

# System notes.\* Li-Chung Chen, Victor Chubukov, Andy Cotton, Mike Develin, Eric Mayefsky

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## 1 General overview and style

Our system is pretty standard, 2/1 game forcing, with a 15-17 no-trump. It contains a fair number of gadgets and treatments, however, which comprise the majority of the description in these notes.

We tend to pass most balanced 11-counts without a five-card major, some balanced 11's with a five-card major, and some trashy 12's without a five-card major. Our openings are particularly heavy in second seat (tend to pass below-average 1m 12-counts, no light preempts at all.) We pay a lot of attention to colors and seat when deciding whether to preempt or not. Second seat red versus white preempts tend to be completely textbook.

We tend to be conservative about inviting. At IMPs, we obviously are a bit looser, but still, our style is conservative invites and aggressive accepts. Our 1x - 1M - 3M bid is a little heavier than most people's, so responder strains to bid 4M with any reasonable excuse.

Other than that, we're pretty normal: normal overcall style, normal responding style (i.e. stretching to bid 1M over 1m instead of passing), etc.

### 1.1 General principles

We've noticed that some principles come up frequently. The 3NT jump bid showing 15-17 balanced, doubleton in partner's suit. When you have only one way to force, it's just a general try (e.g. cuebidding as the only way to agree a suit in a forcing manner, or having only 3M-1 below 3M with agreed M fit, which is a generic game try.) When we have an agreed fit, x is penalty unless it's maximal; this does not apply when the "fit" is only a support double, where x is generic takeout. 2NT tends to be minors or scrambling.

Sometimes we have to bid 3NT when there isn't enough room. In these cases it only guarantees stoppers you can't show, though ideally you have all.

If the opponents show a suit (this tends to be for the purpose of their two-suited or artificial bids), we have the general agreement that bidding their suit is natural if they've shown 4 cards, and a cue if they've shown 5. The exception is when we've explicitly agreed "unusual vs. unusual" even if bidder could be 5-4 or worse (e.g. 1M-(2c majors)). If the opponents have bid two suits and we've bid one suit (e.g. 1c-(1h)-1s), the cue bid is the suit that you're under (2c in this case).

## 2 General treatments and conventions

### 2.1 Jump shifts

We play jump shifts as follows. In constructive auctions by an unpassed hand:

- 3-level jump shifts are natural and invitational (something like ♠ xx ♥ xx ♦ Kxx ♣ AQJxxx for 1♠ - 3♣. 1♠ - 3♥ specifically shows 0-1 spades, see section 3.1.2.)

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- 2-level jump shifts are strong, i.e. game-forcing. There are three hand types: either a one-suited hand which is conveyed by rebidding the suit ( $\spadesuit AKQJxxx \heartsuit Ax \diamond xxx \clubsuit x$  for  $1\clubsuit - 2\spadesuit$ ), a big balanced hand (18+) which is conveyed by rebidding the cheapest NT ( $\spadesuit AKx \heartsuit KQx \diamond AQxxx \clubsuit Jx$  for  $1\clubsuit - 2\diamond$ ), or a two-suited hand (my suit and yours) which is conveyed by any other bid, which is a fit splinter (or your suit, 2-suiter with no shortness (necessarily 5422) or maybe a stiff honor or wanting to keep it low;  $\spadesuit AQxxx \heartsuit Qx \diamond A \clubsuit KQJxx$  for  $1\clubsuit - 2\spadesuit$ ). Opener tends to not rebid above 2NT to give jump-shifter a chance to clarify.

### 2.1.1 Fit jumps

In competitive auctions, and by a passed hand, all jump shifts are fit-showing, unless they are game. This includes auctions like  $(1\heartsuit) - 1\spadesuit - (P) - 3\clubsuit$ , and  $1\heartsuit - (X) - 3\clubsuit$  as well as the usual  $1\heartsuit - (1\spadesuit) - 3\clubsuit$ . These are constructive, showing four-card support with five cards in the newly bid suit (or could occasionally be 6 in new suit, 3 in old.) These only apply when the jump-shifter is making their first bid, so something like  $1\diamond - (X) - 1\heartsuit - (P) - 3\clubsuit$  is not a fit-showing jump shift, but rather a strong minor two-suiter.

If the fit jump is fitting a major, it agrees that suit (for purposes of keycard/nonserious 3NT); if it's fitting a minor, it agrees the suit for purposes of Kantar/keycard (although 4m may not be forcing.) In either case, if partner raises the suit we jumped in (e.g.  $1\diamond - (1\heartsuit) - 2\spadesuit - 3\spadesuit$ ), we have a 6key auction.

Something like  $1\heartsuit - (1\spadesuit) - 3\spadesuit$  is of course a splinter, not a fit bid. Speaking of which...

## 2.2 Splinters

We play splinters whenever possible. The general rule is that the lowest undefined bid in a suit is a splinter.

The classic splinter auction is something like  $1\spadesuit - 4\diamond$ , but there are others. For instance,  $\begin{matrix} 1\clubsuit & - & 1\heartsuit \\ & & 3\diamond \end{matrix}$

is a diamond splinter in support of hearts. This is different from a  $4\diamond$  splinter in that it isn't game-forcing, but it could also be a supermax or void splinter.  $4\diamond$  would be an exactly-stiff min GF splinter.

Here "splinter" means "singleton or void with four-card trump support." Over major-suit openings, we play several different types of splinters, see section 3.1.

All splinters are game-forcing, except for  $1x - 1y - 3z$  where  $x < z < y$ .

## 2.3 Slam bidding

### 2.3.1 RKC 1430

We play Roman Keycard 1430 in most situations. In other words, with an agreed trump suit (sometimes agreed by the 4NT bid itself), 4NT asks for keycards. There are five keycards: the four aces and the king of trumps.  $5\clubsuit$  shows 1 or 4,  $5\diamond$  shows 0 or 3,  $5\heartsuit$  shows two without the queen of trumps, and  $5\spadesuit$  shows two with the queen of trumps.

After any non-queen-showing response, the cheapest bid not in the trump suit asks for the queen of trumps. Responses are to return to the cheapest level of the trump suit without it, to jump in the trump suit or bid 5NT with the queen but no kings, and otherwise to bid one's cheapest king (sometimes suppressed if it would require going beyond six of the trump suit and this is deemed unwise.)

If the response shows 3, and the trump suit is hearts,  $5\heartsuit$  is a non-forcing queen ask (pass with 0, or 3 and no queen, bid a king or  $6\heartsuit$  with 3 and the queen), while  $5\spadesuit$  is a forcing queen ask ( $5NT =$  queen and no kings.)

After any response to 1430, 5NT guarantees all keycards and asks for specific kings. The response is to bid your cheapest king, or to return to six of the trump suit with no kings. 4NT is almost always ace-asking, except when it is obviously not (e.g. immediately following a natural NT bid.) Exceptions will be noted.

We play DOPI through (and not including) five of our trump suit, where double of an interference bid (or XX of a double) shows the first step (1 or 4), pass shows the second step (0 or 3), etc.. At five of our trump suit or above, double shows an even number of keycards, while pass shows an odd number.

If you have a void, you can choose to show it as follows: 5NT shows an even number of keycards with a void, while  $6x$  shows a void and an odd number of keycards. After 5N, the cheapest non-T bid is a Q-ask. With an odd number of keycards, assuming that the suit you're void in is known (if it's not known, bid 6

of the void suit), we zoom to Q-ask, with 6c showing no queen. Other 6-level bids show the queen and that king, with 6M showing an unshowable king.

### 2.3.2 When is 4NT not keycard

The general rule is that when the 4NT bid is needed to show a natural quantitative invite, that's what it is. In cases where you must have another bid with that invite, or 4NT natural is not very reasonable (e.g. opponents have been bidding and raising, or something), 4NT is keycard for the last bid suit (or possibly takeout for the minors, or 2 places to play, or ...) Watch for 4NT natural if we have bid three suits. We seem to play 4NT natural more than most people.

In some situations, this means that the only forcing way to agree a suit is to cuebid, and there is only one cuebid. In this case, the cuebid doesn't mean anything, but is merely a strong way to agree the suit. See Section 2.3.9.

### 2.3.3 Minorwood

In an agreed minor suit, we try to use 4♦ as the keycard bid whenever possible. Here are the detailed agreements:

- If clubs have been agreed before the 4-level, 4♦ is keycard. If diamonds have been agreed before the 4-level, 4♦ is keycard if it's forcing. If it's not forcing, then Kantar rules apply (which generally means that the cheapest 4-level bid that cannot be to play is keycard).
- If a minor suit has been agreed at the 4-level (generally by a 4m bid), Kantar rules apply (next idle bid is keycard).
- No matter which minor is agreed, 4♣ is a general slam try (not promising any particular control) if 4♦ would be keycard.
- If 3N is pulled to 4m (as a slam-try) then an immediate 4N is natural. If partner cues 4M instead, then 4N is keycard (also if it goes 4m-4h-4s).

