

REVISED: 5/20/21

Today's talk is all about the Jacoby 2NT bid.

**ALERT!** There is material in the POSTMORTEM at the end of these notes that relates to something extremely important. I don't have time to go over it in video portion today but it is in the POSTMORTEM notes which are available to you after the lecture. **PLEASE**, download the notes and read them.

## LARRY COHEN SEMINARS – THE JACOBY 2NT RAISE

Sixty years ago, if partner bid a major you could raise to the two level, the three level, or the four level. Easy.

Today if you want to raise partner's major, you can choose from:

A normal raise.

A limit raise.

A splinter raise.

A balanced forcing raise.

A forcing 1NT bid followed by a preference to two of partner's suit.

A forcing 1NT bid followed by a jump to three of partner's suit.

A forcing 1NT bid followed by a jump to game in partner's suit.

And now, you can use a Drury 2C bid if you are a passed hand.

Or perhaps a Drury 2D bid if you are using two-way Drury.

And, just in case you need more tools, you can mix in preemptive raises.

And you have a litany of other bids like a jumps to 3C, or 3D or 3H to show various hands.

How about fit-showing jumps?

How about something called a mini-splinter raise?

And, of course, a 2NT bid if RHO doubles your partner's opening bid of 1H or 1S.

How about using transfer bids after RHO doubles a major for takeout?

1S – DbI - 2H, for some scientists, shows a spade raise.

I'm sure I missed a few.

Whew.

This discussion will feature just one of these. It's the Jacoby 2NT raise.

The Jacoby 2NT bid is used by nearly everyone as their game-forcing major-suit raise. This is it:

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

The Jacoby 2NT bid is used only after partner opens 1H or 1S in first or second seat. It is not used when partner opens 1C or 1D.

The Jacoby 2NT bid is used on all balanced hands with four or more trumps and game values.

## THE JACOBY 2NT RAISE METHOD

What follows is the basic structure for a Jacoby 2NT raise that is largely used today. There are variations in use but what follows is used by a majority of bidders. You will see that there is a large discussion on splinter bids. They are an important bid that will help you define many of your 2NT auctions.

### WHAT DOES A JACOBY 2NT BID SHOW?

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

South is showing a game-forcing heart raise.

The 2NT bid shows game values with four or more trumps, but it can be made on far stronger hands. Here are some examples of a 2NT response to 1H:

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand One

QJ4

K1043

QJ7

KJ6

Keep this hand in mind. If your partner makes a 2NT response to your major, he could have this hand. This hand has thirteen high-card points but you should feel that this is not a nice thirteen points. Take a good look at this hand.

Compare it with the next hand, Hand Two.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand Two

KJ93

AQ97

K109

43

Bid 2NT.

This hand has thirteen high-card points, the same as Hand One. It also has useful spot cards. The ten of diamonds and the three nines are nice. It also has a little shape. And it has quality high-card points. This hand is much better than Hand One.

During a bidding sequence, the value of your hand can vary from bid to bid. You will often be expected to evaluate the hand you are holding. You should feel that Hand Two is worth three, maybe four support points more than Hand One.

It is not uncommon to have a ten-point hand suddenly be worth fourteen points, or to drop to five or six.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand Three

32

KJ9654

AQ8

54

Bid 2NT. In support of hearts, this hand is clearly worth something in the fourteen point range.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand Four

874

KQJ6

KQJ

KJ9

Four trumps. Game-forcing values. 2NT is the only bid you should consider. Note that when you have a 4-3-3-3 hand, it suffers a little from its boring shape. It has no aces but the chunky solidity of the hand will be good.



W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand Five

AQ

KQ97

54

AK1083

Bid 2NT. Setting the trump suit is almost always the right thing to do. The Jacoby bid will let you learn what kind of hand partner has on his next bid, and that bid will help you decide what to do next. Some writers suggest you bid 2C first. If you do that, problems can emerge. For instance, if partner bids 2H, what might you do next? None of your bids will carry the message that you have four-card support.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand Six

Q9

QJ97543

AK

74

Bid 2NT with this hand, too. Bids like 4H do not show this kind of hand. You need more information. One good thing happened here. You got to make your 2NT bid. If East had bid 3S first, a very possible event, you would have had a different problem.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

Hand Seven

AJ32

KJ63

AQ

KJ9

Some day you will pick up a hand like this. Some might bid 4NT, thinking there's no problem.

Bad idea, actually.

Bid 2NT. If partner says he has a normal minimum hand, that will mean about 13-15 points. This nineteen-point hand is not likely to make a grand slam facing that. If you bid 2NT, you will get useful information which can help.

