

DEFENSE AGAINST MULTI TWO DIAMONDS

A "multi-color" opening shows one of two specified suits, neither of which is named. The most popular is "Multi Two Diamonds," Multi for short, which shows a weak two bid in spades or hearts. Responder bids 2♥ if he would pass a weak two bid in hearts, 2♠ if he would pass a weak two bid in spades but would raise hearts, and so on. A 2NT response asks opener to clarify his hand, perhaps with a transfer to his suit. The ACBL requires Multi users to disclose it in advance ("Pre-Alert") and to offer opponents a choice of two ACBL- approved defenses to consult during the auction. Neither is of much value. The following is an alternative defense that may be used (but can't be offered to opponents by Multi users).

Multi may be based on some sort of very strong hand rather than a weak two bid. It is fairly safe to assume the opening is of the weak sort, which it usually is, until opener indicates otherwise. You can sometimes pass the opening, find out about opener's hand on the next round, and then act if he is weak.

If there is no strong adjunct, the convention is properly called Wagner. A defense against Wagner must take into account that, unlike Multi, the 2♦ opening may be passed around to fourth seat when responder has very long diamonds and is very short in the major suits (or, taking a chance, in just one major). With Multi's strong adjunct, the pass possibility is small enough to be ignored.

Both Multi and Wagner have weaknesses that should be exploited. They give defenders two opportunities for acting, immediate or delayed, providing more ways to describe their hands. They often let defenders into the bidding at a lower level than would have been possible after a natural weak two bid. Responder can seldom make a preemptive raise, not knowing opener's suit for sure. The same ignorance applies to his opening leads when opener has not been able to describe his hand.

As when facing standard weak two bids, you may get fixed when neither of you has enough to enter the bidding but the hand is your way. Accept it, because with this defense you will have many more advantages than disadvantages when comparing with those competing against standard weak twos. Be satisfied with that.

As against normal weak two bids, defenders must be reasonable in competing, even when balancing, if the Multi opening comes in first or second seat. They can compete more aggressively, of course, when responder is a passed hand.

Double for Diamonds

The following defense (“Double for Diamonds”) may be modified for use against any multi-color type opening that has a strong adjunct. I am much indebted to Danny Kleinman for his great assistance in this effort, but any dumb actions recommended here are mine, not his.

Goals:

- To take advantage of Multi's drawbacks (e.g., second hand usually gets two chances to act)
- To be better off, never worse off, than those defending a standard weak two
- To show accurately as many types of hand as possible

M stands for a major suit, m for a minor suit, PH/UPH for passed hand/unpassed hand

2♦-

Dbl - diamonds and a major, typically 5-5

With a bad hand or a strong hand advancer usually passes the double. A later voluntary bid (e.g., not a forced preference) shows a strong hand.

With moderate values he bids a major of 3+ cards, 2♥ with both, or he can bid a non-forcing 3♣ or 3♦. Bid 3♥ or 4♥ with strength and 3+ in both majors.

2NT is forcing, natural, implying 2-2 majors (stopped) and a diamond fit, but is artificial over responder's 2♠ bid.

A redouble by responder is ignored.

If responder bids 2♥ advancer doubles with 3+ hearts (but not spades), and bids 2♠ with 3+ spades or 3+ in both majors.

If responder bids 2♠ advancer doubles with 3+ spades or 3+ in both majors and bids 2NT with 3+ hearts (but not spades) OR a strong hand.

When advancer has shown 3+ spades, opener passing, intervenor bids 2NT to deny spades, and advancer then chooses a contract.

With a minimum double, intervenor should not bid (his hand is known) over a rebid by opener, but he can double (penalty).

If intervenor's major is known (but not bid) by advancer, intervenor's bid of the major shows a six-card suit

Intervenor's 3♣ rebid (or double of 3♣) is artificial, showing a strong hand.