Responses are 1430, with the 5th step showing an even number and a void, and higher bids showing an odd number and a void (usually in the suit bid). If the response shows 2 or fewer, both 5m and 4NT are to play, whether NT was previously bid or not. If responder showed 3 or more and did not show the trump queen, both 5m and 4NT are non-forcing Q-asks. Otherwise, the cheapest non-4NT, non-5m bid asks for the trump queen, and the second cheapest such bid asks for kings. With no kings, or no trump queen, simply return to the cheapest level of the trump suit.

With a void and an even number of keycards, bid the 5th step. With an odd number of keycards (and known void location), zoom to Q-ask as above (6th step= no queen, others = Q+K, 6m unshowable king). If the void is unknown, bid 6 of the void suit if it's below 6m, and 6m otherwise.

### 2.3.4 6 keycard situations

In double fit auctions, 4NT (or minorwood) includes 6 keycards (AK of both M and x, other two aces.) 5♠ shows two keycards and *zero* or two of the relevant queens.

This applies in auctions like 1x-2y-3y-3x, as well as something like 1♥ - 2♠ - 3♠ - 4♥. We also play this in the case where, opposite a NT opener, responder transfers, bids the other suit, and opener shows interest in the second suit.

### 2.3.5 Gerber

We play Gerber only directly over a 1NT or 2NT opening. 5♣ after Gerber asks for number of kings.

### 2.3.6 4NT opening

A 4NT opening asks for specific aces. Responses are:

- 5♣: no aces
- 5♦: diamond ace
- 5♥: heart ace only
- 5♠: spade ace only
- 5NT: club ace only
- 6♣: two or more aces

### 2.3.7 4♣ keycard

4♣ is often keycard. Some cases: after Stayman and a 2M response, 4♣ is normal keycard. After partner opens a weak two-bid or three-bid, 4♣ is keycard, with responses 0, 1 without the queen, 1 with the queen, 2 without the queen, 2 with the queen. 4♦ is keycard over a club bid. If there is interference over the preempt, 4NT is keycard but the responses are still 01122.

### 2.3.8 Exclusion Blackwood

We play Exclusion Blackwood if and only if partner can figure it out at the table. Exclusion Blackwood is always 0314.

### 2.3.9 Mystery cues

We make ample use of mystery cues. Essentially this means that if there is no forcing way to agree a given suit, and a bid makes no sense as natural, then it is a cuebid agreeing that suit and showing slam interest. These happen most frequently in 2/1 auctions, such as

1♠ - 2♦  
 2♥ - 3♦  
 3♠ - 4♣

This is a mystery cue agreeing spades. 4♦ would be natural, while 4♥ would be an attempt to play hearts. 4NT would be natural and invitational. Another such auction would be:

1♠ - 1NT  
 3♥

Here, 4♣ and 4♦ would be cuebids for hearts.

## 2.4 Cuebids

With an agreed major-suit fit, we cuebid first- or second-round control, except for shortness control in partner's suit. Bypassing a cuebid denies it (bid up-the-line, even with a "better cuebid" (e.g. AK instead of second-round control) in a higher suit, unless you want to claim to deny the lower cuebid.)

When we deem it appropriate, we cuebid queens in partner's suit. Here partner's suit is defined as any suit in which he has shown 5 cards, or a 2/1 suit.

Our cuebids in opponent's suit are limit raises, general strong bids, or whichever of Western and Eastern is stopper-asking, as appropriate. If there is one unbid suit, a cuebid asks; if there are two, a cuebid tells.

We cuebid fragments when we've denied stoppers and below 3NT. In practice we seem to be able to figure out bid or implied fragments pretty well.

## 2.5 1X - 1Y - 1nt auctions

One structure which comes up frequently is 1X - 1Y - 1NT, where X and Y are suits with Y obviously outranking X. X and Y can both be minors, both be majors, or (most frequently by far) X can be a minor and Y can be a major. In all of these situations we play the same structure, which is tricked-out 2-way NMF.

A 2♣ bid is almost always an invitational hand of some sort, the only exception being a diamond signoff. Opener is forced to bid 2♦. After this, responder will pass with the diamond signoff; any other bid is natural and invitational. Most commonly this is rebidding Y, which shows a fifth card. A bid of 3Y would show six cards.

A 2♦ bid is game-forcing and artificial. Opener makes the cheapest descriptive bid, with life continuing naturally. (In other words, if 2♥ and 2♠ show three-card support and a new four-card suit, bid 2♥.)

A 2Y bid or a 3♣ bid is a weak signoff; also, 2♥ is a weak signoff if Y = ♠. A 2NT bid is natural and invitational. A 3Y bid is natural and game-forcing, showing a six-card suit; it sets trumps unless opener responds 3NT. 3NT is obviously to play.

There are some subtleties / ambiguities which we choose to use as follows.

1♣ - 1M

1NT - 2♣ : This shows 5M game-forcing.

2♦ - 3NT

1♣ - 1♥

1NT - 2♣

2♦ - 2NT

1♣ - 1♥  
1NT - 2NT

1♣ - 1♥  
1NT - 2♣  
2♦ - 3♣

shows support for clubs (4+ clubs) as well as a notrumpy hand. Accordingly, the second sequence sort of denies support for clubs, while the third sequence suggests a non-notrumpy hand (5+ clubs.)

1♣ - 1♠

1NT - 2♥

: We agree that this sequence is weak, showing 5-4 in the majors. With an invitational hand you would go through 2♣ - 2♦ first.

1♣ - 1♥

1NT - 2♣

2♦ - 2♠

1♣ - 1♥  
1NT - 2♠

while the second sequence shows 4-4 in the majors. Both are invitational (with GF either, go through 2D.)

1♥ - 1♠

1NT - 2♣

2♦ - 2♥

: No one should be surprised that this is a normal limit raise in hearts (with some spades to boot.)

1♣ - 1♦

1NT - 2♥

1♣ - 1♦  
1NT - 2♦

: Both of these auctions are forcing to game. We agree that the first auction shows four hearts and 5+ diamonds, while the second auction could be a slammish hand with four in a major and four diamonds, trying to find any 4-4 fit (or it could be a diamond-club hand.)

1♣ - 1♠

1NT - 3♠

1♥ - 1♠  
1NT - 3♥

: These auctions are both game-forcing. In some cases, opener is systemically supposed to rebid 1NT with a stiff in partner's suit; see Section 3.2.1. These "death hands" are revealed in various ways.

1♦ - 1♠

1NT - 2♦

2♥ - 2♠

3♣

1♦ - 1♠

1NT - 2♦

2♥ - 2♠

3♦

apply switching clubs and diamonds.

1♣ - 1♠

1NT - 2♦

2NT

This is 2245 with a heart stop or 2344 (4-4 minor hands can be opened 1c, though we usually open 1d).

1♣ - 1♠  
 1NT - 2♦  
 3♦

This shows 1345 or 2245 without a heart stop.

The auction 1♣ - 1♠  
 1NT - 2♦ does not set spades as trumps. Opener can rebid 3NT with a stiff; any  
 2NT - 3♠  
 other bid shows at least two spades and is a cuebid. No nonserious 3NT.

The auction 1♣ - 1♠ does set spades as trumps, even if opener has a stiff. Opener cuebids, or  
 1NT - 3♠ nonserious 3NT.

## 2.6 Reverses

Let's take a standard reverse auction, such as 1♦ - 1♠  
 2♥. We have the following treatment: the only non-game-forcing bids are the cheaper of the fourth suit and 2NT, which is non-forcing, and the suit rebid (2♠ here), which shows five spades and is a one-round force. Everything else is pretty much as you would expect; 3♦ and 3♥ are game-forcing raises. 3NT shows a minimum game-force with an unslammish hand and no fit. The more expensive of 2NT and the 4th suit shows extras (beyond GF) and is encouraging. The weird thing is that the 4th suit, unless it is the cheapest rebid, denies a fit, and denies a 5th card in your suit, so it is actually natural.

We play a similar treatment in the auction 1x-1N-2y (y>x). 2y+1 is artificial and the only non-GF.

## 2.7 Fourth-suit forcing to game

The cheapest bid of the fourth suit (except, obviously, in cuebidding situations) is artificial and forcing to game except for a couple of situations: when it comes up as the cheapest bid in a reverse (Section 2.6),

when we are already forced to game, or in the specific auction 1♣ - 1♦  
 1♥ - 1♠, which is natural. The bid

of 2♠ in 1♣ - 1♦  
 1♥ - 2♠ is artificial and game-forcing. (In general a jump in the fourth suit is natural.)

Over the fourth suit forcing bid, the cheaper of opener's suits is a catch-all that doesn't promise extra length.

