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2/1: Forcing 1NT agreements

In the previous issue, I answered some two-over-one questions about whether a 2/1 response is absolutely forcing to game. Another popular question involves the forcing 1NT response to a major-suit opening: May you ever bid 1NT when you have a game-going hand?

Consider the auctions below. Your partner made a forcing 1NT response and then jumped to game in your major. What kind of hand do you think he might have?

<i>You</i>	<i>Partner</i>
1♠	1NT
2♣	4♠

It is clear that partner has values for game. Why might he bid this way instead of making a 2/1 response first? Given that your partner is trying to make a descriptive bid, he rates to have something like this:

♠QJ8 ♥8764 ♦K98 ♣AQJ.

Why is this hand appropriate for this bidding?

1. He has a hand with game-going values.
2. He does not have anything meaningful to bid on the first round.

Mike's Advice

3. He does not have a hand that is good enough to think about a slam.

Note that a 2NT bid is not available if you are playing Jacoby 2NT. If you use that convention, you must have four-card support.

The reason he bids 1NT and then 4♠ is that he wants to show a hand of these approximate values. If he were to bid 2♣ instead, for instance, he would never be able to convince opener that he has only three clubs and a balanced hand.

Here is another hand that your partner might have:

♠K94 ♥54 ♦K54 ♣AJ1075.

Your partner probably intended to show a limit raise with three-card support when he bid 1NT. When you rebid 2♣, responder fell in love with his super club fit and felt that 3♠ would result in some missed games.

There is no danger that this sequence will mislead opener because the jump to game is defined as a hand with interest in game and no interest in a slam. Because opener rebid 2♣, responder knows opener does not have lots of extras. Whatever opener has, he will pass 4♠.

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
1♠	1NT
2♠	4♠

This auction is different from the first one. In the first one, responder expects opener has only five spades. In the second auction, responder knows opener has at least six spades. Responder's jumps to game, therefore, will look like one of these hands:

♠KQJ ♥54 ♦QJ74 ♣QJ63

This hand has opening values, if you're not fussy and count fast. You don't mind bidding game and taking your chances, but you do not want to get higher than 4♠ if your partner has a minimum. Hence, the 1NT response and then jump to game. At least you know that your partner has six spades, which is a modest comfort to you.

♠QJ ♥7542 ♦AK ♣Q8654

You might bid 4♠ with this. You should at least raise to 3♠. You know your partner has six spades, which means your queen-jack is actually pretty good support. You also have two diamond winners and a possible diamond ruff coming, so your hand offers a lot. □

