

# The Eclectic Club

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## Part One - The Structure of the Opening Bids

Opening bids are part of a patchwork quilt where the individual pieces are measured and trimmed to fit together as a harmonious whole. Here is the recommended scheme of our version of a strong club system, called The Eclectic Club

1C	-	16+ points
1D	-	11-15 points, 4+ diamonds
1H	-	11-15 points, 4+hearts
1S	-	11-15 points, 4+spades
1NT	-	13-15 points, flat
2C	-	Single-suited, 6+clubs 11-15 points
2D	-	6-10 points, 6+cards in one of the majors
2H	-	9-15 points, 5-5 or better in hearts and another suit
2S	-	9-15 points, 5-5 or better in spades and a minor
2NT	-	9-15 points 5-5 or better in the minors

Higher bids are traditional

1D being natural is a strong part of this one club system. 1H and 1S are 4+ cards, an arbitrary choice in preference to 5+cards. 1NT has an overlap with one of a suit which allows good hand evaluation. The opening bid of 2C covers one type of hand only.

A weak two in diamonds does not strike fear into the hearts of the enemy. A Multi releases 2H and 2S for some other purpose

KQ1075  
8  
10  
K108654

This is a minimum hand which will open 2S. It is a "constructive two bid" an opening bid in terms of losers. All tournament players will know what to do on this hand if the opponents open one of a red suit, but it is not safe to open the bidding. This hand will be delighted to contest the auction but, strangely, must allow the opponents to open the bidding first. If this hand cannot be opened, the deal will be passed out if partner has a hand such as

A96  
A1076  
8765  
Q3

The fourteen count below seems to be an entirely different proposition to the hand above

KQ1075  
5  
A4  
AJ865

It is only different as far as the opponents are concerned. Partner bids exactly the same way.

In addition to being very successful bids in their own right, the constructive twos give valuable negative inference to the opening bid of 1H and 1S

## PartTwo - Responder's First Bid

### The opening bid of 1D

With the exception of 2D, responses are on traditional lines. It is normal to show a four card major in preference to bidding no trumps, but with a hand such as

AQ  
J763  
972  
Q983

1NT is a more intelligent response than 1H. With an extra Queen, 2NT is best, and with an extra Ace, 3NT is the sensible bid.

To raise 1D to 2D promises four card diamond support, is forcing, and shows at least the values for a sound raise to 3D, (an immediate 3D would be pre-emptive and does not invite 3NT). There is no upper limit, 2D might be the first step towards investigating the possibility of a grand slam. This response of 2D is forcing to 3D or 2NT

1D    2D  
?

The rebids of 2NT and 3D are sign offs. If there is a 4-4 diamond fit it might be a shrewd manoeuvre to play in 2NT rather than the more obvious 3D contract. To play in 2NT is a shared decision, responder could pull 2NT to 3D to play. 2NT denies the ability to bid 3NT.

The bids of 2H, 2S and 3C are open to interpretation. They are not suits. If responder were interested in a 4-4 major fit he would have bid 1H or 1S on the first round. To see the best treatment study the following hand:-

AQ7  
1085  
AQ94  
KJ7

Suppose opener has an unbalanced hand with a singleton or void. It would be vital to know where that singleton is. If it is in hearts, the opponents have ten points to take one trick and it becomes a thirty point pack. Even if partner only has a twelve count the opponents have two points to take another trick, and 6D will be a very good contract. But if the singleton is in a black suit 3NT is quite enough. These rebids of 2H, 2S, and 3C should show shortages

### The Opening bid of 1H

The responses to 1H are:-

1S    -    natural  
1NT   -    transfer to clubs  
2C    -    transfer to diamonds  
2D    -    primary heart support, lower limit of 8-9 points, no upper limit  
2H    -    courtesy raise, nearly always four card support  
2S    -    weak two in spades, six cards with, in principle 6-10 points. A good ten count might make a game try, and this bid of 2S could be on less than six points  
2NT   -    natural, must have three card heart support

3C, 3D -	game try splinters
3H -	pre-emptive, five card support
3S -	slam try splinter
3NT -	natural, must have three card heart support
4C,4D -	slam try splinters
4H -	natural, not necessarily pre-emptive

## **The Opening bid of 1S**

The responses to 1S are

1NT -	transfer to clubs
2C -	transfer to diamonds
2D -	transfer to hearts
2H -	primary spade support, 8+ points
2S -	courtesy raise, normally four card support
2NT -	natural, three card spade support
3C, 3D	game try splinters
3H -	game or slam try splinter
3S -	pre-emptive, five card support
3NT -	natural, three card spade support
4C, 4D	slam try splinters
4H -	not used
4S -	to play

## **The opening bid of 1NT**

The responses to 1NT are

2C -	Stayman, promissory
2D -	Transfer to hearts, except 1NT 2D 2H 2S which is Baron
2H -	Transfer to spades
2S -	Transfer to clubs
2NT -	Transfer to diamonds
3C, 3D -	single suited slam try
3H ** -	single suited, may be a slam try (explained later)
3S -	single suited slam try

These are Marx-Sharples transfer, about sixty years old. There is nothing revolutionary here,. The only topic worthy of comment is how the definition of the no trump bid relates to the rest of the system

In theory any no trump bid ought to be confined to a range of three points, and if it is possible a range of two points only is preferable. A rebid of 1NT showing 12-16 is common. Perhaps in some systems there is nothing better to do than rebid 1NT with some twelve counts and some sixteen counts, but one would have to be awfully partisan to claim that a no trump range of five points was desirable in its own right.

Our 1NT is defined exactly as we would like it. To open 1NT on 4-4 in the majors is stupid, the 4-4 fit can then only be found if responder has the values for 2NT. To get to two of a major with a combined 17-23 count is winning technique. The chess equivalent is pawns established on K4 and

Q4. You haven't won but no-one would bet against you. To open a 12-14 no trump third in hand at red is, to be generous, controversial. At teams 1D, 1H, or 1S might be better. We have the option of doing either. The no trump could cost 500/800. At pairs the situation is altered. After an opening bid of 1M the hand cannot be played in 1NT because that is a transfer, as will be shown later. Pairs technique is to stay with the room and hope to play the cards at least as well as everyone else. 1NT is often a good pairs contract, and -500 is a fine result if everybody else is doing -800. Another factor to be taken into consideration is that with a twelve count third in hand one does not expect to win the contract, and so it is good technique to be able to bid a good suit that partner is advised to lead. It might be heresy to suggest to a tournament player that he should pass a twelve count, nevertheless to pass a 4333 twelve count with four clubs is where the clever money lies. To open any flat hand in first or second position with 1NT is considered modern technique even if it includes a six card minor, a five card minor in a 5422 hand, or a five card major. For the arithmetician this is fine, but for slam bidding it is necessary to know which way round partner's suits are if they are AQJxx and xx in the minors.

There are some sequences to be noted

1NT 2D 2H 2S

This bid of 2S is one of two hand types, either a value raise to 2NT with no four card major worth showing, or a slam try looking for a four card fit. Opener bids 2NT on a minimum hand or bids his four card suits up the line with a maximum, then responder either passes 2NT, bids 3NT, or bids his four card suits up the line as a slam try This sequence is one of the reasons for not breaking transfers.

A hand which would have bid this way without this agreement of Baron would be five hearts and four spades. A replacement bid must be found, viz

* *	1NT	2C	2D	3H	shows 5-4	invitational, a 5-4	forcing response bids
	1NT	3H			and partner is expected to bid a four card spade suit.		
Similarly	1NT	2C	2D	3S	is invitational because	1NT 2H 2S 3H	is forcing

1NT 2H 2S 3D Many would play a new suit at the three level as game forcing. It is more flexible to play it as a one round force. With a minimum hand opener should correct to 3S; with a maximum he bids 3NT or 4S. When responder transfers to a major and then follows with three of a minor there is always at least one unbid suit which can be bid at the three level (in this case 3H). This should be regarded as a cipher agreeing partner's minor in case he prefers to play 3NT instead of five of his minor. There are two reasons for doing this. If responder has a moderate hand he might prefer to play 3NT rather than the eleven trick contract, and if he has a good hand this will allow him to ask for controls in the minors, as in

1NT 2H 2S 3D 3H (diamond support) 4C (controls in diamonds?)  
 This use of Blackwood in a minor is explained later

1NT 2NT 3C or 3D

Accepting the transfer to 3D promises Hxx or better. The bid of 3C denies diamond support. There are two reasons for this. If responder is 5-5 in the minors this enables him to find the better contract. If he has some game interest on a suit such as AQxxx or AJxxx he will know that the suit is more likely to come in without loss if partner has Hxx instead of Hx

## Responding in a minor

1NT 3C

Responder does not bid 3C if he does not want to be raised to 4C with trump support and a top hand. A six card suit with no slam interest would raise to 3NT rather than suggest an eleven trick contract

With no trump support (xx being the worst scenario) opener bids 3NT. When opener is unsure whether or not to make an encouraging raise to 4C or bid 3NT he should temporise with stops in the outside suits up the line. The value of such an action is exaggerated but occasionally it may be possible to identify a singleton opposite no stop

Responder could have a hand which is strong enough to be interested in a slam even if partner signs off in 3NT, e.g.

1NT	3C		
3NT	?		
		4C	- still interested in a club slam
		4D	- controls in clubs.

These are the continuations but in practice responder has probably already found out all the relevant information available

1S	1NT	
2C	3C	
3NT	?	This is a transfer sequence which will be discussed later, it is similar to
1NT	3C	But in the transfer sequence opener could have a singleton club, and responder must have a better hand to continue with 4C

## 1NT is doubled

There are various escape mechanisms once a no trump is doubled, they all have their merit. Perhaps the best way of escaping 1NT doubled is not opening 1NT in the first place. In the early days of Acol, the weak no trump was a licence to print money. Nowadays, arguably, the defences to 1NT are better than the bid itself. Nevertheless a weak no trump can be an effective bid provide a player is not obliged to do it because that is what it says on the card. Some escape mechanism from 1NT doubled is desirable. Houdini is as good as anything else

1NT (Dble) ?

Pass	-	imposes a redouble
Redouble		a five card suit
2C	-	the minors, 4-4 or better
2D	-	the reds
2H	-	the majors
2S	-	the blacks

These bids show the suit bid and the next suit up

1NT (Dble) Pass (Pass)  
 Rdbl ?

