

Twos and Transfers

Chapter 1: An Overview of Acol basics.

The weak 1NT opening bid can be considered to be the most basic part of the Acol system. The importance of having a trump suit is also crucial in any system, so it is necessary to be able to bid your hands to optimum effect within the parameters set by your basic system.

The 1NT opening does take away the ability to find a trump fit when the responding hand is too weak to make a move at the two level, but that is compensated for in many other ways, ways which many players don't appreciate. Nor do they make the most of what they have in their armoury when they open a weak 1NT. And few have an effective way of combating the opponents' 1NT opening, whether it is weak or strong.

This series will look at basic No Trump bidding and continuations as well as basic "Weak Twos" and how best to play them, and then lead into ways that both can be improved on, easily and effectively.

We should start with the 1NT opening bid. If you are playing Acol, the 1NT opening bid can be defined quite specifically: 12 to 14 high card points and a balanced hand, which can include a five card MINOR but should not include a five card MAJOR as a rule. If you decide to play basic Acol, then you must adhere to these parameters. And because these parameters are so well defined, your bidding after the 1NT opening will also be made easier if you and your partner are on the same page.

Now let me bring up the subject of "Weak Twos". Weak twos these days are as much a part of Acol as the weak No Trump. Some people play weak twos only in the majors, with the 2C and 2D openings having two different meanings, but both describing very strong hands. Since I can find no real use for such a treatment, I will assume that the normal usage of weak twos is in 2D, 2H, and 2S, with 2C being the only strong forcing opening bid. This is in line with the standard Acol that learners are taught.

Why "Weak Twos"? The original weak two bids came into being because their players wanted to be able to preempt with six card suits. They saw the value of three level preempts with seven card suits, so why not at the two level with only six card suits? It made sense and the weak twos were very effective in those days, but they are not so useful or effective these days. Nevertheless they can be quite effective, and since the old style strong twos can be taken care of by opening with a game forcing 2C, the weak 2D, 2H and 2S preemptive openings are commonly played in most club sessions.

I will later suggest a far more effective method for preemptive two level openings, which will also form the basis of a way to compete over an opposing 1NT, but for now I will talk about the standard weak twos and give you a guideline for how to evaluate them when they come up.

When the reader is fully familiar with standard weak twos, I will then suggest more options via the "Evil Twos", should they feel like further advancement and adventure.