of M | | | |
| 2NT | Mixed Raise | | | |
| JS | Fit | | | |
| DR | Weak | | | |
| DJS | Splinter (doesn't promise void) | | | |

Other

See General Rules.

2NT by responder is natural at their first turn to call. 2NT by opener after raise is “Good/Bad”; this is true both over our raises and the opponents.

17.4 1NT

We have general defenses for most interference. Where specific agreements exist for specific conventions those take precedence.

General NT defense: Ruebensohl over majors, Lebensohl over minors. Double of 2♣ is Stayman regardless of meaning. Double of other natural 2 level bids is Penalty, double of 3 level bids is Negative.

Over Opps Dbl, XX forces 2♣ to escape to a minor. Direct bids are “Systems On”.

Ruebensohl style:

| | Opener 1NT | Overcaller 2M | Responder ? | Advancer |
|------------|---|------------------|----------------|----------|
| 2♠ | NF | | | |
| 2NT | Forces 3♣, auction from here looks like Lebensohl | | | |
| 3♣ | xfer to ♦, Inv+. Opener can accept game. | | | |
| 3♦ | xfer to OM, Inv+. | | | |
| 3M | Stayman, no stopper. | | | |
| 3OM | GF ♣ | | | |
| 3NT | NF, no stopper | | | |

1NT-2♦ Multi

We play “systems on” over 2♦ Multi, with double being a transfer to Hearts. 2NT Puppet becomes the only available Stayman bid.

Pass then double is Penalty. Pass then bid is usually a light hand and/or one not suitable for immediate bidding. For example, an auction like

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1NT | 2♦ | Pass | 2♥ |
| Pass | Pass | 2♠ | |

is 4♠ and a longer minor. 2NT would be both minors.

1NT-2 ♦ Majors and similar

When the opps make a bid showing 2 known suits artificially, we play an Unusual over Unusual style. (Lower for Lower...). Double is general cards and can be the start to a penalty sequence. 2NT isn't Lebensohl, but rather 2 suited for the other suits.

Immediate jumps are stopper showing, denying a stopper in the other suit. To show one of their suits naturally, start with double.

1NT-2 ♥ Majors and similar

When the opps make a bid showing 2 known suits by bidding one of them (except 2♣), we play double is penalty of the bid suit. The other cheap cuebid is the general cards bid. 2NT starts a Lebensohl sequence. (NOT Ruebensohl)

Checking that this is correct...

1NT-2M M+m and similar

When the opps show a known and unknown suit by bidding the known we treat the auction as natural. Ruebensohl over Majors, Lebensohl over ♦, Sys On over ♣.

17.5 2m

The general style over a 2m opener is to treat it much like other openers: negative doubles, new suits forcing after an overcall, etc.

Doubles are ignored; systems on including +1 asking.

17.6 2M

After an overcall, doubles are penalty and new suits are forcing 1 round.

Over double, we play "Transfer McCabe": XX through R-2 are transfers (with 2NT still being an asking bid) that are either to get out in the next higher suit or a lead directional raise in that suit. R-1 is a "green light" raise of M, 3M is a "red light" raise. Over a "green light" raise opener is allowed to further compete if they feel it appropriate.

17.7 Other

Transfer McCabe over 3 level preempts as well. No other special agreements.

Part III

Carding

Leads

18.1 Opening vs Suits

We generally lead 3rd/Low from length. The only real exception is if we have supported partner's suit, we may lead a more attitude type approach. (High from Xxx, low from Hxx, etc.)

Our default honor leads are A from Ace/King. If we have promised 4+ cards in a suit, we revert to Rusinow honors. Note that transfers such as $1\ \diamond - (1\ \heartsuit) - \text{Dbl}$ do promise a suit, but negative doubles such as $1\ \diamond - (1\ \spadesuit) - \text{Dbl}$ do not promise any one suit, even the other major. Takeout doubles are presumed to not claim any suit.

Note: I don't know if we currently have an agreement if we have *both* shown 4+ cards in a suit. I presume the default rule would echo the standard treatment of having Rusinow be "off" by the secondary bidder, but I think that makes little sense for us. I think it would be better to have both sides which have promised 4+ cards to play Rusinow, whichever one ends up on lead.

Signals to honor leads are generally attitude, but if attitude is known they may revert to suit preference.