Pass - expects to make it  
 2C - clubs and hearts  
 2D - diamonds and spades

Two other points are worth making. When a no trump is doubled and redoubled there is only one player at the table who knows what is going on, the no trump bidder's partner

## The rebid of 1NT/ Crowborough

Complicated treatments with kaleidoscopic responses gain more plaudits than they deserve. Both the Blue Club 2D bid and its 1NT bid looked much better than they were, as a result of the impressive array of conventional memory work. 2C over a rebid of 1NT risks falling into the same category. 3NT arrived at after three rounds of bidding is bound to be better defended than 3NT bid after one round of bidding. 1NT 3NT is a good sequence as is 1M 3NT in a one club system

Crowborough is a version of the widely accepted Crowhurst adapted for use with a one club system. It has two advantages. It does not have to cater for a sixteen count, neither does it need to worry about a natural opening bid of 1C.

These are articles of faith

A/ We do not want to subside in 2NT if we could play a 5-2 major fit, or a 4-3 major fit with a ruff in the short hand

B/ We do not want to be in 3NT with 25 and no eight card fit

C/ When it is not possible to judge whether four of a major or 3NT is better on a 5-3 major fit we will prefer the major

D/ We will try for a 25 point game if there is a possibility of a 5-3 major fit

After a 1NT rebid there is a choice of a direct 2NT or a 2C enquiry. Since 2C leaves open the possibility of playing 2M, it is the weaker bid. 2NT shows 12 points 2C shows 10-11 points. A good ten count should bid, a poor ten count should pass. Features of a good ten count after the bidding 1H 1S 1NT are a five card spade suit, three card heart support, intermediates, and top cards such as two Aces or an Ace and two Kings

1H 1S 1NT 2NT ? If opener bids either 3H or 3S here, it is not an escape it suggests that four of a major may be better than 3NT

Hand A	Q86	Hand B	10xx
	Q9763		AK763
	KJ8		AK8
	AQ		76

If partner shows a twelve count both of these hands are going to accept game. It would be a mistake to assume that since they have the same shape and point count they should bid the same way. With its messy minor honours and tenace holdings the first hand should bid 3NT. The second hand with crisp top cards and an obvious weakness in clubs should prefer to show the five card heart suit and raise to 4S if partner bids 3S If players are misguided enough to believe that 3NT in this sequence shows 2-4 in the majors, they should know that the defenders are entitled to this information if they are wise enough to ask



1H 1S 1NT 2C ?

- 2D - 12-13 not five hearts or three spades
- 2H - 12-13 five hearts
- 2S - 12-13 three spades but not five hearts
- \*2NT - 14 points
- \*3C - 15 points

\*Of dubious value, perhaps more helpful to the opponents, should only be used if the player is aware that Q104 / AQJ92 / Q105 / K6 is a fifteen count and Q4 / AQJ2 / Q105 / A632 is a fourteen count. Picky opponents should be told that these two bids "show a hand which partner thinks is worth 14 points / 15 points", otherwise they will call in the police to try and get an adjusted score

Opener's continuations are then

1H 1S 1NT 2C ?

- After
- 3C - bid 3NT or investigate at the three level
  - 2NT - pass, bid 3NT or investigate at the three level
  - 2S - Pass unless spades is a weak four card suit
  - 2H - Pass or try 2S on a five card suit
  - 2D - perhaps 2H or 2S rather than 2NT

1D 1M 1NT 2C ?

Basically the same as above with the exception that 2D offers a playable contract on a five card suit.

Slam tries do not usually go via Crowborough. This is a brief summary of slam going interest

1H 1S 1NT ?

- 3C,3D - second suits may have slam interest
- 3H - three card support, forcing,
- 3S - forcing, 5+ cards

1H 1S 1NT 3H ?

- 3S - looking for a trump suit, three spades but not five hearts
- 3NT - not five hearts or three spades
- 4m - advance cue, five hearts
- 4H - five hearts, weak hand

1H 1S 1NT 3S ?

- Bid 3NT, raise to 4S or make an advance cue

## **The opening bid of 2C**

In a one club system, there is always a problem as to what to do with an opening bid with five cards in clubs and four in a major. The Precision solution is to open 2C. In Blue the solution is to open the four card major. It seldom matters whether opener has five hearts and four clubs or vice versa. When there are game going values the five card major will come to light. In a part score decision such as 1H 1S 2C ? where it is a question of passing or correcting to 2H there is an inference that opener has four hearts and five clubs, because the other way round he might well have chosen to rebid 1NT, responder should give preference with 3-3, and pass with 2-2. It is highly unlikely to matter. On a 6-4 hand with six clubs and a four card major, there is a choice between opening 1H and ignoring the sixth club or opening 2C which is defined as a single suited hand with

six clubs, and losing the fourth card in the major. The decision will be influenced by the relative strengths of the two suits.

## The opening 2D bid

A disadvantage of Multi is that responder cannot continue the pre-emption for fear of partner holding a strong hand. For that reason many players have settled on the simplicity of three weak twos.

Rather than using 2D as a weak two in diamonds, which is not very effective, our opening bid of 2D is Wagner. This shows a weak two in one of the majors. It has the advantage of releasing 2H and 2S for more constructive purposes. Responder will continue the pre-emption on TNT principles. With one or two hearts the bid is 2H. With three hearts and one or two spades, the bid is 2S. With three in each major the bid is 3H. With four hearts and three spades, the bid is 3S. With four cards in each major the bid is 4C. All of these bids (2S, 3H, 3S, and 4C) are TNT raises to the full value of the hand, they show anything from about six to fourteen, depending on commonsense and vulnerability. They are not game tries, partner is not expected to get excited because he has an extra Queen or King. If responder had wanted to know that he would have bid 2NT.

These TNT raises of Wagner are more effective than the raise of a weak two.

After 2H Pass 3H if 2H is a weak two, fourth hand knows exactly what he is playing against. If the bidding is 2D Pass 3H fourth hand does not know whether it is hearts or spades on his left, and he cannot pass to find out which, because if it is hearts 3H is going to be passed out

2NT is the game try in response to 2D, the responses are designed so that the known hand is always put on the table on the table

2D	2NT		
?		3C	- minimum with hearts
		3D	- minimum with spades
		3H	- maximum with SPADES
		3S	- maximum with HEARTS

Then responder always plays the part score or game

2D 2S This may be a game try but it does not have to be. Responder is only saying that he will play in 2S if that is partner's suit or in 3H, perhaps more, if partner has hearts. If responder has a genuine game try in hearts he needs to know the strength of the weak two. So the rebids are

2D	2S		
?		Pass	- `weak two in spades
		3C	- minimum weak two in hearts
		3D	- maximum weak two in hearts

Responder corrects to hearts, either three or four according to how serious his bid was, and again the known hand goes down on the table

2D	4C
----	----

This shows 4-4 in the majors and asks partner to specify his major. 4D showing hearts and 4H SHOWING SPADES. Hence 2D 4H is to play. If second hand, doubles or bids three of a minor the same scheme of responses still applies, and also over 2NT, with appropriate caution

## The opening bids of 2H and 2S

KQ976  
-  
KJ10653  
72

This is an opening bid of 2S, showing 5-5 or better in spades and a minor. Any player who thinks he can open 1D and rebid spades twice will be disappointed. There are three people at the table who won't let him do it. In reality what is going to happen is that there will be some vigorous bidding and either this hand or partner will take a hideous high level decision. The hand has no real defence against 7H. The opening bid of 2S expresses the nature of the hand and does not guarantee the defensive values normally associated with an opening one bid.

A10765  
Q9  
AKJ54  
7

This is also an opening bid of 2S. It shows an opening bid measured in terms of losers, normally five, but it could be six or four. This hand has defence to 4H. Whether or not a 2S bid has defence to their contract is the opponents' problem, partner is not expected to worry about that. With a good spade fit and two valuable cards he is expected to bid 4S.

Dealer opens the bidding and third hand holds

6  
KJ954  
KJ87  
QJ2

If the opening bid was 1NT, this hand is worth a game try. Similar principles apply if the opening bid is 1S. If the opening is a pre-empt of 3S this is not so good, on a bad day this will be doubled for 500 with nothing on for them. A similar sort of thing will happen to a weak two in spades. In both cases the minor honours in the red suit will be waste paper, only of value if partner had chosen to pass. A constructive two in spades is still a pre-empt and this hand with minor honours in the outside suits is a poor hand, not worth its nominal eleven count. 3C should have a good play if partner has clubs. 3NT will not play well on a misfit.

A 1S bid and a 2S bid are both genuine opening bids. But partner's hand evaluation is quite different. In response to a 1S bid.

J843  
A92  
973  
A85

which might be no more than a four card suit, the hand is worth no more than a response of 2H and pass if partner rebids 2S (This is explained below). Yet opposite either the nine count or the fourteen count above, there is an excellent play for 4S with this hand.

The issues involved in replying to a constructive two are :-

- 1/ Minor honours, Kings, Queens and Jacks outside partner's suits are of unpredictable value, most likely to be of little use at all
- 2/ Vulnerability and type of scoring affect responder's decision, just as they would for any other pre-empt.
- 3/ Whether or not opponents have passed may be critical

A765  
Q95  
J75  
987

After 2S (Pass) ? this is either a 3S or 4S bid according to vulnerability. But after (Pass) 2S (Pass) there is a stronger case for bidding only 3S, or perhaps even pass should be considered, although that might look a bit silly if they did come back in.

2NT is at least a game try in response to a two bid. Partner on average will hold a five loser hand. The fit, if there is one, will often be in a minor, so responder should contribute two valuable cards and some plus value to make a game try. These plus values could consist of an outside King, a Jack in one of partner's suit, or an extra trump which is always useful. Rebidding over a 2NT response opener will show his second suit and whether he is maximum or minimum. So 2S 2NT? Opener bids three of a minor or four of a minor. Responder may well pass three of a minor, but is unlikely to pass 4m having made a game try. Responder may be making a game try in partner's major, and will be happy to convert four of a minor to partner's major, and over three of a minor will invite with three of the major. When opener has hearts and spades this is a special case. It is desirable that opener should show whether he is min or max. But 2H 2NT 4S is not very clever if responder was making a game try in hearts. There is a simple solution. 3H is an idle rebid over 2NT, It could show minimum with spades and 3S would be maximum with spades.

After opener has made his rebid partner ciphers in the two unbid suits for controls if he is interested in a slam.

2H	2NT	2S	2NT
3C	?	4D	?

3D for controls in clubs

4H for controls in diamonds

3S for controls in hearts

4NT for controls in spades

The lowest idle bid is for the lower ranking suit. These bids are idle, there is no way of playing in a suit other than one of partner's except for an immediate four of the other major over the opening bid.

