

Weak Two-Bids

Disciplined, Descriptive and Disruptive

Guidelines For Their Use by Mike Savage

When strong two-bids in diamonds, hearts and spades were replaced by weak two-bids along with an omnibus strong two club bid, originally weak 2D, 2H & 2S openers were required to be constructive as well as obstructive (except in 3rd chair). They guaranteed a six-card “strong” suit, some probable defense and could not have a void, a side 5-card minor nor a 4-card major. Some players even frowned on a side three-card major to an honor. Over time, hands that met these strict criteria came up so seldomly that these rigid requirements were relaxed. A majority of modern weak two-bids are made with decent-to-good six-card suits with a point range of either 5-10, 5-11 or 6-12 HCP. Nowadays, 2H & 2S are routinely opened with any 3-card or even a *weak 4-card* major on the side. Some players even have partnership agreements that allow them to make weak two-bids with very poor suits and completely ignore vulnerability concerns.

What has not changed is the principle that when you open a weak 2-bid, *your partner* is now the captain of your partnership. You may answer questions about your strength, the quality of your suit, location of a feature or about controls, but beyond that, you have no freedom of action. That means you shouldn't bid a game if your partner doesn't bid it nor should you sacrifice over the opponents' game—those decisions should be made by your partner who has a much better idea what *you* have than you do about what he has.

Your partnership should choose which type of these three categories of weak two-bids you want to play:

Disciplined Weak Two-bids: In first or second seat, they show a good to very good suit and toward the upper end of your HCP range for weak two-bids. They also are vulnerability sensitive—when vul vs. not, they show a top-of-the-line weak two-bid; when vul vs. vul, they show almost as good a hand; when the vulnerability is equal non-vul, they might be made on a middle of the range hand, but a weak two-bid made when non-vul vs. vul could be bid on a decent suit and not much else (for example KQJxxx and out).

Descriptive Weak Two-Bids: These weak two-bids show decent to very good suits but are not so position and vulnerability sensitive as disciplined ones. They will almost always be made on a six-card suit, although some *might* make one in third-seat on a good five-card suit. They are often made with hands in the lower to mid-range of the partnership's HCP range for weak twos. In general, for partnerships using descriptive weak two-bids: “If it *looks* like a weak two-bid, it is a weak two-bid.”

Disruptive Weak Two-Bids: These weak two-bids are best used in matchpoints as they are a 2-edged sword. Their intent is to derail normal bidding, perhaps create a unique result and hopefully survive without “going for a number.” They are made not so much in an effort to describe the hand but to disrupt the opponents bidding. If you play these disruptive weak two-bids, responder must be very careful not to get overboard—as opener's suit may be *very* poor. They are usually opened with a 6-card suit, very often with the low end of their weak-two HCP range. Partnerships who play them usually open one-bids with very light to light hands, hands that most of us would open with a good to very good weak two-bid.

Responses to Weak Two-Bids: There are two popular conventional 2NT responses in use nowadays. One is called “*Raise is the Only Non-Force*” or “*RONF*” for short—which asks opener about any side features. The other is called “*Ogust*”—which asks opener about his suit quality and strength. If you play Disciplined Weak Two-Bids, you should probably play *RONF* responses as in 1st or 2nd seat and/or vulnerable, a certain amount of quality is assumed. Thus, *if* and *where* you have a feature is more important. If you play Descriptive Weak Two-bids, it seems closer to a toss-up whether to play *RONF* or *Ogust* 2NT responses. However, if you play Disruptive Weak Two-bids, *Ogust* responses almost seem mandatory, as both opener's strength & quality are very much suspect. Here's how both conventions work:

Raise is the Only Non-Force (RONF):

2NT = Asks for a feature. A side-suit feature is defined as a no-trump stopper. If the weak-two bidder shows a stopper, most partnerships play that it also shows a non-minimum range weak-2 bid, although a *few* players will show a feature if it's below the trump suit even with a minimum weak-two bid.

Rebid of the weak-two bidder's suit = Shows a minimum weak-two bid with nothing more to say.

3 of a new suit = Shows a feature.

3NT = Shows a solid suit (at least AKQxxx).

Ogust:

2NT = Asks opener to show his suit quality and strength.

3C = Shows a bad hand and a bad suit.

3D = Shows a bad hand and a good suit.

3H = Shows a good hand and a bad suit.

3S = Shows a good hand and a good suit.

3NT = Shows a solid suit (at least AKQxxx).

Guidelines For Other Continuations no matter which conventional 2NT response structure you use:

Simple Raise = This is to play, it's *not* invitational and may (or may not) be a trap for the opponents.

New Suit = Should be forcing one round.

Responses:

Rebid of original suit = Shows a minimum without a fit.

Raise = Shows usually 3 or 4-card support but could be on ace, king, or queen doubleton.

Raise of 2H or 2S to game = Shows a good fit and a maximum or near maximum weak two.

New Suit = Shows a feature and a maximum but without support for responder's suit.

Jump Shift to 3H or 3S = Natural and game forcing.

3NT = A non-negotiable bid, not to be "corrected" to opener's suit since 3NT might be bid with no fit.

4NT = Blackwood—Roman Key-Card Blackwood if you play it (some play a jump to 4C as Blackwood).

3rd Seat Weak-Two Openers:

When you open a weak-two bid in 1st or 2nd position, you are making it more difficult to bid for your partner as well as the opponents. However, when you are in 3rd seat, your partner is a passed hand and if you have a weak hand of eight or less HCP, it's the opponents who have the balance of power. This is the time to relax your partnership requirements for opening a weak-two bid. With partnership agreement, you could open very poor weak-two bids (be careful if you're vulnerable!) up to good ones when most of your values are concentrated in your suit. In third seat, you are jamming the opponents' auction, not your own.

4th Seat 2D, 2H & 2S Openers:

If you have eight or less HCP in 4th chair, again the opponents have the balance of power—and you don't even have a minus score yet! Pass as quickly as you can and usually you will get a good result. Some partnerships still might elect to open 2H or 2S with a good suit and a top-of-the-line weak-two bid, hoping to buy it there. However, the conventional wisdom is that the best usage of an opening two-bid in fourth position is to show a *good* suit and a full opener. Something like: AQJ10xx Kx QJx xx.

Two Optional Extras:

After a takeout double, there are various modifications possible to your response structure. Here are two:

Redouble = A run-out to responder's long suit. Opener must bid 2NT and responder will then bid his suit.

New Suit = A *fit* bid, showing support, but wants the bid suit to be led (xx J10x xxxx AKJx: 2H x 3C).

2NT = Still asks for a feature if opener has one to show, ignoring the interference.

Redouble = Shows at least an opener, planning to Dbl the opponents later or to raise partner's suit.

New Suit = A *fit* bid, showing support, but wants the bid suit to be led (also includes jump shifts).

2NT = A run-out to responder's long suit. Opener must bid 3C and responder will pass or correct.