## 2.8 The non-serious 3NT

In auctions where we have discovered a major-suit fit below 3NT, and thus are in a cue-bidding situation, we play the "non-serious 3NT." This means that bypassing 3NT to cuebid shows a serious slam try; without a serious slam try, and out of bids below 3NT, 3NT is the bid. All this bid means is "I don't have a serious slam try." On a ridiculously unslammish hand, you can skip 3NT and cuebids altogether and go straight to 4M, although this is generally deprecated. (If partner is limited, this isn't at all deprecated.)

If both partners are limited, then 3N is to play. Jumps to 3N are also typically to play. We do not already have to be forced to game for 3N to be nonserious, although obviously this changes the context for

1M - 1NT  
 when to bid it. 2x - 3M is to play.  
 3NT

If nonserious 3NT is not on and we have no rules, cueing shows extras, maybe an extra ace or king.

If nonserious 3NT is on, bidding 3M (instead of 3N or cue) tends to show extra trump length.

## 3 Constructive bidding

### 3.1 Major-suit openings

We play five-card majors, opening fairly aggressively on such hands. The structure after a 1M opening is fairly normal 2/1 with a forcing notrump. Perhaps a list is in order. Over a  $1\spadesuit$  opening:

- 1NT is forcing (semi-forcing by a passed hand) and shows any hand not accounted for otherwise.
- $2\clubsuit$ ,  $2\diamond$ , and  $2\heartsuit$  are natural and game-forcing, showing 4, 4, and 5 cards in their suits respectively (or  $2\clubsuit$ ,  $2\diamond$  are 2-way reverse Drury by a passed hand, showing a limit raise with three or four trumps respectively.)
- $2\spadesuit$  is the usual spade raise, except that we bid trashy raises by an unpassed hand by bidding 1NT first and then correcting opener's rebid to  $2\spadesuit$ . Two-way game tries are in effect.
- 2NT is Jacoby, showing a game-forcing four-card spade raise, which is usually balanced but is occasionally made with a hand which is too strong to splinter. See section 3.1.3. By a passed hand, 2NT is invitational with clubs.
- $3\clubsuit$ ,  $3\diamond$ , and  $3\heartsuit$  are natural and invitational (fit by passed hand.) Note that with any suit other than clubs, a passed hand with a natural, invitational diamond or heart bid will have typically opened a weak two-bid.
- $3\spadesuit$  is a limit raise with four-card trump support. By a passed hand, it's a distributional mixed raise. 3NT asks for shortness (over either).  $4\spadesuit$  = none, replacement otherwise.
- 3NT is an unspecified minimum splinter (10-11 high card points or so, somewhat less with a void).  $4\clubsuit$  asks, replacement responses.
- $4\clubsuit$ ,  $4\diamond$ ,  $4\heartsuit$  are singletons in the indicated suit with four-card trump support, and a reasonable opener (about 12-14 hcp, again shaded with a void).
- $4\spadesuit$  is to play (the usual  $4\spadesuit$  bid.)
- 4NT is 1430.
- $5\clubsuit$ ,  $5\diamond$  are to play. To bid exclusion, go through Jacoby.

The structure over hearts is mostly identical, with 3NT and  $3\spadesuit$  often switching. For instance,  $3\spadesuit$  is the unspecified minimum splinter (and 3N is the better spade splinter), and  $3\spadesuit$  is the shortness ask after  $1\heartsuit$ - $3\heartsuit$  (and 3N is the spade cue). There is one special bid:  $1\heartsuit$ - $2\spadesuit$  is a limit raise with 3 trumps, over which game tries are natural (2NT shows spades), and consequently  $1\heartsuit$ -1NT is only semiforcing.

One gadget we play is the impossible  $2\spadesuit$  bid; in an auction like  $\begin{array}{l} 1\heartsuit - 1NT \\ 2\clubsuit - 2\spadesuit \end{array}$ , the  $2\spadesuit$  bid is clearly impossible (since with any such natural hand, responder would have bid  $1\spadesuit$  instead of 1NT), so we play that this sequence shows a strong club raise (generally five cards with 10 or so HCP.)

We agree that the auction  $\begin{array}{l} 1\heartsuit - 1NT \\ 2\heartsuit - 2\spadesuit \end{array}$  shows a very minor-suited hand.

#### 3.1.1 1M - 3x

Over 3x invitational, new suit bids are forcing, and 3M is non-forcing.  $4\diamond$  is keycard over 1M-3m, and 4N is keycard in hearts after  $1\spadesuit$ - $3\heartsuit$ .

## 3.1.2 1M - 1NT

Our 1M - 1NT auctions are basically standard 2/1, but we play Bart in the sequence  $1\spadesuit - 1NT - 2\clubsuit$ . Responder's bids are:

- $2\diamond$ : Relay to  $2\heartsuit$ 
  - $2\heartsuit$  -
    - \* Pass: Heart signoff
    - \*  $2\spadesuit$ : Good 2-card spade raise
    - \* 2NT: Invitational with club support (4+ cards)
    - \*  $3\clubsuit$ : Good club raise (5+ cards)
    - \*  $3\diamond$ : Invitational with both reds (55)
    - \*  $3\heartsuit$ : Invitational with hearts (6+) with 3 spades
    - \*  $3\spadesuit$ : 3-card limit raise. My suggestion is this show a balanced hand (suggests 3N) (as opposed to immediate  $3\spadesuit$ ).
  - Bids breaking the relay are natural and show significant extras (??)
- $2\heartsuit$ : Exactly 5 hearts, tolerance for spades or clubs
- $2\spadesuit$ : Bad 2-card spade raise or terrible 3-card spade raise
- 2NT: Invitational without club support
- $3\clubsuit$ : Courtesy club raise
- $3\diamond$ : Diamond signoff
- $3\heartsuit$ : Invitational with hearts with 2 spades
- $3\spadesuit$ : 3-card limit raise

The memory aid for the heart invites is that the slower it is, the more spades it shows.

After  $1\heartsuit - 1N - 2m$  and  $1\spadesuit - 1N - 2\diamond$ , responder rebids as follows:

- Passes or bids 2M with a weak hand.
- Bids a new suit with a weak one-suited hand (this is almost always passed by opener)
- Raises to 3 of the new suit with a decent hand (9+ HCP or equivalent) and support (generally five-card support for a minor, which is often 3)
- Bids 3M with a three-card limit raise in M
- Bids 2NT, natural and invitational (10-12 or so)
- $1\spadesuit - 1NT$ ;  $2\diamond - 3\heartsuit$  shows a heart invite with 2-3 spades.

Opener's ensuing third bid is natural.

Opener's rebid of 2NT shows something like 18-19 balanced and is natural and invitational. Over this, we play that 3m is signoff, 3M shows a (sub)minimum raise, 4M shows the limit raise. Over  $1\spadesuit - 1NT - 2NT$ ,  $3\heartsuit$  is choice of games.

Opener's rebid of 3M shows a good six-card suit and a very good hand. Responder passes, bids 3NT, or bids anything else as a cuebid. Any other reverse/jump by opener is game-forcing. Sometimes this is faked (i.e. 3-card) for lack of any other reasonable bid. After this, responder's 4M shows the limit raise.



### 3.1.3 Jacoby 2NT

Some of us play “standard”. This means that 3x shows a singleton, 4x a good side suit, 4M a balanced minimum, 3S 18-19 or more, and 3N 15-17.

Others play the following structure:

After 1♠-2NT:

- 3♣: all minimums, (though see 4♠, “really really bad”)
  - 3♦: asks for shortness, NLMH responses.
  - 3♥-4♥: LMHLMH “super-max” splinters (the higher steps show a void)
- 3♦: 5 trumps, unbalanced ((5422) is balanced), extras.
  - 3♥: asks for shortness, LMH responses.
  - 3♠-4♠: LMHLMH “super-max” splinters (the higher steps show a void). Yes, even 4♠ (partner is unlimited and has shown extras, so you have to ask (unless you want to tell)).
- 3♥: 6 trumps, unbalanced, extras. Something like ♠AQxxxx♥QTxx♦Ax♣x, or ♠KQxxxx♥Axx♦x♣Axx qualifies as “extras”. 3♠ asks for shortness, LMH.
- 3♠: 5 trumps, balanced, extras. Good 14 counts are included, as are 15-17 and 18-19 hands. This means that decent 16’s or so should show additional values later.
- 3NT: 6(322), extras.
- 4♣, 4♦, 4♥: good 5-card side suit in the suit bid. At least KT9xx, except for AKQxx.
- 4♠: “I had a jack mixed in with my kings”.

The structure for hearts is identical, except that 3NT shows spades (5-6 in the majors), and 3♠ (balanced) can include 6322 hands. Also, we run out of room for responder’s supermax void splinters. After 3♣, 4♥ is to play, so 4♠ is the void splinter (presumably 3N could be void if unwilling to go past 4♥.) After 3♦, 4♥ is a diamond void, analagous to the spade auction (and the spade void is 4♠).