Since the system is geared to play in one of the five card suits, a hand such as

K6543  
KJ6  
AQJ76

-

which could play very well in hearts, should open 1S not 2S

If responder has less than game try values he bids as in Multi. With the Multi 2D bid if responder skips the 2H response and bids 2S this means he is interested in at least 3H, but no more than 2S. Exactly the same principles apply to the opening 2H and 2S bids

2H 2S This is an unconditional sign off if opener has spades, if he has a minor he must bid it at minimum level. The response could be as weak as

J75  
42  
Q876  
K942

2H 3C A sign off in clubs , a game try in the bypassed suit of spades  
2H 3D A sign off in diamonds, a game try in spades and in clubs.

A/	AJ86	B/	AJ86	C/	AJ862
	7		7		7
	Q75		Q75		K7
	J9542		KJ954		KJ954

If partner opens 2H these hands should bid as follows

A/ A mistake to sign off in 2S, if partner has a maximum in the majors there should be a play for game. The bid is 3C, a game try in spades, or a rather conservative sign off in clubs. Partner corrects to diamonds if that is his second suit

B/ Sign off in diamonds. This is a game try in either of the black suits. Opener passes 3D if that is his second suit, or bids 3S, 4S, 4C, or 5C, knowing that his partner is making a game try in both the black suits This may appear complicated but once the principles are understood it is very simple

C/ A complete misfit will not play well in no trumps. If partner's second suit is diamonds a contract of 3D will probably be enough.

The following hand from play proves that no system is perfect. Partner opens 2H and responder has to find a bid on:-

AJ862  
7  
A7  
KJ954

This is about as difficult a problem as one could face. If partner has the red suits, which is most probable, 3D will be enough when he has ten points or so. If he has 14-15 points 3NT will be a playable contract. A response of 3NT would ask to play there with nothing in hearts and the other suits well held, but this would be silly if he has a minimum hand with one of the black suits.

The bid chosen was a cautious 3D and this was the rest of the bidding

AJ862	Q4
7	AQ987
A7	10
KJ954	AQ1062
	2H
3D	5C
6C	Pass

## The opening bid of 2NT

Many authorities speak disparagingly of a 2NT overcall showing the minors, it has certainly lost the initiative once the opponents have opened one of a major. A 2NT overcall before they have opened is a better proposition, even more so if the sting in its tail is that it could be a fifteen count. A weak 5-9 pre-empt stands very little chance of winning the contract and any bid which does not win the contract risks giving away valuable information in the play of the hand

2NT shows the same values as 2H and 2S. There must be an invitational bid in the minors and a forcing bid. A relay does the job

2NT	?	
	3C/3D -	to play
	4C/4D -	invitational
	3H -	impose 3S, and then 4C and 4D ask for controls

## Part Three-Splinters

The sequence 1D 2D 2H is in effect a splinter bid.

The object of a splinter is to tell partner to devalue all honours other than the Ace in that suit, holdings such as KQx and QJx are worth less than face value. Some players will splinter on a singleton Ace. It could be the right thing to do. In theory it is bad technique because KQx is no longer a bad holding. Splinters should be incorporated into the bidding wherever possible. Any unnecessary jump is defined as a splinter. When tournament players have a hand which is between a raise to the two or the three level, they bid three. Stretching a two and a half bid to three is good sense when it can be done by means of a splinter. 1H 1S 3D and 1S 3C are defined as raises to the two and a half level with a shortage in that suit. (1H 2S is not a splinter it is a weak two). The great advantage is that partner will make an enlightened decision as to whether or not to bid game.

K8	Q1073	K8
AQJ65	K1074	AQJ65
Q104	K932	852
852	7	KJ8

The eight count in the middle is minimum for a game try of 3C in response to 1H. With the hand on the left there is a play for game, perhaps more than one is entitled to expect with a combined twenty count. With the hand on the right, two points stronger, game is very poor. The critical feature is the perfect fit in clubs or four points wasted.

The eight count is a minimum for a game try. Tens and nines in the long suits are useful fillers and may often be brought into the play. Without them this hand is not worth a game try

## Slam splinters

The results of splinters can be spectacular. In the extreme case with four small cards opposite a void there will be a lay down grand on a combined thirty count, and there will be excellent small slams on combined point counts normally insufficient for game. A slam of this type, a combined twenty-one count, was board 15 in the B G B Simultaneous Pairs of January 2001.

## North-South Game, Dealer South

♠ Q J 2	♠ A 10 9 7 6	
♥ 10	♥ K J 5 3	
♦ A K Q 6	♦ J 9 7 5	
♣ K Q 8 7 2	♣ -	♠ 4 3
		♥ 7 6
		♦ 10 8 4 3 2
		♣ J 10 4 3
	♠ K 8 5	
	♥ A Q 9 8 4 2	
	♦ -	
	♣ A 9 6 5	

The top for North South was 7H redoubled. It can be seen that it makes on the marked diamond spade squeeze. More of general interest is the contract of 6H, which is virtually unbeatable on any lie of the cards. Out of the two thousand and thirty-six pairs in the country playing in the competition, fifty-eight bid the slam, which is seven percent of those who played the North-South cards. This might be understandable if it was necessary to be playing an unusual system in order to find the slam. This is by no means the case, if there is such a thing as a universal bid, it is an opening bid of 1H on the South hand, followed by an almost equally universal double on the West hand. Then there will be variation, both in hand evaluation, and in system agreements. According to the losing count, the North hand is worth a raise to the four level, and even opposite an unsuitable minimum hand there must be some sort of play for game. As for system agreements, if North had a club suit, he could bid 2C, which could be defined either as forcing or non forcing, a forcing 2C bid could redouble first and bid clubs on the next round. Therefore both 3C and 4C are unnecessary jumps, and either or both could, and should, be splinters. Once North has shown primary heart support and a club shortage it is difficult to see how South could stay out of a slam. Splinters are essential. Hands like this with trump fits and outside singletons occur once a week not once a year.

In a two club system, leading authorities consider the slam try splinter, a jump to the four level, to be a limit bid showing 11-14 points. Opener and responder cannot both be unlimited. In a one club system opener has a narrow range bid, so responder can have any hand ranging from a mild slam try as a precautionary measure to a hand which is worth a grand slam try.

## The Residual Point Count

The residual point count is what opener has left when all minor honours in the splinter suit have been discounted

AQ96	AJ76
K8	QJ8
AQ65	107
654	KQ54

After an opening bid of 1S and a splinter in clubs from partner the hand on the left is a residual fifteen count, on the right an eight count

A residual point count of:-

8-9 points is sub minimum		10-11 points is minimum
12-13 points is maximum	and	14-15 points is super maximum

The adjusted total is the sum of the residual count and responder's point count. An adjusted total of twenty-eight points gives a good slam. With x opposite xxx the opponents have ten points in that suit to take one trick and a further two points in the remaining suits to try to take another trick, With x opposite Axx the opponents have six points wasted and a further six points in the other suits with which to take two tricks, typically two kings and the slam will be on one of two finesses, or an Ace and a Queen where it may well be necessary to finesse for the Queen.

Responder has a wide range of possible hands and will control the auction, opener must show where his hand lies in the scale of values. A/ With a sub minimum opener returns to the trump suit at the four level and if partner continues to cue bid he signs off again at the five level B/ with a minimum hand opener signs off at the four level and returns a cue bid at the five level. C/ with a maximum opener returns the cue bid at the four level, passes responder's sign off, or signs off himself at the four level. D/ with a supermax opener continues cue bidding until a slam is reached or bids the slam directly. The bid of 4NT is a rolling cue bid, an essential part of the cue bidding process showing extra values but nothing convenient to cue

In a splinter sequence controls are irrelevant in the same way as controls have no bearing on a no trump slam. In both cases what is required is fillers in the shape of Queens, Jacks and also tens, for there can be a laydown slam with a control missing and a very poor slam with all the controls. For example

AQ95  
65  
K82  
A964

An average sound opening bid of 1S. If partner splinters in diamonds, and the hand is minimum. But if the splinter is in clubs, it is now a residual count of thirteen, a much better hand. The following two responding hands would splinter in clubs

KJ106	KJ76
KQ104	AQ94
AQ96	A753
7	7

The better slam is with the responding hand on the left, a fifteen count that has the fillers and is missing an Ace, rather than with the hand on the right that has all the controls, but is only a fourteen count. Notice that with an extra trump in either hand both slams are vastly improved. This is a factor to be taken into account in hand evaluation

If an adjusted total of twenty-eight is required for slam and opener is going to accept with a residual count of 14-15, responder must have fourteen or more points for a slam try. A very good trump fit will have a critical bearing on the success of the slam. With an excellent fit twenty-seven points will give a good play for twelve tricks, and conversely with a poor fit twenty-eight may not be enough. For example with a trump fit of Axxx opposite Qxxx a hand can have every other point in the pack, and with the combined count of thirty-six a slam is against the odds. It may be possible to avoid some weak trump fits by establishing the expected strength of the trump suit. Let HHxx be the expected strength of the player who first bids the suit and H10xx the average support where H is one of the top three honours. If either player is considerably worse or considerably better than expectations he should add or deduct a point. Opener's suit of AQJxx is worth an additional point and responder's suit of 10xxx should forfeit a point. In this case the points would balance out but a suit of Kxxx opposite Jxxx will both deduct a point and hopefully a no play slam could be avoided.

Another feature to have an important bearing on the adjusted total is a void. Responder will repeat cue to confirm a void. If opener has xxx in the suit his assets rocket but if he has Axx he was counting full value for the Ace but now its value has plunged



## The Gap Between

If a game try splinter shows 8-11 points, and a slam try splinter must have a minimum point count of fourteen, there is a gap in between, with a nominal point count of 11-14. The solution is simple. The game going splinter, makes its jump to the three level but pushes to game even if partner signs off. The three level splinter should be defined as “either a game try, or a game going hand with little or no slam interest” These point count limits are no more than a shorthand notation, and are not a substitute for judgement. A hand such as:-

A 10 9 7 6  
♥ K J 5 3  
J 9 7 5  
♣ -

is best advised to splinter to 3C over partner’s opening bid of 1H, but push to game in spite of a possible sign off from partner. With a good suit, good trumps and a void it is too pessimistic to stay out of game once partner has opened 1H. Conversely it would be too optimistic to make a slam try of 4C on a hand such as this. Partner will be accepting on a lot of hands that offer scarcely any play for twelve tricks.

