

Weak Twos, Preemptive Bids, and Two Clubs

Kai Liu, 14 September 2003

Oftentimes, you will see some strange activity where people will open bidding with 2S, 3S, or sometimes, even 4S. Are these bids natural, meaning that they have tons of points and lots of spades? Or is there something else at work? Although it varies from partnership to partnership, when you see an opening *suit* bid (note, note, note!!! this stuff applies to suits, NOT No Trump!!) at the two level or above, it is almost never natural. So what does it mean?

HCP (high card points): Low... only 6 to 10 or 11 HCP. If a person has more HCP, they would've opened naturally instead. If you have really crappy points (i.e., below 6), do NOT bid!

Distribution: The person is saying that he has a *lot* of cards in the suit that he just bid. Just how much? Four plus the level of the bid. So if the opening bid is 4S, it signifies eight spades. A 2S opening signifies 6 spades.

Honors: It's also nice to have some muscle in the suit that you just bid. If you have eight spade cards, and they happen to be 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (i.e., missing all the top five cards), do NOT bid! As a rule of thumb, it's nice to have at least two or three of the top five honors in your long suit. Use your judgment.

So what's the point? A long trump suit goes a long ways. Even if you have cruddy points, having, say, 8 cards of a kind can do you a lot of good, which justifies such high levels of bids. Second, it sends out very specific signals regarding your hand: the exact number of cards in your strong suit as well as a point range. If partner has a strong hand, this information can come in very handy in quickly and efficiently getting to a good contract. If the opponents have strong hands, opening so high up makes bidding a miserable experience for them. Such weak opening bids on the two level are called "weak twos" and on the three level or above, they are called "preemptive bids." Note the emphasis on these bids being opening bids.

Two Clubs: THIS IS IMPORTANT!!! There is one big exception to what I just said above, and that is the opening bid of 2C. Do NOT repeat the mistake that I made once when I mistook a 2C opening for a weak two; that was a disaster. A 2C opening is used when a No Trump opening is not very suitable for what you want. A 2C opening simply signifies 21 or more points (very different from a weak bid, eh?) and says *nothing* about distribution (which is why it is used instead of NT because NT requires balance in the distribution). Thus, a 2C opening is completely artificial because someone without a single club in his hand can make a 2C opening. And because of this, *partner must respond to a 2C opening* because you don't want to leave your partner stuck in a club contract if he has dismal clubs (unless, of course, the enemy bids over 2C).

Three clubs, however, is still a preemptive bid signifying long clubs and weak points.