### 3.1.4 2/1 auctions

The auction where opener bids 1M and responder bids 2X is game-forcing (where X is less than M.) A bid of 2X promises four cards, or five if X is hearts. Any bid above 2M by opener shows extras, except 2NT, a heart raise, or 2♠ after a 1♥ opening (more on this later), and is natural, showing either any 5-5 or 5-4 with extras (enough to handle a minor-suit raise); any bid below 2M is natural (four-card suit) and neither shows nor denies extras (extras are defined as slam interest.) Raising a 2/1 minor should be mildly encouraging to 5m or 6m.

3M sets the suit and shows a good hand. Responder cues, or non-serious 3N.

2NT shows 12-14 or 18-19 balanced. With 15-17 balanced, both side suits stopped, and typically 2 in the raised minor (or 3 and not worried about minor fit), bid 3NT. Similarly, responder bidding 3NT after opener’s rebid shows 15-17 (unless it’s not a jump.)

If you have none of these, bid 2M. After this, the auction continues naturally until 3NT is reached or a major-suit fit is established.

Raising opener’s major immediately after making a 2/1 always shows 3 trumps.

Jumps are “picture”. For instance, 1♠-2♣; 2♦-3♠ denies a red suit control.

In the major-suit fit case, non-serious 3NT is on. Jumps are generally splinters.

In some (many) continuations, opener patterns out. E.g. 1M - 2X - 2Y - 2M and 1M - 2X - 2Y - 2N. If we agree a major-suit at the 2-level, then either partner bidding 3M shows extra trump length; bypassing 3M denies extra length.

With 4 spades and 5 or 6 hearts, we rebid 2♠ with 4-6 and 2♥ with 4-5.

### 3.1.5 1M - 2M auctions

In 1M - 2M auctions, we play Cheetah (a.k.a. 2-way) game tries. They're very simple:

- 2M+1 is an unspecified short-suit game try. Responder bids the cheapest short-suit game try they would accept. Opener either knows what to do or bids their short suit (if more expensive than responder's bid.)
- Anything else between 2M and 3M is a long-suit game try in that suit. Responder bids 3M when rejecting the game try (or an intervening bid with a max but no help), or 3NT when accepting the game try. Asker can bid 4♣ to ask for the type of help; if M=♠, then 4♦ shows 1 honor, 4♥ 2 honors, and 4♠ shortness. If M=♥ then 4♦ shows 1 or more honors, while 4♥ shows shortness.
- With a long suit slam try, opener starts with the long suit game try, then bids the suit again. With a short-suit slam try, opener splinters immediately (over the 2M bid). Presumably this means that making a short-suit try and then cueing the short suit at the 4-level shows a void.

If the suit is hearts, no-trump stands in for spades; thus  $\begin{matrix} 1\heartsuit & - & 2\heartsuit \\ 2\spadesuit & - & 2\text{NT} \end{matrix}$  is a long-suit game try in spades, and  $\begin{matrix} 1\heartsuit & - & 2\heartsuit \\ 2\spadesuit & - & 2\text{NT} \end{matrix}$  says you'd accept a short-suit game try in spades (and says nothing about what you would do opposite a short-suit game try in clubs or diamonds.)

These are called Cheetah game tries as a mnemonic: the long-suit game tries are the fast ones, while the short-suit game tries are the delayed ones. Cheetahs are long and fast. We play them only in these two situations (e.g. not in 1x - 1M - 2M auctions.) We also play them with competition involved, such as 1♥ - (1♠) - 2♥ - (P).

### 3.1.6 1M - Drury auctions

First of all, Drury is off after a double.

After a 1M opening followed by Drury, all game tries start with the temporizing (2♦ or 2♥) bid. The exception is the auction 1♥ - 2♦, in which case we play 2-way game tries immediately. (1♥ - 2♦; 2♠ is an unspecified short suit game try, 1♥ - 2♦; 3♣ is a long suit game try in clubs).

For the other three Drury auctions, all game tries bid 2♦ over 2♣ or 2♥ over 2♦. Responder can now make a 2-way try (2M+1 with a short suit try, etc), or bid 2M, in which case opener can make a 2-way try.

Immediate new suit bids are therefore long suit slam tries and jumps are slam-try splinters.

## 3.2 Minor-suit openings

Our auctions after minor-suit openings are essentially normal, with inverted minors. We frequently bypass four-card or longer diamond suits for four-card majors, essentially with all hands not worth an invite opposite a 1nt rebid. After 1m - 1X, we almost always bypass a four-card major or majors to rebid 1NT or 2NT; the official party line is that we never rebid 1M over 1♣ - 1♦ with a balanced hand, and we rebid 1♠ over 1m-1♥ with a balanced hand "only in extraordinary circumstances." We raise major-suit responses on three frequently, with an outside weakness of Jx or worse. With (6331) hands, the raise is optional. With 4-3 in the majors after 1m-1♥, we almost always raise hearts instead of rebidding 1S.

Some quick comments:

- 1NT: 6-bad 10
- 2NT: good 10-12
- 3NT: 13-15
- 3m: weak raise (inverted minors – something like 5-9 with five-card support). The exact range depends on vulnerability and seat. Especially white, there are hands which are too good for 3m and too bad for 2m, and thus bid 1NT. Red, opener is expected to bid 3NT with 18-19 balanced.

Recall the 1x - 1y - 1NT structure (Section 2.5), which comes up very frequently in these auctions.

**3.2.1 1m - 1M**

We've decided to impose a structure such that a 2m rebid in this sequence always promises six. This means that with certain patterns, we are rebidding 1NT with a stiff in partner's suit. We agree to do this with 15 (note that this is usually a misfit 15), or even a bad 16 (with better hands, we would reverse.) The hand patterns where we do this are: 3145, 1345, 1435, 1444, and 1453. The death hand is 0445. Right now we have no agreement on this; partner lies either by opening  $1\heartsuit$  and rebidding  $2\clubsuit$ , or by opening  $1\clubsuit$  and rebidding  $2\clubsuit$ . With a 24(25) 15- or bad 16-count we would typically open 1NT.

**3.2.2 1m - 1M - 2m**

After  $\begin{matrix} 1\clubsuit & - & 1\spadesuit \\ 2\clubsuit & & \end{matrix}$ ,  $2\heartsuit$  is artificial and forcing through 2N,  $2\heartsuit$  is weak signoff (opener can raise to  $3\heartsuit$  in extraordinary circumstances.) After all other 1m - 1M - 2m, basically everything is seminatural and forcing.

**3.2.3 1m - 1M - 2M**

For concreteness's sake, we will discuss the auction  $\begin{matrix} 1\heartsuit & - & 1\heartsuit \\ 2\heartsuit & & \end{matrix}$ ; the other auctions in the 1m - 1M - 2M family are similar. Our treatment is mostly stolen from Adam Meyerson.

- 2NT: 4 hearts, natural and invitational. Opener's responses are as you expect, except that 3NT guarantees stoppers in the unbid suits. (Presumably stiff A (or perhaps K).) With 3 trumps, a max, and missing a stopper, opener makes a descriptive rebid (usually the stopper they have.)
- $3\heartsuit$ : 5 hearts, natural and invitational
- $2\spadesuit$ : This shows 4 spades, game-forcing. Opener's  $3\spadesuit$  is a real raise.
- $3\heartsuit$ : natural and invitational, exactly 4 hearts.
- $3\clubsuit$ : natural and game-forcing, could be many shapes, tends to be stopper/concentration (need only be 3 cards.) Opener bids  $3\heartsuit$  or splinters with four hearts, and 3NT (or 2NT over  $2\spadesuit$ ) with stoppers in all unbid suits. Other bids are fragments. Responder's  $4\heartsuit$  on the next bid shows 5+ hearts, 4+ diamonds, and slam interest.
- 3NT: 4 hearts, guarantees stoppers in the unbid suits.
- $3\spadesuit$ ,  $4\clubsuit$ : Splinters
- $4\heartsuit$ : exactly 4 hearts, 5+ diamonds, slam interest.
- $4\heartsuit$ : to play

$1\heartsuit$ - $1\spadesuit$ - $2\spadesuit$  sequences are similar, with  $3\clubsuit$  and  $3\heartsuit$  gf and mostly stopper showing, and  $3\heartsuit$  showing the 3-card limit raise.  $1\heartsuit$ - $1\spadesuit$ - $2\spadesuit$ - $4\heartsuit$  is 4-3 choice of games,  $1\heartsuit$ - $1\spadesuit$ - $2\spadesuit$ - $3x$ - $3y$ - $4\heartsuit$  is 5-3 choice of games.

**3.2.4 1m - 1M - 3m**

After 1m - 1M - 3m, 3M is forcing, 5 cards. Bids below 3M are seminatural checkback / asking for stopper in the unbid suit. Bids above 3M deny 5 cards in the major and show stoppers. If pressed for space, 3NT may only guarantee stoppers you can't show.

