Opener Rebids a Suit and the Rest of the Auction

With an unfamiliar partner, ask what their "second negative" is after a 2 club opener. We play "the cheapest suit at the 3-level" is our second negative.

After a suit rebid by the 2 club opener, responder must bid again, even with zero points (opener could still have a game-forcing hand). With a completely worthless hand (no aces, no kings, and less than 2 queens), responder rebids the cheapest suit at the 3-level, usually clubs. For example, 2C-2D, 2H-3C, says nothing about clubs. 3 clubs just says, "Partner, my hand is really, really weak. You're on your own." This bid is described as the "second negative" (the 2 diamond bid was the "first negative", denying a 5 card suit with 2 of the top 3 honors, now the 3 club bid denies strength). If responder gives the second negative, the auction is no longer forced to game. For example, after 2C-2D(waiting), 2S-3C(second negative), 3S-, responder can pass. After 2C-2D, 2S-3C, 3H-, responder can pass 3 hearts if they prefer hearts over spades, or bid 3 spades if they like spades better.

Blackwood (4 No Trump)

One way to get to slam or grand slam insuring your side is not missing an ace, is to bid 4 no trump. Since 4 no trump is a silly contract to want to bid (why not bid 3 no trump?), it's used as an ace-asking bid. What you're asking your partner when you bid 4 no trump is, "How many aces do you have, partner?"

The answers to 4 no trump are; with 0 or 4 Aces, bid 5 clubs; with 1 ace, bid 5 diamonds; with 2 aces, bid 5 hearts; with 3 aces, bid 5 spades. The 5 club bid does double duty, showing either no aces or all the aces. You should be able to tell from the auction which it is.

After partner tells you about aces, **<u>and if you can account for all the aces</u>**, you could bid 5 no trump, which asks partner for kings. Don't ask for kings unless your side has all the aces and you're interested in a grand slam. If you bid 5 no trump after 4 no trump, you're promising partner your side has all the aces. Because of this promise, if partner wants, he doesn't have to answer kings. He might bid 7 himself!

The answers to 5 no trump are identical to 4 no trump. With 0 or 4 kings, bid 6 clubs. With 1 king, bid 6 diamonds. With 2 kings, bid 6 hearts. With 3 kings, bid 6 spades.

Beware using Blackwood if partner's answer may take you higher than you want to be. For example, if you're thinking about bidding 6 clubs and want to check on aces first, and your partner has one ace, his 5 diamond response already puts you past 5 clubs. Now what do you do? There may be a solution, depending on your auction. If there's a suit left between partner's Blackwood response (5 diamonds in this example) and 5 no trump, that you can't possibly want to play in, you can bid 5 of that suit, telling partner that you're off two aces and to please bid 5 no trump, which you will pass. For example, 2C-3C, 4C-4N, 5D (oops, off two aces)-5H, 5NT-Pass.

Opening Very Strong Hands

With a unfamiliar partner, always ask if they play "Strong Two's" or "Weak Two's". We play "Weak Two's," meaning an opening 2 club bid is our strong bid and 2 diamonds, hearts, or spades are weak. The "Strong Two's" camp play any opening suit bid at the 2 level is strong and shows that suit.

Occasionally, you will get a hand that is so strong that you can make game regardless of what your partner has. Holding AKJ,AKQ98653,3,2 for example can make 4 hearts all by yourself. If your partner has one ace, you might even make slam! But if you open 1 heart, your partner with his one ace will pass since he only has 4 points. Or change the hand slightly and you might miss game if your partner passes with less than 6 points. How do you bid hands like this? You open the bidding with 2 clubs.

Opening 2 clubs shows either a very strong hand that doesn't fit your point range for 2 no trump (20-22 HCP) or 3 no trump (25-27) opening bids, or more usually, a very strong distributional hand. Opening 2 clubs is an artificial bid. It says absolutely nothing about your club suit. You could have zero clubs. What you're saying is, "Hey, partner! Wake up over there. I've got a big, big hand here and I can't stand for you to pass. Please keep the auction alive and I'll tell you more about it with my next bid."

Opener will have a hand that is one trick short of game, that is, the auction cannot stop below 2 no trump if opener rebids no trump, 3 of a major if opener rebids a major, or 4 of a minor if opener rebids a minor. The exception to this is if the opponents are doubled in any contract.

Responding to Your Partner's 2 Club Opening Bid

With an unfamiliar partner, ask how they play responses to a strong 2 club opening. We play "2 Diamonds Waiting," meaning a 2 diamond response to a 2 club opener doesn't show anything. It **denies** a 5+ card suit with two of the top 3 cards in the suit, but it doesn't show, promise, or deny anything else. Your 2 diamond bid is merely "waiting" for opener to describe his hand.

Your responsibility is too keep the auction alive . To do this, you almost always bid 2 diamonds. This gives your partner as much bidding room as possible to describe his hand. The same way as your partner's 2 club bid was completely artificial and said nothing about his clubs, your 2 diamonds bid is also completely artificial and says nothing about your diamonds. You could have zero points. You could have 20. You could have any distribution.

The alternative to the semi-automatic 2 diamond bid is bidding a suit of your own. A 2 heart, 2 spade, 3 club, or 3 diamond bid would show a 5+ card suit, at least 2 of the top 3 cards in that suit, and being a positive response, is forcing to game.

If over your partner's 2 club opening, your RHO does anything but pass, you don't have to bid. The auction is still alive and partner will get another chance to bid. Therefore any bid by you, even 2 diamonds, is descriptive showing a good suit as above. You don't deny a good hand if you pass. You've fulfilled your responsibility to keep the auction alive. If you don't have a good suit to bid, just pass. Your partner will describe his hand and you can "catch up" later.

Opener Rebids No Trump and the Rest of the Auction

Rebidding 2 no trump shows a hand between an opening 2 no trump (20-22) and 3 no trump (25-27), therefore exactly 23-24 HCP, and denies a 5-card major. The sequence 2C-2D, 2N-, is not forcing. Responder, with a completely worthless hand (say 0-3 HCP), can pass. All other rebids by responder are descriptive and game forcing. Suit bids show 5+ cards (and obviously <u>not</u> 2 of the top 3, else they would have bid the suit the first time). If responder bids 3 clubs (i.e. 2C-2D, 2NT-3C), it's Stayman, asking opener to bid a 4-card major.