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(70) Constructive Bidding Tools: Kokish over Strong 2♣

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Level: Advanced

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General

Big Balanced hands are relatively easy for the Opening Bidder to describe:

- 2N 19+ to 21 points
- 2♣-2♦-2N 22 to 24- points (same if 2♥* Bust Response to 2♣)
- 2♣-2♦-3N 24+ to 26 points (If 2♥* Bust Response to 2♣ then 3N could be 24+ points.)

Note: After a 2♦ Game Force then 2N could be 27-28 points.

But when the Opener has a 3N rebid then Responder is left with a difficult problem. Most players play Systems On over 3N rebids (Stayman and Transfers) but they must still guess what to do if they have a 5-card Major. If Opener has 3-cards in Responder's Major it will be right to Transfer. If Opener has 2-cards in Responder's Major then it will be right to pass. This is a problem for Responder because we are too high --- no room to show 5-card Major and still offer 3N.

Kokish Solution to this Problem

Kokish is a conventional bid by the Opener after they have opened 2♣. We will use this "relay" to help us save space and better describe our hand. Let's see how this works.

We use a 2♥ Rebid (by Opener) as a Relay.

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥* - 2♠*
- This 2♥ bid forces Responder to bid 2♠ - Responder's bid means nothing about ♠.

Now the Opener gets a chance to make another bid. Specifically, this allows the Opener to show more balanced hands:

- 2N directly after 2♣.
- Bid 2♥ Relay first, then rebid 2N.



We use these two different auctions to show more ranges of balanced hands at a level that gives us more space to communicate – starting at 2N.

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2N 22 to 24- points
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥* - 2♠* - 2N 24+ to 26 points

Now we can have much better auctions when we have the 24 to 26 point balanced hands because Partner can still use their normal 2N responding tools at the 3-level (Stayman and Transfers) and stop in 3N if we do not have a fit.

Note: Kokish can be played regardless of the meaning of 2♦ in response to 2♣ - whether you play 2♥ as a bust or not.

Bigger Balanced Hands

Now that we can show our 22 to 24- point and 24+ to 26 point hands with 2N then we can use 3N to show even larger hands:

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 3N 27-28 points
- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥* - 2♠* - 3N 29-30 points

Partner will then be in a good place to judge how high for us to get – to bid slam or not. This is an excellent structure of describing balanced hands and giving Responder room to continue the auction and look for fits, since we will play Systems On.

What To Do with Hearts

You might ask yourself, if we use 2♥ as an artificial bid (relay to 2♠) then what do we do when we actually have ♥? First, if we are 5332 with a 5-card ♥ suit then we treat this as a balanced hand – as we do with all 5332 hands. So we will not have to deal with trying to describe that hand type.

If we have 5+♥ and a 4+cards in another suit or 6+card ♥ suit we still need to know how to describe our hand. Well, it turns out to be easy – we just bid naturally. After we bid 2♥ (Kokish relay) we then bid our other suit:

- 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♥* - 2♠* -
 - 3♣ -- This shows 5+♥ and 4+♣.
 - 3♦ -- This shows 5+♥ and 4+♦.
 - 3♥ -- This shows 6+♥.
 - 3♠ -- This shows 5+♥ and 4+♠, with longer ♥ than ♠.

Once we make any bid other than Notrump over the 2♠ relay then that new bid is natural and it turns the 2♥ bid into a natural 5+card ♥ suit.



Some Advanced Kokish Variations (Not for most players)

(Optional) We can add some additional conventional variations. These are Kokish variations and not something that all players who play Kokish play (or need to play.)

Problem Hands – Strong hand with 4-card Majors and with 5+card \diamond . Some players play that the following auctions shows this hand:

- $2\clubsuit - 2\diamond - 3\heartsuit$ 4-card \heartsuit and 5+ \diamond
- $2\clubsuit - 2\diamond - 3\spadesuit$ 4-card \spadesuit and 5+ \diamond

There are other advanced switches to the classical Kokish structure, but we won't get into too many here.

Conclusion

Kokish is another application (just like Lebensohl) of a conventional relay. This relay allows the Opener to make two calls in a very small amount of space. Thus, the Opener is able to show a lot about their hand without eating up much bidding space. This is valuable, because the $2\clubsuit$ opening bid already ate up a lot of valuable bidding space. *Kokish* helps us describe our hand and gives up very little – just what we want in a convention!