

This is a continuing series of articles written for the advancing player. I welcome any questions or suggestions about future articles. Please send them to the publisher. Who knows? You may be mentioned in a future article! Since beginning this series, I have been asked about several conventions. Keep asking! Your questions give me direction about what the next article should be about.

In this article we will discuss how to maximize the chance to find a game when we open the bidding with 1NT and Partner has a long suit. Most players use major suit transfers, and many others use a bid of 2S to show a long club suit and 2NT to show a long diamond suit. For the major suit transfers, the responder will bid 2NT or 3NT to either invite or force to game with a five-card suit. A raise to three of the major invites game with a six-card suit.

For a transfer to a minor suit, these options are not available. Bidding theorists recognized this problem and developed a "pre-accept" bid. Today, most players who use this theory will bid the suit if they would accept a game invitation. If they bid 2NT over 2S or bid 3C over 2NT, they are saying they would not accept a game invitation if the responder has invitational values.

Returning to the major suit transfer, there are many hands where the responder has invitational values. However, the hand is worth a great deal more if the opening bidder has a strong fit. There are as many hands where the responder would want to invite game if the opening bidder has a strong fit, but there is no possible game if the opening bidder has a poor fit.

I suggest an adaptation of the minor suit pre-accept, which is called "super accept." If the opening bidder has four-card support, he will not accept the transfer. With a minimum hand, the opening bidder will jump to three of the responder's major suit. With a maximum hand, the opening bidder will bid a doubleton or 2NT (4-3-3-3).

The point of showing four-card support is that a nine-card fit should make at least one extra trick. If the responder happens to have a four-card suit opposite the opening bidder's doubleton, the hand should make at least two extra tricks. Responder might be planning to pass if we just accept the transfer. However, when we show strong support and this ruffing value he can judge whether his hand has improved to the point that the partnership should be in game.

Here is an example. Partner opening 1NT (15-17) and we have five hearts and five clubs. Our only honor card is the King of Hearts. We bid 2D, intending to pass Partner's 2H bid. Partner bids 3C instead. He has seventeen high-card points, four hearts and a doubleton club. Our hand is now quite suitable for a heart game.

On the other hand, suppose we have the exact same hand, but we add the King of Clubs. We transfer, but Partner bids only 2H. We know that Partner will have only two or three hearts. Our heart suit will not offer a reasonable chance for game opposite a poor fit, so we pass.

This "super accept" treatment should be in every player's arsenal. It gives us a better chance to stop at the two-level when the opening bidder has a poor fit, but find game when the opening bidder has a great fit.

This treatment is more important today than ever. At the Washington NABC, held July of this year, it became legal to opening 1NT with a singleton Ace, King, or Queen. If we transfer to a major suit on a poor quality suit, we must take into account the chance that Partner has a singleton in our suit. That means we will not invite game on a hand with marginal values.