

REVISED 2♣ AND 2♦ OPENING BIDS AND RESPONSES

Introduction

In standard Acol system the 2♣ opening bid shows either a balanced 23+ high card point (HCP) count or a game forcing hand. In this article it is demonstrated that the system is improved if the game forcing meaning is shared between the 2♣ and 2♦.

In the revised system opening the 2♣ bid includes 8/9 playing trick hands in clubs and the 2♦ bid includes game going hands in diamonds. Balanced hands with 23+ high card points are opened 2♣ still, as are game going hands in a major suit.

The revised 2♣ opening bid and its responses

In the traditional Acol sequence 2♣ 2♦; 3♣, the 3♣ bid is game-forcing showing a hand like:

♠9 ♥AK ♦A86 ♣AKQJ743 (i)

However if the re-bid of 3♣ shows a hand like the above we are left with a problem holding a hand like:

♠KQ ♥9 ♦A86 ♣AKQ7532 (ii)

The system opening bid must be 1♣ as the hand is not quite strong enough to game force. However opening this hand 1♣ risks missing a game. Responder only needs to have the ♥A for 3NT to be cold. On the other hand, if the opening bid is 2♣ regardless, the danger is that the partnership will get committed to bidding an unmakeable game.

In the proposed revised system both the above hands will be opened 2♣. The response will (except under certain specific conditions) be a 2♦ relay bid. The re-bid with hand (ii) above will be 3♣ showing an 8 to 9 playing trick hand single suited in clubs. The re-bid with hand (i) will be 3♦ game force showing a 10+ playing trick hand single suited in clubs. As will be seen further on in this article the 3♦ re-bid would otherwise be an idle bid in the system.

After the 2♦ relay response the 2♠ and 2♥ re-bids are the normal Acol game force bids and the 2NT and 3NT re-bids show balanced hands with 23-24 and 25+ HCP respectively, as in standard Acol.

The revised 2♦ opening bid and its responses

In the revised system the 2♦ opening bid indicates an 8+ playing trick hand with diamonds as the principle suit. The difference from standard Acol is that the bid is unlimited in strength so may have game-forcing values. Thus the strong hand will not be dummy in the event that the game force leads to a 5♦ or diamond slam contract.

The Herbert negative is used in response to the 2♦ opening bid. Playing Herbert negatives the responses 2♥ and 2NT to the 2♦ opener are interchanged so that 2NT shows a positive response with a heart suit and a 2♥ response is negative. This enables the 2NT re-bid by opener to be used to show a game-forcing hand single suited in diamonds. There is no need for the 2NT re-bid in a natural sense as these hands are included in the 2♣ opening bid.

Examples.

1.	west ♠9 ♥AK ♦A86 ♣AKQJ743	east ♠7632 ♥8753 ♦54 ♣1092	bidding west east 2♣ 2♦(1) 3♦(2) 5♣ pass
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- 1 relay bid
- 2 game-force, 10+ playing tricks, single suited in clubs.

The bidding sequence would be similar in standard Acoll but the game-forcing re-bid would be 3♣ not 3♦.

2.	west ♠94 ♥A96 ♦AQ ♣AKQ743	east ♠763 ♥Q753 ♦942 ♣J92	bidding west east 2♣ 2♦(1) 3♣(2) pass
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- 1 relay bid
- 2 showing an 8 or 9 playing trick hand, single-suited in clubs – not forcing

3.	west ♠94 ♥A96 ♦AQ ♣AKQ743	east ♠A763 ♥8753 ♦942 ♣92	bidding west east 2♣ 2♦ 3♣(1) 3♠(2) 3NT pass
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- 1 showing an 8 or 9 playing trick hand, single-suited in clubs – not forcing
- 2 showing a spade stop.

This game would be hard to find using standard Acoll bidding. The opening bid will be 1♣ which may be passed out. An opening bid of 2♣ risks getting into a game contract with a responding hand like that in example 2.

4.	west ♠7654 ♥KJ75 ♦109 ♣864	north ♠32 ♥1032 ♦J42 ♣KQ1092	east ♠J1098 ♥A864 ♦3 ♣A753	bidding south north 2♦ 2♥(1) 2NT(2) 3♣ 3♦ 5♦(3) pass
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- 1 weakness response
- 2 game-forcing re-bid
- 3 denying any first round stops

West may well try for a “safe” trump lead. After removing trumps declarer will play

on clubs hoping to discard heart losers. On winning with ♣A east has to guess which major suit to switch to and may choose the wrong one. Using standard Acol the bidding will start 2♣, 2♦ and the strong hand will become dummy. East is likely to open with the ♠J, but will have no difficulty finding the heart lead after winning ♣A.

