



## Defence against Weak Twos and the Multi

AS THE years have ticked by, I find that an increasing percentage of the bridge playing population now play some sort of 'germ warfare' whether it be:

- Weak Two bids in three suits
- Weak Two bids in the majors (Benji style)
- The Multi (originally referred to as the Multi-coloured 2♦)
- Some form of two-suited Weak Twos (Lucas style).

The need to have an organised defence is absolutely vital so you do not just get trampled over!

### Defence vs Weak-two Bids

There have been many defences that have been played over the years – *Hackett* being among the most popular ones. To my mind, easily the most sensible defence to play is to treat a weak two in exactly the same way as if the opponents had opened with one of that suit. The most important addition to this, however, is to incorporate Lebensohl-style responses once we double for take-out. So the scheme is as follows:

- **A SUIT OVERCALL**

*At the two level*, a good five-card suit and the equivalent of an opening hand.

*At the three level*, a six-card suit should almost always be held and again the equivalent of an opening bid.

**Do not** make an overcall with a weak hand yourself – this just leads to calamity and disaster!

- **A JUMP OVERCALL**

e.g. (2♦) – 3♥ / or (2♥) – 3♠

This should be a 'strong jump overcall', traditionally about 16-18 HCP and *always* with at least a six-card suit.

**Note** 'strong over weak and weak over strong' as a maxim to guide you.

Thus over a weak-two bid a jump overcall should be strong, whereas over a strong-two bid a jump overcall should be played as weak!

- **A 2NT OVERCALL**

This is *natural* (good 15-18 HCP) with a balanced hand and at least one stopper in the opponent's suit. Please note this is **not** the unusual 2NT.

**Responses** should be exactly the same as if you were responding to an opening bid of 2NT: Stayman (or puppet Stayman) and transfers etc. should still apply.

- **A TAKE-OUT DOUBLE**

This is the area where most improvement has developed over the years. I use Lebensohl-style responses, similar to those after intervention over 1NT (see my last article in issue 245) but slightly different. Using a weak 2♥ opening as an example, the scheme works like this:

After (2♥) – Dble – (Pass):

- 2♠ = natural, 0-7 HCP.
- 2NT = artificial, 0-7 HCP (The doubler is required at this stage to bid 3♣ unless he has a very strong hand, 19+ approx.).
- 3♣/3♦ = natural / invitational, 8-11 HCP approx.
- 3♥ = cue-bid of opponents suit; this is forcing to game and acts as Stayman.
- 3♠ = natural (usually 5+ spades); can be played as invitational or forcing depending on partnership agreement. I play it as forcing; to invite, bid 2NT then 3♠ over partner's 3♣ response – simple!

**The key here** is that when you double partner is *forced to respond*. It is very difficult in normal methods to judge

whether to continue to bid once partner has responded at the three-level. If you pass, partner invariably has 8 or 9 points and game is missed, whereas if you bid then he always seems to have a mere 3 or 4 points and game will fail. How frustrating!

So with real values (8+ points and a five-card suit, or 9+ and a four-card suit) the doubler's partner should bid three of his suit. If the doubler's partner is weaker (0-7 points approx.), he must start with the 2NT artificial response which asks the doubler to bid 3♣ for the moment – unless particularly strong.

For example:

♠ 6 2		♠ 7 5 4
♥ K Q 7 6		♥ 8 3
♦ K Q 3 2		♦ A 9 8 6 4
♣ A Q 10		♣ J 7 6

West	North	East	South
			2♠
Dble	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	All Pass

East-West can now stop at a safe level since the 16-HCP doubling hand *knows* his partner to have only 0-7 HCP.

### Defence vs Lucas-style Bids

Many play 2♥ as five hearts and a minor and 2♠ as five spades and another suit with a weak hand.

The style here should be to defend as if the opponents have opened with a natural weak-two bid. Thus suit bids are natural, double is take-out, jump bids are strong etc.

Again, it is very important to incorporate the Lebensohl-style responses once you have doubled these bids.

I can sense some of you reading this (I hope some of you still are!) feeling that this is all a bit 'expert'. In reality Lebensohl-style responses are efficient, easy to learn

and give you a real edge. Well worth the effort of reading this article I would say!

## Defence vs the Multi ♦

The style to adopt when the opponents open a Multi is broadly to bid as naturally as possible and *always assume* initially that they have a weak rather than a strong option. It is this terror that they might have a strong hand that frightens inexperienced players into meekness and often allows their opponents to get away with murder.

Here is my basic scheme:

- **IN THE DIRECT SEAT**

i.e. (2♦) – ?

- Bids are natural (again at least five cards in the suit at the two level and virtually always six at the three level).
- Jump bids are strong.
- 2NT is natural.
- Double – best played as 12-15 balanced (-ish) or any hand 19+. The assumption from partner is that you have 12-15 HCP balanced. This allows you in on many hands – and guess what? Once again we incorporate Lebensohl-style responses, e.g. after (2♦) – Dble – (2♠) – 2NT; the 2NT bid is Lebensohl, wanting to compete somewhere, showing about 4-7 HCP and asking the doubler to bid 3♣ initially as before. After

the double, responses of 3♣/3♦/3♥ are natural, constructive but non-forcing, and showing about 8-10 or 8-11 HCP.

- **IN FOURTH SEAT**

i.e. (2♦) – Pass – (2♥/2♠) – Dble

Double is take-out of the suit just bid. Thus with:

♠	6
♥	K Q 9 5
♦	K Q 8 2
♣	K Q 7 6

- After (2♦) – Pass – (2♥) you should pass but after (2♦) – Pass – (2♠) you should double.
- Over (2♦) – Pass – (2♥) – Pass – (2♠) – Pass – (Pass) you should also double.

Just a couple of points to finish with. When the opponents open a Multi, they can obviously be weak or strong. Assuming they are weak, they will usually have a Weak Two in a major. You *must* take care, if overcalling (whether immediately or in fourth seat) into a major, to have a six-card suit or a well structured five-card suit as you might find you are playing in their suit! Also, if you do overcall in a major, the best use from partner in bidding the *other* major is to use it as an Unassuming Cue-bid, i.e. to show a *good raise* in your suit. □

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