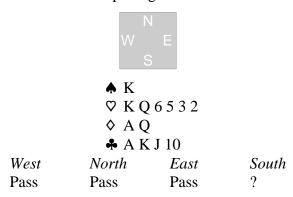
Two Club Opening Bid? -- Problem

Board 6West Deals
E-W Vul



[board rotated for convenience]

With any of the 2 \clubsuit methods below, would you open 2 \clubsuit , or would you open 1 \heartsuit and hope for another chance?

2 \diamond waiting, lacking a good suit. The 2 \diamond responder may or may not have values. This is the method on the Standard American Yellow Card. Since a 2 \clubsuit opening bid is not common, many casual partnerships play this way, especially at matchpoints. However, over a 2 \diamond response, opener must jump to 3 NT to assure reaching game with a forcing balanced hand. Whatever agreements the partnership may have at this point, responder will seldom be willing to risk searching for a major suit fit.

2 \heartsuit **negative.** A 2 \diamondsuit response to 2 \clubsuit is forcing to game, promising at least a king or two queens, but lacking a good suit. Holding a game-forcing balanced hand, opener rebids 2 NT (forcing) over a 2 \diamondsuit response, and systems are on. However, over a 2 \heartsuit response, opener must still use the obnoxious 3 NT bid with a game-forcing balanced hand.

There can be problems with the heart suit after the $2 \, \nabla$ response. Opener's new suit is forcing (possibly game-in-hand, in responder's choice between two suits). Thus $3 \, \nabla$ should be forcing over a $2 \, \nabla$ response. However, since responder is basically broke, with a 4-loser heart hand, opener should pass $2 \, \nabla$! There are negative hands with shapely heart support where responder would want to respond $2 \, \diamond$.

Control responses. Where an ace is two controls and a king is one, typical control responses to $2 \clubsuit$ are: $2 \diamondsuit = 0-1$ $2 \heartsuit = 2$ $2 \spadesuit = A \& K$ 2 NT = KKK $3 \clubsuit = 4+$.

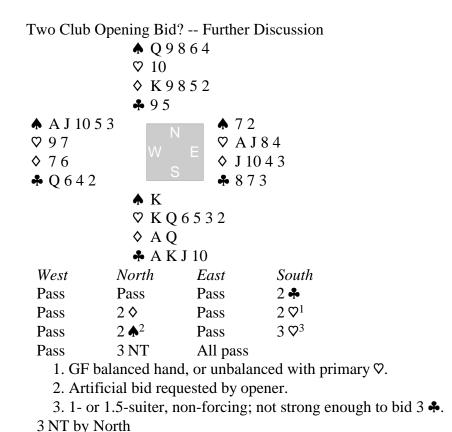
Again, opener must rebid 3 NT over $2 \diamondsuit$ with a forcing balanced hand. After a $2 \heartsuit$ or $2 \spadesuit$ response, auctions can get awkward, or the hand might play from the wrong side. (In a variation, the responses are point ranges.)

Kokish 2 \heartsuit **rebid.** Over a 2 \diamondsuit waiting or control response, the partnership agrees that opener's 2 \heartsuit rebid is forcing, either with (1) hearts, or (2) a game-forcing balanced hand. Responder is requested to rebid 2 \spadesuit , so that opener can continue describing. (Responder should be allowed to bid 3 \clubsuit or 3 \diamondsuit to show a long suit in a very bad hand; opener's new suit is still forcing.) 2 NT is balanced and forcing, while any suit bid is natural and shows primary hearts; opener's 3 \heartsuit shows a non-forcing one- or one-and-a-half suiter.

The balanced opener has two ways to reach 2 NT: directly (non-forcing) and via 2∇ (forcing). The one-suited heart holder similarly has two ways to 3∇ : direct (hearts are trump, start cue-bidding), and via $2 \spadesuit$ (non-forcing). Opener can show the game-forcing 1.5- or 2-suiter with hearts by bidding the second suit.

The 2 \clubsuit opener's jump rebid is forcing and sets trump. The 2 \clubsuit opener's second new suit is forcing, and promises at least ten tricks (unless responder shows values). There are variations on most of these methods.

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After a 2 ♣ opening, this was a bad hand to be playing Kokish. By the time responder gets to make a natural bid, the auction is at 3 ♥. Should responder bid 3 ♠ with only five mediocre spades? Should responder bid 3 NT without a club stopper, or raise hearts on the singleton ten? Playing Kokish, things can get sticky when opener has hearts and either partner has spades.

After $2 \clubsuit$, a $2 \diamondsuit$ response is normal with any system of responses - a king (one control) and lacking a good suit. If $2 \diamondsuit$ has shown values, opener should get to show both hearts and clubs, which should result in the dubious contract of 3 NT by North. Similarly, with $2 \diamondsuit$ waiting, responder gets to rebid $2 \spadesuit$, natural with some values $(3 \clubsuit$ would have been an artificial second negative). Again, opener gets to bid $3 \clubsuit$, reaching the dubious 3 NT.

Suppose responder holds \spadesuit 9 8 6 4 2 \heartsuit 10 \diamondsuit 9 5 \clubsuit Q 9 8 5 2. Playing 2 \diamondsuit waiting or control responses, responder rebids 3 \clubsuit , an artificial second negative, and South will declare 3 \heartsuit . The club fit will be missed unless responder decides to show values with a natural 2 \spadesuit . Playing 2 \heartsuit negative, that should be the final contract! Remove the \diamondsuit K from North's actual hand, and the same result should be achieved.

It's OK to open 2 \clubsuit , if you are willing to let the club suit go, just showing hearts. That would be fine with \spadesuit K \heartsuit K Q J 10 3 2 \diamondsuit A Q \clubsuit A K 6 5. Even if clubs proves to be the better fit, hearts may score more. However, with the dealt hand, it's better to open 1 \heartsuit . South has a 4-loser hand that may have trouble taking nine tricks, due to the lack of texture in hearts.

It is best to play hearts below game on the actual layout, as +110 scored 67%, and nine tricks was typical. Passing the 1 \heartsuit opening bid is the best way to achieve that. Could you bring yourself to pass? Not me.

 $1 \heartsuit - 1 \spadesuit$; $3 \clubsuit ?$ After opener's game-forcing jump shift, I play that three of opener's major is a waiting bid by responder; $3 \heartsuit$ is reasonable bid that will lead to a dubious $4 \heartsuit$ contract on this deal. Eschewing $3 \heartsuit$ on a singleton, responder has no other choice but 3 NT, another dubious contract that opener will pass. Both contracts were made at some tables, but usually failed, some by two tricks. Opposite the alternative North hand $(\spadesuit 9 8 6 4 2 \heartsuit 10 \diamondsuit 9 5 \clubsuit Q 9 8 5 2)$, $5 \clubsuit$ may be reached if anybody else makes a peep.