



Tuesday Night Tips

The Sydney Bridge Centre mini lesson

The Tuesday Night at City has developed its own vibe – a group of bridge enthusiasts playing a friendly competitive game with Phil Halloran and Martin Clear as the hosts. Phil organises the session to make sure there is no sit-out, and Martin continues to lead the group for bridge discussion after the session. He will pick an interesting hand from the face-to-face session for the Tuesday Tips column.

Bidding 2C and Responding to it

F2F at City – Tuesday Night 5th April 2022

22	♠ AKQJ8	Dir: E
	♥ 2	Vul: E-W
	♦ K5	
	♣ AKQ64	
♠ 54	♠ T976	22
♥ KQ987	♥ A63	11 5
♦ AQ96	♦ J432	2
♣ 93	♣ 82	
	♠ 32	
	♥ JT54	
	♦ T87	
	♣ JT75	

Most of these columns are about the play and defence of the hand, simply because I consider it to be more interesting than bidding. I concede that better bidding might well improve most players' overall score more than better play and defence, but to me the subtle cut and thrust of attempting to take tricks is the heart of the game, so I concentrate my writing on that.

However, Board 22 of the 05-April Tuesday night face-to-face game at the Sydney Bridge Centre saw more than half the field fail to get to an obvious game, and some post-match analysis made it clear that many people do not know the thinking behind bidding sequences that start with a strong bid like Two Clubs. Therefore I am going to walk through the sequence that should

have happened on this board on Tuesday Night, and also cover the theory behind a Two Club opening bid which might make it clearer why we use this system.

Firstly, your system may be different to this. If it is, and you know it and understand it, then you should be fine. What I am covering here is the system you might consider a default if you sit down to play with someone you have not played with before. Alternative systems include Precision-style 1♣ strong bids, or your pet system might feature a Two Diamond bid as a game force bid, with Two Club a lesser bid, for instance, but for this article, we will assume that Two Clubs is the only strong and unlimited bid you have, as this is what most people play.

The first question that needs to be answered is, "What does an opening bid of Two Clubs say to partner?" A lot of people might reply something along the lines of "I have a good hand, partner", but there is a more subtle nuance to the bid that some people miss. The 2♣ bid says:

"Partner, I have a hand so strong that even if you have too few points to respond at all to an ordinary 1-level opening bid, we might still make game."

That's the crucial factor in opening 2♣. That's why you should not have your only unlimited bid go down to balanced 18-counts or similar. If you have a balanced 18-count, it is highly unlikely you will make game if partner has less than 6 points, and if partner has 6 or more points, partner is going to respond to a 1-level bid anyway, so go ahead and bid at the 1-level: you won't miss a game. So only open 2♣ if your partner having a 3- or 4-count might still get you to a making game.

Opening 2♣ is not necessarily based on having half the points in the deck. A hand such as AKxxxx-AKxxx-v-x is highly likely to produce game in a major whenever partner has at least two cards in a major. Oddly however for this type of hand, you may not need to open 2♣, because if partner has less than 6, the opponents have enough points to come in, especially as they are likely to have some length in the minor suits. A powerful one-suited hand however is a good candidate for a 2♣ opening because you usually are not trying to ask partner's opinion as to what the trump suit is.

What should you do when partner opens 2♣? The answer is: bid! A large proportion of the disasters that occur on 2♣ openings occur because a weak hand opposite the 2C bidder decided to pass a forcing bid because "I only had X points, partner!" where X is 2 or 3 or 4 or even 5. Those are precisely the hands that partner opened 2♣ to prevent you passing on! The 2♦ response to 2♣ is a catch-all response showing 0-7 points. It is not intended to say "We have no game, partner" ... it is intended to say, "We have no SLAM, partner"! Both these bids should be alerted: they are artificial. Do not assume everyone plays the same; they don't.

The opener then rebids: 2N shows 23-24 points, 2♠ shows a 5-card spade suit, 2♥ shows a 5-card heart suit. 3♣ or 3♦ show only 4-card suits, and deny a balanced hand, because balanced hands would be bid by a 2N opening for 20-22 counts (other bids exist, but everyone should have one for that count) and NT bids for more than 22. Note that the same principle exists for majors after a 2♣ opening as for opening a major at the 1-level: it shows 5. The minor bids show 4 minimum (not 3 as per a 1-level bid) because short minor bids where there is one or more 4-card majors are always balanced, and we have already precluded balanced hands. In fact, most 3-minor rebids show 5 of the suit because not many other shapes exist: a 3C bid has either 5 clubs OR a 4441 shape. A 3♦ rebid shows either 5 diamonds OR a 4441 shape where the singleton is a club. These are not conventions, these are just inherent in the logic of bidding 'up the line'. The rebids of 3♣ or 3♦ are game forcing, so the 2♣ opener has to keep that in mind when starting on the sequence.

