

Last week's winners: Monday 24/3/03

Friday 28/3/03

winner	Margit/Kaj	59%	winner	Gary/Jan (Nor)	61%
2 nd	Hans/Paul	57%	2 nd	Hans/Paul	60%

Partner has a Huge Balanced Hand

Hand A	Hand B	
♠ 98632	♠ 9863	You pick up these hands. But do not despair, in both cases partner has shown a balanced 25+ point hand. There are various possibilities for partner's bidding. Some play a 3NT opener, most open 2♣ followed by 3NT. But what do you do as responder? With hand A it is probably best to transfer, but this could work out badly; no room to find out. Hand B is worse; if partner has a 4 card major then 4 of that suit is best; however, if you try 4♣ (Stayman) and partner replies 4♦ that is no good. So what is the solution? Basically, you have to keep the initial bidding at 2NT so that opener gets a choice (via either Stayman & transfers or Baron or Neimeijer – whatever you play over 2NT) and can still settle in 3NT with no fit. How? Answer later in this news-sheet.
♥ 976	♥ 9764	
♦ 32	♦ 32	
♣ J42	♣ J43	

Chuck takes his time - Plus one for Hans

♠ 96 As I mentioned last week, a few of us get together to discuss hands etc.
 ♥ 86 Last Wednesday there were 6 of us and we had a few rubbers. I held this
 ♦ A973 hand playing with Chuck against Hans and Paul. Chuck opened 1♠ and I
 ♣ AK982 had a decision. 2♣ would be game forcing in our system (2/1).
 The other option was to effectively bid 2NT (via 1NT forcing). I decided that
 the lack of quacks, two good suits (including one 5-carder headed by AK) warranted a game forcing
 response. As it turned out, Chuck had a good 19 count and we ended with him declaring 6NT. When dummy
 appeared Chuck said what he thought (unprintable – he expected more). After an agonising few minutes he
 eventually made the contract on a squeeze. I simply said well played. But I obviously missed a tempo: Hans
 asked me why I did not ask Chuck why he took so long in a lay-down contract – refer to news sheet 16 for
 the subtleties of this remark. I clearly was a bit slow here.

RKCB – Asking about the trump Queen.

A hand from Friday 21st.

An interesting hand, especially in the bidding:-

North	South	West	North (Me)	East	South (Chuck)
♠ A104	♠ KQ985	-	-	2♦ (1)	pass (2)
♥ AKJ643	♥ Q5	pass	dbl (3)	pass	3♠ (4)
♦ A	♦ KQ76	pass	4NT (5)	pass	5♣ (6)
♣ AK7	♣ 65	pass	5♦ (7)	pass	5♥ (8)
		pass	6♠	all pass	

(1) weak (very!)

(2) 2♠ looks OK to me

(3) take-out

(4) I prefer 4♠

(5) RKCB (1430)

(6) Chuck plays 1430 and so this showed one key card (♠K).

(7) next suit up (skip trumps if necessary) asks for the queen of trumps.

(8) We had never discussed this, but I believe that most people play the cheapest bid denies the trump queen and any other bid acknowledges it. A bid of a suit shows that king and a return to the trump suit denies an additional king (or you can simply agree to bid the next up but one to acknowledge the queen and leave it to requester to ask for kings). Paul plays this way; unfortunately Chuck plays that a return to the trump suit denies the trump queen. We'll get it right next time (I'll play his version). With this hand Chuck should, of course, have bid 6♦ to show the trump queen and the ♦K.

Incidentally, Hans expressed an opinion that the next suit up asked for kings, with the trump queen counted as a king. This is nonsense. The trump queen has to be asked for separately. This hand is a good example of why; the ♦K was not important, all that's needed for the grand is the trump queen. 5NT is used to ask for kings and next suit up asks for the key queen (you may give additional king info in the reply if you have the queen). This hand also demonstrates the advantage of 1430. You are more likely to be looking for a grand if responder has one key card rather than zero. The 5♣ bid here gave oodles of space to ask for the trump queen. Shame we had not discussed the replies.

Just consider the same South hand but with the ♦K replaced by ♦J. Normal Blackwood is useless. RKCB enables you to locate both the ♠K and ♠Q without the useless ♦K clouding the issue.

The 2♦ Opening.

There are numerous common meanings for a 2♦ opening. What is the best use for this bid? I shall cover the most common meanings and give reasons for my preferred choice.

- 1- The weak 2♦
- 2- The strong 2♦
- 3- Flannery 2♦
- 4- The Multi 2♦
- 5- Benjamin Twos

-1- **The weak 2♦**

This is a 6 card suit and usually 6-10 points. The weak 2♦ is the most popular choice in USA for those who do not play Flannery. Nothing wrong with having a weak 2♦ opener, but does it really have much of a pre-emptive effect? I believe that there is a much better use for the bid.

Hand 1N	Hand 8W	These two hands are from Friday 21 st , in both cases you are non-vul. I held North hand 1 and was in first seat. Seems like a classic weak 2♦ opener to me (I play a weak 2♦ with Chuck – he is American), and that’s what I opened. Chuck said that he requires a much better suit in first or second seat; I still like the bid because of the solidity of the ♦ suit. What do you think? West hand 8 is also from Friday, one player opened 2♦.
♠ 1082	♠ 104	
♥ QJ9876	♥ Q5	
♦ Q3	♦ KJ109874	
♣ 32	♣ 103	

This is totally wrong. This is a superb 3♦ opening, especially non-vul.

-2- **The strong 2♦**

As used in classic Acol. There is no strict point range, but generally 15+. The important thing is that it must be a good suit (at *least* 5 card – normally 6+) and the hand must contain 8+ playing tricks (playing tricks are defined in the pages on hand evaluation).

