COMPETING FOR PART SCORES
By Ed Yosses 11/23/13

1. **DO NOT LET THE OPPONENTS PLAY AT THE 2 LEVEL IF THEY HAVE FOUND A FIT.**

Nearly all players learn relatively early to bid their 25-26 point games and 33 point slams. You are not likely losing many match points by failing to bid games and slams when you have the points to do so.

**But, you ARE losing match points by permitting Opponents to play at the 2 level if they have found a fit. You need to put a stop to that (and reap the benefits).**

What is wrong with permitting the opponents to play at the 2 level if they have a fit?
1. They generally make their bid.
2. Your actual opponents (players sitting the same direction) are often not permitting it.
3. Your loss will likely be less than 110 or 140.
4. You may miss the opportunity to push them high enough to get a positive score.

I am speaking for the most part about not letting the Opponents play 2 Spades or 2 Hearts; I believe 2 of a Minor is a bit different.

How can I prevent it?
You will bid in the balancing (pass-out) seat to tell Partner to bid. You basic choices are:

1. Bid a 5 card suit.
2. Double.
3. Bid 2 NT.

“Nice people do not make good bridge players.” – Mike Lawrence.

Here is a simplified list of the possible point distribution the Opponents will have:
- 12-15 opposite 6
- 12-15 opposite 7
- 12-15 opposite 8
- 12-15 opposite 9
- **12-15 opposite 6-9** Responder will “never” have 10. c.f. QJ5 QJ5 QJ7 J654.

When did you last see that Dummy? 5 years ago? 5 months ago? Doesn’t matter. Do not build your bridge game around a once or twice a year problem.

Are there potential problems? Sure! You could go for (much) more than their partial score. (You could go for 200, 500 or more.) You could also make your bid but that is not the goal.

However, you give the Opponents 3 choices:
- Double you for penalty
- Bid to the 3 level
- Pass and let you play

Choosing their best option is not always clear. Your problem becomes their problem.
In general, if they have a fit, YOU have a fit. They found theirs, find yours!

**A. REOPENING IF THE CONTRACT IS 2 HEARTS.**

If the Opponents are bidding Hearts, in the pass-out seat,
- **Dbl.** = 4 Spades and a tolerance for both minors
- **2NT** = both minors and fewer than 4 Spades
- **2S/3C/D** = a 5-card suit (to an honor?)

Partner will have a good idea how many Hearts you have.

Example: 1 Heart-Pass-2 Hearts- Pass-Pass-???

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.</th>
<th>B.</th>
<th>C.</th>
<th>D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ K J 9 4</td>
<td>♠ A 3 2</td>
<td>♠ 8 7 6</td>
<td>♠ x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♠ 10 7</td>
<td>♥ 4 3</td>
<td>♥ Q 10 9 8</td>
<td>♥ xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ J 8 6</td>
<td>♦ Q J 4 3</td>
<td>♦ 5 4 3 2</td>
<td>♦ xxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ K 5 4 3</td>
<td>♣ A 9 8 2</td>
<td>♣ Q 10 6 2</td>
<td>♣ xxxxx</td>
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Double       Double or Bid 2NT       Pass? 2 NT?       Bid 2NT(!)

What is going on with hands C & D? Answer: Where are the points? Opener has less than 16, Responder has less than 10 so 24 (15 + 9) is their combined maximum total; Partner has 16(+) in D. How could Partner pass with 16+ points? Because she TRUSTS you! (to reopen). Don’t let her down.

**Reopen in the Pass-out seat unless you have a reasonable chance of setting the contract.**

**B. REOPENING IF THE CONTRACT IS 2 SPADES.**

The theory and reasoning are the same, the bids similar.

If the Opponents are bidding Spades, in the pass-out seat:
- **Dbl.** = 4 Hearts and a tolerance for both Minors
- **2NT** = Both Minors and fewer than 4 Hearts
- **3C/D/H** = a 5-card suit (to an honor?)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♠ 10 7 6</td>
<td>♠ 3 2</td>
<td>♠ Q 10 9 8</td>
<td>♠ xx</td>
</tr>
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<td>♥ x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ J 8 6</td>
<td>♦ Q J 4 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>♣ K 5 4</td>
<td>♣ A 9 8 2</td>
<td>♣ Q 10 6 2</td>
<td>♣ xxxxx</td>
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Double       Double or Bid 2NT       Pass? 2 NT?       Bid 2NT(!)

