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This Week in Bridge

(167) Responding to 2NT with the Majors

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Level: 2

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General

Responding to a 2NT opening bid is more difficult than responding to a 1NT opening bid because there is less space available for the players to describe their hands below game. This leaves Responder with less room to describe a hand that has length in both Majors. However, many of the tools used by Responder after a 1NT opening bid can still be used after a 2NT opening. Let's look at how we respond to a 2NT with length in the Major suits.

Responding with One Major Suit

Responder starts the auction with a Jacoby or Texas Transfer when they have a 5-card or longer Major suit. On the second round of the bidding, Responder then describes the strength of the hand. Since Opener has a good 19 to 21 points, Responder needs fewer points to bid game than after a 1NT opening bid.

Examples with a 5-card Major

2NT 3♦

3♥ ___?

- Pass 5+c ♥, less than GF values
- 3NT 5c ♥, GF values
- 4NT 5c ♥, slam invitational values
- 5NT 5c ♥, choice of slams OR Grand Slam Force

Examples with a 6+card Major

2NT 4♦

4♥ ___?

- Pass 6+c ♥, GF values
- 4NT 6+c ♥, Keycard in ♥

Note: These auctions are similar if Responder has a ♠ suit.

4NT is used as a quantitative bid if Responder has only promised a 5-card suit and Opener has not shown a fit, while 4NT is used as Keycard if Responder has promised a 6-card suit, a known fit.



Responding with Both Major Suits

When Responder has length in both Majors, the bidding will vary based on how long each Major suit is.

Major Shape	Strength	Process
4-4	Any Values	Stayman; then 3NT (or more) if no Major suit fit is found.
5/4	GF	Stayman; then Smolen if Opener has no 4cM This is a good reason to not play Puppet Stayman.
5-5	GF	Transfer to ♠ then bid 4♥ (choice of games)
5-5	Slammish	Transfer to ♥ then bid 3♠

Slam Tries After Stayman

After Stayman, if Responder has a fit for Opener's 4-card Major suit and interest in slam, then Responder needs to make a slam try, but also ensure that Opener knows that there is a Major suit fit.

Examples

2NT 3♣

3♥ 4NT Quantitative with 4c♠ because Responder has not promised a ♥ fit.

Responder establishes a fit and slam interest after Opener's Stayman answer of a Major by bidding the other Major – this is an artificial bid that sets the trump suit and is a slam try.

2NT 3♣

3♥ 3♠ Artificial, Game Forcing, agrees to ♥, and shows slam interest.

2NT 3♣

3♠ 4♥ Artificial, Game Forcing, agrees to ♠, and shows slam interest

These bids are available for Responder to use as artificial bids since a Notrump bid would be used to show 4-cards in the other Major. These bids establish a fit and allow the partnership to later use 4NT as Keycard. These are sometimes referred to as *Other Major Slam Tries*.

Conclusion

Responding to 2NT can be difficult because there is not much room between 2NT and 3NT to find a Major suit fit and explore for slam. Responder's tools are similar to those used over 1NT. Make sure you are comfortable with these tools, specifically using the other Major as an artificial raise, so as to properly find a Major suit fit or explore for slam after partner opens 2NT.