♠ A6	This hand would qualify for a strong 2♦ opener. It is 8 ½ - 9 playing tricks. Nothing wrong with this system, but as we see later, I have a better use for the 2♦ opening and this hand can simply be opened with 1♦ (2NT would be a little too off-beat).
♥ AK6	
♦ AKJ763	
♣ 32	

-3- **Flannery 2♦**

♠ AJ76	Popular in the States. 11-15 points and specifically 4-5 in the majors. For some reason, some Americans seem to find this hand shape difficult. I simply don’t see the problem, open 1♥ and partner will bid 1♠ if there is a fit there. Agreed, a 2♦ opening is very specific and enables responder to enquire about your minor suit distribution, but this really is a waste of an otherwise very useful opening bid; read on.
♥ AK962	
♦ J7	
♣ 32	

-4- **The Multi 2♦**

Popular in Europe, not so popular in the States. There are a multitude of variants of the multi! Basically, a 2♦ opening is artificial and can mean one of (usually) three things from:

- A weak two in a major.
- A strong two in a minor.
- A strong (20+) balanced NT hand.
- A strong 4441 (any order) distribution hand.
- A strong two in a major.
- possibly some other variant.

The multi certainly is a formidable weapon. However, its use against less experienced opponents is perhaps suspect. It has been banned at some levels by some Bridge unions. Their reasoning is that a bid at the two level should be either totally weak or totally strong. Inexperienced opponents cannot cope with a mixture. I totally agree (in a competition with weaker opposition). So, let’s get onto my preferred 2♦ opening (it is always artificial and strong): -

-5- **Benjamin Twos**

Now I am one of those guys who like to have their cake and eat it (perhaps explains my weight?). I certainly like to be able to open a weak two in the majors, but I also like strong Acol type twos in the majors. Fortunately, this was all solved by Albert Benjamin. Playing Benjamin twos, the traditional 2♣ opening (23+ or a game forcing hand) is replaced by 2♦. This then leaves 2♣ free to show a strong two in either major (partner normally relays with 2♦ and you then bid 2♥/♠). Now there are numerous variants as to exactly what the 2♣ and 2♦ opening bids (and subsequent rebids) mean. I shall simply describe my preferred Benjamin variation etc.

- 2♣ Strong but not game forcing. Either 8-9 playing tricks in an unspecified suit or a balanced 23-24.
- 2♦ Game forcing. 25+ if balanced
- 2♥/♠ weak, 6 card suit, 6-10.
- 2NT 20-22 balanced.
- 3NT pre-emptive (gambling 3NT). long solid minor, nothing outside.

After a 2♣/♦ opening, I prefer an automatic relay of 2♦/♥. Rebids then mean: -

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ 8 playing tricks – non-forcing (but rarely passed)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♥/♠ 9 playing tricks – non-forcing (but very rarely passed)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣/♦ 9 playing tricks – non-forcing (generally an unbalanced hand)
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT 23-24, balanced
- 2♦ - 2♥ - 2NT 25+, balanced, game forcing
- 2♦ - 2♥ - any suit natural, game forcing

As I said, there are numerous variants of Benjamin twos, but I prefer this one because you never have to bid 3NT (this leaves partner the option of Stayman and transfers etc. when he is bust and you are 25+). There is a rather better/more complex variant based on this scheme which also includes 4441 type hands.

Note that a 2♦ opening is always game forcing.

Note also that an Acol two is normally forcing. Playing this version of Benjamin the sequence 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥/♠ is not forcing as a stronger opening hand would rebid at the 3 level.

Incidentally, Benjamin twos are normally associated with Acol – but there really is no dependence. You can play any variation of Benjamin twos with Standard American, 2/1 or any natural system.

Support Doubles

As far as I know, there is only one other player in the club who 'plays' support doubles.

W	N	E	S	
1♦	pass	1♠	2♥	This double by West is a SUPPORT DOUBLE and shows 3 card support for partner. Unfortunately, my partner (East, Chuck) was unable to recognise this and passed with a singleton ♥. The moral? I guess that sometimes even Americans have a bad day?
dbl				

In general, a support double only applies when you could have raised partner to the two level. However, if partner has promised a 5 card suit, then you can still (by agreement) play a support double; thus distinguishing between 3 and 4 card support. This is a support double, showing 3 card ♥ support.

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	2♥	2♠
dbl			

If responder bids a minor suit at the two level, there is little point in playing a support double because
(a) responder does not guarantee a five card suit and
(b) Who's interested in minor suit fits?

Since one of the best players (?) in the club cannot remember what a support double is, I cannot really recommend playing them unless you can remember.

The Snapdragon Double

With reference to the unfortunate (for us) hand above, Chuck muttered something about a

SNAPDRAGON DOUBLE. Now I realise that you don't really want to know what this, but just for the record it a double by the *non-opening* side in some competitive situations (it shows five cards in the unbid suit and 3 card support for overcaller). Can't see much use for it myself.

I guess that the KISS system really is best. No support doubles, snapdragons, striped-tail apes or whatever.

Double for take-out or penalties?

W	N	E	S
1♦	1NT	2♠	pass
pass	dbl		

Now it was Ian who asked me a few weeks ago to indicate which doubles are for penalties and which are for take-out (he was upset when his partner converted his take-out double into a penalty by passing). Ian is of the opinion that virtually any low-level double is for take-out. I believe that I

wrote a fair summary in new-sheet 17. Ian intended this doubles as take-out on Friday.

It is not. It is penalties. It is impossible to have a take-out double if you have bid a natural NT. And the moral here? I guess that if you specifically ask me to write up something in the news sheets – then read it?