

Charting the Nebulous Two Clubs

[Pete Matthews Jr](#) – <https://3nt.xyz> – © August 13, 2026

Contents

The Nebulous 2 ♣ Response to One of a Major 1

Preliminaries2

Goals & Scores3

Summary Chart – Nebulous 2 ♣ Responses4

Conclusions.....5

Gavin Wolpert (2020)5

Andrew Gumperz (2012)6

Jack Spear (2013).....7

Ed Herstein (2015)8

Mike Nelson (2022).....9

Matthews Proposal (2026)..... 10

Mike Doecke (2015).....11

Dan Baker (2025) 12

Stephen Fischer (2025)..... 13

Michael Massimilla (2025)..... 14

Hengeveld (2025)..... 15

The Nebulous 2 ♣ Response to One of a Major

Usually, the nebulous 2 ♣ response is forcing to game with:

- Any balanced hand with at least two clubs,
- 5+ clubs, or
- 4-4-4-1, short in opener’s major, likely to rebid 2 NT.

{ 1 M – 2 ♦ } and { 1 M – 2 ♥ } show a 5-card suit and game values. Subsequent bidding after these starts can follow the Bergen (2 M shows extra length), Lawrence (2 M is a catch-all) or Schuler styles.

Specific implementations may change the plans above.

Preliminaries

Only Andrew Gumperz, in response to a comment, noted that a 4-4-4-1 hand, with game values and short in opener's major, would be a 2 ♣ response (the 2 NT rebid is his).

3-card GF raise coverage. Using the Deal program by Thomas Andrews, I built a simulation (a Tcl program used with my practice.pl program) to count deals meeting these criteria:

A deal is accepted when both:

South has a hand shape for a 1 ♠ opening bid.

North has exactly three spades.

The intermediate count of deals is reported:

North has no more than four hearts or four diamonds.

Multiple runs accepting 100,000 deals (typically about 1.97 million deals scanned) led to this conclusion:

A 3-card game-forcing raise would be a nebulous 2 ♣ response about 64% of the time.

We should put some effort into this part of our system. We found a bunch of methods, and we are going to rank them for our goals.

3-card limit raise. The nebulous 2 ♣ response can include this hand. Getting it out of the 1 NT response – and letting us play a refusal at 2 M – is clearly a good thing. However, there are costs. This plan became legal in North American Open events in 2018.

This article was a lot of work. Only when I started charting the results did I begin to get it.

Aaron J Jones, regarding the 1 NT response to one of a major:

Spoiler alert, for every hand where you don't show your 3 card limit raise and make +90 instead of 140 or 170, there are at least as many where after 1M p 1N all pass you take 150 instead of 140, not to mention it's a virtual non-problem at IMPs.

Join the revolution, *semi forcing*, and keep everything the same is far and away the expert standard these days, and with good reason.

Omitted are methods where 2 ♣ promises no clubs and excludes 3-card support. In those methods, either 2M-1 or 2 ♦ shows a limit raise or better; over 1 ♠, the other of those two bids shows hearts. My article, “One-Under Raises of a Major Suit,” shows how tricky that 2 ♣ response can be. Comments by Adam Myerson, Matthew Haag, and Henry Sun suggest it can be playable - see Paul Perkowski’s 2026 trial balloon on Bridge Winners.

Goals & Scores

1. *Set M trump at 2-level – we don’t want to give this up!*
5 = Always available.
0 = Does not happen (unless a limit raise).
2. *Show 6-card M at 2-level – we don’t want to give this up!*
5 = Always at 2 M.
4 = At 2 NT.
0 = Does not happen.
3. *Simplicity: minimize complexity.*
5 = Nothing new to learn.
0 = Totally arcane.
4. *Leakage: Leaks information partner does not need to know.*
5 = Responder bids 4 M with fit, before opener shows shape.
0 = Opener’s second bid always shows shape.
5. *Limit opener’s hand promptly.*
5 = Opener’s rebid shows small hand.
4 = Opener’s rebid accepts LR, but no slam interest over LR.
-1 if common bid(s) for major suit(s) do not show strength.
0 = Opener’s bids seldom show strength.
6. *2 NT normal, with stoppers.*
Or change to *Other*: (reader’s choice).
7. *3-card limit raise: refuse at two level, opener game tries.*
5 = We can stop in 2 M & opener’s game try apply over 2 M.
4 = We can stop in 2 M, but opener has no game tries.
0 = We cannot stop in 2 M.

