

OPENING A STRONG TWO CLUBS by Maritha Pottenger

Opening 2C is a demand bid. It is totally artificial and partner is not allowed to pass. If you have a balanced hand, you will have 22 HCP or more. With a highly distributional hand, you might have as few as 17 HCP. The reason to open 2C is that you have game—or almost game—in your own hand. The 2C opening forces partner to bid and makes sure that you get to game (4H or 4S or 3NT). If you have a hand that will make game if partner only has the right King or Queen (in which case partner could easily pass a non-forcing opening), you should probably open 2C. (If you just have an excessively long suit, you should be making a preemptive opening.)

A typical balanced hand: AKx KQxx AJxx AQ [Open 2C. Rebid 2NT.] With a balanced hand, the typical ranges are: 15-17 open 1NT; 18-19: open a suit and rebid 2NT; 20-21: open 2NT; 22-24: open 2C and rebid 2NT; 25-27: open 3NT. Some people play 3NT as a “gambling” bid, showing a solid (or semi-solid) minor suit (7 or 8 cards, depending on partnership agreement) with [usually] no more than one outside card (Ace or King). An example of a distributional 2C Opening: AKQxxxx Ax x AQx [Game is there if partner has King of hearts or clubs or Ace of diamonds. Slam is there if partner has both Kings.] Change the clubs to three small and you should open 4S (or 4D if you play Namyats). I recommend AGAINST opening 2C with 2-suited or 3-suited hands—takes up too much room—and hands with long diamonds—which also gets you too high too fast.

RESPONSES TO TWO CLUBS

There are 3 major approaches to responding to 2C Openings:

- 1) 2D as a waiting bid
- 2) Bidding controls, e.g., 2D is 0 or 1 control where an Ace is 2 controls & a King is one; 2H is 2 controls, etc.
- 3) Bidding high card strength in step responses, e.g., 2D is 0-4 HCP; 2H is 5-7 HCP, etc.

Many people play 2D as a “waiting” bid, denying an immediate positive response. An immediate positive response would generally promise 8+ HCP (or less, depending on partnership agreement) and a good, 5-card or longer suit. (Your partnership should define “good suit”—two of top 3 or 3 of top 4 or 3 of top 5 honors would be typical.) After seeing the 2D waiting bid, the Strong 2C Opener will either show a balanced hand with a no trump rebid, or name his/her suit. Responder can pass any NT rebid, but is obligated to make at least one more bid over a suit. Many people play that the “cheapest minor” is a 2nd negative saying responder has basically just about nothing. If responder has a bit more than nothing, s/he can raise opener’s suit; bid a suit; or bid NT instead of making 2nd negative. If partner opens 2C, you say 2D and partner says 3D, then 3H (cheapest SUIT, rather than cheapest minor) is 2nd negative. After giving a 2nd negative bid, you can pass anything partner says.

Most people play “fast arrival.” With “fast arrival,” the more quickly you bid game, the less you have. For example, 2C-P-2D-P-2H-P-4H is weaker with fast arrival than 3H would be. You want to leave room to cue bid or make slam tries when you have the stronger hands. Fast arrival denies any Ace, King or singleton.

INTERFERENCES OVER STRONG 2C

Nowadays, people are bidding with fewer and fewer HCP—especially when they can interfere with a strong hand (such as 2C or a NT opening). Some people play that bidding over 2C is completely natural. It usually asks partner to lead that suit and also suggests a possible sacrifice if partner has a fit with you.

Other people play specialized systems to show 2-suited hands over a Strong 2C Opening. One example would be CRASH—which stands for Color, Rank, Shape. Over 2C Opening, DOUBLE (the 1st step) shows 2 suits of the same color (diamonds & hearts OR clubs and spades). 2D (the 2nd step) shows two suits of the same rank (clubs & diamonds OR hearts & spades); 2H and 2S are often played as natural (showing that single suit) and 2NT shows two suits of the same shape (diamonds & spades OR clubs and hearts). Decide what you are going to do if the opponents chime in. (If you double their bid, for example, is that for penalties or is that a negative double showing the other suits and some points, or is that just showing a stopper in case partner wants to bid NT?) Also decide with your partner(s) what your bids will be over a Strong 2C Opening.