2♥/2♠/3♣/3♦- natural

2NT/3NT - natural by UPH, minors by PH

3♥/3♠/4♥/4♣ - too good for a simple overcall

4♣ - clubs and a major, game strength (4♦ asks, 4♥/4♣ is to play)

4♦ - diamonds and a major, game strength (4♥ is pass-or-correct)

4NT - minors, game strength

With clubs and spades, pass and bid spades next round (over a likely 2♥ or 3♥)

With clubs and hearts, pass and bid clubs next round (over a likely 2♠)

With a takeout double of one major, pass, hoping to double that major next round

With a solid m, one major stopped, consider passing & cue bidding or bidding NT next round

With a hand too good for 3m, pass and bid strongly later (e.g., cue bid, notrump bid, jump bid)

2♦-P-2♥- (could be fairly strong with short hearts) -

2♠ - natural, possibly a two-suited hand

Dbl - shortness (takeout double) or length (possibly two-suited)*

3♣ - natural

3♦- natural, maybe with clubs too

3M/4M - natural

4m - m and spades, game strength

2NT/3NT natural by UPH, minors by PH

4NT minors, game strength

*Opener's next call, pass or bid, will reveal the meaning of a double.

2♦-P-2♠- (a heart raise, but may have only three hearts and may be weak) -

As above, but 4m is m and hearts

2♦-P-2♥/2♠-P; P or 2♦-P-2♥-P; 2♠ -

Dbl is takeout, possibly 4=6 major-minor

Cue bid of opener's suit asks for a stopper (solid minor)

Over 2♥ a spade bid shows clubs too and 3m is natural and strong

Over 2♠ a club bid shows hearts too and 3♦ is natural and strong

2NT/3NT natural by UPH - needed to know openers's suit

4m - natural, too strong for original 3m

2♦-P-2♠-P; 3♥-

Dbl is takeout, possibly 4=6 spades-minor

3♠ - spades and clubs

3NT - natural by UPH, minors by PH

4m - natural, too strong for original 3m

2♦-P-2NT (forcing inquiry, unlikely to be a bluff) -

Dbl is extremely strong, enough to beat 2NT. Pass with less.

3m/3M/4M natural

3NT natural (long minor), minors by PH

4♣ - clubs and a major, game strength, 4♦asks (other advances natural)

4♦- diamonds and a major, game strength, 4♥/4♠ is pass-or-correct

4NT - minors, game strength

Note: Responder would usually preempt with a 3♥/4♥ pass-or-correct response when holding support for both majors and a weak hand, so 2NT tends to show a good hand. Since 2NT is forcing, fourth seat can pass and act later if that seems wiser. If opener's response to 2NT is a transfer bid, a double shows that suit and a bid in the target suit asks for a stopper (solid minor). With a takeout double of the target suit, pass and double that suit next round. If opener's rebid is artificial a double shows the suit, and if the rebid is natural a double is takeout.

If 2♦ gets passed around (unlikely), use the Wagner defense shown below.

Defense Against Wagner

For the sake of simplicity, we do not change the meaning of direct actions against 2♦ in order to cater to the possibility of its being passed around. That happens too infrequently to justify compromising the Multi defense in the direct seat.

If 2♦ does get passed around it will be because responder is very short in both majors (but may not be weak) or is very short in just one major (a reasonable risk when weak). If the former, defenders likely have a good major suit fit. If the latter, they have the preponderance of strength and should be in the auction. It is also possible that a weak third seat will pass even with short diamonds as a sort of psych. Fourth seat actions:

Double - opening strength or better, balanced hand. Advances are all natural except for a diamond cue bid, which asks for a major or, secondarily, a diamond stopper.

2NT - stronger, natural, “systems on”

2♥/2♠ - natural overcall, 3♦ advance asks for diamond stopper

3♣ - natural, 3♦ advance asks for a diamond stopper, secondarily asks for a major

3♦ - takeout of diamonds, does not promise another bid

3♥/3♠/4♥/4♣ - too good for 2♥/2♠

3NT - natural, too strong for 2NT

4♣/4♦ - two-suited in that minor and a major, forcing by UPH. Over 4♣, 4♦ asks for the major and other advances are natural. Over 4♦ advancer can make a pass-or-correct major-suit bid, with other advances natural.

4NT - natural, too strong for 3NT

These bids do not cover all bases, and some are dangerous. Accept that you will be “fixed” occasionally.