



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(169) Stayman then 2♠

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Level: 3

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General

When partner opens 1NT and we have a game forcing hand with 5♣ and 4c♥, we start by bidding Stayman to look for the 4-4 Major suit fit and later show our 5♣ suit, using Smolen if partner responds 2♦. But when we only have an invitational hand and the auction goes

1NT 2♣
2♦ ___?

then we bid 2♠ to show an invitational hand with 5♣ and 4+c♥. This is a valuable auction that allows Responder to invite game, but stop at the 2-level if Opener has a minimum hand with only 2c♣ support, as this is usually better than playing in 2NT when Responder has a distribution hand. Let's look at how we can expand the use of this distributional invite.

Stayman then 2♠ - Distributional Invite

Since in the auction 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ partner will not correct to 3♥, this 2♠ bid does not need to promise ♥. Instead, the modern approach is to use this sequence to show a distributional invite with a 5♣ suit. This is usually a hand that is interested in game if Opener has a ♠ fit, but less interested when Opener does not have a ♠ fit.

Example

♠ AT873

♥ 2

♦ K9753

♣ 84

With this hand we want partner to bid 4♠ with a ♠ fit and maximum values, but we do not want to play in 2NT if partner does not have a ♠ fit. We do not want to have the auction 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - 2NT – Pass.

By playing this extended version of Stayman followed by 2♠, we can invite game with this hand and keep the auction low by having the sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2♠ - Pass, when Opener is not accepting an invitation.



Looking at this same example hand, if partner responds 2♠ to Stayman, with the 9c♠ fit it is best for us to just bid 4♠.

1NT 2♣
2♠ 4♠

If partner bids 2♥ in response to Stayman, we would raise to 3♥ with an invitational hand and 4c♥, but we still bid 2♠ with this example hand.

1NT 2♣
2♥ 2♠

In this auction, 2♠ now shows a 5c♠ suit, invitational values, and a distributional hand without a ♥ fit.

Opener's Continuations

With a minimum hand and 2c♠ or 3c♠ support, Opener can pass since Responder has already indicated they do not want to play in 2NT.

But Opener can continue to bid and further explore game or the best part score.

1NT 2♣
2♦ 2♠
___?

- 2NT Asking bid – usually a game try with 3c♠ support, wanting to know Responder's side suit, since Responder has already shown a lack of interest in playing in 2NT.
- 3♣ (rare) Probably to play, a 6c♣ suit
- 3♦ (rare) Probably to play, a 6c♦ suit
- 3♥ Does Not Exist
- 3♠ Forcing, Choice of Games, maximum with 3c♠ - willing to play 3NT or 4♠
- 3NT To play, maximum with 2c♠ support
- 4♠ To play, maximum with 3c♠ support

Note: This bidding sequence can have a problem in that it may wrong-side a 4♠ contract, but when Responder is distributional, this is less important than when Responder has a balanced hand.

Conclusion

This extension of Stayman then 2♠ allows Responder to invite game with distributional hands of many different shapes (not just both Majors) that are likely to play well opposite a fit while keeping the auction low and insisting that we play in ♠, not NT, when Opener has a minimum.