Summary Chart – Nebulous 2 ♣ Responses

Author	M trump 2-level	6-card M 2-level	Simplicity	Leakage	Limit opener	2 NT = stoppers	3-card LR 2-level GT	Score	For 3-3-3-3-2-3
Weight	5	5	2	2	2	2	2	100	100
Wolpert	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	60	45
Gumperz	5	5	3	2	2	0	0	64	51
Spear	5	5	3	0	0	5	0	66	49
Herstein	2	3	3	5	4	0	0	49	51
Nelson	2	3	3	5	4	0	0	49	51
Matthews	5	4	3	5	4	0	0	69	63
3-card limit raise included									
Doecke	5	4	3	2	4	0	4	71	66
Baker	2	4	3	5	5	0	5	66	72
Fischer	5	0	3	2	2	0	4	47	48
Massimilla	2	3	3	5	5	0	5	61	69

You don't have to take my word for it. Download the spreadsheet: adjust the weights, ratings, and other considerations as you wish!

The weights used for all but the right-most column emphasize the two goals where expert standard does best. The idea of those weights is to keep those capabilities, unless diminishing them pays well. For the right column, I roughly equal-rated the goals.

This method of evaluation has a lot of wiggle room.

The Hengeveld method is the most complex (Simplicity=0), with different systems for heart and spade openings. I was unable to assimilate the 4-5 charts, so it is not represented above.

Conclusions

My proposal scores best without the 3-card limit raise. However, it has never been played. The design and scoring are correlated.

The Doecke method respects the standard capabilities while providing the 3-card limit raise and some other advantages. The Baker method appeals only if the standard capabilities do not.

Gavin Wolpert (2020)

<https://wolpertbridge.com/lessons/2-1-system-structure>

Gavin Wolpert, as the first topic of his first master class, states that the nebulous 2 ♣ response is expert standard, although he does not use a name for it.

Wolpert uses natural continuations. His examples demonstrate the basics, including that we can “survive 2 ♣ on a 2-card suit.”

The Wolpert method is evaluated without the Bergen method.

Andrew Gumperz (2012)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/print/better-21-bidding-the-nebulous-2c-bid/> - the first definitive article on nebulous 2 ♣.

O2	R2	Gumperz: { 1 M - 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	5-3-3-2 with 12-14 or a diamond suit.	
	2 M	3-card support (balanced or unbalanced).
	2 oM	Artificial: unbalanced with 5+ ♣ & 2- M.
	2 NT	Natural and balanced.
	3 ♣	6+ ♣, one-loser suit.
	3 ♦	Unbalanced hand with 4+ ♦ & 5+ ♣.
	3 M	Picture bid: good spades & clubs, slam interest.
	3NT	Balanced, 16-17 HCP.
2 M	6+ M (Bergen style).	
2 ♥	[M = ♠] Natural, 4+ ♥ (standard).	
2 ♠	[M = ♥] Natural, 4+ ♠ (Bergen: any strength)	
2 NT	5-3-3-2, 17-19 HCP.	
3 ♣	4+ ♣.	
3 ♦	Splinter raise of clubs.	
3 oM	Splinter raise of clubs.	
3 M	Strong suit, sets trump.	

The “or a diamond suit” on opener’s 2 ♦ rebid restricts responder’s ability to close down the auction with a jump to game.

{ 1 M - (P) - 2 ♣ - (X) }: Pass = 12-14, 5-3-3-2; 2 ♦ = 4+ ♦; XX invites penalty doubles.

{ 1 M - (P) - 2 ♣ - (2 ♥) }: Pass = 12-14, balanced, forcing; X = penalty; 3 ♥ = shortness.