5.	west	east	bidding
	♠A	♠753	west east
	♥10864	♥AK953	2♦ 2NT(1)
	♦AKQJ42	♦3	3♥ 4♥
	♣AK	♣7532	4NT(2) 5♥(3)
			6♥ pass

- 1 positive response with heart suit
- 2 Roman key card Blackwood
- 3 Two controls (A and K of trumps) lacking queen of trumps

Note that the strong hand becomes declarer.

6.	west	east	bidding
	♠AKQ3	♠10842	west east
	♥4	♥KQ	2♦ 2♥(1)
	♦AKQ42	♦53	2♠ 4♠
	♣A63	♣97542	pass

- 1 weakness response

A further advantage of Herbert negatives is that awkward strong hands with five diamonds and four spades, like this example, can be described at the two level. Using standard Acol the opener will likely open this hand 1♦ to avoid the awkward situation arising from a 2NT negative to an opening 2♦ opening bid, and the 4♠ game might well be missed.

Refinements to the System

Breaking The Relay

When responder holds a single suited hand it makes sense to break the relay and show the suit. Bidding a major suit at the two level then shows a weak hand. warning opener not to go beyond game. Any three level bid is a positive response showing interest in going to slam in that suit.

The following deals, sourced from Ron Klinger's Better Duplicate Bridge, illustrate how the relay breaking will operate.

Example 1:	west	east	bidding
	♠J3	♠KQ10942	west east
	♥52	♥A84	2♣(1) 3♠(2)
	♦AKQ	♦3	4♠(3) 4NT
	♣AKQJ86	♣732	5♥ 6♠
			pass

- 1 having a 9 playing trick hand in clubs (intending to re-bid 3♣)
- 2 breaking the relay to show slam invitational hand single suited in spades
- 3 agreeing spades as trumps, no need to show the club suit.

Example 2:	west	east	bidding	
	♠AKQ732	♠	west	east
	♥A96	♥875432	2♣(1)	2♥(2)
	♦AK	♦J752	2♠(3)	3♥(4)
	♣AJ	♣843	5♥(5)	pass

- 1 having a game force hand with spades
- 2 breaking the relay to show a weak hand with a long heart suit
- 3 showing the game force nature of the hand
- 4 insisting hearts as trumps
- 5 asks for good trumps

3NT Blackwood After a the 2♦ opening bid

The 3NT re-bid is not needed in the natural sense after a the 2♦ opening bid and can be used as Blackwood. This is particularly useful after a positive response.

Example:	west	east	bidding	
	♠A	♠K53	west	east
	♥K1086	♥A7	2♦	3♦(1)
	♦AK8642	♦QJ7	3NT(2)	4♦(3)
	♣AK	♣87432		4♥(4) 4NT(5)
			7♥	

- 1 positive response, slam invitational showing diamond support
- 2 Roman key card Blackwood
- 3 Having one or three controls
- 4 Do you have the queen of trumps
- 5 Yes I have the queen of trumps

Application to Benji Acol

The principle of sharing the game-going hands between the 2♣ and 2♦ bids can be applied to Benjiminised Acol. More exactly a system can be devised which includes weak two majors and which shares the game force between the 2♣ and 2♦ opening bids.

The system is the same as the one above except that the two-major re-bids after an opening 2♣ bid are unlimited in strength and are forcing for one round. In other words the 2♠ and 2♥ re-bids, like the 2♦ opening bid, may be made with an eight playing trick hand but may also be a game forcing hand. To cope with this there has unfortunately got to be a further degree of artificiality introduced into the system

After a 2NT negative response to the two major re-bid the 3♣ bid by opener is used to indicate the game forcing hand. The auction can then proceed naturally. The penalty involved in introducing this artificiality is to make it awkward to show bid the strong two suited hands when the two suits are a major suit and clubs. This situation is probably rare enough not to matter too much.

Application to The Multi 2♦

hand in clubs is shown by a 3♦ re-bid after a 2♣ opening bid. The 2♦ relay response to 2♣ applies.

The principle can also be applied to the multi so long as the multi 2♦ bid is confined to the two meanings, weak in a major or an 8+ playing trick hand with a diamond suit. The game-going hand in diamonds is shown via the 2NT re-bid and the game going

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