OPENER'S REBIDS WHEN HE HAS A BALANCED HAND

HOW DOES OPENER RESPOND TO A JACOBY 2NT BID?

*I would have thought that by now, there would be general agreements on this. So, I looked up Jacoby 2NT raises online and found lots of different ideas. Well, here are mine. I will not say they are perfect. But I will say they work for me.*

*Frankly, lack of perfection is everywhere when one plays bridge. It's unavoidable. We do the best we can. We often have to use judgment, an illusive quality. That's good bridge. Sometimes things happen which are not expected. Good luck plays a role. Sometimes bad luck plays a role. Enjoy the good. Learn from the bad.*

## OPENER REBIDS FOUR OF HIS MAJOR

W	N	E	S
			1S
P	2NT	P	4S

Opener can jump to four of his major. It's a warning that he has a minimum hand. Responder usually passes, although he is entitled to continue with a maximum hand. Opener is expected to have a balanced hand. He might have a singleton. Very rare.

W	N	E	S
			1H

P	2NT	P	?
---	-----	---	---

Hand One

QJ3

QJ863

K2

KJ5

Bid 4H. You can reasonably hope to make a game. But you don't want to go higher unless partner has a beast. If you think about it, partner will need three aces and a king, and even that might not be enough. Remember too that partner will have a balanced hand most of the time.

Note this hand starts with two queens and three jacks.

SYMPTOMS OF POOR HANDS ARE:

*ONE      Minimum high-card points.*

*TWO      No aces.*

*THREE    Only two kings.*

*FOUR     Lots of queens and jacks.*

*It's hard to imagine any minimum hand with four jacks being good.*

*It's hard to imagine any minimum hand with four queens being good.*

*It's hard to imagine any hand with a mix of five queens or jacks being any good.*

*FIVE      5-3-3-2 distribution. It's the worst shape you can have when you have a five-card major.*

W	N	E	S
			1H

P	2NT	P	?
---	-----	---	---

Hand Two

QJ

KQJ765

K8

J94

Bid 4H. I would always open this hand but it stinks. If the opponents were to bid 7NT, I'd wonder if I could beat it with this hand. Note this hand has two queens and three jacks. And no aces. Never a good start.



W	N	E	S
			1H
P	2NT	P	?

Hand Three

K

QJ764

QJ6

KJ43

Bid 4H. If this is a 1H opening bid for you, it is most definitely a 4H rebid if partner uses the Jacoby 2NT bid. Your singleton king is a very poor value. I'd open it out of courtesy to the thirteen high-card points. If partner bids 2NT, it means I've gotten lucky. I would not push my luck. I'd bid 4H. Note that this hand has two queens and three jacks and a singleton king. And no aces.

The singleton king of spades isn't going to sway me into bidding 3S to show a singleton.

W    N    E    S

1H

P    2NT P    ?

Hand Four

Q7

KQ863

QJ4

QJ3

I wouldn't open this hand but today, some do. I would rebid 4H, hoping it ends the bidding. Your only good card is the king of hearts. There's nothing to like about this hand.

## OPENER REBIDS 3NT

W   N   E   S

1H

P   2NT P   3NT

Opener can bid 3NT. This bid starts at a good minimum hand and goes up to perhaps sixteen decent support points. Opener always has a balanced hand for this bid. Your judgment may be called on to decide if a hand is good or poor.

## EXAMPLES OF A 3NT REBID BY OPENER

W	N	E	S
			1H

P	2NT	P	?
---	-----	---	---

Hand One

Q9

KJ987

AQ3

KJ5

If you play a 1NT opener is 15-17 and if you have agreed to open 1NT with a hand like this one, then you will not have this hand. However, if you do have it, your bid is 3NT showing a balanced hand in the 13-16 point range.

Hand Two

KJ2

AQ9765

A9

83

Bid 3NT. This hand has classy points.

Hand Three

65

AKJ54

K54

Q109

Bid 3NT. This is not a wonderful hand. But it is much better than the kind of hand you would jump to 4H on. 3NT shows you have fair values. If partner gets interested in a slam, you will deny interest. This is a common auction in which you will have to decide just how good or how bad a hand is.

Hand Four

53

AKQ1087

K43

Q3

Bid 3NT. This is a good but not wonderful hand. Your queen of hearts is probably not needed.

Hand Four

AQ63

AQ1085

76

32

Another 3NT bid. It's not that this is a strong hand. It's that it is better than one of those crummy hands that jump to game.