What is going on with hands C & D? Answer: Same as above.
C. WHAT IF THEY STOP AT 2 OF A MINOR?

For Declarers, stopping at 2 of a Minor is often bad bridge, meaning making 2 of a Minor will often not score well for Declarer. Therefore, there is less need to compete. However, the Law of Total Tricks suggests that you look for a fit at this level.

If the Opponents are bidding either Minor, in the pass-out seat,

- **Dbl** = Hearts and Spades
- **2 NT** = 2 lower suits (Hearts and the other Minor)
- **2 H/S** = a 5-card suit. See below.
- **3 C/D** = 5 card suit.

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<td>♠ 7 3 2</td>
<td>♠ Q 10 9 8</td>
<td>♠ xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ K J 9 4</td>
<td>♥ A 7 4 3</td>
<td>♥ 8 7 6</td>
<td>♥ xxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ J 8</td>
<td>♦ 4 3</td>
<td>♦ Q 10 5 4</td>
<td>♦ x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♣ K 5 4</td>
<td>♣ A 9 8 2</td>
<td>♣ 8 6 2</td>
<td>♣ xxxx</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Double   Bid 2NT   Pass   Bid 2 NT(!)

D. WHAT HAPPENS IF I PUSH?

Here are some possible consequences of your aggressive “pushiness”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Side</th>
<th>PLUS</th>
<th>MINUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) If you let them play at the two-level</td>
<td>110, 140 or 170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) If you bid at the 2 or 3 level and make it</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) If you bid at the 3 level and go down</td>
<td>50 or 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) If THEY bid to the three level and go down</td>
<td>50 or 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) If they bid 3 and make it</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) If they double you at 3 level</td>
<td>100, 200, 500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the time, it is right to not let them play a contract at the 2 level and bid and make their contract.

- You will be **AHEAD** 60% of the time (b, c and d).
- You will **BREAK EVEN** 20% of the time: (e)
- You will **SUFFER** 20% of the time (f). This is the least likely result; most of the time you will not be doubled. **Keep in mind that at Pairs (match points) it is about how often not how much.**

E. WHEN IS IT NOT APPROPRIATE TO BALANCE?

- When they do not have a trump fit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1S</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1NT</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2D</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>2S</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
-When they are in their third suit:

```
W  N  E  S
1C  P  1H  P
1S  P  2S  P
P  ?
```

BTW, what do you lead against this type of bidding?

F. HERE ARE 2 PRACTICE HANDS. WEST IS THE DEALER IN BOTH CASES.

1.  

```
KQ10
1097
K98
A963
86
KJ32
AJ742
K7
J7542
A5
Q10
J852
```

2.  

```
KJ654
AK64
J
Q87
A
983
J1083
92
97654
KQ82
J102
AK53
Q1072
Q75
A103
964
```

2.  

```
P  1S  P  2S
P  P  2NT  3S
P  P  P
```
G. PRE-BALANCING; A NEWER CONCEPT

-Only applies after 1-P- raise to 2.
-Bid directly over Responder with a hand you would balance with if you were in the pass-out seat.
-You will make aggressive overcalls in this seat.
-Partner must not get excited, i.e., over bid.

-Bid at the 2 level on almost any decent 5-card suit (unless you have good reason not to)*.
-If you have a better hand, you should bid almost any 5-card suit.
-Particularly if you are short in a higher suit and do not want Partner to balance in that suit.
-Be aggressive in this fourth seat when Responder makes a non-forcing bid.
-Caution! Opener has not limited his hand.

* Can reasonably expect to set the contract.

With: 43, AJT78, KJ42, 32:

After 1C-P-2C, bid 2 Hearts if not Vul. You do not want partner to bid 2 Spades or pass.

With: x, AK642, A842, ♠963, pre-balance with 2H at any Vul.