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This Week in Bridge

(255) Responder's Unusual 2-Major Jump Shifts and NT Bids

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Level: 6

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General

When partner opens the bidding 1-minor (1m), a jump shift to 2-Major (2M) by Responder can be used for a variety of different hand types. Both the standard approach of a *strong jump shift* and the common approach of a *weak jump shift* leave a lot to be desired. The modern style is for good hands to go slow, which makes a strong jump shift less appealing because it eats up valuable bidding space. With players responding to a 1m opening bid with 1M more and more aggressively, this makes using a weak jump shift less common even if it is our agreement. For these reasons many experienced partnerships choose to use these jumps to 2M for other constructive bidding purposes. Let's look at uses of these jump shifts that can help us with some problem hands for Responder.

Issues with 1m – 2NT Auctions

When partner opens the bidding with 1m and we have an invitational hand without a 4-card Major suit, we usually respond 2NT, unless we have a fit for Opener's minor suit and choose to use an *Inverted Minor* raise. But one of the issues with this 2NT response is that we may not wish to have a NT contract declarer from the weaker side (the side with only invitational values).

Example 1

♠ xxx

♥ xxx

♦ KQJ

♣ AJxx

If partner opens the bidding with 1♦, using traditional 2/1 GF methods we must respond 2NT and then any NT contract must be played from Responder's side. This does not seem best since we have poor holdings in both Major suits (the most likely opening lead) and Opener may have positional stoppers (or tenaces) they wish to protect by having them led into on the opening lead.

Let's look at how we can use a response of 2♥ to help us improve our bidding with these types of hands.



1m – 2♥* Balanced Invite (old 2NT Response)

Let's define a 2♥* response to show the "old 2NT" bid – invitational values, no 4-card Major, no fit for Opener. This allows us to play a NT contract from the correct side (whichever side we choose to play from). We also gain some other valuable tools for helping Opener further describe their hand in these auctions.

The primary tool we will add is a 2♠* relay to 2NT*.

1m 2♥*

2♠* 2NT* (Relay to 2NT)

This "siding relay" allows Opener to show a variety of different hands and allows us to do things like choose who declares in NT or create Forcing vs. Non-Forcing auctions. Let's look at these auctions in detail to see how this works.

1♣ Auctions

1♣ 2♥*

—

- 2♠* Siding Relay to 2NT*
- 2NT To Play
- 3♣ To play, usually 5+c ♣
- 3♦* S/V ♦, GF, 5+c ♣
- 3♥* S/V ♥, GF, 5+c ♣
- 3♠* S/V ♠, GF, 5+c ♣
- 3NT To Play

1♣ 2♥*

2♠* 2NT*

—

- Pass To Play (Responder declares NT)
- 3♣ usually 6+c ♣, GF
- 3♦* 5c ♦, 6+c ♣, GF
- 3♥* 5c ♥, 6+c ♣, GF
- 3♠* 5c ♠, 6+c ♣, GF
- 3NT To Play (Responder declares NT)



1♦ Auctions

1♦ 2♥*

—

- 2♠* Siding Relay to 2NT*
- 2NT To Play
- 3♣* S/V in ♣, usually 5+c ♦, 1F, not GF!
- 3♦ To Play, 5+c ♦
- 3♥* S/V ♥, GF, 5+c ♦
- 3♠* S/V ♠, GF, 5+c ♦
- 3NT To Play

1♦ 2♥*

2♠* 2NT*

—

- Pass To Play (Responder declares NT)
- 3♣ 5/4 in the minors, NF
- 3♦ 6+c ♦, GF
- 3♥ 5c ♥, 6+c ♦, GF
- 3♠ 5c ♠, 6+c ♦, GF
- 3NT To Play (Responder declares NT)

The general approach to this bidding applies the concept of *fast arrival*. Directly bidding our suit is non-forcing (or conventional), while going through the relay and then bidding our suit is natural and forcing.

As you can see this structure gives Opener the ability to describe a large variety of hand shapes and strengths, allowing for both forcing and non-forcing auctions at the 3-level and allowing Opener to decide if a NT contract should be played from their side or Responder's side.

Example 2 (Using the Siding Relay)

1♦ 2♥*

—

♠ KTx
♥ Kx
♦ KJTxx
♣ KTx

With this hand we jump to 3NT, accepting Responder's invitation and declaring from Opener's side.