## The Sequence 1S 3H

If the slam try splinter in response to 1S is a bid of 4H, opener has only two options, a sign off or a slam try above game. With a residual point count ranging from eight to fifteen, this is not ideal. That is why the splinter to 3H is defined as either a game or slam try. The level of the cue bidding will show which

## Part Four-Transfers and Relays

### Let the Weak Hand Choose trumps

AK10843	7
7	KQ10943
AK7	954
AQ8	1073

A game contract on these cards is about as good as it deserves to be on a twenty-five count with no eight card fit. But 4H is infinitely preferable to 4S. The reason is obvious. Played in responder’s best suit partner’s wealth of high cards will pull their full weight. If the strong hand decrees that the contract should be played in its own suit, partner’s scant values may be totally worthless. Whenever possible the weak hand should be allowed to choose trumps

## The Competitive Zone

. More than 50% of computer dealt hands have their point counts divided within the range of 17-23 between the two partnerships. It would be wrong to define this as the part score zone. For if the points are divided 20-20 and each side has a ten card major fit this is a potential double game swing. A proper definition would be, instead of the “part score zone”, the “competitive zone”. Within this range it is in both sides’ interests to compete. An average weak two will have about

eight points and a six card suit. If the remainder of the deck is dealt out, on average partner will receive two cards in the suit and about ten or eleven points, precisely the hand where 2S is the directed contract. With an eight card major fit it is desirable to get to the two level as quickly as possible anywhere within the competitive zone. Either 2S makes or shows a profit in going down.

In the competitive zone it is impossible to compete effectively unless the weak hand as well as the strong hand is allowed to bid its suits. If over 1S partner has to respond 1NT on 6-10 points with either a six card club suit or a six card heart suit this is a grave disadvantage. The results of having the "right" six card suit can be stunning

AQ1076	5
KQ83	75
AJ5	863
4	KQ10952

As will be shown later this hand would play in 2C. 2C is quite enough, but reverse opener's minors and 5C is not a bad contract. The weak hand must be allowed to bid his suits and play in them.

### **Bidding a Passed Hand**

It is common practice in a one club system to play two level responses forcing to 2NT. It is stupid to continue to play this by a hand that has passed, it means that the passed hand can only show its suits if it has an eleven count. A passed hand should be allowed to bid its suits as a weakness take-out

4	AK9865
964	A2
754	9
AJ8762	K543

This hand would bid	Pass	1S
	2C	3S (a)
	4C	5C
	Pass	

(a) - 6-4 , virtually forcing, 4S might be better than 5C

Against 6C opponents will lead a heart or a diamond and then switch to a heart. If clubs are 2-1, and spades are 4-2 the slam makes by ruffing out the spades. Give the two of clubs to the opponents in exchange for the ten of clubs and the slam does not make on a 4-2 spade break. Illustrative hands can be painstakingly concocted to prove that the sun goes run the moon. This one proves that the two of trumps is more important than the ten.

### **Transfers in response to 1H and 1S**

Responding to transfers is counter instinctive. The golden rule is that opener breaks the transfer if he likes partner's suit and completes the transfer if he does not like it

AK1075
AQ86
J107
9

This hand opens 1S. If partner bids 1NT (transfer to clubs) the player would be tempted to rebid his hearts. He would be wrong. Responder might have a hand as weak as

63  
973  
83  
AQ10543

where he intends to play in clubs when partner completes the transfer as he has been asked to do  
If there is a heart fit it is responder's duty to find it

82  
K1072  
K82  
A872

This hand is worth two bids, responder transfers to clubs and bids the hearts. This bidding is forcing to 2S, 2S being what opener will bid with five spades and no liking for either of partner's suits. On the actual hand opener is only too delighted to raise 2H to 4H.

After a transfer opener indicates his suitability in responder's suit. This is the scale of responses after

1S ?	1NT	
	2C	- No liking for clubs but could have as much as four card club suit in a minimum flat hand with 4-4 in the black suits 12-13 if responder has a hand which will pass 2C, no game has been missed
	2NT	- four card club support 14-15 points, not necessarily flat shape support
	3C	- a losing count raise to 4C if partner had eleven points. The obvious advantage is that partner will pass if he has not got eleven points rather than climbing up to four of a minor which is seldom a sensible contract

3D,3H,3S - All jumps are splinters unless defined to the contrary. It would be rare for opener to have the playing strength to produce such a bid. Normally the bid of 3C will have a singleton and do justice to the hand although it does not specify the shortage

2D, 2H - These are specialist bids. Clearly they have some club support to force partner to the three level when he could have A10xxxx in clubs and not much else. They show a very specific hand, three card support for partner's minor, five cards in the opening major and four cards in the second bid suit. So the response guarantees a shortage in the fourth suit, usually a singleton, but could be a void with an extra card in one of the three suits shown.

1S 2D	1NT ?	
		- This shows 5143 shape in that order. Any continuation means exactly what it sounds like, 2S, 3C, and 3NT are to play. 3D (responder could have passed 2D) is invitational as is 3S (although responder might have been better advised to have taken the decision himself whether to bid 2S or 4S) The only forcing continuation is 2H (the unbid suit). Clearly this cannot be a normal fourth suit enquiry responder knows his partner's hand already. What he does not know is whether partner is 12-13 or 14-15 and whether the shortage is a singleton or a void. That is what responder will want to know so opener replies in four steps 1/ minimum with a singleton 2/ maximum with a singleton 3/ minimum with a void 4/ maximum with a void

1S 2S	1NT	
		Six card suit, "my suit is as good as yours"

1S     1NT  
 3S     -     six spades and four clubs, a hand which has enormous potential and is not as uncommon as 3D,3H,3S. An example was shown above

This schedule is typical of the philosophy of the system, lateral thinking coupled with a refusal to accept traditional theory, a vastly increased number of possible sequences at the players' disposal and a consequent ability to define a hand within far closer limits. To the serious tournament player this could be an Aladdin's cave of untold wealth ; to the "natural" player of more modest ambition it could be a nightmare. One thing is certain, an increased vocabulary of bidding gives scope for expert hand evaluation.

J107  
 K107  
 986  
 KQ43

Partner opens 1S and we bid 1NT to which partner is expected to bid 2C and the follow up of 2S shows 4+ clubs and three spades with a point count of 8-10, roughly the values, though not the distribution, for Acol jump preference, with the advantage that the hand can be shown at the two level without risking going down at the three level when partner is minimum

Suppose partner rebids 2H instead of 2C, showing five spades four hearts and three clubs. Originally we had planned to show the values for a sound 2S bid with only three card support, now the hand has improved enormously with the King ten in partner's side suit and nothing wasted in the diamond suit. The combined count is only 21-22 but this hand is worth game, and the bid is 4S. Change partner's rebid to 2D and now the King of hearts faces a singleton, responder signs off in 2S, opener has described his hand and is not expected to continue.

## **Transfer Responses to 2C**

Responding to 2C is quite different to responding to 1H and 1S. Responder does not rescue his partner from a six card suit. To respond at all supposes game interest. Since opener is limited to fifteen points, a response shows eight or more points. When partner responds 2D which is a transfer to hearts, opener's duty is to show his suitability in support of hearts, Responder only promises five cards in the major, and if opener has a singleton or void in his partner's suit he will retreat to the safety of his six card club suit, or bid 2NT if he is maximum. To complete the transfer shows tolerance for partner's major, usually a doubleton, or perhaps a trebleton in a poor hand. A better than minimum hand with trump support of Hxx should bid 3H and a maximum with excellent trump support of HHx should bid game. If that is not enough for partner he should have passed 2C. Also there are two specialist bids which show primary trump support and an outside shortage. To fall in line with the other transfers opener rebids the fragment showing a shortage in the unbid suit. A typical hand will be 3316 which rebids 2S to show a diamond shortage. In schematic form for ease of reference.

2C	2D	
?		
	2H	- tolerance for hearts 11-13 points
	3C	- no tolerance for hearts 11-13 points
	2NT	- either no tolerance or at best a doubleton heart 14-15 points
	3H	- better than minimum, primary trump support, no outside shortage
	4H	- maximum . excellent trump support, no outside shortage
	2S	- primary heart support, diamond shortage
	3D	- primary heart support, spade shortage

2C	2H		
?	As above		
2C	2S		
?		3C,2NT -	no liking for diamonds
		3D -	primary diamond support
		3H, 3S -	primary diamond support shortage in the other major
2C	?		
		3C,4C,2NT -	natural

Sputnik is freely used when the opponents overcall one of a suit. It is needed when opener has a wide variety of point counts and hand patterns. When opponents bid over 1NT, double is for penalties, because partner's hand is closely defined. Similarly 2C is closely defined and double is for penalties.

### The 5-3 Major Fit

A suit rebid over a transfer response announces a six card suit. Four and five card majors both start by bidding the same way. When there is a 5-3 major fit it is responder's responsibility to find it. To transfer to another suit and correct to 2S shows 8-10 points with three card spade support. If then opener continues with 2NT, this is not a rescue it is a game try, for there is no reason why 2S should not play well on a 4-3 fit. An immediate 2NT response shows 11-12 points, a flat hand, and three card spade support. A transfer corrected to 3S is forcing with 12+ points and three card support. This sequence is unlimited partner bids 3NT with only a four card spade suit, shows a minimum hand with 4S or makes an advance cue

### The Cost of the Transfer

The cost of transfers to an opening bid of 1NT is the natural weak take out to 2D, no great loss to the system. The cost of the transfers in response to one of a major is the loss of the natural bid of 1NT, not an exorbitant cost since many players play a forcing 1NT response anyway. nevertheless it is a cost to be weighed in advance

A/	8	B/	85	C/	85	D/	8
	AQ2		A75		Q1087		Q976
	9865		QJ95		K53		K976
	Q10652		K864		KJ54		A762

These are the types of hand where the course of action is not clear

A/ Is 2C likely to be a better contract than 1S? What is more important is not the decision itself but whether the decision is taken after wriggling and consulting the ceiling. Opponents will often protect unless warned not to. It is useful to have a rule of thumb to pull with 8-10 points and 1345 shape unless the suit is very weak

B/ This ten count will pose a problem in many systems. More of this later but on balance make two bids with this hand

C/ with a nine count and tolerance for spades, pass

D/ A difficult decision, with three four card suits there is a good chance of a fit, but perhaps pass is best in the long run. Do it smoothly and the opponents may well protect and they are welcome to it. In fact it might even be worth doubling two of a minor. It is no disaster if it makes, and on a good day the double might bring in 500. Terence Reese said that if the opponents never make a doubled contract against you, you are not doubling often enough

## Responder Makes Two Bids

The archetypal sequence will be 1S 1NT 2C 2D  
 Responder shows two four card suits or better and the values for 2NT or better, 2D is forcing.  
 Opener's rebids are

3C - nothing better to do  
 3D - natural non forcing  
 2NT - natural denies the ability to bid 3NT  
 2S - not forcing, If opener cannot bear the thought of 2S being passed there is nothing to stop him bidding 3S. But he should really bid 2S. If responder passes, that will be quite sufficient

2H - This is an essential forcing bid. It is not a blind man's buff bid saying he does not know what to do, as sometimes happens in other systems. He is junior hand and it is his duty to describe his hand. His partner asks the questions and he gives the answers. The bid of 2H has a very specific meaning, it is game acceptance opposite the values partner has announced, it can visualise a game in two or more denominations. Diamonds, spades and no trumps are all a possibility. The hand almost certainly has the Ace of hearts, neither the King of hearts nor the Queen is a brilliant card, and to insist on game with two or three small hearts (he cannot have a singleton heart) is ridiculously optimistic. An ideal hand would be

AQ1087  
 A95  
 KJ107  
 8

This schedule of responses is typical of the system, a wealth of sequences available, and their meanings are self explanatory once the general principle is understood.