Jack Spear (2013)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/spear-them/>

O2	R2	O3	R3	Nelson: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }	
2 ♦	Clubs, or diamonds, or balanced.				
	2 ♥	Artificial denial of 3-card support.			
		2 ♠	Balanced; lacks stoppers or extra values.		
		2 NT	Balanced with stoppers, minimum.		
		3 m	Priority: natural, 4+ card minor.		
	2 ♠	Artificial, 3-card support; balanced or clubs.			
		2 NT	No 4-card minor.		
			3 ♣	5+ ♣, extra values.	
			3 x	Control.	
			3 M	5+ ♣, no extra values.	
			4 x	Shortness.	
		3 m	Natural, 4+ card minor.		
	2 NT	Natural denial of 3-card support, minimum: natural continuations, bidding a minor optional.			
	3 ♣	5+ ♣, short in M.			
	3 ♦	Unbalanced hand with 4+ ♦ & 5+ ♣.			
	3 M	3-card support, slam interest.			
2 ♥	[M = ♠] Natural, 4+ ♥ (standard).				
2 ♠	[M = ♥] Natural, 4+ ♠ (Bergen: any strength)				
2 M	Natural, 6+ cards (Bergen).				
2 NT	Natural, desires to declare notrump. [Mike Nelson]				
3 m	Natural, 5+ card minor.				
3 M	Strong suit, sets trump.				

This plan has been designed and described well. Despite that, it's the Gumperz plan that is the prominent basis for the Herstein and Nelson plans. The Spear plan cannot measure up.

No strength bids.

Ed Herstein (2015)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/advancing-a-nebulous-2c-response/>

O2	R2	Herstein: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦		Any minimum (< 15 HCP), except both majors.
	2 ♥	Relay. Opener bids as over 2 ♣ (limited values).
	2 ♠	Artificial: usually 3=5 minors & 1-2 M.
	2 NT	Natural, all side suits stopped.
	3 ♣	6+ ♣.
	3 ♦	Unbalanced hand with 4+ ♦ & 5+ ♣.
	3 M	3-card support, slam interest.
	4 M	Play here.
2 ♥		Both majors, any strength. Natural continuations.
2 ♠		Good hand with 4+ ♦.
	2 NT	Asks opener to pattern out.
2 NT		Good hand, 6-3-3-1 or 6-4 (4-card minor).*
	3 ♣	Asks: 3 ♦ = 6-4 (3 ♥ asks minor); LMH shortness.
3 ♣		Good hand with 4+ ♣.
	3 ♦	Asks opener to pattern out (plan unspecified).
3 ♦		Strong hand, 5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2, or 7-2-2-2.
	3 oM	Asks: 3 NT=5, control-bid=6/7.
3 M		Strong suit, sets trump.

* Related to the Schuler shift.

Must jump to 3 M with slam interest over 2 ♦.

Mike Nelson (2022)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/2c-nebulous-response-to-1m-tsar-continuations/>

O2	R2	Nelson: { 1 M - 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	Any minimum (< 15 HCP), except both majors.	
	2 ♥	Relay. Opener bids as over 2 ♣ (limited values).
	2 ♠	Catch-all, 0-1 cards in M.
	2 NT	Natural, usually slam interest, short in M.
	3 ♣	6+ ♣, short in M.
	3 ♦	Unbalanced hand with 4+ ♦ & 5+ ♣.
	3 M	3-card support, slam interest.
	4 M	Play here.
2 ♥	Both majors, any strength. Natural continuations.	
2 ♠	Good hand with 4+ ♣.	
2 NT	Good hand, 6+ M, & shortness somewhere.*	
3 ♣	Good hand with 4+ ♦.	
3 ♦	[M=♠] Good hand, 5-5 or better majors, strong suits.	
3M-1	Strong hand, 5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2, or 7-2-2-2.	
	3 oM	Asks: 3 NT=5, control-bid=6/7.
3 M	Strong suit, sets trump, extra values.	

* Related to the Schuler shift.

Must jump to 3 M with slam interest over 2 ♦.

This is Herstein's method with some significant changes and much rewording.

When I started this effort, the Herstein and Nelson methods looked like they might be best.

Matthews Proposal (2026)

Over the nebulous 2 ♣, opener's 2 ♦ shows a small hand, one that would pass a constructive raise. We hope that many auctions will be uninformative, while landing in the correct contract, for example:

1 M – 2 ♣ [nebulous]; 2 ♦ [small] – 4 M

O2	R2	Matthews: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }		
2 ♦	Small hand.			
	2 oM	Natural, any strength. ²		
	2 M	Catch-all, 0-2 M, any strength.		
	2 NT	Artificial 3-card raise (Schuler), slam interest. ¹		
	3 ♣	6+ ♣, 0-2 M, slam interest.		
	3 ♦	Natural, 0-2 M, slam interest.		
	3 M	3-card support, start bidding controls. ¹		
	4 M	3-card support, play here ¹		
2 ♥	[M= ♠] Natural, 5-5 majors, any strength. ???			
2 ♠	[M= ♥] Natural, 4+ ♠, medium+ strength.			
2 M	Catch-all, medium+ strength (balanced or diamonds).			
2 NT	6+ M (Schuler):	[a] Any strength.	[b] Medium+.	
3 ♣	4+ ♣, medium+ strength.			
3 ♦	Slam splinter, 5+ clubs.			
3 oM	Slam splinter, 5+ clubs.			
3 M	Strong suit, M trump:	[a] Any strength.	[b] Medium+.	

