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CONVENTIONS by JEREMY DHONDI

Responding to 1 No Trump - Part 2

A quick recap from part one, here is the suggested scheme of responses to a 1NT opening:

2♣	Stayman (asks partner to bid a 4-card major or 2♦ without one)
2♦	Transfer to Hearts
2♥	Transfer to Spades
2♠	Transfer to Clubs
2NT	Transfer to Diamonds
3♣/♦/♥/♠	Natural, 6 cards, slam try
4♦	5-5 in the Majors with (only) game values

It's a good idea to remove some possible misunderstandings, so discuss with your partner as to whether you play the same method if you overcall 1NT, such as in the sequence (1♣)-1NT and also what you play if it goes 1NT(DbI). I once played a couple of boards with the then chairman of the EBU as my partner was late for an event. We agreed to play 'Standard English' and the first board went 1NT(DbI)-2♥. Everyone passed. He played the 3-3 fit quite well, but for no matchpoints as, of course, the common contract was 2♠ making overtricks. As he was primarily responsible for the introduction of Bridge for All I wasn't that impressed with his view of 'Standard English'.

Transfer to a minor

If you have a six-card minor you can show it by transferring to it, so the sequence 1NT-Pass-2♣ shows clubs. You can do this on a weak, invitational or strong hand. Partner, therefore, must not go beyond 3♣ when he responds. Thus, he has two choices either 2NT or 3♣. I suggest 3♣ is the rebid that shows you like clubs and 2NT is the call you make if you don't like clubs. A good reason for telling partner whether you like his minor is to enable you to bid a thin 3NT. Suppose you have:



After partner opens 1NT (12-14), you bid 2♠ to show clubs. If partner responds 2NT to say he is not that keen on clubs, then it is unlikely 3NT will be a good contract, as you have a maximum of 24 points and a club suit to set up, so you bid 3♣ to play. On the other hand, if he bids 3♣, you know you have six likely tricks so can chance 3NT, even if you have somewhat slender values. Of course, you might have a hand such as:



in which case, all you are trying to do is to find a safer haven. The sequence over 1NT-2NT, showing diamonds, is the same. You would rebid 3♣ if you did not like diamonds and 3♦ if you did. One advantage of bidding the minor if you like it is that one day you will hold:



You respond 2NT (transfer to diamonds) to partner's opening bid of 1NT. He either bids 3♦, you are happy to play there, or 3♣ to show he is not that keen on diamonds, in which case you pass knowing you are likely to have a better club fit. One sequence you ought to discuss is transfer to a minor followed by a major suit bid. An example would be:

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You	Partner
	1NT
2♠ ¹	3♣ ²
3♥ or 3♠ ³	

Transfer to clubs
I like them
??

I suggest that this should show a shortage. If you had a four-card major and a longer minor, you could bid I suggest that this should show a shortage. If you had a four-card major and a longer minor, you could bid Stayman first, so this sequence shows game values (or better) and a shortage in the major. This way, partner knows he needs to have good cards in the major to make 3NT, otherwise he may choose to play in 5♣ or 6♣. Suppose, for example, he held:

	♠ 9 8 5 ♥ A J 5 4 ♦ A J 10 ♣ A 9 5								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>You</th> <th>Partner</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♣</td> <td>3♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♠¹</td> <td>?</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	You	Partner		1NT	2♣	3♣	3♠ ¹	?
You	Partner								
	1NT								
2♣	3♣								
3♠ ¹	?								

¹Shortage in spades

Now he has an excellent hand with a club fit, no wasted values in spades and three aces so he is well worth a cue bid of 4♦.

Single suited slam try

If partner opens 1NT, one hand type you may have is a slam going hand with a single suit. This is a slam going example. Partner opens a 12-14 1NT and you hold:

♠ A Q J 10 7 5 ♥ A 5 ♦ A 8 ♣ K J 7	
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To show this sort of hand you jump, in this case, to 3♠. Partner can now bid 3NT with nothing much in spades, he can bid 4♣ with something in spades and not a great hand or he can cue bid with a better hand. So if he held the following for his 1NT opening:

	♠ K 6 3 ♥ K Q 7 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ A 9 6 5
---	--

He has an easy 4♣ cue bid. Although minimum, he has a spade fit and all his high cards are useful ones.