Example 3 (Using the Siding Relay)

1♦ 2♥*

—

♠ Axx

♥ Ax

♦ KQTxx

♣ Txx

With this hand we bid 2♠* as a relay to 2NT* and then raise to 3NT, allowing Responder to declare in 3NT.

New 1m – NT Responses

Adopting this 2♥* response allows us to adjust our NT responses (usually balanced hands, with no 4-card Major) after a 1m opening bid. All these bids deny a 4-card Major.

1m __?

- 1NT 6 to Bad 10 points, NF (minimum)
- 2♥* Good 10 to Bad 12 points, 1F (Invitational)
- 2NT Good 12 to 14 points or 18+ points, GF (Game or Strong)
- 3NT 15-17 points, GF/NF (Extra Values)

The 2NT and 3NT bids always show balanced hands because with shortness and no 4-card Major, Responder would either make an inverted minor bid or respond in the other minor suit.

Example 4

1♣ 2NT

3NT 4NT

With 18-19 points and a balanced hand with no 4-card Major suit, Responder starts by bidding 2NT. Opener assumes this shows a minimum game forcing hand. If Opener raises to 3NT, then Responder follows up by bidding 4NT. This lets Opener know that Responder does not have the basic 12-14 point hand, but instead has a stronger 18-19 point hand. This is a quantitative bid and the split ranges in the NT agreements nicely define the playing strength for making a further slam try.



1m – 2NT Details

Since 2NT is now a game forcing response to 1m, let's look at some of Opener's rebid options and see how they can describe their hand (and look for the best game or slam) while keeping the auction below 3NT.

Opener's Rebids

1♣ 2NT

—

- 3♣ 6+card ♣, usually a slam try
- 3♦* S/V in ♦, no extra values required, usually 4/3-1-5 (worry ask)
- 3♥* S/V in ♥, no extra values required (worry ask)
- 3♠* S/V in ♠, no extra values required (worry ask)
- 3NT To Play
- 4♣ Gerber (or Minorwood if you play this convention)

1♦ 2NT

—

- 3♣ Natural, usually 5-5 minors (2-2-5/4 possible)
- 3♦ 6+card ♦, usually a slam try (2-2-5-4 with good ♦ possible)
- 3♥* S/V in ♥, no extra values required, (worry ask)
- 3♠* S/V in ♠, no extra values required (worry ask)
- 3NT To Play
- 4♣ S/V in ♣, extra values since going past 3NT, usually 4/3-5-1
- 4♦ Minorwood (if you play this convention)

These agreements allow Opener to describe their hand effectively for slam.

Example 5

♠ Axx	♠ Kx
♥ x	♥ Axx
♦ KQxxx	♦ Axxx
♣ AJxx	♣ QTxx

These hands with 14 HCP opposite 13 HCP are excellent for 6♦ (on a finesse for 7♦).

1♦ 2NT

3♥* —

After Opener shows shortness in ♥, Responder reevaluates their hand and can try for slam.



1m – 2♠* Mixed Raise

When playing inverted minors, standard agreements are:

- 1m 2m* Inverted, 1F, 10+ points, with a fit
- 1m 3m* Weak, 0-5 HCP, with a fit (some play 3-6 HCP vulnerable).

This leaves a gap for a minimum-valued hand with about 7-9 HCP and a fit for Opener's minor where we are forced to respond 1NT (we have no raise that shows this amount of values).

Example 6

1♦ ___?
♠ Kx
♥ Qxx
♦ Qxxxx
♣ Jxx

With this hand, we simply respond 1NT. With this balanced hand and scattered values, we are happy to bid 1NT and hopefully play it there.

Example 7

1♦ ___?
♠ x
♥ xxx
♦ KQxxx
♣ QTxx

With this hand we are not happy about bidding 1NT as we have a singleton ♠ and no honor in ♥. We would much prefer to find a way to play in a ♦ contract, not NT from our side.

A nice solution to this problem is to use a 2♠* response to 1m opening bid to show this type of hand.

1m 2♠* 5+card support for Opener's minor (usually), no 4-card M, 6+ to 9 HCP
 (Mixed Raise)

After Responder makes this description of their hand Opener can now place the contract and play NT from the proper side if that is to be the final contract.

Conclusion

Jump Shifts to 2M after 1m opening bids are not particularly useful in the standard (strong) or otherwise common (weak) formulation. When playing with an established partner, we are better off looking for ways to use these bids that help make us better constructive bidders. These responses are an example of how an established sophisticated partnership can improve their bidding using some gadgets. If you have an experienced established partner who likes gadgets, give these a try!