

Two Club Opening Bid? -- Problem

Board 6

West Deals

E-W Vul



♠ K
♥ K Q 6 5 3 2
♦ A Q
♣ A K J 10

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	?

[board rotated for convenience]

With any of the 2♣ methods below, would you open 2♣, or would you open 1♥ and hope for another chance?

2♦ waiting, lacking a good suit. The 2♦ responder may or may not have values. This is the method on the Standard American Yellow Card. Since a 2♣ opening bid is not common, many casual partnerships play this way, especially at matchpoints. However, over a 2♦ response, opener must jump to 3NT 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♥ negative. A 2♦ response to 2♣ 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 2NT (forcing) over a 2♦ response, and systems are on. However, over a 2♥ response, opener must still use the obnoxious 3NT bid with a game-forcing balanced hand.

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

Control responses. Where an ace is two controls and a king is one, typical control responses to 2♣ are:

2♦ = 0-1 2♥ = 2 2♠ = A & K 2NT = KKK 3♣ = 4+.

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

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

The balanced opener has two ways to reach 2NT: 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♠ (non-forcing). Opener can show the game-forcing 1.5- or 2-suiter with hearts by bidding the second suit.

The 2♣ opener's jump rebid is forcing and sets trump. The 2♣ 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.

Two Club Opening Bid? -- Further Discussion

Board 6

West Deals

E-W Vul

♠ Q 9 8 6 4			
♥ 10			
♦ K 9 8 5 2			
♣ 9 5			
♠ A J 10 5 3	N	♠ 7 2	
♥ 9 7	W	♥ A J 8 4	
♦ 7 6	E	♦ J 10 4 3	
♣ Q 6 4 2	S	♣ 8 7 3	
		♠ K	
		♥ K Q 6 5 3 2	
		♦ A Q	
		♣ A K J 10	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥ ¹
Pass	2 ♠ ²	Pass	3 ♥ ³
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

1. GF balanced hand, or unbalanced with primary ♥.
 2. Artificial bid requested by opener.
 3. 1- or 1.5-suiter, non-forcing; not strong enough to bid 3 ♣.
- 3 NT by North

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 ♣, a 2 ♦ response is normal with any system of responses - a king (one control) and lacking a good suit. If 2 ♦ 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 ♦ waiting, responder gets to rebid 2 ♠, natural with some values (3 ♣ would have been an artificial second negative). Again, opener gets to bid 3 ♣, reaching the dubious 3 NT.

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

It's OK to open 2 ♣, if you are willing to let the club suit go, just showing hearts. That would be fine with ♠ K ♥ K Q J 10 3 2 ♦ A Q ♣ 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 ♥. 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 ♥ opening bid is the best way to achieve that. Could you bring yourself to pass? Not me.

1 ♥ - 1 ♠; 3 ♣? After opener's game-forcing jump shift, I play that three of opener's major is a waiting bid by responder; 3 ♥ is reasonable bid that will lead to a dubious 4 ♥ contract on this deal. Eschewing 3 ♥ 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 (♠ 9 8 6 4 2 ♥ 10 ♦ 9 5 ♣ Q 9 8 5 2), 5 ♣ may be reached if anybody else makes a peep.