1S            1NT  
 2C            3C  
 ?

Since 1S 3C is a splinter. There is no way to force to game with a club suit unless 3C here is forcing. If responder has a hand where he would like it to be invitational he must bid 2S or 2NT on the second round

A problem from play will illustrate another advantage of transfers.

K10864  
 Q6  
 AJ10  
 AJ8

In one room playing a standard two club system with four card majors, the bidding was

1S	2D
2S	3H
?	

Now which is better 3NT or 4D? At the table the choice was 3NT, not unreasonable with a good club stop, and responder passed

In the other room they were playing a one club system with transfers. The bidding started

1S	2C
2D	2H

Already responder has passed the same information and saved a complete round of bidding. The bidding continued

3C	3D
4D	4NT
5H	6D
Pass	

Responder held

A7  
KJ85  
KQ8532  
4

With the natural system the opening bid started off by being 11-19 points. After two rounds of bidding it fell to opener to take the critical decision. With transfers the opening bid was 11-15 points and opener took the critical decision after three rounds of bidding. Is it any surprise who took the winning decision?

The next hand from a pairs tournament shows good hand evaluation by both players

KQ965	J8
KQ7	52
Q6	K8752
732	AKJ8
1S	1NT
2C	2D
2S	Pass

To show 5-4 in diamonds and clubs either in a natural system or with transfers takes the bidding to the three level and is effectively game forcing. The hand is not suitable to bid this way. The diamonds need better support than Hxx and the hand does not have game going values. It shows good judgement to bid the hand as 4-4 in the minors with the values for 2NT. Over 2D opener has the choice of 2S or 2NT. With AQ of hearts instead of KQ the bid is definitely 2NT. As it is if partner passes 2S that is probably the limit of the hand. 2S made was the only plus score on the sheet. Even if the partnership can stop in 2NT, 2S is a better contract. It nearly always will be when there is a 5-2 fit. Many players go wrong over an invitational three of a suit, they pass with a minimum hand and a three card fit and bid 3NT with a minimum and doubleton support. This is entirely the wrong way round

Again from a pairs tournament a hand which is instructive in another way

AQJ2	765
Q94	K1065
Q843	AKJ7
J6	Q8
1S	2C
2D	2H
3D	Pass

Declarer was disappointed not to find the Jack of hearts and went one down. However this proved to be a complete top since 3NT was universal, going at least two down. No trump bidding is arithmetic, bidding suits leads to better judgement, Qx in the unbid suit is worth nothing. Sometimes there is poetic justice.

### Responder has hearts

When responder bids a four card minor he does not usually visualise an eleven trick contract, it is a means of developing the bidding. Hearts are always bid with the serious intent of playing there and it is generally agreed that to show hearts at the two level promises five. This has repercussions with transfers. Primary trump support is either three or four hearts. 1S 2D 3C shows primary heart support and a shortage in the unbid suit. It might be bid on any of the following hand patterns 5413 ; 5314 or 4315. It really does not matter which, if there is a heart fit that is where the hand will be played and the critical feature is the diamond shortage. With that proviso opener's rebids shadow those after the transfer to a minor

1S	2D	
?		
2H	-	no particular liking for hearts. An unpromising minimum hand but it might contain three hearts
2S	-	six card spade suit
2NT	-	sound raise to 3H in a traditional system
3H	--	raise to 4H in a traditional system, no outside singleton,
3C/3D	-	heart support, shortage in the other minor
3S	-	six spades and four hearts, enormous slam potential

1S	2D
2H	3H

What is the meaning of 3H? When responder's suit is a minor the raise is defined as forcing. The situation is not quite the same when responder has hearts. An invitational 3H bid is a live possibility, and it is not impossible to manufacture a forcing raise in hearts, by bidding a minor suit fragment

1S	2D
2H	3C

As mentioned under opening 1NT above, many play the bid of 3C as game. We prefer a one round force. By analogy 3D, the "unbid" suit is primary club support



## The transfer to partner's suit

1S      2H

With the exception of splinter bids, all hands with primary spade support from game tries to grand slam tries will start with this transfer. This incorporates all of the slam going gimmickry of other systems with the added advantage that it can also be no more than a game try which does not necessarily go beyond the two level. The bid of 2H starts by being a raise to two and a half spades, eight to a poor ten points. Opener with a flat hand even though it might be a fifteen count, limits his hand with a bid of 2S. Responder will go on with a good ten count or better

K1085  
62  
Q1053  
K107

When partner opens 1S this responding hand is a problem, for most players. It is too good for 2S and not good enough for 3S. Duplicate players as a race tend to overbid and many would stretch to bid 3S. Take away the tens and it is only a 2S bid. For us this is the minimum requirement for a response of 2H, a hand worth two and a half spades. We can make a mild game try without going beyond the two level

The following sequences show how the system work

1S	2H
3C (a)	3D (b)
3S (c)	4C (d)
4D (e)	?

(a) - Showing a side suit, with the values to make a game try, at least. Opener's hand may be worth a bid of 4S opposite a responding hand worth two and a half spades, but kangaroo leaps are most unhelpful if partner is interested in a slam.

(b) - Not a minimum hand, which would have bid 3S which opener could have passed if he wanted to. The bid shows diamond values or a diamond suit, the strength is unlimited.

(c) - This expresses the limit of the hand, not prepared to insist on a game

(d) - A pass of 3S would have been possible although unlikely in view of the 3D bid, 4S would have been terminal. 4C is a definite slam try, a cue bid which demands a return cue bid. Playing Italian style cue bidding this could be first or second round control, but not a singleton or void which would have splintered.

(e) - Owning up to a diamond control

Opener's hand on the sequence above is very closely defined, a six loser hand with a side suit of clubs and a diamond control. A typical example would be :-

A J 7 6 2  
K 8  
A 8  
Q 7 5 4

The black suits could be the other way round, because of Canape but probably not 4-4. 4432 hands are not usually worth more than a rebid of 2S. Only good trumps, good intermediates and a

fifteen count would justify breaking the transfer on a flat hand. Compare this sequence to a Swiss heave to four of a minor which, not so long ago, was the cutting edge of technology

Until responder produces the bid of 4C his hand could be quite weak. In fact he could have the hand above quoted as a minimum 2H response

A J 7 6 2	K 10 8 5
K 7	6 2
A 8	Q 10 5 3
Q 7 3 2`	K 10 7

1S	2H
3C	3D
3S	?

There is no excuse for bidding 4S. This is an IMP game, defined as any optimistic contract which might have been a lot better. The hand is not worth game. Admittedly responder fits the clubs, but that was why he found the 3D bid, which was questionable anyway.

Another example

1S	2H
3H	3S (a)
4S (b)	Pass

- (a) - Minimum or not improved by the heart bid
- (b) - The values to have bid 4S over 2H, Opener will have a five loser hand such as

A 9 7 4 3 2
A Q 10 3
K 8
3

This hand is worth game and on the second round of bidding opener had the option of showing the side suit of hearts or he could have splintered with a bid of 4C, whichever he thought the more the more important feature to show if partner was slam minded.

1S	2H
2S (a)	3C (b)
3S (c)	4S (d)
Pass	

- (a) - minimum
- (b) - A side suit and at least a game try, may be much more
- (c) - very minimum, nothing extra at all.
- (d) - "Oh, alright then". By bidding game in spite of partner's continued sign offs it is clear that 3C was a serious slam try. The slam tries have been made below game level as they should be. A deal to fit the bidding would be

K 9 7 6	A J 8 5
K Q 10	A 5
A J 9	Q 2
7 6 5	A Q 10 9 3

This is the sort of hand where team mates come back and say “It was a good slam , we were desperately unlucky that both the club honours were offside” They seem to forget that it was not so desperate when they found the trumps 3-2 with the Queen inside.

There are other aspects of this hand worth studying. Blackwood does not help at all, it finds two key cards and partner could have his actual hand where slam is a very poor proposition or

K1076  
K76  
A965  
K7

where there is a good slam. With this alternative hand is right to bid 2S on the second round, but having declared a minimum hand his hand has improved when partner shows a club suit, and must bid 3D.

Yet another transfer sequence

1S	2H
2S	3S (a)
4S	Pass

(a) - High card raise to 3S, with no particular suit that requires help

J1076  
AKQ2  
J5  
984

It would be an error of judgement to bid 3H on this hand. Partner should judge by any additional values anywhere in the hand, not on the heart fit. Notice also that 3S is a serious game try since opener has already announced a minimum and with a thin 3S bid responder could have passed

## The Shape Ask

Another weapon in responder’s armoury is a shape ask

1S	2H
2S	2NT

Since 2NT will find opener’s shape but not his strength, it is a slam try , not a game try. Opener’s continuations are

3C, 3D, 3H	-	second suits
3S	-	five spades with no other four card suit
3NT	-	precisely 4333. If responder is also 4333 the hand must be played in 3NT, not 4S. This will be the one exception to 2NT being a slam try
4C,4D,4H	-	splinters.

The object of a shape ask is to be able to evaluate minor honours, Queens Jacks and tens. In partner’s side suit they are valuable cards, but of dubious value in a side suit

KQ876  
AK9  
A65  
J7

1S 2H  
2S ?

