

Ingberman, Blackout, Lebensohl Reverses - Roots

Pete Matthews Jr - <https://3nt.xyz> - April 10, 2023 REFERENCE MATERIAL FOR *ADVANCED BIDDING TOOLS*

The possible strong reverse sequences, after a response in one of a suit, are:

1 ♣	1 ♥	1 ♣	1 ♠	1 ♣	1 ♠	1 ♦	1 ♠
2 ♦		2 ♦		2 ♥		2 ♥	

Opener's reverse is a rebid at the two level in a higher suit than the original. Without agreements, these situations may work out poorly. All three of the better systems that I discovered employ a bid of 2 NT and/or the fourth suit: *Ingberman*, *blackout* and *lebensohl*.¹ The last seems most common now, often modified from what is presented below.

Ingberman

Ingberman is probably the earliest of the three conventions. Gary Schwartz and I played it for two decades. Ingberman was the original coach of the Dallas Aces and a contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Bridge*, which has this entry:

INGBERMAN. Named after its inventor, Monroe Ingberman. The convention is designed to cope with the problems that can arise following a two level reverse by the opener, such as 1♣-1♠; 2♦.

The method is as follows:

Two of responder's major shows five or more in the suit and is forcing for one round.

2NT by responder is a relay, showing weakness and denying five cards in responder's major – opener usually bids three of his minor, which he expects to be passed. If responder bids three of another suit, that is expected to be passed.

Preference to opener's minor or a raise of the reverse suit are forcing for one round.

3NT shows a minimum game force (depending on whether the initial response was at the one or two level) with slow cards in responder's suits (2NT followed by 3NT shows a better hand).

Fourth suit collects all the good hands not suitable for other action.

Some prefer to play that the cheaper of fourth suit or 2NT is the relay, a little more complicated. There are other little wrinkles, such as what 3♣ shows after 1♦-1♠; 2♥-2NT, and what opener does if he does not want to bid three of his minor because he feels he is too strong. Related: Blackout.

Noteworthy features: 2 NT may always be the waiting bid, and opener's bid over 2 NT is usually a repeat of the original minor suit.

¹ On Bridge Winners, George Cuppaidge promoted always playing 2 NT as the lone *strong* bid. He seemed to have no takers. Among other issues, there may be no way to set opener's minor as trump at the three level.

Blackout

Blackout may be a descendant of Ingberman. Here is the entry from the *Encyclopedia*, omitting examples and an alternative:

BLACKOUT. Also known as Wolff Over Reverses. This is used when a 1/1 response is followed by opener's reverse at the two level. After a reverse, the responder rebids as follows:

A rebid of his own suit shows five or more cards in the suit and is forcing for one round, but does not promise extra strength.

The cheapest bid of 4th-suit-forcing and 2NT shows exactly four cards in his own suit and a minimum hand for his 1/1. *An exception should be made in the auction 1♣ – 1♠; 2♥ where 3♣ should be to play. In that case, 3♦ should be forcing with clubs.*

The non-cheapest bid of 4th-suit-forcing and 2NT shows exactly four cards in responder's own suit, forcing to game but not suitable for any higher bid.

A preference back to the opening suit or raising the reverse-suit are both natural, game-forcing with mild slam try or better.

Noteworthy features: The cheaper of the 4th-suit bid or 2 NT is the waiting bid, with continuations undefined. The higher of those bids is an artificial game force, unsuitable for a higher bid.

Lebensohl

The encyclopedia has no entry for lebensohl over reverses. Lebensohl gained dominance, first for dealing with interference over 1 NT, and then after a double of the opponent's weak two bid. Reinventing or recasting blackout as lebensohl seems inevitable. Translated from German, the word means "sole of life."

The Lebensohl Convention Complete, by Ron Andersen, was published in 1987. Here are his rules for reverses:

- (1) After a reverse, two notrump by responder is artificial and forces opener to bid three clubs, enabling responder to sign off at the three-level.
- (2) Any response other than two notrump is natural, constructive, and game-forcing.
- (3) After a reverse to two diamonds, responder uses the fourth suit (instead of two notrump) to show weakness. Opener is forced to rebid three clubs. (Responder's 2 NT becomes a natural force.) [Optional feature, highly recommended.]

If opener makes any other call than three clubs after the artificial signoff, he shows extra strength and invites responder to bid game.

Noteworthy features: The cheaper of the 4th-suit bid or 2 NT is the waiting bid; any bid but 3♣ by opener shows extra values.