¹Top priority: raise. ² Second priority: other major. Shaded bids are strong.

This plan wins big when opener has better than small values or when responder has 3-card support.

The costs arise when neither of the above applies. We have given up a step plus half a round of bidding. In practice, this may not hurt much unless responder has slam aspirations (a large hand).

Opener's Schuler 2 NT (6+ M) and 3 M rebids promise:

- a. ◻ any strength – aimed at top players, who want to know.
- b. ○ medium+ strength – more consistent.

Mike Doecke (2015)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/advancing-a-nebulous-2c-response/> [from comments on this Herstein post]

The nebulous 2 ♣ response is forcing to game with:

- A 3-card limit raise,
- Any balanced hand with at least two clubs,
- 5+ clubs,
- 4-4-4-1, short in M – plan to rebid 2 NT.

This plan became legal in Open events in North America in 2018. Doecke is from Australia, where he had experience playing this plan before posting an outline for a 1 ♥ opening to Bridge Winners.

O2	R2	O3	R3	Doecke: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	Accepting limit raise, no interest in slam over limit raise.			
	2 M	3-card support, slam interest (clubs or balanced).		
	2 oM	Clubs, less than 3-card M (space-saving).		
	2 NT	Balanced with 2-card M.		
	3 ♣	TBD.		
	3 ♦	Natural, 6+ ♣, GF, serious slam interest.		
	3 oM	Natural, 6+ ♣, GF, serious slam interest.		
	3 M	3-card support, GF, no serious slam interest.		
	4 M	Limit raise.		
2 M	Rejecting limit raise.			
2 oM	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise.			
2 NT	6+ M, not solid, accepts LR? (Schuler)			
3 ♣	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise.			
3 ♦	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise.			
3 M	Self-supporting suit, usually balanced.			

Finding few online traces of Doecke since 2020, I reached out to him with a Bridge Winners message. It seems likely that, after aging out of the Australian junior bridge program, his life has taken a different trajectory.

Dan Baker (2025)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/including-a-3-card-lr-in-a-2c-response/> - see comments on this Scaramuzzi post.

The nebulous 2 ♣ response is forcing to game with:

- A 3-card limit raise,
- Any balanced hand with at least two clubs,
- 5+ clubs,
- 4-4-4-1, short in M – plan to rebid 2 NT.

O2	R2	O3	R3	Baker: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	Most minimums. Artificial, asking for more info.			
	2 ♥	[M=♠] Natural.		
		2 ♠	Non-forcing.	
		3 ♥	GF (double fit, if LR).	
	2 M	3-card limit raise, non-forcing. Game tries on.		
	2 NT	Natural GF, usually 18-19 balanced.		
	Other	GF.		
2 M	Extra length, GF (6 th card is extra values for LR).			
2 oM	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise.			
2 NT	6+ M, not solid. [LR raises to game?]			
3 ♣	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise.			
3 ♦	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise.			
3 M	Self-supporting suit, usually balanced.			

Interference. If the opponents interfere after 2 ♣, opener passes with a minimum unless holding extra length in the major; any bid creates a game force. After a pass, responder's minimum rebid in the major is non-forcing and shows the 3-card limit raise (unless already at game, in which case it can be wider).

Stephen Fischer (2025)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/including-a-3-card-lr-in-a-2c-response/> - see comments on this Scaramuzzi post.

The nebulous 2 ♣ response is forcing to game with:

- A 3-card limit raise,
- Any balanced hand with at least two clubs,
- 5+ clubs,
- 4-4-4-1, short in M – plan to rebid 2 NT.