You have twelve points, which is minimum, but you have all of them working together, which helps.



Hand Five

32

AJ98654

K2

K10

Bid 3NT. This eleven-point hand has far more value than most thirteen- or fourteen-point opening bids. This is where your judgment comes in. It's still a minimum hand but given that, it's a very good one. Too bad you don't have a singleton spade and another club or diamond. That would add another two or three points to this hand. But if you had that singleton, you would have shown it instead of bidding 3NT.

OPENER CAN REBID HIS SUIT AFTER A 2NT RESPONSE.

W	N	E	S
			1S
P	2NT	P	3S

Opener's strongest rebid with balanced hands is three of his suit. He denies a singleton.

When opener rebids his suit, it is often the prelude to reaching a slam. At minimum, it shows fifteen spectacular high-card points. Sixteen high-card points is the norm. There's no upper limit.

## EXAMPLES OF OPENER REBIDDING HIS SUIT AFTER A 2NT RESPONSE

Hand One

W	N	E	S
			1S

P	2NT	P	?
---	-----	---	---

K10874

AKJ3

43

A9

Bid 3S. In theory, you need sixteen points when you rebid your suit. The values here are all good and you have some shape. You are entitled to upgrade.

Hand Two

KQ10875

AJ10

A3

54

Bid 3S. This hand has only fourteen points, a bit less than the previous hand. Its shape, however, is dynamic and the high-card points are also solid.

KQ543

QJ5

KJ5

KQ

This hand has seventeen points. Which hand would you prefer?

Hand Three

AQ764

K763

A2

K10

Bid 3S. This hand is more classic.

Hand Four

KJ876

QJ

KQ7

AQ2

Bid 3S. When your hands become stronger, you will run into some hands that are balanced. This hand has eighteen points but the hand is not as pretty as some of your sixteen-point hands which have better quality values.

Hand Five

AK1087

AK

AJ43

98

Bid 3S. This is one of your bigger hands. Probably as big as you are likely to see. You expect to reach a slam, but there's no need to rush. Bid 3S and see what partner can do.

## OPENER CAN SHOW A SINGLETON AFTER A 2NT RESPONSE

Finally, a look at interesting hands. Balanced hands are boring.

Shape hands are where the fun is.

Hands with shape are like waifs in a breeze. For a second you think you see them and in a heartbeat they morph into something else. May be something good. Maybe something bad. Auctions where opener has a singleton are exciting when you discover your fit is better than expected. But sometimes those singleton bids sound an alarm.

Opener can show a singleton by bidding that suit at the three level. All of these bids show singletons. There is no limit to what they show. Could be a nice minimum up to a 20-count.

W    N    E    S

1S

P    2NT P    3C,D,H

These bids show singletons. Can be a minimum hand or a huge hand.



Hand One

W    N    E    S

1H

P    2NT P    3C

874

AQ864

KQJ4

2

Bid 3C. You promise a singleton. You may have twelve points. You may have twenty. If your partner likes your bid, your potential is high.

Here's the kind of thing that can happen if luck is with you:

W	N	E	S
			1H

P	2NT	P	3C
---	-----	---	----

A53

K9752

A2

J84

874

AQ864

KQJ4

2

6H is cold. Twenty-four high-card points. Twenty-three if you don't count the jack of clubs. Bidding slam is possible. I would say that without a splinter bid, it would be impossible to reach.

Hand Two

4

QJ8743

AKJ

KQ8

Bid 3S. Showing a singleton spade. This time you have a good hand. Slam might be cold. Opener can have a wide range of hands.

Your splinter may help you reach a grand slam. But not if this is the layout:

W	N	E	S
			1H

P	2NT	P	3S
---	-----	---	----

P	4H	P	P
---	----	---	---

P			
---	--	--	--

KQ96			
------	--	--	--

AK92			
------	--	--	--

Q8			
----	--	--	--

732			
-----	--	--	--

4			
---	--	--	--

QJ8743			
--------	--	--	--

AKJ			
-----	--	--	--

KQ8			
-----	--	--	--

You can make an overtrick but no slam. When you bid 3S, North will discount his spade honors. They may turn out to be worthless. It's hands like this hand and the previous hand where the splinter information is so valuable.

RESPONDER CAN SHOW A SINGLETON

## SOME EXAMPLES WITH SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	3S

Hand One

SOUTH

4

KJ94

QJ74

KJ43

This is not a 2NT bid. But it is a splinter bid. Bid 3S. Game points with a singleton spade.

