

Responding to a 2NT opening

When partner opens 2NT (or it goes 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT etc.) then we need a mechanism to find our 4-4 or 5-3 major suit fits etc. as over a 1NT opening. Now over 1NT everything is pretty easy, but over 2NT there is not so much room and it really is important to play a combination of things that actually works! For example, with hands that want to go no further than game we need to be able to locate 4-4 and 5-3 major suit fits. And there are a few problems. For example, suppose partner of the 2NT bidder has 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s – should he bid 3♣ Stayman or transfer?

There are numerous combinations around. Some of the most popular are: -

- 1 Stayman and Transfers.
- 2 Puppet Stayman, Transfers and an artificial 3NT bid. In Holland this whole scheme is known as Niemeijer.
- 3 Baron 3♣ together with Flint 3♦.
- 4 Baron 3♣ together with Transfers.

1 Stayman and Transfers.

Very basic.

3♣ asks for 4 card majors

3♦/♥ are transfers

3♠ can be used as a transfer to 4♣

3NT is to play

This really is rather rudimentary and players past the beginner's stage should really move on to something like Niemeijer that is described next. British players may prefer Baron and transfers.

2 Niemeijer

There are in fact many variations on the Neimeijer scheme of responding to 2NT and I give a fairly basic but very good one here.

3♣: Puppet Stayman, asks for 4 and 5 card majors, reply is as follows: -

- a) 3♦: no 5 card major, but 4♥ and/or 4♠

The 3♣ bidder then shows his major suit holding as follows: -

| | |
|---|----------|
| 3♥ shows 4♠ | * note 1 |
| 3♠ shows 4♥ | * note 1 |
| 3NT shows no 4 card major, and is to play | * note 2 |
| 4♣ shows both majors and interest in slam | |
| 4♦ shows both majors and no slam interest | |

Note 1: These responses allow opener to be declarer.

Note 2: The 3♣ bidder may have gone this route because the direct 3NT bid is needed conventionally. Alternatively, he may have a 3 card major and a weak doubleton elsewhere and was hoping to find the 5-3 major suit fit.

- b) 3♥/♠: 5 card suit
c) 3NT: no 4 or 5 card major

3♦: Transfer to 3♥

3♥: Transfer to 3♠

3♠: Minor suit Stayman or a transfer to 4♣. Up to you.

3NT: shows 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s (there is not enough room to show this with a transfer sequence).
Note that if 2♣ were 'normal' Stayman then you could bid 3♣ followed by 3♥/♠ to show 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors after a 3♦ response, but when playing Puppet Stayman that is no longer possible.
With 5 ♥'s and ♠'s you simply transfer into ♥'s and then bid 3♠ of course.

4♣: Gerber

etc.... where it's up to you what the higher bids mean, and some prefer to play 4♣ as a transfer to ♦'s.

3 Baron 3♣ together with Flint 3♦.

Baron 3♣ asks for 4 card suits and they are bid up the line. If the 2NT bidder bid 3NT directly over the Baron 3♣ then he denies a 4 card ♦/♥/♠ suit and so he must have a ♣ suit. Flint 3♦ was basically a fore-runner of Jacoby transfers. It was a weak bid which asked the 2NT bidder to bid 3♥ which the Flint bidder would either pass or correct to 3♠. There really is no point in playing Flint these days and transfers are to be preferred.

4 Baron 3♣ together with Transfers

3♣ is Baron. Baron 3♣ asks for 4 card suits and they are bid up the line. If the 2NT bidder bid 3NT directly over the Baron 3♣ then he denies a 4 card ♦/♥/♠ suit and so he must have a ♣ suit.

3♦ = transfer to 3♥

3♥ = transfer to 3♠

3♠ = Minor suit Stayman or a transfer to 4♣. Up to you.

3NT = to play (no 4 or 5 card major).

* Note 3

4♣ = Gerber

Note 3: There is the problem with a hand with 4 ♥'s and 5 ♠'s. If you start with Baron 3♣ then you cannot subsequently show a 5 card ♠ suit. And if you transfer with 3♥ into 3♠ then you are up at the four level when you show your ♥ suit.

With Puppet Stayman we solved this problem by using a direct 3NT to show 4 ♥'s and 5 ♠'s and to play in 3NT we went via 3♣. You can also adopt this philosophy here (so go via 3♣ Baron) even though you have no intention of finding a 4-4 fit.

Thus with this alternative approach we have: -

3NT = shows 5 ♠'s and 4 ♥'s