O2	R2	O3	R3	Fischer: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	Accepts. When M=♠, denies 4 ♥.			
	2 M	GF, leaving plenty of room for slam tries.		
	2 NT	Balanced GF, 2-card support.		
	3 M	Limit raise, leaving room for slam try.		
	Other	Natural GF with clubs.		
2 ♥	[M=♠] Natural, any strength.			
	2 ♠	Limit raise, non-forcing.		
	2 NT	Balanced GF, 2-card support.		
	3 ♠	GF, 3-card support.		
	4 ♥	Limit raise with heart fit.		
	Other	Natural GF with clubs.		
2 M	Weak.			
3 x	Natural, slam interest opposite a limit raise (4 ♣ natural).			

Opener’s priority for showing hearts is an unnecessary leak.

The only strength information shown is accept/reject LR.

Michael Massimilla (2025)

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/including-a-3-card-lr-in-a-2c-response/> - see comments on this Scaramuzzi post.

The nebulous 2 ♣ response is forcing to game with:

- A 3-card limit raise,
- Any balanced hand with at least two clubs,
- 5+ clubs,
- 4-4-4-1, short in M – plan to rebid 2 NT.

O2	R2	O3	R3	Massimillia: { 1 M – 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	Any minimum (11-14), except denies 4+ ♥ if M=♠.			
	2 ♠	Limit raise, non-forcing.		
	2 M	3-card limit raise, non-forcing. Game tries on.		
	3 M	Forcing, choice of games or slam interest.		
	3 NT	4-3-3-3 choice of games.		
	4 M	Sign-off.		
2 ♥	[M=♠] Natural, any strength.			
2 ♠	[M=♥] Natural, extra values.			
2 M	4+ ♦, extra values.			
2 NT	6+ M, not solid, extra values, no 4-card side suit.			
3 ♣	4+ ♣, extra values.			
3 ♦	Splinter, 4+ clubs, extra values.			
3 oM	Splinter, 4+ clubs, extra values.			
3 M	Semi-solid suit, extra values..			
3 NT	18-19 balanced (new suit = control for M).			

“This is now my normal preferred structure; however I play 1M-2C*-2D*-2M as forcing.”

Hengeveld (2025)

<https://rosalind.home.xs4all.nl/bridge/romi/1hs.htm#1s-2k> – link found in Scaramuzzi post. Translated from the Dutch in Firefox... Source started with spades, then hearts, in 4-5 chunks. I was unable to complete the chart below or to evaluate this plan.

The nebulous 2 ♣ response ... 3-card limit raise, etc.

O2	R2	O3	R3	Hengeveld: { 1 M - 2 ♣; ? }
2 ♦	[M=♠] relay, tell me more:			
	2 ♥	1 st step: up to 14, no 4-card ♥.		
	2 ♠	2 nd step: 18-20, 5332.		
2 ♦	[M=♥] [tell me more?]			
	2 ♥	[M=♥] 3-card limit raise, NF, game tries.		
	Ghak! It's two different systems! (I quit ♥ here.)			
2 ♥	[M=♠] 4+ ♥, any strength.			Common continuations: 2 M - 4 M = 3-card LR. 2 NT - 3NT = natural, “divided” (balanced?) 3 ♣ = 6+ cards. 3 M = 13+, 3-card support.
2 ♠	[M=♠] 15+, 6+ ♠ (or strong five-card).			
2 NT	15+, 4+ ♦.			
3 ♣	15+, 4+ ♣, usually 5422.			
3 ♦	15+, splinter, 4+ clubs.			
3 ♥	[M=♠] 15+, splinter, 4+ ♣. [M=♥] no splinter in ♠.			
3 M	15+, self-supporting, sets trump. Serious 3 NT.			
3 NT	15-17, 5-3-3-2. (Not to be confused with 1 ♠ - 2 ♣; 2 ♦ - 3 NT.)			
	4 ♣	Natural.		
	4 ♦/♥	Control-bid for M.		
4 m ♥	[M=♠] 6+ m/♥ and 5 ♠, not strong.			

Bids are, if necessary, primarily based on natural ♣. 2 NT is, as it were, reversed with 2 ♦ and therefore shows a ♦ suit.

1 ♥ – (P) – 2 ♣ – (2 ♠):

Pass [1] 4+ ♦ (replaces 2 ♦), about 11-14.
[2] 15+ waiting (forcing)
Double = penalty, 3 ♥ = limit.

Double Penalty

Other 5+ cards, as much as possible, natural (also 2 NT).
Not exactly like after pass, because less bidding space.