**3.2.5 1X - 1Y - 2NT**

Over the auction  $\begin{matrix} 1X & - & 1Y \\ 2NT & & \end{matrix}$  we play Wolff signoff:  $3\clubsuit$  relays to  $3\diamond$  for either passing, signing off in  $3\heartsuit$  or  $3\spadesuit$ , or bidding 3NT, which is a mild slam try in X.  $3\diamond$  is checkback, asking for hitherto unshown support in a major. 3M is natural and game-forcing, setting trumps.

1m-1 $\spadesuit$ -2NT-3 $\heartsuit$  shows 5-5. With 5-4, bid  $3\diamond$ .

1m-1 $\heartsuit$ -2NT-3 $\diamond$ -3 $\heartsuit$ -3 $\spadesuit$  is a cue for hearts. 1m-1 $\heartsuit$ -2NT-3 $\diamond$ -3 $\heartsuit$ -3NT shows 4-4 in the majors, and 1m-1 $\heartsuit$ -2NT-3 $\spadesuit$  shows 4-5.

A direct  $4\clubsuit$  is signoff.

**3.2.6 1m - 2m auctions**

We play 1m - 2m as a strong raise (inverted minors), with a structure. Opener's rebids are as follows:

- 2m+1: The default rebid. Could be a good hand which doesn't fit any of the other categories, e.g. 18-19 balanced concerned about stoppers, but is usually a minimum.
  - 2m+2: asks for more information, pseudo-game-forcing.
    - \*  $2\spadesuit$  (m =  $\clubsuit$ ): Generally balanced, hand unsuitable to declare notrump.
    - \* 2NT: Hand suitable to declare notrump. We still bid stoppers.
    - \*  $3\clubsuit$ : Extra length or suitishness in the minor.
    - \*  $3\diamond$ : Stopper in the other minor, promises 4m.
    - \* Other major bids at the cheapest level: stopper (no cheaper stopper), promises 4m.
    - \* Jumps: splinters, gf.
  - 2NT: Wants to play 2NT. Opener should correct to 3m when desired, or bid on.
  - 3m: Wants to play 3m. Opener can bid on.
  - Others: splinters, gf.
- Cheapest major bid: 4 cards, 5 in the minor, pgf; 2NT is replacement (shows 4 in m+1 and 5 in m.)
- $3\clubsuit$ : 6+ in the minor, pgf.
- $3\diamond$ , m= $\diamond$ : 4 clubs, 5 diamonds, pgf.
- Jumps: Splinters, gf.
- 3NT: 18-19 balanced with all stoppers.

Note that for either minor,  $3\clubsuit$  generally shows extra length / suitishness,  $3\diamond$  shows a stopper in the other minor. This applies whenever 3m is forcing (i.e. basically all the time, including over things like  $1\diamond$  -  $2\diamond$  - 2NT showing hearts.)

Keycard rules apply as in section 2.3.3.

**3.2.7  $1\diamond$  -  $2\clubsuit$  auctions**

Auctions that start  $1\diamond$  -  $2\clubsuit$  are game-forcing, but are a bit different from 2/1 auctions over 1M. We agree that opener's rebids are as follows:

- 2M: 4 in the major, 5 diamonds, with extra shape or strength
- $3\clubsuit$ : four clubs, with substantial slam interest
- 3NT: 18-19, no 4cM or (optionally) four clubs
- 2NT: 12-14, no 4cM or (optionally) four clubs
- $3\diamond$ : standard American, good 6-card suit, good hand

- 3M: Splinter for clubs
- 2♦ : all other hands

After a non-2♦ response, things proceed pretty naturally. After 2♦ , 2M is a suit, 2NT is temporizing, asking for more information (e.g. club support, major-suit stopper, more diamonds.) 3♣ and 3♦ both highly suggest playing in the suit, although the partnership expects to furiously use up the remaining bids (of which, sadly, there are very few) in an effort to reach 3NT. 3M is, uh, a splinter in support of diamonds. Note that 2♦ by no means guarantees or even suggests a real diamond suit; indeed, you would bid it with the least diamondy hand of all, 4432.

In practice this system seems to work quite well.

### 3.3 1NT openings

The range is the usual 15-17. Over 1NT, we play a few gadgets. We start with the list of bids:

- 2♣ : Stayman
- 2♦ , 2♥ : transfers (opener can super-accept)
- 2♠ : Either clubs, any strength, or a diamond invite. Opener rebids 3♣ with a hand which would accept a club-based invite to 3NT and 2NT otherwise. Responder's 3♦ bid is a diamond invite; any other bid confirms clubs (3M is shortness).
- 2NT: Natural. Seriously.
- 3♣ : Diamonds, either signoff or game-forcing. Opener bids 3♦ . Next bid by responder is shortness.
- 3♦ : minors, game-forcing (should be 5-5, but could be a slammish 5-4 either way.) Opener bids concentration if available.
- 3♥ : 4♠ GF, should have no slam interest. 3♠ suggests 4333 choice of games, 4-anything-not-spades = "I don't want to declare."
- 3♠ : 4♥ GF, should have no slam interest. 4m = "I don't want to declare."
- 3NT: to play
- 4♣ : Gerber
- 4♦ , 4♥ : transfers
- 4♠ : Kantar-Kleinman slam force
- 4NT: natural and invitational
- 5NT: pick 6NT or 7NT

Most of this stuff is pretty self-explanatory; see below for some other stuff.

#### 3.3.1 KK slam force

We play 1NT - 4♠ as the Kantar-Kleinman slam force. Despite its name, it is not forcing to slam. Opener, with a minimum, rebids 4NT; responder can of course keep bidding. Other bids are 5-card suits at the 6-level, or decent 4-card suits at the 5-level. 5NT passes the buck. We usually employ this at IMPs when getting to a better suit slam at the 6-level instead of 6NT is worthwhile.

So, when do we bid 4♠ and when do we bid 4NT? We bid 4♠ with a suitish hand (4432, 4441, 5332 with a 5-card minor), while we bid 4NT with a non-suitish hand (4333, maybe 4432), or at matchpoints.

### 3.3.2 Superaccepts

After a transfer, with four-card support, opener can super-accept (and will usually do so unless 4333.) Bidding 3M shows four-card support and a non-max. With a max, if you have a side four-card suit with honor concentration (typically something like KQxx), bid it; if not, bid 2M+1. Then transferrer's 2M+2 asks for doubleton with replacement principle, i.e. 2M+3 and 2M+4 show doubletons there, while 2M+5=3M shows the remaining doubleton.

The cheapest bid in M-1 by responder is always a retransfer. On this sequence, since opener is 2-limited, 3NT is temporizing, asking for a cuebid.

### 3.3.3 Inviting with 5 spades

With a hand with five spades, we bifurcate balanced and unbalanced invites. With a balanced invite, transfer into spades and then rebid 2NT. With an unbalanced invite, bid 2♣. Assuming the response is not 2♠, bid 2♠. This is non-forcing; opener's 2N is also non-forcing. Note, however, that this sequence includes 5-5 invitational hands.

### 3.3.4 Bidding over Stayman and transfers

Suppose that the auction starts 1NT - 2♣. We play that bidding three of the other major shows an unbalanced slam try, 4♣ asks for keycards, and 4♦ shows a balanced slam try (Baze); all of these agree trumps. All other bids are as usual, including 4NT natural. After 3♠, 3♠+1 asks for shortness, which we bid using the substitution principle. Everything else is a cuebid.

After something like 1NT - 2♦, 3♥ promises three trumps and says nothing about slam interest, 3NT is non-forcing and slam-discouraging, and other bids agree clubs and are cuebids either with slam interest, or with a desire not to play 3NT. After a transfer, jumps are splinters.

After the auction 1NT - 2♣, bidding 4♦ or 4♥ is delayed Texas (6-4 in majors), bidding 3♣ or 3♦ is as usual, 3♥ and 3♠ show 5-4 majors with 5 in the other major (Smolen). Bidding 2NT here is natural and invitational, and *does* guarantee a four-card major.

### 3.3.5 A major-suit primer

Here's how to bid various major-suit distributions:

- 4-5 weak: 2♣, followed by 2♥ over 2♦
- 5-4 weak: 2♣, followed by 2♥ over 2♦ (or transfer to spades if substantially better spades)
- 5-5 weak: 2♣, followed by 2♥ over 2♦
- 4-5 invitational: transfer to hearts, followed by 2♠
- 5-4 invitational: 2♣, followed by 2♠ over 2♦. Note that this does not show hearts, but merely an unbalanced spade invite.
- 5-5 invitational: 2♣, followed by 2♠ over 2♦, and 3♥ over 2N if possible.
- 4-5 or 5-4 game-forcing: 2♣, followed by three of your four-card suit over 2♦ (Smolen)
- 5-5 game-forcing: 2♥ (transfer), followed by 3♥.
- 6-4 or 4-6 slam try: bid Smolen and then bid 4 of your six-card major after 3NT
- 6-4 or 4-6 game-forcing: 2♣, followed by a Texas transfer
- 6-4 or 4-6 invitational: suppress the 4-card major (or with 6-4, you can bid 2♣, 2♠ over 2♦, and, why not, 3♠ over 2NT.)

