

Wacky Hands & Gadgets – by Dave Bort

Good-Bad 2NT

In an online "virtual club" matchpoints game this month, partner and I bid to 4H, making 4, but we were helped by a gadget that eliminated what could have been guesswork on whether to proceed to game. We were playing Good-Bad 2NT, which uses the basic principle of Lebensohl, namely the ability to distinguish between hands of lower or higher quality.

15
D

N 5+
♠ 43
♥ KJ652
♦ K32
♣ K104

W 3
♠ A107
♥ 1073
♦ AJ8
♣ J752

W N E S
Pass 1♥ 2♠ 3♥
3♠ 4♥ Pass Pass
Pass

E 3
♠ J98652
♥ Q
♦ 96
♣ Q986

S 5
♠ KQ
♥ A984
♦ Q10754
♣ A3

4♥ North
0 0

Bidding:

West	N (me)	East	South
			1D
Pass	1H	2S (1)	3H (2)
3S (3)	4H (4)	All Pass	

Notes:

- (1) Preemptive.
- (2) Raising directly, after RHO (right-hand opponent) bids, shows a stronger hand than first bidding 2NT (which is a relay to Clubs, as in Lebensohl), then bidding 3H.
- (3) Just increasing the preempt (since white-on-red, aka non—vulnerable vs vulnerable).
- (4) Since you indicated a stronger hand than if you had bid 2N (relay to Clubs), then bid 3H, I know you're not just competing, and since my hand is good in that context, here we go!

Discussion: This gadget, Good-Bad 2NT (GB2N), can be used in various ways, per partnership agreement. One good partner of mine only wants to play it when the opponents both bid the same suit, and we're deciding how high to compete. But, another partner wants to play it for generalized sequences where GB2N can be used to identify a better or worse hand, pretty much regardless of the sequence. Note that there are a number of recommended exceptions, including (1) when 2NT would clearly be Unusual, (2) when either side has opened 1NT, (3) when the opponents have opened a big club, (4) when the opponents make a penalty double, (5) when we have already found a fit, and (6) when we are already in a game-forcing auction. So, make sure you and your partner are in agreement on when it applies before using GB2N.

References:

1. "To Bid or Not to Bid", by Larry Cohen
2. https://www.bridgehands.com/G/Good_Bad_2_Not trump.htm

Kokish Game Try, Keycard, Specific King-Ask, & Second King-Ask

In another online virtual club matchpoints game, last month, partner and I made all our long slam-bidding practice pay off, managing to be the only pair in the “room” to find our way to a solid grand slam.

The screenshot shows a bridge bidding interface with four players: North (dB451), West (Garr01), East (irgnaz), and South (elsbubbas). North's hand is ♠KQJ75, ♥A752, ♦A752, ♣A752. West's hand is ♠98, ♥K52, ♦109643, ♣963. East's hand is ♠63, ♥J109863, ♦KQ8, ♣85. South's hand is ♠A1042, ♥AQ74, ♦J, ♣K1074. The bidding sequence is: Pass, 1S (1), Pass, 2S (2), Pass, 3H (3), Pass, 4S (4), Pass, 4N (5), Pass, 5N (7), Pass, 6D (9), X (10), 7S (11). The final contract is 7S (11). The score is 0-0.

Bidding:

West	N (me)	East	South
		Pass	1C
Pass	1S (1)	Pass	2S (2)
Pass	3H (3)	Pass	4S (4)
Pass	4N (5)	Pass	5H (6)
Pass	5N (7)	Pass	6C (8)
Pass	6D (9)	X (10)	7S (11)
All pass			

Notes:

- (1) 1S is forcing, so I'll keep the bidding low, to maximize our chances of finding the best strain.
- (2) I would jump with a 5-loser or better hand, but this will have to do for now.
- (3) Heart shortness (part of Kokish 3-Way Game Tries, from among: 2N = Asks if partner has meaningful help in a suit or suits; 3C/D/H = shortness in C/D/H); 3H = points for game, but poor honors).
- (4) I have wasted honors in partner's short suit, so although I have a 6-loser hand, I'll just bid the game.
- (5) Partner is showing doubt, but I think we're safe at the 5 level, so I'm going to bid keycard (we play 1430 Kickback, but it's the same as 1430 Roman Keycard Blackwood, when in Spades).
- (6) Two keycards in Hearts, without the Heart Queen.
- (7) We have all the keycards and the Queen, partner, so do you have any Kings? Remember, we play Specific Kings, not just the count of Kings, so show me your lowest King, if you have one.
- (8) I have the King of Clubs (at least).
- (9) Ooh, do you also have the King of Diamonds (known as a Second King-Ask)? If so, bid a grand slam.
- (10) Showing Diamond honor(s) (presumably, although East's partner is not on lead).
- (11) Well, I don't have the Diamond King, but I do have second-round control in Diamonds, so let's do it!

Discussion: Kokish Three-Way Game Tries offer three paths to game: (1) by requesting help, whether honor(s) or shortness (avoiding showing a weakness in the asker's hand, as with conventional Help Suit Game Tries, which can tip off opponents to their best opening lead), (2) by showing shortness, and (3) by showing the points for game, but indicating poor honors, so partner knows they will need good honors to succeed in game (otherwise, pass).

References:

1. Documentation for Kokish Three-Way Game Tries is available from the author upon request.
2. Roman Keycard Blackwood, The Final Word (5th Edition), by Eddie Kantar, for Specific King-Asks, the Second King-Ask, and anything else that ails you in keycard-based slam bidding (I know you cue-bidding enthusiasts are out there, but you could still use this from time to time)!

Stay tuned next month for more *Wacky Hands & Gadgets*.