***There's Something Special About this 3S Splinter Bid.***

*It leaves room for partner to bid something useful. It leaves room for partner to tell you something at the four level. If your splinter bid had been 4D, your partner has less room to explore.*

W	N	E	S
	1S	P	4C

Hand Two

SOUTH

AQ873

KJ4

AK93

3

Bid 4C.

***There's Something Special About this 4C Splinter Bid.***

Just like the splinter in Hand One, this splinter leaves lots of room for opener to bid.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	3S

Hand Three

SOUTH

7

AJ875

AQ87

QJ9

Bid 3S. This splinter is a good one. If your partner bids 4H, showing a bad hand, you can comfortably pass.

If he bids 4C, for example, you know he has a reasonable hand or better. This is news you can use. Bidding 4NT here would be reasonable.

Hand Four

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	3S

SOUTH

4

QJ875

AKJ

AQ74

Bid 3S. This splinter is about as good as it gets. If partner signs off in 4H, you will continue by asking for aces.



Hand Five

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	4D
P	4H	P	?

KJ3

AJ543

J64

K5

AQ2

KQ76

2

A10765

North, expecting South to have 12-15 support points, will sign off in 4H. Note that North likes what he has. As minimums go, North is pleased, especially since he has nothing wasted in diamonds.

South will cuebid 4S. North, knowing South is looking for slam, will bid Blackwood.

IMPORTANT BRIDGE AXIOM

A hand with kings learns more from Blackwood than the hand with aces.

## OPENER CAN SHOW A VOID

This is rare. It is also something you must discuss.

W   N   E   S  
                   1S

P    2NT P    ?

If you have a void, there is still room for a bid that will show it. If South jumps to 4C, 4D, or 4H, he is showing a void.

Be aware that some players play this jump to show a good five-card suit.

There's merit to both treatments. I suggest, rather strongly, that you use it to show a void. It's specific information that partner can use. If you play a jump here shows a five-card suit, it means you must have a singleton or a void somewhere. You won't be able to tell partner which singleton or which void you have.

## WARNING

Be very aware that there can be a snag here.

W   N   E   S  
                   1H

P    2NT P    ?

If you have a spade void, you may be better off bidding 3S only. Partner will expect a singleton but will know you might have a void. If you jump to 4S, it may get you too high. You can bid 4S if you have a void and a maximum hand. If you have an ordinary hand, I suggest bidding 3S.

Hand One

W    N    E    S

1S

P    2NT P    ?

J9874

AK75

QJ87

--

Bid 4C. A void. This can be wonderful news for partner, or terrible news.

Note that partner can bid Blackwood and will know that any ace you have won't be in clubs.

North will have a problem here since he will have to dump all of his conceptions about his hand and start again from scratch. His before and after evaluations may be as far as seven points apart.

Hand Two

W    N    E    S

1S

P    2NT P    ?

KQ9864

--

AK875

76

Bid 4H. Showing a void.

ONE JACOBY 2NT auctions start with opener bidding 1H or 1S.

TWO Assume the next player passes.  
Jacoby 2NT methods are off if they bid.

THREE Responder bids 2NT to say he has game-forcing points with four or more trumps.

FOUR Opener then makes a bid that describes more about his hand. He may show a singleton or a void. He may make a bid that shows points.

FIVE Then the real bidding starts.

## IMPORTANT BIDDING TRICKS YOU CAN USE AFTER YOU BID 2NT AND OPENER MAKES HIS REBID

After the initial auction reaches stage five, there will be times when someone wants to make a strong bid but does not want to make a bid that takes up bidding room.

Often, opener or responder can make a waiting bid by bidding three of the trump suit or 3NT. These bids can be used to say that they have good hands but want to hear more from partner first.

## Auction One

W	N	E	S
			1H
P	2NT	P	3C
P	3D	P	3H

SOUTH

QJ53

AKJ43

KQ2

3

North's 3D bid was good news for South.

South's 3H bid is not a signoff. The partnership is committed to bidding a game.

3H is a bid that says opener is interested in going further but does not have a bid he wants to make now. In this case, the 3H bid should get North to look at his spade suit. North hopes South can bid 3S, showing a spade honor. In which case, 4NT can be used.



## Auction Two

W	N	E	S
	1S	P	2NT
P	3S	P	3NT

Here, it is responder who uses this trick. South showed his game-forcing hand with 2NT and learned that partner has a maximum hand. Slams are often in the picture after this beginning.

K1074

KQ3

KQJ3

87

South can bid 3NT, telling partner that South is interested in a slam but does not want to make a cuebid.