### 3.3.6 Over interference

When the opponents interfere: if the bid is an artificial double or  $2\clubsuit$  (even if it's for the majors, no unusual versus unusual), we ignore it (X over  $2\clubsuit$  is Stayman). Double of interference tends to be takeout; double of balancing interference tends to show values (without values, you can takeout by bidding, as opener is not going to misread your distribution.) Double of  $2\heartsuit$  or  $2\spadesuit$  could be purely competitive (opener rarely passes), double of  $2\spadesuit$  shows some values.

If they specifically bid  $2\heartsuit$  showing the majors, double is penalty. Hopeless bidding, opps.

Over  $2\heartsuit$  we play ordinary Lebensohl: 2M is signoff, 2NT relays to  $3\clubsuit$  for weak clubs or GF 5-card major, Stayman, or 3NT with a stopper,  $3\clubsuit$  is GF with clubs,  $3\heartsuit$  is Stayman with no stopper, 3M is GF 5 cards no stopper, 3NT has no stopper.

We play funnysohl over interference of 2M which is seminatural. Here is the scheme; in the case of 2M interference, "our major" is the one they didn't bid.

- $2\spadesuit$  is a weak signoff if they bid  $2\heartsuit$ .
- 2NT transfers to  $3\clubsuit$ .  $3\heartsuit$  asks for holding in the other major over 2M (over  $2\heartsuit$ , ordinary Stayman), and shows a stopper. 3NT is a normal 3NT bid with a stopper. If our major =  $\heartsuit$ , then  $3\heartsuit$  is a signoff. These bids do not show clubs; everything else shows clubs. Otherwise  $3\heartsuit$  shows 5 clubs and 4 in our major(spades) with or without a stopper; opener bids above 3NT with a major fit, 3NT with a stopper, or  $3\spadesuit$  with no stopper.  $3\spadesuit$  is a single-suited slam try, either with a stopper or prepared to pull 3NT.
- $3\clubsuit$  transfers to  $3\heartsuit$ . This always has diamonds.  $3\heartsuit$  shows 5 diamonds and 4 in our major with or without a stopper; opener bids as after 2NT -  $3\clubsuit$  -  $3\heartsuit$ .  $3\spadesuit$  is a single-suited slam try. 3NT is, uh ... I have to go now.
- A direct  $3\heartsuit$  asks for holding in our major and denies a stopper. Anything above 3NT shows 4 cards. 3 of our major shows 3 cards. 3NT shows 2 cards and a stopper. 3 of their major shows 2 cards and at most half a stopper. After 2NT -  $3\clubsuit$  -  $3\heartsuit$ , it's the same, except that 3 of their major is undefined. If bidding continues, double shows 2 cards in our major, pass shows 3, bid shows 4.
- 3 of their major shows 6 in our major, game forcing.
- 3 of our major shows 6 in our major, invitational.
- 3NT shows 3NT without a stopper.
- Texas into any relevant majors is still on. There are 3 other 4-level bids.  $4\spadesuit$  shows the minors; the other two show 2-suiters with  $4\clubsuit$  showing clubs and our major.

After they double us for business, we play TORS: pass forces redouble to play or to scramble, everything else is a transfer to the next higher suit. After the redouble, if responder wants to scramble, he just bids his cheapest four-card suit, or  $2\clubsuit$  with any 4333. The corollaries are left to the reader, but it always works. After all, it is The Optimal Runout System.

## 3.4 2NT openings

The range is 20-21 HCP, with a five-card major no obstacle. Here are responder's immediate bids:

- $3\clubsuit$  is Super Muppet Stayman.
- $3\heartsuit$ ,  $3\spadesuit$ ,  $4\heartsuit$ ,  $4\spadesuit$  are transfers.
- $3\spadesuit$  is minor-suit Stayman.
- 3NT is to play, 4NT is natural and invitational.
- $4\clubsuit$  is Gerber.
- $4\spadesuit$  is the Kantar-Kleinman slam force (see Section 3.3.1.)

Perhaps we should explain a couple of these things.

### 3.4.1 Super Muppet Stayman

Super Muppet Stayman is like Puppet Stayman, except with a name a thousand times cooler and better by one deal in 10,000 or so. Because, hey, that one deal could come up in the finals of the Blue Ribbon pairs, and you could get to 4M instead of 3NT only to be foiled by a 5-0 rail and lose the event because of it, and you wouldn't want to miss out on that story.

After 2NT - 3♣, 3♠ shows five spades, 3NT shows five hearts, 3♦ denies a five-card major and shows at least one four-card major, 3♥ denies a four-card major. In all continuations, bids of 4m are natural, except for over 3NT, where 4♦ is a transfer to 4♥ and 4♥ shows diamonds. These minor bids need only show five cards; responder can cuebid or bid 4NT natural. After a cuebid, trumps are agreed and 4N is keycard.

After the expected 3♦ response, 3♥ shows four spades and denies four hearts, 3♠ shows four hearts and may also have four spades, 3NT is to play, 4♣ is natural, 4♦ is natural.

After  $\begin{matrix} 2NT & - & 3♣ \\ 3♦ & - & 3♥ \end{matrix}$ , a bid of 3♠ shows exactly three spades (responder may have three hearts and five spades), a bid of 3NT shows two spades (4♥ over this is to play in the known 4-4 fit), and any other bid is a cuebid and shows four spades.

After a 3♥ response, 3♠ shows five spades, while 3NT denies five spades. Minor bids are suits. No delayed texas.

After a 3♠ response, 4♣ and 4♦ are natural, 4♥ is an artificial cuebid agreeing spades and showing some slam interest.

After a 3NT response, showing hearts, 4♣ is natural, 4♦ is a retransfer, 4♥ shows diamonds (this is the super part of super muppet.)

After a 3♦ or 3♥ response, 4M shows 3 in that major, 1 in the other major, (45) in the minors, gf (Where the hell did this come from? That's pretty sweet though.)

Muppet instead of Puppet means switching the 3♥ and 3NT responses, because if responder is 5-3 (game-forcing) in the majors, he can then bid over 3♥. Super Muppet means switching the intuitive meanings of 4♦ and 4♥ over 3NT (to right-side 4♥, so that 4♦ is a puppet and 4♥ is diamonds.)

### 3.4.2 Minor-suit Stayman

3♠ is minor-suit Stayman. Responder usually has a very strong slam try with both minors (single-suited minor slam tries bid 3♣ followed by 4m.)

## 3.5 The 2♣ opening

After 2♣, we play a normal 2♥ negative (no A, K, or two Q's), 2♦ waiting (catchall), and very rare other bids (9 or so HCP and two of the top three in a five-card suit, 2NT showing hearts.)

After 2♦, we play a modified Kokish relay.

After 2♣-2♦:

- 2NT : 22-24 balanced
- 3NT : 28-29 balanced
- 2♥ : either hearts (5+) or 25-27 balanced (or 30+ balanced).
  - 2♠ : usual response with <5 spades.
    - \* 2NT : 25-27 balanced. Usual structure.
    - \* 3♣ : 5+♥, 4+♣
    - \* 3♦ : 5+♥, 4+♦
    - \* 3♥ : 6+♥
    - \* 3♠ : 4+♠, 5+♥
    - \* 3NT : 30+ balanced, same structure one level up.

Over 3♣, 3♦ and 3♥, 3♠ is "impossible", since 2♠ denied spades, so it shows a good heart raise (3+♥). 3♥ over 3m tends to be only two trumps.



- 2NT : 5+ spades (any hand that would transfer to spades over a 2N rebid)
  - \* 3♣ : 5+♥ , 4+♣ , <3♠
  - \* 3♦ : 5+♥ , 4+♦ , <3♠
  - \* 3♥ : 6+♥
  - \* 3♠ : 25-27 balanced, <4♠ (normal transfer accept)
  - \* 3NT : 25-27 balanced, 4♠ (superaccept)
  - \* 4♣ : 3+♠ , 5+♥ , 4+♣
  - \* 4♦ : 3+♠ , 5+♥ , 4+♦
  - \* 4♥ : 6+♥ , 3♠ (NF)
  - \* 4♠ : 5+♥ , 4+♠ (NF)
  - \* 4NT : RKC for ♠
  - \* 5m : exclusion for ♠

After 2♣ -2♥ , 2NT shows 22-24 (again with the usual structure, including Super Muppet Stayman), 3NT is to play (could be unbalanced – no xfers or anything?). Ensuing bids are otherwise natural.

2♣ - 2♦

After an auction like 2♠ - 3♦ , 4♣ and 4♥ are cuebids, while 4♦ is a real suit. With no spade support, bid 3NT.

