

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 Opponent s 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-???

A.	B.	C.	D.
♠ K J 9 4	♠ A 3 2	♠ 8 7 6	♠ x
♥ 10 7	♥ 4 3	♥ Q 10 9 8	♥ xx
♦ J 8 6	♦ Q J 4 3	♦ 5 4 3 2	♦ xxxxxx
♣ K 5 4 3	♣ A 9 8 2	♣ Q 10 6 2	♣ xxxxxx
Double	Double or Bid 2NT	Pass? 2 NT?	Bid 2 NT(!)

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?).

A.	B.	C.	D.
♠ 10 7 6	♠ 3 2	♠ Q 10 9 8	♠ xx
♥ K J 9 4	♥ A 4 3	♥ 8 7 6	♥ x
♦ J 8 6	♦ Q J 4 3	♦ 5 4 3 2	♦ xxxxxx
♣ K 5 4	♣ A 9 8 2	♣ Q 10 6 2	♣ xxxxxx
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.

A.
♠ J 10 7 5
♥ K J 9 4
♦ J 8
♣ K 5 4

Double

B.
♠ 7 3 2
♥ A 7 4 3
♦ 4 3
♣ A 9 8 2

Bid 2NT

C.
♠ Q 10 9 8
♥ 8 7 6
♦ Q 10 5 4
♣ 8 6 2

Pass

D.
♠ xx
♥ xxxxx
♦ x
♣ xxxxx

Bid 2 NT(!)

D. WHAT HAPPENS IF I PUSH?

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

Your Side

- a) If you let them play at the two-level
- b) If you bid at the 2 or 3 level and make it
- c) If you bid at the 3 level and go down
- d) If THEY bid to the three level and go down
- e) If they bid 3 and make it
- f) If they double you at 3 level

PLUS

110
50 or 100

MINUS

110, 140 or 170
50 or 100
140
100, 200, 500

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.

W	N	E	S
1S	P	1NT	P
2D	P	2S	P
P	?		

-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			A93
	KJ32			Q864
	AJ742			653
	K7			Q104
			J7542	
			A5	
			Q10	
			J852	

1.	W	N	E	S
	1D	P	1H	P
	2H	P	P	2S
	?			

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

2.	W	N	E	S
	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, AJT87, 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.