

## The forcing Notrump

by I/N Columnist, Melanie Manfield, [melbridgewrite@outlook.com](mailto:melbridgewrite@outlook.com);  
Technical Editing: Steve Robinson

This column plans to have a series of articles on the Two-Over-One (2/1) Game Force system of bidding. One advantage of playing 2/1 (defined as: when partner opens 1-of-a-suit and responder bids 2-of-another-suit with out jumping) as game forcing is that it allows players to relax and engage in more precise bidding in a 2/1 auction, without any fear of partner passing.

However, as a result, the response of 1NT to partner's One-of-a-Major (1M) suit opener becomes a bid that covers a broader range of hands, and is typically treated as forcing for one round.

Please note: The Forcing 1NT response only applies when partner opens 1 $\heartsuit$  or 1 $\spadesuit$ , not when partner opens a minor suit.

Learning to use the Forcing NoTrump response when partner opens 1M is an integral part of the 2/1 game force bidding system. Here are the main criteria for using the Forcing 1NT response when partner opens 1M:

You respond 1NT to partner's 1M opener with 6 to 12 points with the following exceptions.

- (1) You should still respond 1 $\spadesuit$  to partner's 1 $\heartsuit$  opener holding at least four spades.
- (2) You should still raise 1M to 2M directly holding 7-10 support points and at least three-card support. With a hand worth 6 to a bad 7 in support points, respond 1NT and then support partner's major at the lowest level.
- (3) With three-card support and 11-12 support points respond 1NT and then jump in partner's major. With four-card support and 11-12 support points, raise directly to 3M. Here, using the Forcing NT allows you to distinguish between a limit raise with 3-card vs. 4-card support.

$\heartsuit$ Axx  $\heartsuit$ Kxx  $\heartsuit$ Axxx §xxx or  $\heartsuit$ Axx  $\heartsuit$ Kx  $\heartsuit$ Kxxx §xxxx are examples of three-card limit raise hands where you respond 1NT to 1 $\spadesuit$ , planning on jumping to 3 $\spadesuit$  over opener's two-of-a-minor response.

Never respond 1NT with a game-forcing hand!

$\heartsuit$ Axx  $\heartsuit$ Qxx  $\heartsuit$ xxxx §xxx or  $\heartsuit$ Axx  $\heartsuit$ Qxx  $\heartsuit$ Jxx §xxxx are examples of hands where you respond 1NT to 1 $\spadesuit$ , planning on bidding 2 $\spadesuit$  over opener's two-of-a-minor response.

So, as you can see, the Forcing No Trump response includes all of the hands on which you would have responded 1NT if using Standard American, but it expands the range of hands on which this bid is used.

Remember: you will no longer bid a new suit at the two level with 10, 11, or 12 points.

aAx ©Kx`QJxxx §Jxxx and ax ©xx`KQxxx §Jxxxx are examples of hands where you respond 1NT to partner's 1M opener. Note that 1NT does not show a balanced hand.

Now, let's look at Opener's rebid choices when partner has responded 1NT.

First of all: Don't pass! (Note: If you opened in third or fourth seat light, there are limited exceptions to this rule). You must find a rebid.

In general, if you are 5-4 or 5-5 or have a six- card or longer major then bid exactly as you would have over a non-forcing 1NT. If you have six or more cards in your major, rebid your major, at the appropriate level based on the strength of your hand.

If you have a second suit, bid it jump shifting if your hand is worth 17+ points. Make the same bid you would have made over a non-forcing 1NT response.

Holding aAKxxx ©xx`AKxx §xx, open 1a and rebid 2` just like you would over a non forcing 1NT. Holding ax ©AKxxxx`xxx §AQx, open 1© and rebid 2© just like you would over a non-forcing 1NT.

However, suppose that you hold the common 5-3-3-2 distribution hand where you would have passed 1NT? Then, rebid two of your lowest three card minor suit.

Open 1a and rebid 2` holding aAKxxx ©xxx`Axx §Qx. Open 1a and rebid 2§ holding aAKxxx ©xxx`Ax §Qxx.

The problem hand is when you hold aAJxx ©AKxxx`xx §xx. You have to open 1© and rebid 2§ over partner's forc- ing 1NT.

Remember, as Opener, keep in mind after part- ner's 1 NT response that he has disclosed a hand that could have limited or invitational values. In addition, while partner definitely does not have four card trump support, partner could still have an invitational hand with three card support for your major. From your point of view, game in either a suit or Notrump is not out of the question, particularly if your opening bid was solid. Also remember: partner

**could still have five or more hearts when you open 1a, again, with either limited or invitational values.**

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