

Bidding big balanced hands

One of the great excitements in the class was when we learned to bid BIG hands. All students knew was that hands where the point count started with a two were opened at the two level. Next issue I will look at Acol Two Bids but let's look first at the 2NT opening, showing 20-22 points.

♠ A J 8 3 This super hand is stuffed with high cards. 21 high card points – right in the middle of the 2NT opening range. You may not be able to see where the eight tricks are coming from, but partner has 13 cards too. Some will surely be useful.
♥ K Q 10
♦ A Q J 2
♣ A 8

How might the bidding continue? Partner is allowed to pass, but only needs 4 points to respond, since that should give our side enough to try game. If partner responds we are forced to game – there is no weakness takeout of 2NT. This is because the higher starting point leaves no room for invitational bids. Responder bids as though partner opened 1NT, but one level higher. Look at how the bidding might go facing the hand above.

♠ 10 6
♥ 9 3 2 Margaret said 'Its only 5 points'. True, but nevertheless facing a minimum of 20, it must come to at least 25 points. Bid 3NT with confidence. Take away the ♣Q and make it the ♣J, you still bid 3NT but with less confidence!
♦ 9 6 5 4
♣ K Q 7 3

♠ Q 6
♥ J 9 8 3 2 Barbara couldn't believe I wanted her to bid this miserable heart suit. Partner raised to 4♥ with 3-card support. One can see that a club lead could be very damaging to 3NT and 4♥ is a much better contract.
♦ 9 6 5 4
♣ Q 3

♠ K 10 6 5 Peter remarked he hadn't a 5-card suit to bid but 3NT seemed wrong. He had forgotten that 3♣ would be Stayman, asking about majors. He cheered up when partner bid 3♠ and happily raised to 4♠. Had partner bid 3♦ with no major, he would have bid 3NT.
♥ J 9 3 2
♦ 9 6 5
♣ 7 2

♠ K 10 6 5 On this deal, Peter couldn't see how to show a 5-card heart suit, whilst checking up on a 4-card spade in partner's hand. It took him ages to work out that bidding a Stayman 3♣ would work well. If partner bid a major, he could raise to game. If partner could only bid 3♦, 3♥ must now show a 5-card suit.
♥ J 9 8 3 2
♦ 9
♣ K 7 3

♠ –
♥ J 9 8 A 3♦ bid should not just be used to show any 5-card suit, with that you just bid 3NT, but a decent hand interested in slam. This hand with a good suit, good shape and useful high cards would bid 3♦. The hand shown above as the 2NT opener is so good, it would jump straight to 6♦.
♦ K 10 7 6 5 3
♣ K Q 3 2

Having mastered the 2NT opening, Janice asked what she could do with even more points. The answer surprised everyone except John, who had played a bit many years ago. Open 2♣, which shows any very good hand. Partner will probably bid 2♦ showing less than eight points. Now with 23-24 points bid 2NT, with 25-28 bid 3NT. With even more bid 4NT, 5NT or even 6NT. But don't worry, as you will only have that good a hand about once every twenty years.

♠ A K J 8 This hand would open 2♣ and rebid 2NT.
♥ K Q 10 Add the ♣K and it would rebid 3NT
♦ A Q J 2 Partner will respond just the same as if you opened 2NT, but needs even fewer points to find a bid.
♣ A 8

TWO SUMMARY TABLES IF THERE IS ROOM (can be cut back if need be)

Openings with a strong balanced hand

Points	How to bid the hand
19 - poor 20	Open one of your longest suit and rebid 3NT
good 20 - 22	Open 2NT
23 - poor 25	Open 2♣, rebid 2NT.
25 - 28	Open 2♣, rebid 3NT.

Summary of responses to 2NT openings

Bid	Meaning
3♣	Stayman, asking for 4-card majors
3♦	Good diamond suit, slam interest
3♥/♠	5-card suit, asking partner to choose
4♥/♠	To play with six or more in major.
3NT	4-10 points, no 4 or 5 card majors
4NT	11-12, asks for 6NT with a maximum
6NT	balanced 13-16 points
7NT	balanced 17+ points