If you jump to 3♣ or 3♦ over 1NT, showing a slam try in that suit, then 3NT suggests partner isn't much interested. Perhaps over 1NT-3♦ he holds:

	♠ Q J 4 ♥ Q J 10 4 ♦ 8 7 ♣ K Q J 6
---	---

He has a minimum, no fit and very soft values (ie queens and jacks). If his 1NT opening was:

	♠ 5 4 ♥ A Q J 6 ♦ K 9 4 ♣ A 10 9 4
---	---

He can show a little interest by bidding 3♥. This has the added advantage that if you are weak in spades, you may avoid 3NT and play in 5♦.

The four level

Many people play 4♣ as Gerber (asking for aces) and there is nothing wrong with this, as a raise to 4NT over 1NT is usually played as quantitative. For a 4NT response you would hold something like:

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♠ KQ9
♥ AJ7
♦ KQJ5
♣ K104



What you want partner to do over 4NT is to pass with a minimum and bid 6NT with a maximum. With 13, he looks at this hand and decides. If he has a five card suit as part of his 1NT opening, he can jump to six in that suit to suggest an alternative. I suggest you might consider a response of 4♦ to 1NT as showing 5-5 in the majors with no ambition beyond game. It gets your hand across in one bid, it makes it more difficult for the opponents to come in and you are guaranteed a 5-3 fit at least, unless partner has a peculiar 1NT opening. An example hand might be:

♠ QJ1075
♥ KQJ54
♦ 6
♣ J4



If you had a stronger hand than this, you would start by transferring to spades and then bidding hearts. The auction:

You	Partner
	1NT
2♥	2♣
3♥	

shows at least 5-4 and is forcing to game.

What else?

Does this article and the last cover all hand types? Well, no and you must decide how complicated you want to get. It's better not to play too much and remember it, than play something technically better and forget it, but perhaps one last hand type. Partner opens 1NT and you hold:

♠ KJ95
♥ 7
♦ AJ6
♣ KQ742



You know game is the place to be, 3NT, 4♠ or 5♣. You can't bid 3♣ because that is a single suited slam try and will lose the spade suit. Also, partner will think you have a six card suit. So you bid 2♣ (Stayman). If partner bids 2♠, then you will play in 4♠. If partner bids 2♥, you will probably bid 3NT, especially at pairs, and hope the hearts are good enough. If partner bids 2♦, you can bid 3♣ to show, usually, a five-card suit but could be six, a major and the values for game. Now you can investigate whether 3NT or 5♣ is better. Partner might have ♥K-Q-J, in which case 3NT is the place to be or he might have ♥J-6-4 in which case 3NT is very unlikely to be the right contract.

♠ A106
♥ J74
♦ A94
♣ KJ95



♠ KJ95
♥ 6
♦ KQ7
♣ AQ876

West	East
1NT	2♣
2♦	3♣ ¹
3♦ ²	3♠ ²
4♣ ³	5♣

¹A hand with five clubs, the values for game and a four-card major suit.

²Showing values in an attempt to determine the right contract.

³Very likely that you hold nothing in hearts.

On a good day you might make 6♣ if you guess the spades, so you should bid 4♣, forcing, to show a suitable hand in case partner can cue bid.

Summary

- Playing the same method after a 1NT overcall as you do after a 1NT opening isn't perfect but it does simplify your agreements.
- After you transfer to a minor, partner can show whether he likes your minor or not, enabling you to bid 3NT with minimal points but a running suit.
- After you transfer to a minor, a rebid of 3♥ or 3♠ shows a shortage to enable you to identify the best game or perhaps a slam.
- Jumping to the three level after 1NT shows a decent six-card suit and a hand with some slam possibilities.
- Use Stayman followed by 3♣ or 3♦ to show a game going hand with that minor and a major. You don't need it as a weak bid because you could have simply transferred with that.