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Better Bridge with Bergen

What do you need to open 2♣? —part 1

Before being able to decide when to open 2♣, there are some important topics to cover.

Identifying losers

With certain hands, you can easily count the tricks you expect to lose based on your own hand.

Consider this one:

♠QJ109876 ♥643 ♦— ♣QJ10

You have seven losers (two spades, three hearts and two clubs). With the quality suit, a void and a club trick, I'd open 3♠ at any vulnerability.

Now what about this one:

♠AKQJ1094 ♥A ♦A2 ♣652?

With four losers (one diamond and three clubs) and four quick tricks (♠AK, ♥A, ♦A), open 2♣ and then bid spades.

If partner says he has nothing, bid 3NT and expect to win nine tricks. There's no reason to think that the enemy can take five club tricks in 3NT, but even if they could, you expect a heart opening lead.

As you can see, when you have a long strong suit, you may be able to count your losers in advance (especially if the hand is very strong or

very weak). On most hands, however, accurately counting losers in advance is not possible. For the great majority of suits, you need to know exactly what partner has. For example, you pick up the following hand:

♠AQ98 ♥KJ752 ♦7 ♣Q83.

Partner opens 1♦ and you respond 1♥. Partner then jumps to 3♥.

Excellent! Any time you have all of the following ingredients, slam prospects are rosy: Partner opens and then jumps; your side finds a fit, and you have an opening bid of your own.

Downgradable distribution

In a suit contract, if your distribution in your three shortest suits is the flattest it could be, that is *not* good.

When your longest suit is four cards: No one gets excited to pick up 4-4-3-2 distribution, but 4-3-3-3 is truly awful. You have nothing to ruff and no suit to set up.

When you have a five-card suit:

Although you are grateful to have a long suit, 5-3-3-2 shape is a turnoff. Even 5-4-2-2 is a significantly better distribution.

When you have a six-card suit: 6-3-2-2 is a bummer. You would much prefer to have a singleton or void.

When you have a seven-card suit: By now, you know the story. 7-2-2-2 is just too flat.

In conclusion: When you are dealt any of the four "flat as a pancake" distributions, downgrade your hand and proceed with caution.

On the auction below, what would you do with the following hands:

Partner	North	You	South
1♦	3♣	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	?	

1. ♠KQJ985 ♥A108 ♦72 ♣A4?

Pass. I'm unwilling to bid on with this boring shape.

2. ♠KQJ985 ♥A1087 ♦A2 ♣4?

4NT. If partner has at least one ace, I'll take my chances in slam based on the very good distribution.

3. ♠KQJ985 ♥A1087 ♦A72 ♣—?

6♠. With this awesome distribution, slam should be worthwhile opposite almost any hand that opened and jump-raised. On this deal, trying for seven is impractical.

What are quick tricks?

Quick tricks are tricks you expect to win in a suit on the first two rounds of that suit. There are only two QT per suit. Jacks are never "quick." A-K = 2, A-Q = 1½, A = 1, K-Q = 1, K-x = ½.

Count 'em up:

A. ♠AKJ7 ♥KQ ♦QJ1074 ♣J10?

This hand has three quick tricks. (♠AK = 2, ♥KQ = 1).

B. ♠K8752 ♥KJ4 ♦Q96 ♣AQ?

2½ quick tricks (♠K = ½, ♥K = ½, ♣AQ = 1½).

C. ♠8752 ♥64 ♦AKQJ108 ♣7?

Two quick tricks (♦AK).

Want guidelines for opening 2♣? Keep reading next time. □

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