

The Good/Bad 2NT

These two deals from the Senior Pairs semi-finals saw the two members of a partnership follow differing approaches to a similar problem.

Board 24. Dealer West. None Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Dble	1♥
2♦	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	All Pass	

North's 1♣ opening could have been two cards and, understandably, he wanted to show that he had a genuine suit when holding seven of them. The only problem was that the 3♣ bid could have been based on substantially more high-card strength. As it happened, he would have done better to pass at his second turn as South had enough to bid again and passing then bidding 3♣ at his next turn would have described North's strength well. Of course, he was afraid that 2♦ might end the auction if he did not bid immediately.

Though declarer got the clubs right by leading low to the ten and ace, there were still two more unavoidable trump losers and the contract was down one.

Two boards later, having arrow-switched:

Board 26. Dealer East. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
–	–	1♣	Pass
1♠	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dble	All Pass		

Perhaps mindful of the previous deal, East did not bid 3♣ on his excellent suit. With both North's 2♥ and East's 3♣ being cold, West had to do well by reopening with a double on his minimum responding hand. Alas, East fell from grace by passing and that was -670 instead of +110.

True, East had two almost certain trump tricks on defence, but the rest of his high cards were all concentrated in his long suit, where they rated to be of limited value on defence, so 3♣ is the indicated response to the double.

So, what is the solution to this thorny problem. The answer is a convention called the Good/Bad 2NT, which is effectively an extension of the Lebensohl convention for use in competition.

Very simply, if playing Good/Bad an immediate 3♣ bid on either of these deals would show roughly the same invitational values as would a jump to 3♣ in an uncontested auction, while merely competitive hands, like the two examples above, bid 2NT. Unless partner is strong enough to go on over a purely competitive bid, he converts that to 3♣, and the partnership stops at a safe level.

This does not only apply when the hand is single-suited. Take these two hands:

<p>(i)</p> <p>♠ A ♥ 7 2 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 ♣ K 10 9 8 7</p>	<p>(ii)</p> <p>♠ A ♥ 7 2 ♦ A Q 10 8 6 ♣ A K 10 9 8</p>												
<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">West</td> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">North</td> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">East</td> <td>South</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">1♦</td> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">1♠</td> <td>2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 10px;">?</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		West	North	East	South	1♦	Pass	1♠	2♥	?			
West	North	East	South										
1♦	Pass	1♠	2♥										
?													

Holding hand (i), West has only competitive strength so bids 2NT. Partner, if not interested in game facing a competitive hand, converts to 3♣ if he prefers clubs to diamonds, bids 3♦ if he prefers diamonds.

Holding hand (ii), West bids an immediate 3♣, showing a strong, though not forcing hand-type.

West would also bid 2NT with:

(iii)

♠	A 5
♥	7 6
♦	A Q J 10 7 5
♣	Q J 2

but an immediate 3♦ holding:

♠	A 5
♥	7 6
♦	A Q J 10 7 5
♣	K Q 2

The price for improving your ability to compete on distributional hands? You lose the natural 2NT bid in these auctions. Any hand that would normally bid a natural 2NT has to make a take-out double instead. That is not a great hardship, as the balanced 17-18 with adequate stoppers in the opponents' suit required for a natural 2NT does not come up very

often.

And here endeth today's lesson.