Partner is 13-15 flat or 12 with a five card suit. In any case not much to spare. In view of the trumps and controls it is worth a slam try in spite of the expected total of 29-32 points. It would be too much to expect partner to splinter to 4D, that sort of thing only happens in text books on bidding. Partner bids 3C in response to 2NT. Now the Jack of clubs is a very valuable card and it is worth checking on Aces

A1054  
J3  
K983  
KQ84

This is a better slam than it might be, partner has suitable holdings in the minors. The point to emerge from the hand is the value of the Jacks. The Jack of clubs in partner's suit is a precious card, the Jack of hearts is not

## Part Five- The Control Ask

### Florentine Blackwood

Culbertson said of his Asking Bids that they were his greatest technical achievement but his greatest psychological failure. They were not generally adopted. Presumably they were considered too difficult, or perhaps some players found them accident prone. Mistakes and misunderstandings are far more costly than having a simple system that does not always provide the questions and answers that a particular hand would like. There will always be hands where a player would like to have a different treatment to the one that is agreed

Standard Roman Blackwood is simple and efficient  
4NT ?

5C	-	1 or 4 of the five key cards which include the King of trumps
5D	-	0 or 3
5H	-	2 without the Queen of trumps
5S	-	2 with the Queen of trumps

It is ill-conceived to reverse the meaning of the first two responses because it is far more likely that partner will want to proceed over a response showing one Ace rather than none, and one notch in the bidding can be crucial

The continuations are open to interpretation. Partner may be looking for the Queen of trumps or a particular king. The system must try to cater for both eventualities. The rules which work practically all the time are

NEXT SUIT UP EXCLUDING THE TRUMP SUIT ASKS FOR THE QUEEN OF TRUMPS  
NEXT SUIT BUT ONE ASKS FOR KINGS TO BE CUE BID  
ASKING FOR THE QUEEN OF TRUMPS IS NOT NECESSARILY A GRAND SLAM TRY  
BUT ASKING FOR KINGS IS A GRAND SLAM TRY

It is unlikely but possible that this is not the schedule that a player would want on a given hand. The solution is simple:- If you don't like the answers, don't ask the questions. Some use 4NT for controls with a minor agreed, we don't, but those who do must not ask the question if they are not prepared to hear the answer. With hearts agreed a player might be wanting a minor King for a grand but not the King of spades. Unless he can play in 6NT he shouldn't ask the question

There is an agreement in Acol that over a response showing three or no controls, the 4NT bidder signs off and partner continues if he has three controls. In a one club system hands are more closely defined in the early rounds of the bidding and it is impossible that a player should not know whether his partner has three controls or none. With a major agreed and a response of five clubs there is always room to ask for the Queen of trumps without forcing the bidding beyond the five level. So asking for the Queen does not have to be a grand slam try After all there may be a control missing but a slam is very good with the possession of the Queen of trumps, but not good enough without it. In schematic form the replies are:-

- - - 4H 4NT 5C 5D ?
- 
- 5H - no Queen of trumps
- 6H - Queen of trumps but no outside King
- 5S,6C,6D - Queen of trumps and that King, or the other two Kings
- 5NT - Queen of trumps and three outside Kings ( do not bid the grand there could be a control missing. It could be that partner can deduce the presence of the Kings from the values that have already been shown)

AK876  
AQJ7  
AQ9  
4

1C	1S (9+points)
1NT (? Points)	2D (11-13)
2S	3S
4NT	5D
?	

There is an excellent slam if partner can produce the Queen of trumps and the two red Kings, but we certainly do not want to be in seven if partner has The Queen and three Kings. 5H asks for the Queen of trumps and Kings, but is not a grand slam try.

Asking for Kings is always a grand slam try. After a response of 5H or 5S there is no doubt about the Queen of trumps, and, of course the next suit up asks for Kings

- - 4S 4NT 5H/5S 5NT ?

- 6C, 6D,6H - that King, or the other two
- 6S - no King
- 7S - three Kings (bid the grand there is no control missing)

It is always wise to visualise problems before they happen

- - 4H 4NT 5H 5S (Kings?)

It may be inconvenient for responder to cue bid the King of spades. So the responses are:-

6C, 6D - that King or the other two  
5NT - the King of spades or the other two  
6H - no King  
7H - three Kings

Even more inconvenient is

- - 4H 4NT 5S 5NT (Kings?)

6C - King of clubs or the other two  
6D - King of diamonds or the other two  
6S - King of spades or the other two (partner must be prepared for this response)  
6H - no King  
7H - three Kings

### **Blackwood with a minor agreed**

Blackwood after a minor is quite useless. Four of a minor must start the enquiries. If four of a minor is forcing it is Blackwood, if it is invitational four of the other minor would be the control ask. For ease of memory 4m( ? controls) must shadow 4NT and must, if at all possible, be what it sounds like

4D (Blackwood) ?  
4H - 1 or 4  
4S - 0 or 3  
4NT - 2 without  
5C - 2 with

Playing pairs there is no such thing as a contract of five of a minor because 3NT+1 outscores 5D. This, along with several other anomalies, could easily be cured by scored minor suits as thirty for the first trick and twenty for each subsequent, But we are concerned, not with what ought to be, but what is, and ideally it should be possible to ask for key cards and stop in 4NT. The second relay is not 4NT or five of the agreed minor

Second relay

4D(controls in diamonds) 4H (one) ?  
4S - second relay  
4NT,5D- sign offs

4D 4H 4S ?  
4NT,5D - sign offs, nothing extra  
6D - Queen of trumps but no Kings  
5C,5H,5S - Queen of trumps and that King, or the other two Kings  
5NT - Queen of trumps and three Kings

The most uneconomical sequence is

- - 4D 5C 5H (? Kings)
- 6D - no Kings
- 5S, 6C - that King or the other two
- 5NT - King of hearts \* or the other two
- \* The King which cannot be cue bid without committing the partnership to a grand
- 7D - three Kings

## Part Six-The Strong Hands

### The opening bid of 1C

Control responses, natural positives or point count responses to a strong club are an article of faith, much as four and five card majors. They all have their merits. Over the last forty years or so we have played all three. We have come to prefer point count for three reasons

1/ A negative response in Blue Club was 0-5. 0-7 is too wide for comfort. When it matters we distinguish between 0-4 and 5-6

2/ To create a game force with eight points opposite sixteen before anything is known about the suits and the fit, is premature.

3/ A semi-positive response can be included with point count responses

	1C	?	
	1D	-	0-6 points
	1H	-	7-9 points
	1S	-	9+ points
Golden negatives	1NT	-	5-6 points, 4-4 or better in the majors
	2 suit	-	5-6 points, six card suit headed by an honour
Special positives			
	2NT thru 3H	-	transfers to the next suit up, 9+ points, six card suit with three of the top five honours

After the point count responses of 1D, 1H, and 1S the next suit up rebid by opener is strong and conventional

1C 1D 1H 1H shows 20+ points and asks partner to define 0-4 or 5-6 points, 1S shows 0-4, other bids are natural showing 5-6, and creating a game force. It follows that opener's rebids of 1S thru' 2H are natural, non forcing, and show 16-19 points. There is no game without a fit

1C 1H 1S 1S shows 18+ points and creates a game force. The subsequent bidding is natural. This rebid of 1S will be unbalanced, for with a game going flat hand opener rebids 2NT to protect his tenaces. Opener's rebids of 1NT thru' 2S by opener would be freewheeling showing 16-17 points. Responder bids on with a fit or the prospect of finding one..

1C 1S 1NT 1NT shows 19+ points and asks partner to define his point count on the scale of

2C - 9-11    2D - 11-13    2H - 13-15    2S - 15-17

2S is tagged on the end, but it rarely happens

The strong, conventional rebids of 1H and 1S over 1D and 1H are always made when the requirements are present. 1NT over 1S is not obligatory. With a major suit, opener will prefer to make the range enquiry, but with a six card minor and a four card major, it would be poor technique to make a range enquiry, and have to introduce the minor at the three level

1C 1S 2M or 2NT shows 16-18, a limit bid, and responder will control the auction. There is no reason for responder not to bid 1NT with nineteen points and find partner's range. But

1C 1S 2m This is not limited to 18. Opener prefers a natural auction rather than risking having to make the first natural bid at the three level. See Canape in the Majors

### Strong Balanced Hands

1C	1D	1H	1S	1NT	20-21 points
1C	1D	2NT			22-23 points
1C	1D	1H	1S	2NT	24-25 points.

In every case Stayman is available

### Strong Unbalanced Hands

AJ8	AK8
AQ76	AQ76
9	9
AKQ52	AKQ52

Playing a two club system the twenty count above would open 1C. What about the twenty-two count? It is all too likely that 1C would be passed out. This is so nearly a game going hand that it is better to open 2C. That is an assessment of probabilities rather than a gold plated guarantee. More often than not a game will be playable

How do we deal with these hands? On both hands the bidding starts 1C 1D 1H. If partner does anything other than 1S the problem is solved. The problem then is 1C 1D 1H 1S ? Neither hand can promise game opposite 0-4 points, so the continuation is 2C. This could be defined either as a one round force, or forcing to 2NT. The better definition is that partner should try to dredge up a bid on 3-4 points, but is not obliged to bid on 0-2. What is the point in forcing partner to bid if he has such an unpromising hand as?

J72  
982  
J852  
864

### Strong Two Suiters

A constructive two has been defined as a six to four loser hand. A three loser hand is too strong.

AQ1076  
75  
-  
AKQ542

This hand must open 1C, and it faces a problem over a response of 1D. A rebid of 1H would find out if partner had 0-4 or 5-6 , but that would not solve the problem. The answer is to announce a two suiter with three losers.



2S	-	spades and a minor
3C	-	clubs and hearts
3D	-	diamonds and hearts
3H	-	Spades and hearts

Unfortunately 2NT is reserve for a flat hand. After 2S, responder's continuation of 2NT is a stronger bid than 3C and 3D in the same way as over constructive twos

### The Golden Negatives

1C two of any suit shows 5-6 points and a six card suit headed by an honour. The strong club has an average 16-19 points with 5431 distribution and a singleton in partner's suit, that is where the hand should be played, in partner's suit. On a good day opener might have four card support and four of a major or 3NT will make on a 21-22 count.

