**(109) More Constructive Bidding: 2NT Trump Suit Game Try - 3344**

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**General**

When the auction begins 1X – 1Y – 2Y we usually have 4-card support for our raise of partner’s suit. But in some auctions, we don’t have a convenient rebid and we are forced to raise on only 3-card support. For example, if we have 3-4-5-1 distribution and the auction begins 1♦ - 1♠ - then we will need to raise to 2♠ with only 3-card support.

Some players (a generally older fashioned approach) choose to raise frequently on 3-card support (even with a balanced hand) if they don’t have a stopper in an unbid suit.

*Example*

♠xx

♥Axx

♦KQxx

♣Axxx

When the auction begins 1♦ - 1♥ - these players would raise to 2♥ with this hand. Most players would rebid 1N with this balanced hand, but players with the “frequently raise on 3-cards support style” would rebid 2♥ on this hand.

If we are going to raise Partner more frequently on 3-card support then Partner will need to have a way to find out what we have raised on (and even if we do so only rarely, this will be a useful tool). Let’s see how this works.

**2N Trump Ask - 3344**

When the auction begins 1X – 1Y – 2Y (Example, 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♠) then any new suit (even returning to Opener’s suit) is a Help Suit Game Try attempting to reach game in Y (our expected fit.) But if Responder has only a 4-card suit then they cannot be completely confident that we actually have a fit (we might be in a 4-3 fit). If Responder has less than an invitational hand they will just pass. But if they have an invitational or better hand they would like to have a way to find out if Opener is minimum or maximum and a way to find out if Opener raised on 3-cards or 4-cards. We will use a 2N bid as an ask (“Trump Ask”) in exactly this way.

*General Auction*

1X - 1Y – 2Y – 2N\* -

* 3♣\* 3-card Raise, Minimum Values
* 3♦\* 3-card Raise, Maximum Values
* 3♥\* 4-card Raise, Minimum Values
* 3♠\* 4-card Raise, Maximum Values

As you can see, Opener replies in steps showing 3-, 3+, 4-, 4+, telling Responder about their fit (3- or 4-card) and the strength of their hand (12 vs. 14). There is one additional call for when Opener is 4333 with 4-card support for partner and maximum values - 3N. In this case 3N shows the hand perfectly and allows Responder to pass and let play in 3N if they so desire.

*Example*

1♣ - 1♥ - 2♥ - 2N\* Asks how many ♥ Opener has and if they are a min or a max (closer to 12 or 14.)

**Is there a Downside to the Convention?**

Whenever we add a new convention to our agreements it is good to think about what are we giving up by playing this. In this case, Responder is unlikely to want to make a natural 2N bid (that would be NF invitational). Thus, we are actually giving up very little by adding this agreement. Responder can still handle a balanced invitational hand by using our 2N convention and then offering 3N later.

*Example*

1♦ - 1♠ -

2♠ - 2N\* –

3♠\* - 3N

When Opener shows 4-card support with a maximum Responder will normally bid 4♠, but with the right hand (balanced with stoppers in the unbid suits) they can still offer 3N and see which game partner would like to play.

**Conclusion**

Using 2N as “a Convention not a contract!” is one of the themes of modern bridge – this is an example of that. We can use 2N (a place that we are unlikely to want to play) to simultaneously explore for a fit (ensuring we actually have a 4-4 fit) and quantifying Opener’s hand more specifically. With our 3-3+4-4+ steps we give away little information about dummy or declarer’s hand. Give this agreement a try and give yourself an excellent tool for exploring game!