

Whether you subscribe to Lawrence, Bergen, Hardy, or Rodwell & Grant, duplicate players are familiar with some version of 2/1 Game Force. The objective of any approach is to define 1) values for game, 2) fit, 3) controls in side suits and 4) sufficient key cards for slam. If you think that bidding theory and analysis has been stagnant, be ready for a surprise. This is a very brief overview of some cutting-edge thinking and expert practice.

Discuss a new convention in detail with partner including 2 and 3rd round rebids and areas of ambiguity before adopting it.

DEFAULT AGREEMENTS

Before we begin let's look at our preferred style of 2/1:

(Lawrence) Opener's 2M Rebid is default for unspecified minimum hands and only promises 5 trumps (Lawrence Style). Reverses and 3-level new suits show extra values. 2N promises stoppers or honors in the unbid suits.

(Bergen) Opener's 2M rebid shows 6+ card suit (Bergen Style). Opener's 2N rebid is default for balanced minimums and promises no specific holding in unbid suits. Reverses and 3-level rebids promise no extra values.

With ♠Q2 ♥K32 ♦864 ♣AKQ102
 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♦ - P :
 Bergen rebid: 2N (some 3♦)
 Lawrence rebid: 2♣

With ♠AK432 ♥K2 ♦84
 ♣K1092 and 1♠ - P - 2♦:
 Lawrence style rebid: 2♣
 Bergen style rebid: 3♣
 (some 2N)

(Bergen) Responder's 2M rebid promises 3 cards. This allows partner to pattern out so 2N usually shows 5422, and 3. Shows 3/4 cards in a 5431 5440 pattern. This often leads to NT bids that are wrong sided.

(Lawrence) Responder's 2M rebid can be on Ax, Kx, or Qx in the major, allowing the pair to right side NT.

Defaults Summary	Lawrence	Bergen
Opener's 2M rebid	Min with 5+ cards	6+ card suit
Opener's 2N rebid	Min with honors in unbid suits	Bal min, No side suit promised
Opener's 2♠ Reverse	Extra Values	Shape Only, no extras promised
Opener's 3-level simple new suit	Extra values	Shape Only, no extras promised
Responder's 2 Major rebid raise	2-card minimum, Ax/Kx/Qx	3-card support

Showing 6-card suits early has a major advantage. Knowing we have a 9 or 10 card fit enables better constructive and competitive bidding. The need to right-side NT is important. Knowing when opener has extra values matters. Can we have the benefit of knowing partner's 6-card suit without sacrificing stoppers for 2N and extras for reverses (high reverses – 3-level rebids)? You bet!

1) HOW OPENER SHOWS A 6-CARD MAJOR¹

Opener's simple rebid of 2 of their major shows 6 or more cards in Bergen's style. In some sequences this might not be clear until the 3 or 4-level in Lawrence's approach. Here's how 6-card suits and extra values can be shown:

Option 1 – The Schuler Shift:

- a) Allow a 2 level rebid on all 5 card suits in minimum range, including balanced 5332's with or without stoppers in unbid suits. Include any hands with a 6-card major that is willing to play 3N (say, ♠AQ6543 ♥4 ♦98 ♣KQ32, in the auction 1♠ - P - 2♦ should rebid 2♠ not 2N).
- b) Assign the rebid 2N to show any hand with 6+ card Major that will play better in 4 of the Major than 3N.

This suffers from potentially missing minor suit contracts when opener holds ♠3 ♥AKJ872 ♦K32 ♣QJ2 and the auction is 1♥ - P - 2♦ - P - 2N(6♥s) - P - 3N - P - ?? Could we be missing a slam in ♦s? A lot depends on what 2♦ means.

Option 2 – The Martel Switch:

- a) Opener's simple rebid of the next strain (Step 1 rebid) show all minimums with 5-card suits or 6 cards holdings unsuitable for play in NT. 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♦ says nothing about ♦s, but guarantees a minimum hand with 5 or 6 trumps.

- b) Responder's bids the Step 1 strain to ask which (5-card minimum or 6+ Cards). 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♦ - P - 2♥ asks. 2♠ shows 6+ cards while 2N shows flawed minimum hands with only 5 cards in the Major.
- c) Responder's rebid of the Major now takes the place of the Step 1 suit! So 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♠ shows ♠s, the bid that the 2♦ artificial rebid had eliminated ← the (Chip) MARTEL SWITCH!

