



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(149) Good/Bad 2NT

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Level: 6

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General

In many competitive auctions, it does not make sense and is not particularly useful for a 2NT rebid by Opener to be natural. In these cases, 2NT can be used as a “convention not a contract” to try to more effectively describe the strength of the hand. One way that this can be done is by using 2NT as a conventional treatment called *Good/Bad 2NT*.

Good/Bad 2NT gives Opener two ways to compete to the 3-level - by bidding directly with a “Good Hand” or by bidding 2NT first with a “Bad Hand”. By using 2NT as a relay bid, instead of a natural call, this allows for a more precise description of Opener’s hand. Let’s see how it works through some examples.

Simple Case for Good/Bad 2NT - Opponents Bid and Raise

Basic Example

1♦ 1♠ X 2♠
3♣

In this auction, where the opponents have bid and raised a suit after we have opened the bidding, a competitive bid of 3♣ shows a ♣ suit and is wide-ranging in values - it could be made on a hand with as few as 12 points or as many as 17 points. Responder does not know if we have extra values or if we are just competing in the auction.

Playing Good/Bad 2NT this problem is solved. In this case, a direct bid of 3♣ shows extra values:

1♦ 1♠ X 2♠
3♣

A 3♣ bid shows 15-17 points and at least a 4-card ♣ suit. With a minimum hand and a desire to compete to the 3-level, we bid 2NT. This 2NT bid is artificial and tells Responder that we want to compete to the 3-level. Responder will bid wherever they can stand to play, usually 3♣ or 3♦.

Note: In this example, Opener giving up a natural 2NT to play Good/Bad 2NT does not cost much because with a balanced 18-19 points we can double or just bid 3NT.

Another Case Where Opener Can Use a Good/Bad 2NT

1♦ 1♠ 2♥ 2♠

___?

In this auction, Responder has shown more values, at least 10 points and at least a 5-card ♥ suit. Opener can bid directly at the 3-level to create a game-forcing auction or use 2NT to compete to the 3-level with a weaker hand.

Examples

♠ 98

♥ 32

♦ AQJ76

♣ AKJ5

Here Opener rebids 3♣, showing a ♣ suit and extra values, creating a game forcing auction opposite partner's invitational or better bid.

♠ 98

♥ 32

♦ AQJ76

♣ KQ54

With a minimum hand, Opener rebids 2NT – Good/Bad 2NT. This 2NT rebid says to Responder that we want to compete to the 3-level, usually in the ♣ suit.

Note: With a balanced minimum hand, 12-13 points, Opener simply passes. This is what a natural 2NT rebid would show if the partnership was not playing Good/Bad 2NT.

Single-Suited Hands

We can also use the Good/Bad 2NT convention with a single-suited hand.

1♦ 1♠ 2♥ 2♠

___?

A direct bid of 3♦ shows a ♦ suit and extra values, enough to force to game opposite Responder's 10+ points.

With a minimum opening hand with a long ♦ suit, we rebid 2NT (Good/Bad 2NT) and after Responder bids 3♣ then Opener rebids 3♦ -- attempting to end the auction if Responder has only an invitational hand.

Note: With a balanced minimum opening hand Opener just passes the auction around to Responder.

Advanced Uses of Good/Bad 2NT

A partnership can agree to use Good/Bad 2NT in other auctions as well.

Example

1♥ P 1NT 2♠

___?

In this auction Opener can bid a new suit directly at the 3-level to show extra values, 15-17 points and a second suit – at least 4-cards.

With a minimum hand and a second suit, 12-14 points and at least 4-cards, Opener rebids 2NT as Good/Bad 2NT – saying we want to compete in the bidding.

1♥ P 1NT 2♠

2NT P 3♣ P

3♦

This auction shows a hand with ♥ and ♦ and no significant extra values.

Conclusion

The Good/Bad 2NT Convention is another situation where 2NT is better used as a conventional bid instead of a natural call. With lighter opening bid styles and modern opponents overcalling with few values, Opener is faced with more competitive auctions where it is important to differentiate purely competitive actions from actions that promise extra values. The Good/Bad 2NT convention is an effort to do this. *But this comes with a warning!* Like any convention, there is a possibility of having a misunderstanding with partner, and it is important to have good rules for when the 2NT bid is not natural (like when the opponents have bid and raised a suit). If you feel like adding a competitive bidding gadget to your regular partnership, talk about these kinds of situations and give another conventional use of 2NT a try.