

Twos and Transfers

Chapter 6: Transfers after 2NT

At this stage I would like to talk more about transfers over 2NT. After a 2NT opening there is less room for responder to describe their hand via transfers. I don't mind playing Stayman (3C) with normal responses, but prefer "Baron". The latter asks opener to bid four (or 5) card suits and responder does the same until 3NT or a major game is reached. Thus, a 4-4 or 5-4 fit in a minor as well as a major can be found and that can often be vital. But whether you choose to play Baron or Stayman, you should still play transfers to the majors.

Let's take a typical hand that is bid the same way as it would be over 1NT.

♠ 84

♥ AQ1092

♦ J92

♣ 1043

When partner opens 2NT (or rebids 2NT) you bid 3D and when partner follows the transfer request, you bid 3NT. Now let's say you have five hearts and four spades. That one is also easy: you bid 3D and when partner bids 3H you bid 3S. But what would you do if you had THIS hand:

♠ KJ853

♥ Q1092

♦ J2

♣ 43

You can bid this hand easily if you play Stayman and transfers: bid 3C and if partner has a major you have your fit. If partner bids 3D you can bid 3S because at this level it is 100% forcing and now it should show five spades and, by inference, four hearts. With 5-5 you would transfer to spades and then bid 4H.

However with Baron and transfers, which I prefer because of the ability to find minor suit fits, there is only one way you can show five spades and four hearts, which is by bidding 3S immediately. At this level you don't need a range finder so agree with partner that 3S shows specifically 5-4 in spades and hearts if you have agreed to play Baron. Stayman and transfers may be easier, up to you and partner, just make sure you have agreed on what you're doing!

When you have a six card or longer heart or spade suit, you can decide whether it is better that you play the hand, or transfer to partner. Often, it is an advantage for the weaker hand to be hidden, or to have the opening lead come round to it. You can please yourself, as indeed you can do if partner opens 1NT and you have a long (6+) heart or spade suit and game values.

One thing that you should remember when using transfers: an opponent can always DOUBLE the suit you bid, either to help with an opening lead (lead directional) or to suggest this is a suit they could compete in. The same can be said when you bid 2S as a range finder. You, too, can of course make such use of opponents' transfers, and should do so whenever possible.