

OGUST and Modified OGUST

By Neil H. Timm

The OGUST Convention was developed by the American champion Harold A. Ogust and is used to investigate game after a weak 2-level bid when responder has 12-16 Dummy points.

OGUST

After a weak two bid (usually a 6-card suit), the convention allows for a detailed description of the opener's hand. It is invoked by the artificial 2NT bid made by the responder. The reply to a weak two bid shows strength and asks whether the opener is weak (5-7/6-8 HCP) or strong (8-10/9-11 HCP) **and** how many of the top three honors are held in the major. The replies are most commonly as follows.

- 3♣ = minimum, 1 top honor (BAD/WEAK Hand and BAD/STRONG Suit)
- 3♦ = minimum, 2 top honors (BAD/WEAK Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
- 3♥ = maximum, 1 top honor (GOOD/STRONG Hand and BAD/WEAK Suit)
- 3♠ = maximum, 2 top honors (GOOD/STRONG Hand and GOOD/STRONG Suit)
- 3NT = all 3 honors, A-K-Q-x-x and little else.

A simple way to remember this is to picture Mama Mimi dancing. **1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3...** These refer to the order of the top honors in the major as shown above.

NOTE: Some players interchange the bids of three diamonds and three hearts. The **1-1, 2-2, 1-2-3** dance step! Discuss this convention with your partner. The word OGUST may have a different meaning to your partner!

This is why a description of any convention is better than using just the "WORDS". The OGUST Convention is used instead of "asking" for a feature.

A few examples: You may open 2♠ with the following hands.

- a) ♠ QJ10xxx ♥ x ♦ KJx ♣ xxx
- b) ♠ AQxxxx ♥ x ♦ xxx ♣ Jxx
- c) ♠ QJ10xxx ♥ x ♦ Axx ♣ xxx

And suppose partner hold: a) ♠ Kxx ♥ Axxx ♦ xx ♣ Aqxx

After the 2♠ bid partner now responds 2NT (artificial and NOT an alert). The responses for each of the hands by opener are:

- a) 3♣ bad-bad and partner would sign off in 3♣
- b) 3♦ bad-good and partner would bid 4♠ since there are not trump losers
- c) 3♥ good-bad, and partner seeing on loser in trumps and a good fit, bids 4♣

If you only use 2NT to ask for "a feature" you may not reach a game with hand (b), but be in game with hand (a)! Both would reach a game with hand (c).

MODIFIED OGUST

Today, bidding is becoming more aggressive. Many partnerships will open weak twos with a 5-card major one suiter. If you do, one may use Modified OGUST rebids to describe the hand. Again, the 2NT bid is used to ask about the hand. Using this convention, the bids are:

3♣ = 5-card suit GOOD/STRONG hand
3♦ = 5-card suit BAD/WEAK hand
3♥ = 6-card suit BAD/WEAK hand
3♠ = 6-card suit GOOD/STRONG hand
3NT = either a 5 or 6-card suit or a semi-solid 5 or 6-card suit plus Ace or King in a side suit

Observe that the 3♣ bid is used to show a stronger hand in order to leave more room for further investigation since all responses describe the “hand” and say nothing about the quality of the suit.

If after the response of 3♣ bid, responder wants to find out about the suit he bids 3♦’s. The opener now clarifies the suit:

3♥ = BAD/WEAK suit and 1 honor
3♠ = GOOD/STRONG suit and 2 honors
3NT = GOOD/STRONG suit and 3 honors

While one may use OGUST type of response for two suited hands, for example 6-4 in the majors the responses become complicate and will not be discussed.

However, a more common practice is to use 5-card OGUST Non-Vulnerable and 6-card OGUST Vulnerable!

If you do not make this distinction in your partnership agreement there is yet another convention called the TWO-STEP OGUST Convention developed by Daniel Zenko and discussed in the “The Bridge World” publication, April 1997.

Finally, one may also use OGUST with three level preempts.

After the three level bid, partner bids 4♣ which is artificial and asks partner to describe his hand further. The responses are similar to Ogust and go like this:

4♦ = bad hand, bad suit.
4♥ = bad hand, good suit (2 of the top 3 honors in the preempt suit).
4♠ = good hand (1 or 2 honors outside the preempt suit), bad suit.
4NT = good hand, good suit.

If you use this convention, note that you may not use the “Weak Roman Keycard Blackwood” Convention discussed on the Web site since it also uses the bid of 4♣.