

## Competitive Bidding—Part X (November 15, 2021)

### Unusual 2NT and Sandwich NT

The simple overcall (see October 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> lessons) allows you to show a suit that may ultimately become the trump suit if your side plays the contract. Today, we want to look at types of bids which allow you to show a two-suited hand.

- Unusual 2NT
- Sandwich NT
- Michael's Cue-bids (to be covered in the next lesson)
- Leaping Michael's Cue-bids (to be covered in the next lesson)

### UNUSUAL TWO NOTRUMP

The **Unusual Two Notrump** overcall is used after the opponents have opened the bidding. A 2NT overcall is artificial, showing the two lowest unbid suits (at least 5-5 in shape). The bid does not have to be alerted. It is forcing if the next opponent passes.

How many points does the 2NT bid promise? For defensive bidding purposes, two-suited hands can roughly be divided into three categories:

<u>Type of Two-Suiter</u>	<u>High Card Points</u>
Weak	12 or less
Intermediate	13 to 16
Strong	17 or more

The above ranges are approximate. Borderline hands can be upgraded or downgraded according to your judgment. Points in your suits are better than points outside your suits; 6-card suits are better than 5-card suits; aces and kings are better than queens and jacks; honors together are better than honors apart, etc.

An overcall of 2NT over a one of a suit opening shows either a **weak or a strong** two-suiter. **DO NOT** make this bid with an intermediate two-suiter. Just try to get both of your suits into the bidding, if possible. If you have the weak two-suiter, you will tell that to your partner at your next opportunity to bid by passing. If you have the strong two suiter, you will tell your partner by bidding again at your next opportunity.

NOTE: Always be aware of the vulnerability level. You are pushing the bidding to the three level. The best time to bid the unusual notrump holding a weak hand is when you are nonvulnerable vs. vulnerable.

### Unusual Two Notrump Overcalls

- (1C)        2NT        5+hearts and 5+diamonds
- (1D)        2NT        5+hearts and 5+clubs
- (1H)        2NT        5+diamonds and 5+clubs
- (1S)        2NT        5+diamonds and 5+clubs

**Example 1.** Your LHO opens with 1H. Your Hand: 7 43 QJ1086 AQJ95

This is a typical weak two-suiter. Bid 2NT showing at least 5/5 in clubs and diamonds. You will pass at your next opportunity to bid to tell partner that you have the weak type of unusual NT hand. The above hand qualifies for the 2NT at any vulnerability because your points are all in both suits.

**Example 2.** Your LHO opens 1C. Your Hand: 8 KJ975 A108653 2

Again, bid 2NT, showing diamonds and hearts. You pass at your next opportunity to bid. This hand also qualifies for the 2NT bid at any vulnerability because of having all your point in your suits.

**Example 3.** Your LHO opens 1S. Your Hand: A3 4 AK876 AQJ54

On this strong two-suited hand you make the same bid of 2NT. When partner picks, you will bid the other minor to tell him you are strong (17+). He can then place the contract in game or not. He can bid controls, bid Minorwood, or 3 NT if he holds stoppers in both majors. He is the Captain.

**Example 4.** Your LHO opens 1H. Your Hand: 98 6 KQJ98 AKJ93

DO NOT bid 2NT with this hand. This is an intermediate strength two-suiter. Bid diamonds first and then clubs, if you have another opportunity to bid both of your suits.

**Example 5.** Your LHO opens 1D. Your Hand: 95 KQ1096 3 KJ983

If the vulnerability is equal or favorable, bid 2NT. At unfavorable vulnerability, just overcall 1H.

**Example 6.** Your LHO opens 1H. Your Hand: K10 3 KJ974 Q9542

Bid 2NT at favorable vulnerability. Otherwise, pass.

**Example 7.** Your LHO opens 1H. Your Hand: 63 VOID KJ987 KQ10865

Bid 2NT. If partner bids 3C, raise to 4C. This bid does not show the big hand—you've simply raised the suit chosen by partner because of the extra club in your hand. To show the strong hand such as in example 3 above, you have to bid something else, i.e., 3D.