2) RESPONDERS STRONG BALANCED HANDS¹

Current practice has us bidding 1NT with a balanced 11-12, 3N with a balanced 13-15 and a 4-card minor with 16+ HCP. Sometimes we have to make due with 2♣ on a 3-card suit (Partner opens 1♠ and you hold ♠KJ2 ♥KQJ9 ♦AJ3 ♣K32 you will likely call 2♣ then jump to 3N or 4N). Why not put all balanced GF hands in 2♣, freeing 3N for other duty? 2♣ shows ♣s or balanced GF. This has the benefit of keeping the auction low and allowing more space for exploration. This also allows 2♦ by responder to promise a 5-card suit. To do this:

- a) Opener rebids 2♦ on a 5 and 6-card minimums. Responder then shows a GF balanced hand by rebidding 2N or real ♣s by rebidding anything else.
- b) Some simplify the 1NT forcing bid by including the 3-card limit raise in the 2♣ response (optional). Thus when opener rebids 2♦ (waiting), responder can rebid 2♠ to show the limit raise hand. This does not allow the rebid on 2 cards, but gains other advantages. Now opener can safely pass 1N with many minimum hands.
- c) Typically opener's balanced 12+-14's and 18-19 rebid 2N while 15-17 rebids 3N. If you have 20+ HCP you don't have a bidding problem 😊.

3) MINI – MAXI SPLINTERS BY RESPONDER¹²

Since 2♣ response shows all balanced game forces to 1♥/♠, what do we do with 3N? The best idea is to fine-tune our splinter raises. We can now afford to show 9+-11 HCP splinters and 12-14 HCP Splinters. Holding fewer HCP we want to share less specific information with defenders. Holding more strength (approaching Slam) we can be more overt. NOTE: The HCP ranges assume all are WORKING – do not count singleton HONORS EVER!

- a) Bid 3N with 4 trumps, a singleton or void, and no worse than 7 losers. All HCP must be working (NO SINGLETON HONORS). If partner has enough to consider slam they will ask for the short suit by bidding 4♣ (responses show the suits up the line: ♣, ♦, Other Major).
- b) Bid 3♠, 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ with the stronger hands. This makes it very easy for partner to assess slam potential
- c) With 15+ WORKING HCP and 4-card support, start with a 2/1 bid then continue strongly.
- d) With a stiff A/K/Q, be sure to hold the HCP range in the other 3 suits – do not count the stiff honor.

4) FIT JUMPS REPLACE WEAK JUMP SHIFTS²³

Weak Jump shifts? They wrong-side the contract and give defenders a clear blueprint for an effective attack. Andrew Robson made an important contribution to constructive and competitive bidding advocating fit jumps. A fit jump shows invitational or better values, is forcing at least one round, and promises 1) 4-cards trump support for opener's Major and a 5+ card 1-loser suit. If partner opens 1♥, a minimum 3♦ response would look like ♠32 ♥Q742 ♦KQJ54 ♣Kx. Responder can have more, so the Fit Jump is forcing 1 round. If opener or responder rebids a new suit, it is a control bid and forces game / seeks slam. Fit Jumps show source of tricks raises, complementing Jacoby 2NT (Balanced) and 3-suit GF Raises (Splinters).

5) FAST ARRIVAL AND PICTURE BIDS¹

Experts play fast arrival in suits and slow arrival (jumps show extras) in NT. One important refinement is to not allow either partner to make a fast arrival jump to game if partner is UNLIMITED (partner has not narrowly limited their hand). 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♦ - P - 4♠ is not Fast arrival. Rather it is a good raise with prime values in the bid suits and NO CONTROLS in the unbid suit (honors or singletons). Something like ♠KJ84 ♥98 ♦104 ♣ AKJ64. Picture bids help opener assess slam opportunities. Does this mean there are no fast arrival bids? No, we just delay them 1 round. 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♦ - P - 2♠ - P - 3♣ - P - 4♠ = fast arrival! Experts also use responders Jump Raise as a serious slam-try asking partner to begin to control bid: 1♠ - P - 2♣ - P - 2♦ - P - 3♠ set ♠s and asks for control bidding. Opener's single/double jump shifts show shortness (you decide whether min/max or singleton/void).

These expert approaches are gaining adherents. Consider adopting what you find worthwhile. Remember to ALERT!
 References: 1) www.bridgewinners.com – Andrew Gumperz and Kit Woolsey; 2) www.bridgebaseonline.com 3) Andrew Robson & Oliver Segal, *Partnership Bidding at Bridge*, Faber and Faber (1993) ISBN-10: 0571164323 ISBN-13: 978-0571164325.