Example: $1\ \diamond - (P) - 1\ \heartsuit - (\text{Dbl}) - 2\ \heartsuit$...whichever hand is on lead would lead Rus honors in \heartsuit .

18.2 Opening vs NT

Our spot leads are typically 2nd/4th from 4+ cards, top of xxx or fewer. (American 2nd/4th). As versus suits, we may vary from this in partner's suit. We may lead low from xxx in some situations to show length - a good example would be after a unsupported weak 2. If dummy is winning the trick and 3rd hand gets to signal, signals are count if the winning card is Q or lower, attitude if K or higher. For this purpose, it is presumed dummy plays the lowest of touching cards. (e.g., if dummy has KQx and calls "K", we would still consider dummy to be winning the Q and is therefore count.)

Honor leads are Rusinow from Q to 9, with 8 being a pivot card¹. "Shortness" from

¹Pivot card is the break point for Rusinow. 9 promises 10 or shortness, 8 might have the 9 or not.

a Rusinow perspective here is anything less than 4 cards, so we would still lead Q from QJx. We would lead Q from KQx to avoid the power lead, but this is a very rare exception.

Ace from AK is the default honor lead, with K being the “power” lead, asking for count or unblock. (e.g., KQT9). Signals to other honors are generally attitude about the honor below the led card.

18.3 Middle of the Hand

Middle of the hand leads are generally attitude. If we feel that count is important, we will continue to play 3rd/Low vs Suits and 4th vs NT.

Against NT, if we win the opening lead and return the suit, we generally play lowest from 3+ remaining and high from 2. It is also possible that a high card might be led to hold the lead which may be done with any number.

Honors revert to standard.

Signal agreements

General carding rules: upside down count and attitude, regular suit preference. Priority of signals when partner on lead is Attitude/Suit Preference/Count; priority for following suit is Suit Pref/Count. When count is “necessary” we give count signals, but in general most cards following suit are S/P or just following suit.

Discards are generally attitude based.

19.1 Suit Preference

Standard S/P means high for high and low for low. Often times this is sufficient when a suit can be eliminated (such as trumps.) Middle cards are sometimes used to encourage the suit led despite a normal S/P situation (singleton on the board) or to encourage a trump shift.

Other suit preference situations, such as following suit, there are often 3 suits in play. Sometimes we can infer a suit not being reasonable, but otherwise we encode in the following manner:

With 2 cards to signal: High-Low indicates a high or middle suit, Low-High indicates a low suit or no preference.

With 3 cards to signal:

- LMH:** Neutral or Mild Low suit
- LHM:** Strong low suit
- MHL:** Mild Middle
- MLH:** Strong Middle
- HLM:** Mild High
- HML:** Strong High

The unifying concept here is we always start with the suit we want to make (LMH). Then the more “active” we are (using higher spots) the more we like the suit we

signaled. For example, Middle then Low shows that we were actively signaling, so if we don't get a chance to complete the high at least partner will know we are interested in something. If we started MH they may not know this wasn't LH from 2.

Examples from Play

20.1 Lost in Translation

Often times, it is important to signal with the clearest card possible. While subtleties can be nice, there is a danger that partner will not pick up on the message.

NABC+ BAM, SF 2019. 1st Qual. (rotated)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | ♠ 76 ♥ AKQ ♦ J53 ♣ QJ986 | |
| Tom ♠ AKJ52 ♥ JT83 ♦ K96 ♣ 3 | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div> | Ari ♠ T83 ♥ 954 ♦ AQ72 ♣ T72 |
| | ♠ Q94 ♥ 762 ♦ T84 ♣ AK54 | |

| West | North | East | South |
|------------|--------|------------|-------|
| <i>Tom</i> | | <i>Ari</i> | |
| — | — | — | Pass |
| 1 ♠ | Double | 2 ♠ | 3 ♣ |
| 3 ♠ | 4 ♣ | Pass | Pass |
| Pass | | | |

♠ K lead, 6, 8, 4.

♠ A, 7, 3, 9.

♥ 3 ...

Ari was attempting to be subtle to try to show a diamond s/p. Tom thought at trick 1

that the 8 might be low (since the QT9 were still out). Once it was proven at trick 2 to not be the case, Tom put Ari on Q83, since from T83 he could play the T at trick 1. This led Tom to thinking that there was no need to switch to diamonds as there was no discard in spades. We dropped 1 trick. The board was still won at +100, but should have been +200.