The sequence 1C 1D 1NT creates a problem. If responder has 5-6 points and a four card major, he will feel he ought to use Stayman. In practice opener is more likely to hold sixteen points than nineteen, and if he has a major it is more likely to be the wrong one and the partnership lands in 2NT on a combined 21-22 count. Another golden negative solves the problem. 1NT shows 4-4 or better in the majors with 5-6 points. Opener passes, bids two of a minor to play, or the appropriate number of a major. There are two other advantages

1/ With a hand such as

AJ7  
3  
AK75  
KJ543

Opener has the option of rebidding 2S instead of 2C

2/ If Stayman is not needed over a 1NT rebid, 2C can be Gladiator(0-4) imposing 2D which is passed or corrected to two of a major. Leaving an immediate bid of two of a major as a third golden negative showing a good five card major and 5-6 points

### Special positives

2NT, 3C, 3D, 3H show a six card suit with three, or more, of the top five honours and 9+ points. Opener's instinctive reaction with a minimum hand and a singleton in partner's suit is to bid 3NT. This is wrong. Four of a major will be a better contract. When both hands are minimum and opener has a singleton in the six card suit, played in no trumps declarer knocks out one of the opponents' guards in the six card suit and then needs two entries to dummy, one to knock out the other guard, and then another to get there to cash the winners. The hand won't have two outside entries, the suit won't come in and 3NT will not make

6	KJ10854
KJ52	A74
AK8	J75
KQ876	2

This is a gruesome game. With a combined twenty-five count and a total hand pattern of 7766 game always will be gruesome. Notice however that 4S has some play whereas 3NT requires a minor miracle, or more probably, several major ones.

To bid game in partner's major is sign off, as is 3NT where opener has a good minor. To bid partner's suit at the three level is a range ask and partner replies in steps 9-11, 11-13, 13-15. It can happen that opener is not interested in a slam but responder is good enough to take over the running. Opener should keep control with 19+ points or 20 with no fit and will sign off in game with 16-18 points. When responder is strong enough to proceed opposite 16-18 points he can continue with a control ask. This is similar to the sequence 1C 1S where opener passes control of the auction to partner by making a natural bid on 16-18 points, but with 19+ asks for range.

## The Opponents Intervene over Our Strong 1C

A good system should cater for hands which are likely to occur. In Acol an opening bid of five of a major showed precisely a two loser hand where the losers were the Ace and King of trumps. If responder had the singleton Ace of trumps it was never clear whether he should play opener for

A / QJxxxxxxxx / - / A                      or            AK / QJ109xx / AK / AKQ

Nevertheless this nugget of information was stored away in the attics of the mind until the final reckoning when all bridge players on the day of judgement would be asked the meaning of an opening 5M and the poor wretches who did not know would be consigned to the boiling pitch for the next few millennia.

The system must not be cluttered up with dead wood, which is no more than a burden on the memory. In the Blue Club after 1C (dble), redouble was defined as 3-5 with values in clubs. In three decades of playing Blue, or its derivatives, the bid never came up. We were assured, however, that "it enabled the opener to play for penalties at a low level". Presumably there were rich pickings to be had, if opener knew his partner had K10xxx in clubs. This was never verified.

Using idle bids when they are made available by the opponents, is not necessarily good technique. Why should we create a complicated plan B when we are perfectly satisfied with plan A? It is simplest, and safest, to ignore the opponents bid whenever possible

1C	(Dble)	?		
		1D	-	0-6 points
		1H	-	7-9 points
		,etc		
1C	(1D)	?		
		Pass	-	0-6 points
		1H	-	7-9 points
		etc		
1C	(1H)	?		
		Pass	-	0-6
		Dble	-	7-9 points
		etc		

So far we have been able to play our agreed system. But if the overcall is 1S or higher we can no longer do so. The easiest solution is to revert to Precision style responses where pass shows 0-7, a bid is game forcing, and a double is also 8+ points flat. No Sputnik. If both opener and responder are flat with 25+ points, the jump overcaller could be called to account. If there is no Sputnik opener is never obliged to reopen if he sees fit not to.

## R.H.O bids

There are different defences to a strong club, sometimes a spade bid will be natural or it may be conventional. We make no distinction, our course of action is always the same. Pre-emptive bids can always cause awkward decisions, simple overcalls should only be damaging if they create a misunderstanding

1C (1D) Dble (1S) 1C (no) 1D (1S)

From our point of view these sequences are the same, partner has shown a negative and R.H.O. has bid 1S, which may or may not show spades. We would like to continue as we would have done without the intervention, and we can. The opponents are not going to be allowed to play at the one level undoubled, so pass is forcing. This does not presume that the hand belongs to us, it only assumes that it is in our interests to play two of a suit rather than defend 1S. There is also an assumption that we will not gear our bidding to try and penalise opponents at the one level, it is more important to bid our own cards. Without the intervention we would bid 1H to show 20+ points and any other bid would be 16-19. Since pass is forcing, it can show 20+ and all bids are limited. Double would be take out or might be the sensible bid on a flat hand which does not want to bid 1NT, which would almost certainly play better from the other side of the table. 1NT ought to show a four card spade suit, the bid of 1S may well be artificial. And with four spades the contract for us is more likely to be 1NT. When opener passes showing 20+ points partner is asked to specify whether he is 0-4 or 5-6. His cheapest bid will show 0-4. The "cheapest bid" will be pass if his R.H.O bids, or double of 1S if it is passed to him. Any other bid will be game forcing

When R.H.O.'s bid is at the two level or 1NT, opener only rebids if he wants to. Of course he hopes that partner will have enough to come back in, but it would be silly to rebid a poor 16-17 count only to find partner with 2-3 points and no fit. A balanced 16-17 has already shown its hand and there is no point in doubling 1NT, double shows a flat hand and 20+ points Double of R.H.O.'s two level bid will be for take out, bids will be limited and natural. With 20+ points opener would double and then bid his suit.

Over a 1H or 1S response an overcall does not do much harm as long as it does not create misunderstandings.

1C (Pass) 1H (1S)  
?

Opponents will often bid 1S to indicate a lead. It is almost certainly natural. We need to know if we have game going values. Without the intervention the cheapest rebid would be strong and conventional. It still is. Pass is the cheapest bid and is game forcing, leaving other actions to show 16-17 points

1C (Pass) 1S (bid)  
?

Here we know we have game going values and it is a far better prospect to double for penalties when they are at the two level on a maximum combined count of fifteen. Bids are all what they sound as if they meaning. Redouble means four spades, they will be very sorry if it is a misfit. Double of a two level bid is penalties, pass is no convenient bid. Suits are natural

## Our Defence to Their Strong Club

Our preferred overcalls of a strong club are:-

1C	?		
		Dble -	hearts
		1D -	spades
		1H,1S,1NT -	two suiters (COR) colour, odd, rank
		Two of a suit -	that suit or take out of that suit
1C	Pass	1D	?

Here is another occasion where there is an advantage to be gained. If the response had been a positive, it is better to stay quiet

1H,1S,1NT -	two suiters (COR)
Two of a suit -	that suit or a take out of that suit

For ease of memory the bids are the same with the proviso that fourth hand does not show a major unless he is prepared to show it at the two level

## Part Seven- More Bidding Techniques

### Canape in the majors

After a game forcing two of a minor, four, five and six card majors are bid up the line. That means that with six spades and four hearts the bid is 2H, and the bid of 2S would deny four hearts. It seems weird but it works.

1C	1S	2C(a)	2H(b)	2NT(c)	3S(d)	?		
(a)	-	game forcing						
(b)	-	4+ hearts						
(c)	-	denies four hearts or four spades						
(d)	-	since partner has denied four spades this must show 5+ spades						
1C	1H	1S(a)	1NT	2D	2H	2NT(b)	3H(c)	?
(a)	-	artificial, game forcing						
(b)	-	denies four spades						
(c)	-	5+ hearts may or may not have four spades						
1C	1D	1H(a)	2C(b)	2D	2S(c)	2NT	3H(d)	?
(a)	-	20+ points						
(b)	-	5-6 points accepts game						
(c)	-	4+ spades denies four hearts						
(d)	-	suddenly found hearts after all, this shows 5-5 in the majors						

## Strong Club Sputnik

When an opponent overcalls he risks conceding a large penalty. He does not know if his partner has any values, neither does he know if the hand is a misfit.

Q65

AQ86

AJ943

7

This is a sound opening bid, but if the bidding is 1H (Pass) 1S ? This is a frightful bid of 2D. With seven cards in their suits it risks losing 500/800 when the opponents have no game on. If opener was about to rebid 2D, a contract of 2D would have been worth 90 to him, now defending 2D x will be worth 500/800. Not all players define a double by opener here as penalties, but it is ill-conceived not to.

Exactly the same thing happens if there is an opening bid of one of a major and an overcall of two of a minor. It risks a large penalty to save against a partscore. It is essential for third hand to preserve a penalty double here.. The best way to do that which is universally accepted is Sputnik. An immediate double is not for penalties, it shows a desire to compete but no clear course of action. The penalty double passes and relies on partner reopening with a double which will then be passed out. The operative words here are "relies on partner to reopen". If the bidding is 1H (1S) Pass (Pass), everybody would reopen. If the bidding were 1H (4S) Pass (Pass) it is possible that opener has so much in reserve that he would bid again, but he certainly would not feel he had to. Somewhere between 1S and 4S is the watershed where opener is not duty bound to reopen. All players play Sputnik to an agreed level, be it thru' 2S or thru' 4D, it is written on their cards. Ask them to what level opener is obliged to reopen, and many will not be sure. In effect they are going to judge each hand on individual merit. This is not satisfactory for two reasons. First there will always be "vibes" which create ethical problems, either the vibes are picked up or deliberately ignored. Secondly if a player has to guess, he will often guess wrong. Recently in a Wales England Camrose match, dealer held 763 / AQJ63 / 9 / AK75, opened 1H, and an overcall of 1S was passed back to him. He passed. There was no hint of malpractice. Pass was the wrong thing to do. Partner had AKQ52 in spades and a fourteen count. If internationals can misguess, so can we.

There is one occasion when opener is not obliged to reopen, that is if he holds Hxxx in the overcalled suit. Partner cannot have a penalty double, he has insufficient points to bid.