**NOTE:** The Unusual Two Notrump is still possible if one or both opponents have bid.

**Example 8.** West North East South  
(1H) P (1S) 2NT\* \* = Unusual 2NT

Your Hand: xx x AJ1094 KJ982

### Partner's Responses

After partner has made an unusual 2NT overcall, the advancer (you) should assume initially that it shows a WEAK two-suiter. If the next opponent passes, you have the onus to choose the trump suit at the cheapest level possible. You are the CAPTAIN. You know exactly which suits your partner holds.

- You normally bid the suit that you have the most tolerance for. With equal length in both suits, bid the cheaper suit first, e.g. 3C with xx and Kx of diamonds. If the opponents double, you can run to diamonds.
- If you have a weak hand and at least 4-card support, you might consider making a preemptive jump bid.

**Example 9.** West North East South \* = Unusual 2NT  
(1H) 2NT\* (P) 4C

4C is preemptive and non-forcing, promising at least 4 clubs.

- With a good hand, you can cue-bid the opponent's suit. This bid typically shows support for at least one of your partner's suits and interest in game or slam. A cue-bid is forcing for one round and asks your partner (the 2NT bidder) to bid his cheaper suit at the cheapest level with a weak hand (0 to about 10 HCP), or to make any other bid with a "fair" hand (around 10+ HCP).

- If you bid the “fourth suit”, i.e., the suit not bid by the opponents or shown by your partner, it is a natural bid and non-forcing. It implies a very good suit (usually 6+ cards), a good hand, and no support for either of your partner's two suits.

**Example 10.**        (1D)    2NT    (P)    YOU

Your Hand:    AQ985    J74    Q85    76

Bid 3H. You must choose between clubs and hearts, the suits your partner has shown.

**Example 11.**        (1S)    2NT    (P)    YOU

Your Hand:    KJ97    A9865    103    98

Bid 3C. With no clear preference, bid the lower ranking suit, leaving bidding room for partner in case he has the big hand and can bid 3D. If your RHO bids, pass and let partner choose.

**Example 12.**        (1S)    2NT    (3S)    YOU

Your Hand:    654    J873    K9842    3

Bid 5D. You are preempting against the probable 4S game that the opponents can make.

### **Rebids by the 2NT Bidder**

- Pass = WEAK 2NT overcall
- Raise the suit your partner bid to show more extreme shape, not more point
- Bid your other suit to show the strong 2NT overcall
- Cue-bid the opponent's suit to show a strong hand (17+ HCP). This bid is forcing.
- Bid 3NT to play (not forcing)
- Bid the fourth suit to show a powerful hand. This bid is forcing.
- Double the opponents (not forcing)

- Bid game in suit chosen by your partner (not forcing)
- If appropriate, make a slam try by bidding either Keycard Blackwood or Kickback (if partner has bid hearts).

### **Defense After an Opponent Bids the Unusual 2NT\***

When the opponents open and you overcall with 2NT, the defense can use a bidding scheme which incorporates two features:

- The double becomes available as an additional call by opponents
- The Unusual v. Unusual bid becomes available as a call by opponents

If your partner opens 1H/1S and the next opponent makes the 2NT bid, a double by you indicates no fit for partner's major and the ability to penalize one or both minors. (Recall the hand from the Roanoke Times some months back.)

If your partner opens 1H and the opponent bids 2NT, a bid of 3C (the lower ranking of the two suits shown) shows the fourth suit (spades in this instance). Your partner (the opener) should bid spades if he holds Hx or xxx in the suit. A bid of 3D by you (the higher ranking of the two suits shown) shows good support for hearts and is game invitational. Three hearts by you is a weak raise of partner's suit. Three spades shows a six-card spade suit (non-forcing). Three NT is to play. Either 4C or 4D is a splinter bid, showing a singleton or void in support of hearts.

If your partner opens 1S and the opponent bids 2NT, similar bids as above are available to you. A double indicates the ability to double one or both of the minor suits.

If your partner opens 1S and the opponent bids 2NT, a bid of 3C shows the fourth suit (hearts in this instance). Your partner (the opener) should bid 3H if he holds Hx or xxx in hearts. A bid of 3D by you shows good support for spades and is game invitational. Three spades is a weak raise. Three notrump is to play. A bid of either 4C or 4D is a splinter bid, showing a singleton or void in support of spades.