What sequences are NOT game-forcing? After 2♣*-2♦*-2♥ or 2♣*-2♦*-2♠, responder's rebid of 2N has a special meaning: it is the Second Negative. It shows a hand in the 0-3 point range. Now there are some sequences where the bidding can stop below game. The 2♣ opener can pass 2N in the light of the 0-3 points opposite. Also, if the 2♣ opener rebids the major at the 3-level, this bid can be passed by responder. However if opener rebids a minor, the sequence is forcing to game. Responder must allow for the possibility of opener having enough for game entirely in their own hand but not knowing what suit to play in.

There are two other sequences I would recommend. The first is 2♣*-2♦*-4♥ (or 2♣*-2♦*-4♠). This sequence is simply an 8-card suit (perhaps 7), but a hand too strong to bid directly to game which would normally be weak and pre-emptive. The hand is usually in the 16-point area. The other important sequence is 2♣*-2♦*-3♥ (or 2♣*-2♦*-3♠). This says "Partner, I have a great hand, and my trump suit is bomb-proof, so I am setting it as trumps right now." Responder now does not show suits, but shows controls: Aces in side suits. Bidding 4-of-the-major is the weakest response; bidding 3N shows good values but no Aces. Opener may still lack the Ace or King of trumps for this bid, but will have solidity in the middle values: QJT98x or similar. The top honours can be asked about with Keycard Blackwood; this bid says that opener is not needing help in the trump suit or finesses in it.

What if you have 8 points in response? Lucky you! Bid 2N if balanced, bid a suit, find a fit. You will be very close to slam. If you have one or more 3-card major suits, it can pay to still bid 2♦ as if you had 0-7. This allows opener to bid a 5-card major. If you have a 3-card major and start with 3♣ or 3♦, when opener bids a major, you won't be able to find out whether it was a 4-card suit or 5+ until you are past 3N. However, if you make this bid, you must keep in mind that opener thinks you have a weak hand, so you must make a positive bid later - suggesting slam - to show that your 2♦ was "the Impossible Negative".

On Board 22, the sequence should have been 2♣*-2♦*-2♠-2N-4♠. North is strong enough to bid game regardless of his partner's hand, and the spades are solid enough to make them the trump suit without finding out how many partner has. The opponents will lead a heart, declarer ruffs trick 2, draws 4 rounds of trumps and 5 rounds of clubs to make 10. He cannot take the diamond finesse even though it works because once the trumps have to all be drawn he is out of spades. If the opponents lead anything other than a heart, declarer makes 11 by drawing trumps, going to ♣J and finessing the ♦K, which is quite safe with the extra trump on standby.

Martin Clear (SBC Tuesday Night host)

F2F Easter Monday Matchpointed Pairs Congress



Let's have some real cards in hand and play in a F2F congress with real people!

The Sydney Bridge Centre is running a F2F Matchpointed Swiss Pairs Congress on Easter Monday 18th April at Level 1, 162 Goulburn Street, Sydney. It is a one-day congress with 24 boards in the morning, lunch break, then another 24 boards in the afternoon. A delicious light lunch is included.

An invaluable and meaningful prize for Overall Novice & Restricted winners and the Best Novice (or Restricted) Pairs will receive a meaningful prize – Over the Shoulder Mentoring by an advanced player in one complimentary SBC session (either online on BBO or F2F in club). To support our fellow clubs, the Open Winners will receive a Complimentary Entry to any one-day local congress in New South Wales in 2022.

RED masterpoints awarded. \$50 per person (a delicious lunch and snacks included)

[Enter in advance](#) required on the NSWBA website. We intend to run separate fields for Open and Restricted & Novice players, if number allows. Please nominate the field you would like to compete in.

F2F Night Game in the City

Yes most of our regular sessions are run during the day, however, the night game culture is not lost! The SBC evening games are run by our volunteers who contribute their time for the love of the game.

The **Tuesday PM (Tuesday Evening hosted by Phil and Martin)** has created its own special vibe which attracts a steady growth in table number. The session starts at 7.15pm, 24 boards will be played. Martin Clear will be your host of the session with Phil Halloran and the après in which drinks & snacks will be served. We are trying to avoid sit-out for a proper competitive night, so please [contact office](#) if you would like to join the group on the first time. Promotional table money fee at \$6 per person! Limited time only.

For players who have just started their bridge journey and are looking for a more social game night, please join our **Wednesday night Supervised session** instead. The session starts at 6.30pm, with a 20 – 30 minutes pre-game talk by Jake Andrew (on the current Supervised Play) and Wing Roberts (on the upcoming Beginners Supervised Play). The session is run on duplicate movement, so players can get to meet other people. We aim to finish at around 9pm, so only 12-16 boards will be played. Table money fee \$12 for member and \$15 for visitors. No need to book, walk-ins are welcome.

There are more sessions during the day, both F2F and online, please refer to our [session timetable](#) on our website.