There are two types of Sputnik, limited Sputnik and high powered Sputnik. With limited Sputnik the double shows 7-10 points and a suit bid would show 11+ and be forcing to 2NT. High powered Sputnik is the reverse, the double showing 11+ points and a suit bid being competitive. Limited Sputnik is best with a one club system. It is possible that high powered Sputnik is better with a two club system

The Sputnik double expresses the desire to compete and asks partner to describe his hand. It will be more difficult to do this the more bidding space that has been consumed by the overcaller, and also more difficult the wider the range of the opening bid. It is always more difficult to bid if space is limited and both opener and responder have a wide range of point counts and distribution. It is quite likely in Acol that some rebids by opener have to be

treated as forcing, and also possible that responder might have to promise some holdings in the unbid suits because otherwise opener's task is impossible. The one thing that is certain is that it would be a mistake to assume that accepted rules in a two club system should necessarily apply to a one club system. In a two club system after an opening one bid and a Sputnik double the problem is to find a possible fit and also investigate the possibility of game. In a one club system with a one bid showing 11-15 points and a double showing 7-10, there is no game without a good fit and the whole task is different and simpler.

There are two main types of hand which would double after a sequence such as 1H (2D) ? or 1S (2C) ? a hand with one of the unbid suits and insufficient values to bid it at the two level which would promise eleven points, or the two unbid suits

752  
A6  
76  
KJ10743

After 1H (2D) ? Responder doubles and pulls the rebid to 3C. In high-powered Sputnik bids 3C immediately suggesting that he wants to play there

J7  
K987  
A1076  
543

After 1S (2C) ? responder doubles showing the red suits. In high-powered Sputnik this hand might be awkward

In a one club system there are no shape requirements for a Sputnik double, it merely shows 7-10 points. Opener should make his natural rebid, preferring a second four card suit to rebidding his five card suit, because there is a negative inference that partner might have raised the first suit with three card support

1H (2D) Pass Pass  
?

2H is either a six card suit or a five card suit with no better alternative rebid.

2S, 2NT, or 3C might show reserves of strength in Acol, but in a one club system all they show is shape

Sputnik over a simple overcall is indispensable. Should it be extended to jump overcalls? This is not a clear-cut decision. These are some of the factors which should influence the decision

1/ After a simple overcall, there is always at least one possible contract at the two level. But to double a bid of 2S or higher forces the bidding to the three level.

2/ The normal difference between a Sputnik double and a suit bid is that the double shows 7-10 points and the suit bid shows 11+ and is forcing to 2NT. This cannot apply when the overcall is 2S or higher. A hand with 11-12 points becomes a problem. Also a

seven count will be reluctant to commit the hand to the three level with no obvious fit. Whatever is agreed there must be some modified schedule

3/ Whenever opener is obliged to reopen on minimum values in case partner has a penalty double of the overcall, there is always the danger that partner does not have a penalty double, he may have passed because he has less than seven points. It is a balance of probabilities. It is normal for fourth hand to respond to a simple overcall on about nine or ten points because a simple overcall can contain reserves of strength. Fourth hand will not respond to a weak jump overcall of 6-10 points with a fifteen count and a singleton in his partner's suit. So it becomes more likely that the Sputnik pass was a weak pass after a jump overcall and if partner bids three of a new suit after a reopening double, as he has been asked to do, this will be expensive if R.H.O doubles.

It seems at least as good as anything else to abandon Sputnik over jump overcalls.

AQ97 / 65 / K94 / J876

After 1H (2S) this is a penalty double. Admittedly this hand will be less common than a hand such as

K102 / 1095 AQ4 / J876

Both these hands should double as a penalty suggestion which partner should pass on a flat hand but remove on 5-5 hands or a six card suit. Terence Reese once said that if you never double a contract that makes, you aren't doubling often enough. However, if a double on the second hand appears too aggressive, then some may prefer to pass.

With 7-9 points and no support for partner's suit the course of prudence is to pass. In a one club system nothing much is being missed. Partner is capable of reopening if he wants to (These being the operative words "if he wants to")

6  
AQ987  
AQ7  
K1065

After 1H (2S) Pass (Pass) ? it would be very pusillanimous to pass. Even if partner has only 6-7 points, three of his suit is not coming to much harm. Also if he has a decent four card spade holding, 2Sx is coming to a lot of harm.

With 10-11 points third hand should try to find a bid. With three to an honour in partner's suit he should raise, and with three to an honour in their suit a penalty suggestion is in order. With 5-4 in the unbid suits and a ten count, this is the hand which would like to produce a Sputnik double, but has to pass.

## **Appendix- The Variable Forcing Pass**

### **A voyage of discovery**

In the mid nineteen-eighties Terence Reese as non playing captain of the British European team advised Sowter and Lodge to include a weak option in their strong club to deter frivolous intervention. They came up with a variable forcing pass where pass from declarer or second hand showed either a strong club or a negative response to a strong club. Shortly afterwards my team was

drawn to play Sowter in the fourth round of the Gold Cup. Systems with restricted licences were allowed in the Gold Cup from the fourth round onwards provided a written summary was given to the opponents three weeks in advance of the match. Having always been a bidding freak ever since learning Vienna before the Blue Club was born, I promised to devise a defence to their VFP, "we'll slaughter them". Far from slaughtering them I became convinced that VFP was by far the best bidding system on the market, and started constructing my own version based on the Blue Club. V.F.P was the way forward. Shortly after that the EBU decided to abolish experimental and restricted licences. To me that was the death knell of British bridge and I gave up national competitions. For the last twenty-five years or so I have played different versions of VFP with three different partners in various private leagues and at the local club where it is allowed at the discretion of the committee. There has never been any objection to VFP and the EBU cannot ban it in clubs which decide to allow it.

Basically it is incredibly simple and can be tried out after ten minutes of study. Any one club system is easily adapted to VFP, so there is no one version. One club players press a button and put their systems into overdrive. The following is the simplest possible beginner's DIY construction kit

#### Dealer and second hand

Pass = 0-7 or 16+  
 1C = 8-11  
 Everything else is according to the agreed club system

Natural, non forcing responses to 1C except that 1D is 16+ conventional game force

#### Third and fourth hand

1C = 0-7 or 16+

Hands in the range of 8-15 will "open" as they see fit. They are positive responses to a strong club, and either there is no game because partner is weak, or partner is strong and all sequences are game forcing. It makes Acol look incredibly complicated.

1D = 8-12 flat  
 1H, 1S, 2C, 2D = 8-15 points 5+ cards  
 1NT = 13-15 flat  
 2H,2S,2NT = 8-15 definition to taste, preferably constructive twos .

Simplest possible responses are to pass with a weak hand, and any response is game forcing. There is one exception to that. 2C is Gladiator over 1NT and 2D,2H,2S,2NT and 3C are game forcing.

### Our version of V.F.P

#### First and second in hand

Pass - 0-6 or 16+ points  
 1C - 7-11 points, tends to be flattish since shapely hands make other bids  
 1D,1H,1S - 4+ cards, 11-15 points  
 1NT - 12-15 flat  
 2C - 6+ clubs single suiter, 11-15 points  
 2D - 6-10 points, a six card major  
 2H,2S,2NT - 8-15 points, constructive twos



### Third and fourth in hand

1C	-	0-6 or 16+ points
1D	-	conventional showing 9-15 tends to be flattish
1H	-	7-9 points
1S	-	5-6 points, a six card suit
1NT	-	5-6 points, 4-4 or better in the majors
2C	-	8-15 points 6+clubs
2D	-	8-15 points, a six card major
2H,2S,2NT	-	8-15 points constructive twos

Third hand “responses” are dual purpose bids. They have to be not only responses to a strong club but also opening bids in their own right. They are game forcing opposite a strong hand.

Two weak hands together has never occurred, presumably if it were dealt the opponents would take over the bidding. Two strong hands together has occurred two or three times in twenty years.

To allow point count and hand pattern to override good hand evaluation is the mistake of a beginner. Take this hand in third position

97652  
K4  
A  
Q8764

Three bids are possible according to the given definitions, 1D, 1H, and 2S

1D	-	would show 9-15 points flattish
1H	-	would be a semi-positive, a game try but not a game force, 7-9 points
2S	-	5-5 or better with spades and a minor 8-15 points, a game force

1H is the best bid. It is always possible to add to what has already been said , but never possible to subtract from it. We are not worried about 1H being passed out and being a silly contract if it is passed by a weak partner the opponents have missed something.

The reason for 1D being stronger than 1H is that with 12-15 points, the probability is that partner is weak and the points are fairly evenly divided. Under those circumstances if we are going to be allowed to play the hand, we do not want to concede 200/300 in some silly contract. Opener’s rebids of 1H and 1S in response to 1D are reserved for weak hands, he can also pass 1D, so that we can play in all three suits at the one level.

In the straight one club system two level responses are golden negatives. In VFP the two level “responses” have a different meaning. So 1S is maximum negative with a six card, 1NT asks which .

### **VFP v A Legal One Club System**

The initial justification for VFP is that it prevents the opponents’ frivolous intervention. The unforeseen but overwhelming advantage of VFP is the opening bid of 1C showing 7-11 points. It is a passport to enter the auction on hands which the hand would otherwise pass. On computer dealt hands 20%-25% of the hands would be opened by a VFP 1C bid. In the modern tournament game there are no glittering prizes for passing too frequently, and there is a tendency to open many sub-minimum hands. When these sub

minimum opening bids can be opened with a bid of 1C there is less incentive to devalue the requirements for a traditional opening bid. The opening bid of 1C enables a player to open the bidding without the risk of being swept overboard by a game hungry partner

Perhaps the greatest advantage is that 1H 1S has exactly the same meaning in a traditional system as Pass 1H 1S. In VFP these two sequences are totally different. This automatically doubles the vocabulary. Furthermore taking into account the fact that VFP harnesses many otherwise meaningless sequences to describe the vast variety of possible hands the vocabulary of bidding is more than tripled.

An Acol player would have no use for the sequence

Pass 1C 1D 1H 1S 1NT 2C 2D pass

In VFP its meaning is Pass = 0-6 or 16+ 1C = 0-6 or 16 1D = 0-6 1H = 20+ 1S = 0-4 1NT = 20-21flat 2C = gladiator 2D = very obedient

Here is a hand which would fit the bidding

J107	AK8
9	A75
J7542	A86
8742	KQ95

If those seven bids are not preceded by a pass their meaning is totally different

1C 1D 1H 1S 1NT 2C 2D 3C 4C 4D 4NT 6C Pass

The meaning is 1C = 7-11 1D = 15+ 1H = 7-9 1S = 18+ 1NT = flat 2C = Stayman 2D = no major 3C = 4+ clubs 4C = 4 clubs 4D = Roman Black 4NT = two, no Queen of trumps 6C = tired but happy

Here is a hand which would fit the bidding

A97	5
76	AK82
J876	AK9
K1076	AQJ82