**\*These bids are not standard. These bids are attributed to John Markey. For me, they are easier to remember and less likely to cause confusion.**

**Before leaving the Unusual 2NT topic, I want to caution you in using the convention with insufficient strength or lengths (such as 5-4 in the minors). This may lead to:**

- An opponent doubling and collecting more penalty points than the contract points they would otherwise have scored.
- Opponents outbidding to obtain a major suit contract.
- Opponents making a contract owing to the additional information gained about the strength and distribution of the hand that made the 2NT bid.

## SANDWICH NOTRUMP

A Sandwich Notrump is a 1NT overcall made after both opponents have bid. The 1NT overcall is similar to the 2NT overcall in that it shows a two-suited hand with at least 5-5 shape. However, the purpose of the Sandwich Notrump is to compete with weaker hands, typically 5-10 HCP. This bid may be of use at certain vulnerabilities (e.g., red on white) in which it is too dangerous to overcall with the Unusual 2NT bid.

NOTE: The Sandwich NT gives up the meaning of a natural strong 1NT overcall, which rarely occurs after both opponents have bid and your partner has passed. The convention gets its name from the fact that 1NT is bid “between” the two bids made by the opponents. Let's look at the following three hands:

<b>Example 13.</b>	<b>West (1H)</b>	<b>North P</b>	<b>East (1S)</b>	<b>You 1NT*</b>	<b>* = Sandwich NT</b>
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Your Hand:    7     93     A8743     J5432

Bid 1NT, the Sandwich NT. This bid asks your partner to bid one of the other two suits, clubs or diamonds. Bidding the Unusual 2NT here would show better values and would force the bidding to the three-level. Also, a takeout double would imply more strength.

<b>Example 14.</b>	<b>West (1C)</b>	<b>North P</b>	<b>East (1D)</b>	<b>You 1NT*</b>
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Your Hand:    Q87632     K9763    4     6

Bid 1NT to show hearts and spades. If you bid 2C (the Michaels Convention), you are showing 5-5 in majors; but, with a much stronger hand than the one above.

**Example 15.**      **West**    **North**    **East**    **You**  
                          **(1C)**    **P**           **(1H)**    **1NT\***

Your Hand:    J10983    J        AJ854       72

Bid 1NT to show the two unbid suits, diamonds and spades.

NOTE: Some players only play the Sandwich NT bid, if they were a PASSED hand. Thus, an overcall of 1NT indicates the strong NT type hand. Playing this strategy may help your side uncover a psych bid by the opponents.

### Responses to the Sandwich 1NT Bid

In response to a Sandwich 1NT, partner is expected to bid one of the indicated suits if the next player passes. Any jump raises are preemptive and non-forcing, showing at least a four-card suit. A cue-bid is rare, artificial and forcing, showing interest in game.

Next Week: Michael's Cue-bids and Leaping Michael's Cue-bids

The following hand (#5) was in the **Roanoke Times**, November 13<sup>th</sup> edition.

Hand #5.	Bidding:	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
		<b>1C</b>	<b>(P)</b>	<b>1H</b>	<b>(P)</b>
		<b>2H</b>	<b>(P)</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>(3D)</b>
		<b>P</b>	<b>(P)</b>	<b>???</b>	

**Your Hand:**            **KQxx**        **xxxx**    **K10x**    **J10**

Analysis of the bidding: Partner opens with 1C, showing at least 3+C and 12 HCP. You hold 9 HCP and both majors. When holding 4-4 in majors, bid the hearts first, despite the fact that your spades are so much better. Your pard raises the hearts to 2H which implies that he holds 4 hearts and 12-14 HCP, a minimum opening hand.

Now, West comes in with a 3D nonvulnerable overcall. He is trying to push your side to the three-level (purpose behind all these lessons on competitive bidding). You are South and have a decision to make. What do you know?

You have at most 8 hearts (LOTT = 2 level). You have a minimum of 21 HCP between the two hands. Your side is vulnerable. Bidding 3H is NOT likely to be a good bid; however, the fact that you hold the K10x of diamonds and the KQ of spades makes your hand look right for a **Penalty Double**.

