

A Different Kind of Game-Forcing Raise

by Jim Jacoby

Conventions designed to show a trump fit and distributional features in the responder's hand have become increasingly popular among tournament players. These conventions often enable partnerships to reach sound slams that are based on a good fit rather than on an abundance of high-card points.

The Jacoby 2NT response to a major-suit opening serves a similar purpose, but is different in that it attempts to elicit information about distributional features in the opener's hand.

2NT Response = Traditional Double Raise

The immediate response of 2NT to a major suit (1♠ – 2NT) replaces the traditional double raise (1♠ – 3♠) as a force to game announcing at least four-card trump support.

Opener's Response to 2NT

Opener's responses to 2NT are automatic:

- With a singleton in a side suit, opener identifies it by bidding that suit at the three level.
- With a void, opener jumps to the four level in the void suit.
- When opener has no singleton or void and 12 to 14 HCP, he bids four of the agreed trump suit.
- When opener has no singleton or void and 15 to 16 HCP, he bids 3NT.
- When opener has no singleton or void with 17 or more HCP, he bids three of the agreed suit.

Opener's Hands without a Singleton or Void

There is an easy way to decide which response to 2NT best describes the value of the hand for those who would rather not be restricted to using an exact point count to determine what their rebid should be when no singleton or void is held.

- If you would pass a limit raise of 9 to 11 HCP, simply bid four of the agreed suit over 2NT.
- If you would accept a limit-raise invitation to game, bid 3NT.
- If you would begin looking for slam over a limit raise, rebid three of the agreed trump suit.

Partnership Understandings

There are a few commonsense rules involved in playing the Jacoby 2NT.

1. First, you and your partner should have the understanding that when four of the agreed suit is bid, this connotes a general lack of interest in slam. Of course, if the player who is signing off has cuebid some controls earlier, partner is free to continue the investigation.
2. Second, regardless of opener's strength, he must show a singleton or void in response to partner's 2NT inquiry. The only exception may come in that rare instance when the agreed suit is hearts and opener has a void in spades. This would necessitate a jump to 4♠, taking the partnership past the game level. In this case, opener, with a mediocre hand, may choose to treat his void as a singleton initially by bidding 3♠ and await later developments.

Slam Possibilities

In determining slam possibilities, the key is to check for wasted strength. If the player who has bid 2NT discovers that his partner holds a singleton in a suit in which he has some values, he should realize that those values are likely to be wasted. Conversely, it pays to be aggressive when the holding opposite partner's singleton is A-x-x or all small cards – this means the values in the other suits are all “working.”

Examples of the Convention in Action

1.	OPENER	RESPONDER
	♠ K Q 10 8 3	♠ A J 7 4
	♥ 3	♥ K Q 10 7
	♦ A Q 4	♦ K J 3
	♣ A J 3 2	♣ 10 6
	The bidding:	
	1♠	2NT
	3♥ (a)	4♠ (b)

a. Singleton heart.

b. Heart values are wasted.

2. OPENER

♠ A Q 8 6 5

♥ K 10 3 2

♦ A 3 2

♣ 4

The bidding:

1 ♠

3 ♣ (a)

3 ♠ (c)

4 ♦ (e)

5 ♥ (g)

6 ♠ (i)

RESPONDER

♠ K 10 7 4

♥ A J 4

♦ K 8 4

♣ A 7 6

2NT

3 ♥ (b)

4 ♣ (d)

5 ♦ (f)

5 ♠ (h)

a. Singleton club.

b. ♥ A

c. Not a signoff, but a waiting bid to allow partner to show the ♣A economically if he has it.

d. ♣ A

e. ♦ A

f. ♦ K

g. ♥ K

h. "I've told my story."

i. "We should have a good play for slam."

3.	OPENER	RESPONDER
	♠ A K 5 4 2	♠ Q 10 9 6
	♥ K J 3	♥ A 8
	♦ A 7 4	♦ K Q 9 5
	♣ 7 5	♣ A 6 4
	The bidding:	
	1 ♠	2NT

3NT (a)

4 ♣ (b)

4 ♦ (c)

4 ♥ (d)

4 ♠ (e)

5 ♦ (f)

5 ♥ (g)

6 ♠ (h)

a. 15-16 HCP, no singleton or void.

b. ♣ A.

c. ♦ A.

d. ♥ A.

e. "I'm going to need more."

f. ♦ K

g. ♥ K

h. "Slam's a good bet."

About Jim Jacoby

Jim Jacoby, one of the world's leading players until his untimely death in 1991, was one of the original members of the full-time professional bridge team known as the ACES. It was organized by Dallas financier Ira Corn for the express purpose of returning the world team championship to the USA. The team won the Bermuda Bowl in 1970 and 1971. Jacoby is the co-author with his father, Oswald Jacoby (1902-1984), of the Jacoby 2NT and Jacoby transfer conventions.