Over interference at the 2-level, double is takeout, game-forcing. Over interference at the 3-level or higher, x denies offensive values, everything else shows offensive values. We play unusual versus unusual (see Section 4.7.2) if opponents make a 2-suited bid. If they make a one-suited bid (that isn't the bid they bid), x suggests penalty, bidding it is takeout (game forcing but no extra values). If they make a nebulous bid (e.g. suction/psychosuction) x suggests penalizing them, everything else is natural.

### 3.6 Weak two-bids

We play standard weak openings of 2♦ , 2♥ , 2♠ , with a HCP range of 5-10 or 11 (no gap between 2x and 1x.) 2NT is Bogust: after 2M - 2NT, we have:

- 3♣ = bad suit, bad hand. 3♦ reasks, 3M very bad, 3oM not very bad.
- 3♦ = good suit, bad hand
- 3♥ = bad suit, good hand
- 3♠ = good suit, good hand

All new suit bids are constructive and forcing for one-round.

We are very aggressive pre-empting in third seat; expect frequent five-card suits (also occasionally in other seats, especially at favorable vulnerability.) Jumps are fit-showing unless they're game, in which case they're to play. 4♣ is keycard, 01122; see Section 2.3.7, 4N is 01122 keycard after interference.

### 3.7 Weak three-bids

Normal. New suit is forcing and constructive (unless it's game.) Jumps are to play. 4♣ is keycard as in Section 2.3.7.

## 4 Competitive bidding

### 4.1 Overcalls

1-level overcalls are 8-17ish HCP; 2-level overcalls are opening count through 17 or so. Assuming the next hand passes, opposite a 1-level overcall, the cuebid shows some sort of strong hand (typically a good raise or

asking for a stopper; by passed hand, always a raise.) A new suit is non-forcing and constructive opposite a 1-level overcall and forcing otherwise;  $1\spadesuit$  over a  $1\heartsuit$  overcall shows 5,  $1M$  over a  $1\diamondsuit$  overcall shows 4. Jumps are fit-showing except for opponent's suit, which is a mixed raise.

Our  $1NT$  overcall is 15-18, except balancing, where it is 11-14 over a minor and 11-16 over a major. We play usual systems on.

#### 4.1.1 What if they bid?

If there is an overcall, and they pass or double, we play transfer advances; see Section 4.2. If they do anything else, new suits are non-forcing if at the cheapest level, but are very constructive.

## 4.2 Transfer advances

We play transfer advances in many situations. The most common is when we open  $1M$  and they double. Transfers start with  $1NT$  and go through  $2M-1$ . Thus after  $1\heartsuit-(x)$ :

- $xx$  shows 10+ as usual.
- $1\spadesuit$  shows spades as usual, forcing one round.
- $1NT$  shows clubs.
- $2\clubsuit$  shows diamonds.
- $2\diamondsuit$  shows a constructive heart raise.
- $2\heartsuit$  shows a destructive heart raise.

Opener then responds to the transfer as he would respond to a negative free bid. Accepting the transfer denies significant extras and implies by inference some vague tolerance for responder's suit (usually 2+, but sometimes you are forced to do it with a stiff.) Bidding a new suit in a non-reverse or high-reverse manner is non-forcing and natural, as is bidding an old suit in a non-jump manner. Anything strong-sounding is.

Responder generally has the suit in question, but can also have a lead-directional raise of opener's suit, although this must be a hand inappropriate for a fit jump (generally you would do this with a good suit and bad trumps, such as  $xx\ xxx\ Jx\ KQxxxx$ .)

We also play these transfer advances after we overcall at the 1-level and third hand doubles, except that the advances start with  $xx$  and go around  $1NT$  (thus after  $(1\clubsuit) - 1\diamondsuit - x$ ,  $xx$  shows hearts,  $1\heartsuit$  shows spades,  $1\spadesuit$  shows what a  $2\clubsuit$  bid would have been, i.e. a limit raise,  $2\clubsuit$  shows a constructive raise,  $2\diamondsuit$  shows a destructive raise.) Finally, we play these when we make a non-preemptive overcall at any level and third hand passes or doubles. In this case,  $xx$  if available is snapdragon/cards as applicable. Transfers start with the cuebid and go around notrump. Thus for instance after  $(3\diamondsuit) - 3\spadesuit$ ,  $4\clubsuit$  shows clubs (forcing),  $4\diamondsuit$  shows hearts,  $4\heartsuit$  is a strong raise to  $4\spadesuit$ ,  $4\spadesuit$  is a normal raise to  $4\spadesuit$ .

The strengths and hand types for these bids are essentially the same as with  $1M$  openings getting doubled, obviously varying with level and colors and implied strength of partner's hand.

## 4.3 Fourth seat 2+ openings / jump balancing

Opening in fourth seat, a jump to  $2x$  is weak (expect to make opposite an average dummy, but no game aspirations). Balancing after  $(1x)-p-(p)$ , a jump to  $2y$  is intermediate, showing 13-15 or so, with a decent 6-card suit.

Opening or balancing,  $3x$  in fourth seat shows exactly 8 tricks.

A jump balance like  $1\heartsuit - (2\diamondsuit) - p - (p) - 3\heartsuit$  shows a hand which would rebid  $3\heartsuit$  over a  $1NT$  response from partner;  $x \dots 3\heartsuit$  would show a hand which would rebid  $4\heartsuit$  over a  $1NT$  from partner.

## 4.4 Doubles

We play negative doubles through  $4\heartsuit$ , although not in the auction  $1\spadesuit - (4\heartsuit)$ . Non-negative doubles of  $4M$  are just cards, and corresponding  $4NT$  bids are 2 sensible places. In the auction  $1m - 1\heartsuit$ , double shows 4 spades and  $1\spadesuit$  shows  $5+$ .

We play responsive doubles at almost all levels. When there are two unbid suits (e.g.  $(1\diamondsuit)-1\spadesuit-(2\diamondsuit)-x$ ), double shows both unbid suits. When there are three unbid suits, if two of them are majors, double shows both majors. Otherwise double shows 4 in the other major and a (longer) minor, and  $2N$  shows the minors. Basically:

- $(1m) - x - (2m) - x$  : both majors
- $(1\heartsuit) - x - (2\heartsuit) - x$  : 4 spades and a minor
- $(1\heartsuit) - x - (2\heartsuit) - 2N$  : minors
- $(1\spadesuit) - x - (2\spadesuit) - x$  : 4 hearts and a minor
- $(1\spadesuit) - x - (2\spadesuit) - 2N$  : minors

We play support doubles (which are not obligatory) below 2 of our major, plus the support redouble. Not all doubles at that level are support; if they bid your suit artificially,  $x$  shows that suit, if they bid  $1NT$  natural, double shows defensive values. Examples:

- $1\diamondsuit - (1\spadesuit) - x - (2\diamondsuit)$  artificial:  $x$  shows diamonds.
- $1\diamondsuit - (1\spadesuit) - x - (2\diamondsuit)$  natural:  $x$  is support.
- $1\diamondsuit - (1\spadesuit) - x - (2\clubsuit)$ :  $x$  is support.
- $1\diamondsuit - (1\spadesuit) - x - (2\heartsuit)$ :  $x$  shows a hand which would have bid  $2\heartsuit$  without interference.
- $1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - (1\spadesuit)$ :  $x$  is support.
- $1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - (1NT)$  natural :  $x$  is cards
- $1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - (1NT)$  sandwich :  $x$  is support
- $1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - (2\diamondsuit)$  natural:  $x$  is support.
- $1\diamondsuit - 1\heartsuit - (x)$ :  $xx$  is support.

Doubles of opponents' pre-empts are for takeout. Double of  $4\spadesuit$  tends to be takeout, but  $4NT$  shows an extremely shapely hand (usually 2 suits, but could in principle be 0445).

We play maximal doubles, i.e. when both sides have an agreed fit, and their suit is one under ours, a double of 3 of their suit is a game try.

We play snapdragon doubles on auctions that start with three different suits being bid (or shown via a negative double anchored around one suit). This means that doubling shows the fourth suit, 5 cards (or 4 if the fourth suit is a major and we're at the 1-level), and a partial fit (exactly two cards) for overcaller. (Conceivably you could have a 3-card fit for opener's minor and 5 in the unbid major.)

After  $1m - (1\spadesuit) - x - (p)$ ,  $2\heartsuit$  is just any hand which would raise on 3 – we treat it as if the auction had gone  $1m - 1\heartsuit$ .  $1NT$  does not necessarily promise a stopper, although the probability is of course high.

Basically, all low-level doubles are takeout if we don't have a fit (support double doesn't count as a fit). Here's an example:  $1m - 1\heartsuit - (1\spadesuit) - x - (2\spadesuit) - x$  is takeout, probably something like 2443 pattern. Probably the only exceptions are when we double their notrump overcall. Other auctions which some people seem to play as penalty we play as takeout, such as  $(1X) - p - (1Y) - p - (1NT) - x$ .