Tom thinks the best sequence is the T at trick 1, then the 4 for low s/p.

20.2 Average hand

NABC+ BAM, SF 2019. 1st Qual (rotated)

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ Q73 ♥ J8 ♦ AQ98654 ♣ Q | |
| Ari | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div> | Tom |
| ♠ J862 ♥ K97653 ♦ J3 ♣ 5 | ♠ K9 ♥ AQ ♦ — ♣ AT9876432 | ♠ AT54 ♥ T42 ♦ KT72 ♣ KJ |

| West | North | East | South |
|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| <i>Ari</i> | | <i>Tom</i> | |
| — | — | — | 1 ♣ |
| 2 ♥ | 3 ♦ | 3 ♥ | 3NT |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

♥ 6, 8, T, Q

♣ A, 5, Q, J

♣ T, ♥ 3, ♦ 4, ♣ K

♠ 4 ...

Declarer made a creative 3NT bid. Their play at trick 2 was surprising. Tom played the ♣ J in a hope to indicate a holding like this. Declarer's ♣ T was a mistake, they should lead a lower spot. The 10 was much too revealing, showing the 9 card suit to the defense. Ari didn't process this and discarded a heart in the hopes that it would indicate that he didn't have a spade card. Tom was desperate for a spade signal,

as he knew declarer had $2=2=0=9$ with the $\heartsuit AQ$. The only question was whether declarer had the $\spadesuit K$ or not. If no, a low spade back might beat the hand if Ari has both honors and break even otherwise. If yes, Tom must play a heart to wait for the $\spadesuit A$ and a heart trick at trick 12. Tom interpreted the heart as encouraging due to an entry (in spades) and therefore played a low spade.

A direct signal in spades would have been more useful, the levels of indirection were ambiguous.

The result didn't matter, teammates were in $6\clubsuit$ down 1, so making 4 or 6 were both a loss.

Part IV

Post Mortem

Post-Mortem Intro

This part of the document is to record hands and/or discussion which came up at the table for posterity. I haven't fully decided how I want to organize this. For the time being at least I am going to put each tournament into its own chapter, with sections for individual hands. I can then use references in other sections of the document where the item in question came up.

This may also help with crafting a to-do list, if we have items which came up that don't fit anywhere.

2018/2019 Monterey

22.1 Double fit!

| | | NORTH | SOUTH |
|--------|---------|--------------|------------|
| | | <i>Jenni</i> | <i>Tom</i> |
| ♠ AKJ | ♠ 2 | 1 ♣ | 1NT |
| ♥ AJ8 | ♥ KQ762 | 2 ♣ | 2 ♦ |
| ♦ AJ2 | ♦ 87 | 2 ♥ | 2NT |
| ♣ QJ32 | ♣ AKT54 | 3 ♣ | 3 ♦ |
| | | 3 ♠ | 4 ♣ |
| | | 4NT | 5 ♦ |
| | | 5 ♠ | 6 ♣ |
| | | 6 ♥ | |

When this hand came up, Tom was playing with Jenni. (Ari was playing the same hands with Thuy.) Jenni held the 1 ♣ hand, Tom held the 5-5 hand.

4NT was intended as double RKC. Tom felt at the table that 4 ♦ should have been RKC but Jenni meant 4NT as RKC, so answered 3 double KC. (Jenni did mean 4NT as RKC.) Then came the queen ask...but for what suit? The 3 ♠ bid agreeing both suits is used to set up double KC, but also generally makes the second suit as the “primary” for purposes of expected trump suits, Q ask, etc. Tom intended 6 ♣ to deny the ♣ Q and say nothing about the ♥ Q. Jenni felt that there was likely a grand, but didn’t want to pull the trigger with no info.

Tom feels that the right answer to this problem is a counter-intuitive one: do not show the secondary fit. You don’t actually need to KC around the club suit. While the ♣ K is valuable information, you can get that from RKC around hearts. For example, ...4NT-5 ♠-5NT-6 ♣. This is a difficult auction to see the trap without experience; every person shown this hand by Jenni has duplicated the 3 ♠ bid.