## Example Two

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

P	3D	P	3H	3D shows a singleton. Values unknown.
---	----	---	----	---------------------------------------

P	3S	P	4C
---	----	---	----

P	4H	P	P
---	----	---	---

P			
---	--	--	--

SOUTH

Q10

AQJ6

943

AQ86

When South bids 3H, it's not a cuebid. Hearts are trump. It's better than cuebidding 4C. Here, South can use the 3H bid as a waiting bid. South is hoping North will show a spade control.

There's nothing easy about some of this. Not cuebidding when you seem to have a good one to make is odd. But given that you can make a forcing noise, it is sometimes wise. If partner can't show a spade control, you will stop in 4H. If partner cuebids spades, as shown, you will cuebid clubs. If partner bids 4H you pass, having shown your values.

AJ3 K10987 Q K753 This is a possible hand for North.

He showed his singleton diamond.

He showed his spade control.

Over your 4C bid, he felt he had shown everything and bid 4H, ending the bidding. It turns out that slam is marginal. It goes down if the spade finesse loses and there is a chance that clubs won't break. You don't need to pursue slams like this.

### Example Three

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2NT

P	3H	P	3S	3H shows a big balanced hand.
---	----	---	----	-------------------------------

P	3NT	P	4C
---	-----	---	----

P	?		
---	---	--	--

KQ84

AJ1087

AQ

Q3

AJ2

KQ106

54

KJ109

3S was a cuebid and North bid 3NT. The waiting bid of 3NT got South to cuebid clubs. North is able to use Blackwood.

## POSTMORTEM NOTES

This section discusses what happens when an opponent bids over your partner's 2NT. If an opponent does that, your methods change in many ways.

W	N	E	S
			1S
P	2NT	3D	?

Poof. In an instant, your 2NT sequence has been compromised. You no longer have the nice routines that the 2NT sequences give you.

What can you do?

Here are suggestions that help you in some ways. They are memory-intensive. They aren't perfect. But they give you a fighting chance that guesswork doesn't do.

ONE      If you pass, you are telling partner that you do not have a control in diamonds, the suit they bid. No ace. No king. But you are showing more than a minimum hand. Partner knows that if he does not have a diamond control, he should just bid game in your major.

On hands where he has a diamond control, he can keep bidding, but your bidding will be less accurate as a result of their overcall.

SPECIAL MOMENT - This one sequence gives your side an opportunity. If your partner has a normal 2NT bid with four cards in their suit, he can double. He knows opener has two cards so that means the opponents have risked bidding without good hands and they have not found a fit. A double here can set their bid three or four tricks. Remember this one.

TWO      If you double 3D, it is not a penalty double. It tells partner that you have a diamond control, either the ace or king.

THREE    If you bid 3NT, you promise a singleton in their suit.

FOUR     If you bid a new suit, you show a singleton in that suit and you have a diamond control, the ace or king.

FIVE        If you bid 4D, cuebidding their suit, you have a void in their suit.

SIX         If you bid four of your major, you are showing a minimum hand for your major without a control in their suit, but probably a six-card suit.

These bids are not trivial. They let you tell partner something important. But the information is not as precise as when you are allowed to use your methods without their competition.

#### SOMETHING WONDERFUL YOU CAN LEARN FROM THIS DISCUSSION

If you agree that their bid annoys you, then you can be the one to annoy them when they use the Jacoby 2NT bid against you.

Take the best-case scenario where they are vulnerable and you are not.

#### EAST-WEST VULNERABLE

W    N    E    S

1H   P    2NT ?

This auction tells you they have a game in hearts and may be looking for a slam. Here are some hands you might have:

#### HAND ONE

KQ10974

43

54

532

Bid 3S. This is not an effort to find a contract for your side. They have 25 or more high-card points. The hand belongs to their side. When you bid 3S, it knocks the stuffing out of their science, just as their bid did to you when you used the 2NT bid and they bid. It's a real headache.

#### HAND TWO

43

2

KJ98764



3D is a fair bid but 4D is perhaps better. If you bid 4D, your opponents will be more engrossed in how high they should bid themselves. Doubling you will not be a high priority.

Whatever they do, they will be guessing. That's a good thing.

I remind you that when you make one of these overcalls, you need to be aware of the vulnerability.

One last thing. If you bid something, your partner should do nothing unless he has a fantastic fit for you. If he has anything less, he should stay out of the bidding.

HAND THREE

653

43

876

KQJ108

For the brave of heart. Bid 3C. You will get away with this foolishness more than you deserve. As noted, their mind set is to reach their best contract, and you have put a big rock in their path.

