

The ABC of Bridge
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In the December 2016 ABC of Bridge article, I presented a step response system for the 2C opening bid. Reader interest has been very positive and a few players asked how the system should work when the opener has only one Ace for the 2C bid. Before I address that question it would be appropriate to present the step response system again.

The responses to a 2♣ opener with no interference are as follows:

2♦ = 7 HCP or more that includes at least an A and a K or 2 aces

2NT = 7 HCP or more with the inability to bid 2♦

All other bids show 0-6 HCP as follows:

2♠ = 0-6 HCP with 4 or 5 spades

3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 3♠ = 0-6 HCP with 6 or more cards in the suit

2♥ = 0-6 HCP which is the “default” bid. It may or may not contain hearts.

The advantage of this step approach is that bidding space is conserved when the responder has a very good hand. Subsequent bidding takes place normally. For example – 2♣ 2♦

2NT 3♣ (Stayman)

3♦, 3♥ (Transfers)

3♠ (minor suit Stayman)

Several years ago I enhanced the basic structure to encompass Ace and King identification, initiated by the opener. When the 2♣ opener bids 4♣ following any response, the 4♣ bid seeks specific information pertaining to Aces held by the responder.

2♣ 2♦

4♣ 4♦, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ = only the Ace in that suit

4 NT = 2 Aces

2♣ 2♥, 2♠, 2NT, 3♣, 3♣, 3♥, 3♠

4♣ 4♦, 4♥, 4♠, 5♣ = only the Ace in that suit

4NT = No Aces

The King-asking feature only applies when the responder bids 2♦ and the opener initiated the 4♣ inquiry. Think of the information you would like to elicit from your partner if you both could verbalize questions and answers.

♠ –
 ♥ AKQJ10742
 ♦ K7
 ♣ AQ109

Look at four possible responding hands and then examine the appropriate auctions.

(a) ♠ A7542	(b) ♠ 97542	(c) ♠ A7542	(d) ♠ 97543
♥ 865	♥ 865	♥ 86	♥ 86
♦ 865	♦ A65	♦ A65	♦ 865
♣ K8	♣ K8	♣ K85	♣ 872

(a) 2♣ 2♦	(b) 2♣ 2♦	(c) 2♣ 2♦	(d) 2♣ 2♠
4♣ 4♠	4♣ 4♦	4♣ 4NT	4♣ 4NT
5♣ 6♣	5♣ 6♣	5♣ 6♣	5♥ P
6♥ P	7♥ P	7NT P	

Anticipating the manifestation of the third “C” (Curiosity), let me address the obvious question – how do I handle interference of the 2♣ opener? A KISS solution is as follows: When the interfering bid is at the 2 or 3 level, double shows the value of a positive 2♦ response, thus allowing the opener to initiate the 4♣ query. A suit bid shows the value of a 2NT response with 5 or more cards in the bid suit. A cue bid shows a VOID with 7 or more HCP. If the interference is at the 4 level or higher, a double is for penalty and shows at least 2 defensive tricks, most likely in the opponent’s suit. If the 2♣ bid is doubled, responder bids as if there was no double except in the case when responder has 4 or more good clubs with fewer than 6 HCP in which case a redouble is made. Opener is free to take appropriate action.

Now to the question at hand: Suppose the opener has the following hand:

♠ K
 ♥ AKQJ98765
 ♦ –
 ♣ KQJ

The auction would proceed as follows:

2♣ 2♦

4♣ 4NT

5NT 6♣ = 2 Aces of the same Color

6♦ = 2 Aces of the same Denomination (majors or minors)

6NT = Neither same color nor denomination; i.e. (A♠ & A♦) or (A♥ & A♣)

In the rare instance when responder has 3 aces, the responder, in the above sequence, should just bid 7NT. And what if the 2C opener has no aces? Find a new partner.