One of the things to remember about relay auctions is that they are a 1-way auction. We are taught from the time we are first starting to have a conversation with partner to find the best contract. Relays turn that on their ear – the puppet master does not need to tell the puppet anything. If you can get the info you need (such as the ♣ Q) via showing a double fit, then do it. If confirming that will only muddy the auction, feel free to not show the secondary support and just continue with the one suit relay.

This principle can be expanded to more than just confirming a double fit, of course.

Relays can take some planning, especially when the relayer has multiple options or multiple questions they can ask.

30 Nov 2019

Ari and I rebid this hand in a CIRKLE world yesterday, here was the auction:

| NORTH | SOUTH |
|------------|------------|
| <i>Ari</i> | <i>Tom</i> |
| 1 ♣ | 1 ♠ |
| 1NT | 2 ♣ |
| 2 ♦ | 2 ♠ |
| 2NT | 3 ♣ |

... At this point, 3 ♥ is no longer a double relay, but instead is CIRKLE in ♥.

| NORTH | SOUTH |
|------------|------------|
| <i>Ari</i> | <i>Tom</i> |
| ... | ... |
| 3 ♥ | 4 ♦ |
| 4 ♠ | 4NT |
| 5 ♣ | 5 ♦ |
| 7NT | |

4 ♦ showed 8 slam points, 4 ♠ was SQUARE for ♥(4 ♥ would be sign off). 4NT stop showed 2 (AQ), 5 ♣ was SQUARE for ♣, 5 ♦ stop showed 2 (AK). From there you can count 13 tricks.

22.2 Grand Ole Opry

| | | NORTH | SOUTH |
|---------|---------|--------------|------------|
| | | <i>Jenni</i> | <i>Tom</i> |
| ♠ QT874 | ♠ AKJ96 | — | 1 ♠ |
| ♥ K9 | ♥ A3 | 2 ♦ | 2 ♠ |
| ♦ J83 | ♦ AQ762 | 2NT | 3NT |
| ♣ AK6 | ♣ Q | 4NT | 5 ♣ |
| | | 5NT | 7 ♠ |

Another hand with Tom playing with Jenni. As it happens, this hand was against Ari and Thuy.

The bids through 3NT seem normal enough, the question is how then to continue. (There are other possible rebids than 2NT, such as 4 ♣ or 3 ♦, but I think 2NT is better in the long run.)

Jenni bidding 4NT then 5NT sounded to Tom like a very strong hand, but one either more balanced or more solid on the side. Tom thought that with 2 of the 3 side

Ks, that was enough to bid grand. However, today we really needed the \diamond K. Tom strongly believes that a 5NT bid asking for Kings should be strong enough to support slam opposite 2 kings, at least in a pure power auction such as this one.

I think instead of bidding 4NT directly, a $4\diamond$ cuebid first will help focus on that suit. Now if the auction continues similarly we at least know what cards might be working.

The way I learned it, 5NT promises all keycards and the queen of trumps, allows partner to bid a grand if they have a source of tricks, and otherwise requests partner to show their cheapest king. ...5NT-6 \clubsuit -6 \diamond would say "I understand you have the \clubsuit K, do you have the \diamond K as well?" after which opener would make some bid above 6 \spadesuit to show the \diamond K. On this hand, responder doesn't need to worry about opener having an undisclosed source of tricks because opener's shape is known to be 5-3-3-2.

I learned it exactly the opposite, where the 6 \diamond bid in your example would show the King, not ask for it.

I'm not familiar with the agreement that 5NT requests partner to bid a grand with two kings. I'm open to playing that way but I don't think it's standard.

I was speaking a little loosely, but to me 5NT first and foremost invites a grand slam. I was a 5332 hand that didn't open 1NT and had a 4 control 13 count, it can't really get any better, so I accepted the invitation. It's not that 5NT in all auctions asks responder to bid grand with 2 kings, but it is common.

On this hand, I think responder should bid 4 \clubsuit over 3NT to see if partner can cuebid 4 \diamond (which must be the \diamond K) after which RKC would allow responder to easily bid the appropriate slam. I think ...3NT-4 \diamond would tend to be denying a club control.

I think what you are saying is reasonable, however if you have a planned auction of suit...4NT then it is common that you are focusing on the suit you bid. Clearly bypassing clubs than bidding 4NT over a signoff (not this hand) must have a club control. Further, there is something to be said for the strong hand to adopt an Ace first cue style while the weaker hand does an up the line style.