#### 4.4.1 Bidding after takeout doubles

(1x) - x - 1NT is 6-medium 11 or so.

(1x) - x - 3y with  $y < x$  tends to be 9-11 or so.

(1x) - x - 2x is forcing to suit agreement (i.e. - 2M - 3M) or game. This auction typically arises when x is a minor, and is pick-a-major. (Isn't this weird? If you don't agree the suit, then you shouldn't really be forcing to game...)

On the auction (1x) - x - 2y - 2x, 3y shows the very bad hand.

Something like (1 $\heartsuit$ ) - x - 2 $\spadesuit$  - 3 $\heartsuit$  is often (always?) three-card support, choice of games. (Is 3 $\spadesuit$  forcing? (Surely it is))

### 4.5 Lead directing doubles

We play that doubling our own suit is lead-avoiding if we (doubler) have promised 5 cards, and lead-directing/competitive otherwise. If we double the opponents' uncontested NT auction, it asks for a lead of partner's shorter major.

### 4.6 Various agreements

#### 4.6.1 Good/bad 2NT

In the specific auction 1x-(Dbl or 1y)-any-(2y), we play the good/bad 2NT. Immediate 3 level bids are invitational, 2NT shows hands that are only competitive. This could be a single suiter in opener's suit, a weak two-suiter if logically possible, or a weak raise of responder's suit. We also do this if they overcall and make a bid implying support (e.g. cuebid.) Good/bad 2NT sequences which make no sense show general doubt about strain (for instance, after 1m - (1 $\spadesuit$ ) - x - (2 $\spadesuit$ ), 2N... 3S would show 3NT with 3 hearts, 2N... 3N would show 3N but with slam interest, and no I don't know how you are supposed to remember which is which.)

#### 4.6.2 Jordan 2NT

After 1M - (x), 2NT shows a limit raise or better with 4 trumps. Opener rebids shortness, or 3M with no stiff and a min, or above 3M with a game force.

#### 4.6.3 Gambling 3NT

Our 3NT opening shows a solid minor suit with nothing outside in first or second seat. The minor is always exactly AKQ seventh. Minor bids are all pass or correct, other bids undiscussed, this should be improved.

#### 4.6.4 Two-suited bids

A jump to 2NT (or 4NT) shows the two lowest unbid suits, almost always 5-5. Immediate cuebids over 1-level bids are Michaels (we play weak/strong Michaels). Something like (1 $\heartsuit$ ) - 3 $\heartsuit$  asks for a heart stopper for notrump.

If the opponents have bid two suits, bidding their suits is natural, double or NT shows the unbid suits. Over an opponent's preempt, we play Leaping Michaels; see Section 4.11.

### 4.7 Unusual NT bids

In various cases, 2NT may be 2 places to play. This usually ends up being the minors, but need not be. Some examples: (1 $\spadesuit$ ) - P - (2 $\spadesuit$ ) - x - 2NT, (1 $\spadesuit$ ) - P - (2 $\spadesuit$ ) - 2NT (typically the minors.) 2NT is often minors, though, in competitive situations, such as 1 $\diamond$  - (1 $\spadesuit$ ) - P - (2 $\spadesuit$ ) - P - (P) - 2NT. Basically it's 2 places to play (assuming no jump) if we haven't mentioned a suit yet and minors otherwise.

A jump to 2NT shows the two lowest unbid suits. We play the sandwich NT, even by an unpassed hand; in other words (1x) - P - (1y) - 1NT shows the other two suits, at least 5-4, either not good enough or too much shape to double.

### 4.7.1 Michaels advances

After (1♠) - 2♠, 2NT asks partner to bid their minor and shows constructive values; partner responds 3♥ or 3♠ with a good hand and the corresponding minor. 2NT followed by 3♥ is a strong heart raise. 3♣ and 3♦ are both pass or correct (obviously 3♣ ... 3♥ is weak) and 3♥ is weak. After (1♥) - 2♥, 2NT asks partner to bid their minor and shows constructive values, 3♣ is pass or correct, 3♥ is a strong spade raise, 3♦ is to play (??).

### 4.7.2 Unusual versus unusual

We play unusual versus unusual. If an opponent makes a 2-suited overcall, they have two suits and we have two suits. Bidding our suits is weak. Bidding their suits at the cheapest possible level is strong. The lower-ranking of their suits codes for the lower-ranking of our suits. So if it goes say 1♣ - (2♣), bidding 2♦ is a weak diamond hand, bidding 2♥ is a strong club raise, bidding 2♠ is a strong diamond hand, (2NT is natural), bidding 3♣ is weak, etc.. Double shows a desire to defend, tends to have cards in both of their suits, while passing and then doubling shows a trump stack.

### 4.7.3 Develin

If the auction starts (1m) - p - (1NT) or (gambling 3NT), we play Develin: 4♣ shows both majors with equal or longer hearts (4♦ asks for partner's better major), 4♦ shows both majors with longer spades, double of the former is takeout (promising support for the other minor) while double of the latter is penalty. If we bid 2♣ and they double, pass shows clubs, 2♦ is natural, xx is pick a major.

## 4.8 Defense against 1NT

Against an opponent's 1NT opening, we play Meyerson:

- Double shows a minor and a major, 5-4 or longer either way.
- 2♣ shows the majors.
- 2♦, 2♥, 2♠, 3♣ are all natural.
- 2NT shows the minors.
- Anything higher is natural and generally preemptive.

After the double, a bid by responder of 2M is to play. 2♣ asks responder to bid their five-card suit (or pass with clubs), 2♦ asks for partner's major. 2NT is a game-force; partner will bid their five-card suit. After 2♦ - 2M, bidding 2NT asks for partner's minor and strength; 3♣ is min with clubs, 3♦ is min with diamonds, 3♥ is max with clubs, 3♠ is max with diamonds. 2♦ - 2M - 3♣ is pass or correct. After 2♣ and response, bidding 2NT is pick your minor, while 3m is signoff.

If there is a bid after the Meyerson x, anything which could be pass or correct is. If it goes (1NT) - x - xx, pass asks for your minor, everything else is as if the xx didn't happen (2♣ asks for 5-card suit, 2♦ asks for major, 2M to play.) After p - 2c, 2d is to play.

Against a weak NT (defined to have a maximum count of 15 or less), we play Landy:

- Double shows an additional king beyond the top of their NT range.
- 2♣ shows the majors.
- 2NT shows the minors.
- Anything else is natural.

After a Meyerson or Landy 2♣ is doubled, pass shows clubs, 2♦ is natural, xx is pick a major.

After (1NT (weak))-x, we are forced to at least 2♥ (or defending doubled). Passing the double shows some values. 2♣ tends to be scrambling. If they bid, the first double by either partner is takeout, unless advancer shows extra values (i.e. if the auction goes 1N-x-p-p or 1N-x-2m-p).

## 4.9 Against precision 1♦

We play 2♦ as Michaels, and 2♦ is the cuebid if we overcall or double.

## 4.10 Defense against a strong 1♣ or 1♦ opening

Against any strong artificial opening, we play suction vulnerable and psycho-suction non-vulnerable. This applies after a strong 1♣, 1♦, or 2♣ opening *but not after negative responses to these*.

Suction means that a bid in suit X, counting double, at the lowest available level, shows either suit X+1 or suits X+2 and X+3, with the four suits in cyclic order. Responder bids X+1, or bids anything else naturally. Any NT bid shows two non-touching suits, pass or correct continuations. This applies at all levels. Psycho suction moves the suits down a level, meaning that bidding X shows either X or (X+1 and X+2).

## 4.11 Defense against opposing pre-empts

After a double of a weak two-bid, we play Lebensohl.

Over an opponent's weak two-bid in a major, we play Leaping Michaels: (2M) - 4m shows five in that minor and five in the other major; it is forcing. We play that (2M) - 3M asks for a stopper and is usually based on a solid suit. Over opponent's 2♦ opening, 3♦ is still a stopper ask and 4♦ is Michaels. 4♣ is leaping Michaels showing clubs and a major. We do these same things after (1M) - p - (2M).

# 5 Defensive carding

We play upside-down everything (attitude, count, discards) except suit preference.

## 5.1 Leads

Our opening leads are as follows:

- Our supported small-card opening leads are third-from-even, low-from-odd against suits and fourth-best against NT.
- Our honor leads are standard against suits; we lead A from AK except against trump contracts at the five-level or higher, where A asks for attitude and K asks for count.
- We lead high from three small and top of nothing (or second if top looks bad) against NT. We lead small from three small against suits, unless we've shown 3 on the auction.

During a hand, we generally lead attitude (high card discourages). If we are leading a low spot, we generally lead 3rd/low against both NT and suits, unless this is a useful spot or is hard to read for some reason. K from AK in the middle of the hand.

## 5.2 Signals

Our primary signal is attitude (upside-down.) Of course, we give suit-preference (right-side-up) when a switch is called for, or when declarer is running a suit or drawing trumps.