

After One Diamond – Two Clubs

by [Pete Matthews Jr](http://3nt.xyz) – <http://3nt.xyz> – © March 6, 2012

The modern North American style is to play a two over one response as forcing to game. I certainly play that way sometimes, but that's too simplistic an approach. My preference is the earlier approach called Eastern Scientific, which can be simply described as Kaplan-Sheinwold with strong notrumps. Be that as it may, even Mike Lawrence, who writes about the 2/1 system, recommends playing the 2♣ response to a 1♦ opening as standard. I'm here to say, you can do better than that.

A decade or so ago, I laid out two full systems to handle 1♦ - 2♣, and presented them to Gary Schwartz. The other is lost to posterity; what I present here is his choice. Over the years, I have been involved with tweaking many bidding systems and conventions – this may be the best.

The system features a 2♣ response defined as any other Eastern Scientific 2/1: game forcing if either partner raises or bids notrump. (It is also playable with 2♣ immediately forcing to game.) Opener rebids a major only when holding at least four, plus longer diamonds (opener does *not* bid a stopper).

Often opener rebids 2♦, a “catchall” bid that does not promise any extra length, usually a minimum hand, either balanced, long diamonds, or a club fit. Responder is likely to show an opening hand by bidding a major suit, which could be either a suit looking for a fit, or a stopper probing for notrump or slam:

1♦ - 2♣; 2♦ [catchall] - 2♥/2♠; ?

The crux of the system is a bidding trick, two *alertable* bids. Suppose opener holds four-card support, plus the other major well stopped, such as ♠KQ62 ♥Q1083 ♦AJ2 ♣J3. The trick is to use opener's jump to 3NT to show such a hand. The raise to 3 of responder's major also shows 4-card support, but *denies a stopper in the other major*.

Here's an example from recent play at our club. Partner opens 1♦ and we hold:

♠- ♥98752 ♦6 ♣AKQ6543

I feel strongly this is a club hand that has some hearts, essentially a 7-4 hand. If partner offers hearts, I'd be pleased to shoot out a game. Otherwise, it's probably clubs or notrump for me. Yes, it might be right to play an 8-card heart fit – but it could be wrong – and pard may insist on a 5-2 fit, holding a stiff club. Those who play 2♣ as forcing to game are coerced into responding 1♥, but we get to bid 2♣ right away.

If opener now bids 2♥, promising at least four hearts with longer diamonds, we can drive to game. If opener instead bids 2♠, we have an easy 3♣ bid, limiting our hand. On the actual deal, this should end the auction – see http://web.mit.edu/mitdlbc/www/session_notes/2011-01-25_4.pdf.

If opener rebids 2♦, he could still have four hearts, so we should try 2♥. If partner raises hearts (3♥ or 3NT), 4♥ is easy. If partner bids 2NT (forcing), 3NT is a standout with all those likely club tricks. If opener bids 3♦, we'll pass – opener has a minimum hand (no jump rebid), with no spade stop and no club fit – could be seven diamonds and a club void. Apply **S.J. Simon's rule**: *when the balance of the information indicates a misfit, stop bidding*. Perhaps the worst opener can do to us is a belated preference to 3♣; being a raise, it's forcing to game or perhaps 4♣. If it's four cards, it's probably 11-13 HCP (opener did not make a forcing raise); otherwise, it should be three cards. We bid 4♣, surely the weakest available bid; opener may pass.

The complete 1♦ - 2♣ system:

O1	R1	O2	R2	O3	R3	Description
1♦		Natural, better minor opening (5-card majors)				
	2♣	Promises either: (1) 4+ clubs in an opening hand, may have a major suit, if clubs are longer, or (2) clubs playable opposite a singleton, invitational. If either partner raises or bids notrump, the auction becomes forcing to game or four of a minor.				
		2♦	Catchall: unable to make one of the other rebids; often made with only 3 or 4 diamonds			
		2♥/2♠	Natural suit, or a stopper for notrump. Promises an opening hand, and may be intending to probe for slam in either minor.			
			2NT	Natural, with the other major stopped, forcing		
			3♣/3♦	Natural, forcing		
			3♥/3♠(!)	[raise] Natural, 4-card support, <i>denies a stopper in the other major</i>		
			3NT(!)	4-card support for responder's major, <i>with the other major stopped</i>		
			2NT	Natural and forcing		
			3♣	Natural, invitational (responder's limiting rebid)		
			3♦	Natural and forcing		
		2♥/2♠	Natural, shows shape: 4+ cards in the bid suit and longer diamonds, any strength.			
			2♠	[over 2♥] Forcing to game, may be artificial		
			2NT	Natural, forcing to game, but may be intending to probe for slam in a minor		
			3♣	Natural, invitational (responder's limiting rebid)		
			3♦	Natural and forcing		
			3♥	[over 2♠] Artificial game force		
			3♥/3♠	[raise] Natural, forcing, 4-card support		
			2NT	Natural, forcing to game		
			3♣	Natural, forcing, 4+ card support with at least sufficient strength to accept a game invitation		
			3♦	Natural, forcing, 6+ diamonds (a jump rebid in diamonds)		
			3♥/3♠	Splinter: at least 4-card support with a singleton in the bid suit		
			3NT	Natural, 18+ HCP in a balanced hand (a jump rebid in NT)		

Many partnerships use *fast arrival*: a jump to game in a forcing context is weak – the lower level bid of the same strain would be stronger. I don't like fast arrival in a suit, and like it less in notrump. However, when playing my 1♦ - 2♣ system, you should probably play the same way with respect to fast arrival as you do in other situations. There is no fast arrival in the table above, so you may want to modify it.

Once a minor suit fit has been confirmed, I recommend playing Crosswood: see Roman Keycard Blackwood and Crosswood, at <http://web.mit.edu/mitdlbc/www/contrib.html#Articles>. An alternative would be to use four of the suit above trump as the keycard ask. However, note that you won't be able to play a 4-3 heart fit, once diamonds have been raised. If you already have an agreement for the keycard ask after an inverted minor raise, use that.