***This Week in Bridge***

**(34) Opening 2♣**

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*Level: 1* [*robert@advinbridge.com*](mailto:robert@advinbridge.com)

**General**

An opening bid of 2♣ is strong, artificial and forcing. It shows a hand that has or almost has game on its own and feels that it can’t afford to open with a simple 1-level natural bid. 2♣ opening bids are forcing to one level below game (“game minus 1.”) So even if partner has nothing we must play at least 2NT, 3M, or 4m.

**What Kind of Hands Open 2♣ and Why**

* Balanced hands with 22+ HCP
  + There is no other way to show hands with this many HCP.
* Single-Suited Unbalanced Hands with 20+ HCP (usually 9+ tricks.)
  + These hands have 6+ card suits and are afraid that if they open at the one-level if they might play there when they can make a game.
* Two-Suited (or Three-Suited) Unbalanced Hands with 10+ tricks and a large number of HCP.
  + These two-suited hands have at least game in their hand and are highly interested in slam.

**What Kind of Strong Hands Do Not Open 2♣ and Why**

Two- and three-suited hands rarely open 2♣. This is because a 2♣ opening bid takes up a lot of bidding space. If we open 2♣ and have two suits to show, it can become difficult to have enough space to show our hand at a low enough level. When we have a very distributional hand the opponents often have very distributional hands and thus can preempt us if we open 2♣ with this kind of shapely hands. This also makes opening at the 1-level safer; your bid is much less likely to pass out when everyone at the table has a distributional hand.

**Thinking About 2♣ Opening Bids**

The most important thing about making good decisions when it comes to opening 2♣ is to think about 2♣ openings properly. Most bridge players are excited to open the bidding with 2♣ and they are proud to open 2♣. This is the wrong way to think about opening 2♣. You should open 2♣ only when you must or when you feel obligated to because you are afraid of getting passed out at the 1-level when you can make a game. If you think of opening 2♣ as something you are forced to do and that is not a fun thing to do, then you will break the habit of opening 2♣ when you should not.

**Responding to 2♣ - Positive vs. Bust**

When partner opens 2♣ the first thing we need to do is tell partner whether we have enough to force to game (which opposite such a strong hand doesn’t take much) or we have a horrible hand and we are willing to stop short of game.

2♣ \_\_?

* 2♦\* Artificial Game Forcing – Shows at least an Ace, King, or two Queens.
* 2♥\* Artificial “Bust” – Double negative. Less than a 2♦ bid.
* 2♠ 5+c♠, usually 2/3 honors, 8+ pts (often 2-suited and not wanting to wait to show suits.)
* 3♣ 6+c♣, usually 2/3 honors, 8+ pts
* 3♦ 6+c♦, usually 2/3 honors, 8+ pts

*Note: These positive bids usually have 2 of the top 3 honors, but could not if they have a good hand w/ lots of playing strength (like they have a 5-5 hand.)*

**Some Examples of 2♣ Openings**

**Balanced Hands**

In both of these auctions we play systems on. We respond as if partner opened 2NT by using Stayman, Transfers, etc…

2♣ 2♦ 2NT

2♣ 2♥\* 2NT

*Details*

2♣ 2♦/♥\*

2NT 22 to a bad 24 points. Balanced Hand. 5-card Major Common.

2♣ 2♦/♥\*

3NT Good 24 to 26 points. Balanced Hand. 5-card Major Common.

2♣ 2♦/♥\*

4NT 27-28 points. Balanced Hand. 5-card Major Common.

**Majors**

2♣ 2♦

2M This usually shows a 6+c Major Suit with 20+ HCP. It could be a 5-4 hand,

but this is much rarer.

**Fast Arrival**

2♣ 2♦

2M 4M Since 2♦ is GF, this is shows the worst possible 2♦ bid. It shows no Ace

or King.

2♣ 2♦

2M 3M Since 2♦ is GF, then 3M is forcing and stronger than a jump to 4M –

usually an outside Ace or King.

**Conclusion**2♣ opening bid auctions are not common, but when they do come up it is important for you and partner to have good agreements about how to handle these strong hands. It can be frustrating to pick up an enormous hand and make a bid that you think is forcing a slam try, only to have partner pass. Avoiding that kind of misunderstanding is what having good agreements accomplishes, so make sure to discuss these auctions with your partner.