

# Kokish Continuations

## After A Balancing 1NT

Especially effective after a major opening  
— Presented by Mike Savage

If you double in the balancing seat, intending to rebid no-trump on your next call because you feel your hand is just “too big” to balance with 1NT, you’d best take into account what suit has been opened. If the suit opened is a minor, then you will probably be able to rebid 1NT, showing 16-18 HCP and all will be well. However if you double a major suit, your partner may well be bidding his suit at the 2-level and then if you bid no-trump *now*, it will be 2NT. Not only could you be too high (since your partner may have next to nothing), upon hearing your 2NT rebid, if your partner *has* “something,” say seven or so HCP, he will reasonably play you for a big hand of around 19-20 HCP and will bid 3NT! Here’s Eric Kokish’s scheme to avoid that, along with his continuations over 1NT.

Play a sliding range for a balancing 1NT. The lower ranking the opener’s suit is, the lower the top limit of your range to balance with 1NT should be. Over a 1C or 1D opener, play that a balancing 1NT’s range should be 11 to around 15 HCP—up through a 1H or 1S opener where the range for a balancing 1NT should now be from 11 to 17 or possibly even 18 HCP.

If you have the strength for a normal-looking overcall or the right shape for a take-out double, prefer that to balancing with 1NT. However, choose to balance with 1NT instead with almost all other balanced hands—with *or without* a stopper in the opener’s suit—including most hands with a five-card suit that would have to be bid at the two-level. There is another reason to bid 1NT on the majority of balanced hands that you decide to balance with. This allows advancer to be more confident that balancer’s take-out doubles will be “pure,” with the expected shape while balancing overcalls at the two-level will be with good suits and if balanced, will usually be on a six-card suit.

### Advancer’s Bids and Balancer’s Responses after a Balancing 1NT (a basic outline):

**2C** = Forcing, artificial. Asks balancer to define his strength and show if he has a four-card major.

**2D** = Shows a non-maximum for his possible point range without a four-card major.

**2H** = Shows a *weak* hand with both majors. Balancer must choose his longest/best major.

**2S** = Natural and invitational.

**2NT** = Natural with a minimum invitation. Balancer could bid 3NT with sufficient values.

**Cue-bid** = Game forcing and asks balancer to bid 2NT with a stopper.

**3C/3D** (unbid minor) = Natural and invitational, along with a four-card major.

**3H/3S** (over 1C/1D Openers) = Smolen, showing 5-4 in the majors (the bid suit is 4 cards).

**Three of the other major** (over 1H/1S openers) = Natural and forcing.

**3NT** = To play with a stopper in opener’s suit.

**2H/2S** = Shows a four-card major and a minimum (bid hearts first with both majors).

**2NT** = Shows a maximum with or without a four-card major and is game forcing.

**3C** = Stayman.

**3D/3H** = Jacoby Transfers.

**3S** = Asks balancer to bid 3NT with a stopper in opener’s suit.

**3NT** = To play with a stopper in opener’s suit.

**2D/2H/2S** = All are natural and to play (even if the suit bid is opener’s suit).

**2NT** = Shows 5-5 or longer in the minors, asks balancer to pick his longest/best minor, which usually is passed—but if advancer now bids a major suit, it shows shortness with game-going values.

**3C/3D/3H/3S** = Natural and invitational (even if the suit bid is opener’s suit).