

7. The Wolff Signoff

This convention was invented I believe by Robert Wolff of the US Aces and was adapted by Robert Goldman, also of the US Aces, to the following treatment. This convention can be used equally well when partner has overcalled two notrump as when he has reopened with two notrump.

Here are the mechanics.

2♣-Pass-Pass-2NT
Pass-?

Three clubs is an artificial call forcing partner to bid three diamonds. He has no alternatives. This initiates weak signoff sequences. Three diamonds and three hearts are natural and forcing. Three spades is a game force guaranteeing four hearts and implies a stiff spade.

When the auction proceeds

2♣-Pass-Pass-2NT
Pass-3♣-Pass-3♦
Pass-?

Responder passes with a weak hand and a diamond suit. Responder bids three hearts or four clubs with a weak hand and the suit bid. Responder bids three spades which is still a game force with four hearts, but implies a balanced hand. Responder bids three notrump to show a good hand with clubs.

Here are a few hands to illustrate the convention.

YOU

2♣ Pass Pass 2NT
Pass 3♣ Pass 3NT
Pass Pass Pass

Three spades is game forcing, and shows four hearts plus a stiff spade. Partner with Q62 of spades may elect to change his mind about notrump. Note if he had

♠ K Q 10 8
♥ 9 7 5 3
♦ K J
♣ A K 10 6

... he could choose to ignore the four-four heart fit.

YOU

2♣ Pass Pass 2NT
Pass 3♥ Pass 4♥
Pass Pass Pass

Three hearts is game forcing.

♠ 3 2
♥ A J 9 7 5
♦ K J 8 7
♣ 5 4

YOU
 2♣ Pass Pass 2NT
 Pass 3♦ Pass 3♣
 Pass 3NT Pass Pass
 Pass

Three diamonds is game forcing, but because it is a minor suit, you require a better hand than for three hearts. Usually, your hand will be distributional, else you would just bid three notrump.

YOU
 2♥ Pass Pass 2NT
 Pass 3♣ Pass 3♦
 Pass 3♣ Pass Pass
 Pass

This is the signoff sequence. Partner will never act over three spades except on rare inspired hands. Hard to imagine.

YOU
 2♥ Pass Pass 2NT
 Pass 3♣ Pass 3♦
 Pass 3NT Pass Pass
 Pass

This shows a forward going hand with clubs. Clubs is the only suit you can't bid naturally after partner's two notrump so you have to manufacture this sequence. Because you are looking for a minor suit game, you need shape.

YOU
 2♣ Pass Pass 2NT
 Pass 3♣ Pass 3♦
 Pass 3♣ Pass 4♥
 Pass

This auction shows a balanced hand with four hearts. Partner can choose.

YOU
 2♣ Pass Pass 2NT
 Pass 3♣ Pass 4♣
 Pass 5♣ Pass Pass
 Pass

Unusual. Partner must have a weak spade stopper plus a good five card suit. He might have one of these hands:

- ♠ 3
- ♥ A 7 6 5
- ♦ Q 9 4 2
- ♣ K 8 7 5

- ♠ Q 4 2
- ♥ K 3
- ♦ K J 10
- ♣ A Q J 6 3

You might not care for this two notrump bid on the second of these hands there is no easy bid to make. I would not object to the choice.

YOU
 2♥ Pass Pass 2NT
 Pass 3♣ Pass 3♦
 Pass 3♥ Pass 3♣
 Pass 4♣ Pass Pass
 Pass

I would not treat this hand as distributional. King of hearts is probably worth something. It is an error to treat a stiff honor as any other suit in this sequence.

Partner Reopens After a Three Bid

If your options were few when partner reopened after a weak two bid feel positively cramped when he reopens after a three bid. Except in response to a takeout double, there will be no cue bids, sh occasional slam try, and there is exactly one invitational sequence. You induce a new suit now and then, but generally speaking, you will either bid or you will pass. Remembering the seven point rule, here are some hands.

1. Partner doubles.

No one vul

3♥-Pass-Pass-Dbl

Pass-1
 ♠ Q 10 6 3
 ♥ J 9 6 4
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ K 10 5

Three spades. Be happy with what you have that it is not up to the seven point standard expecting.

Vul vs. not

3♦-Pass-Pass-Dbl

Pass-1
 ♠ K 7 6
 ♥ Q J 4 2
 ♦ 3 2
 ♣ A 9 6 5

Four diamonds. Just strong enough. Partner four-four in the majors will bid hearts first.

Not vs. vul

3♥-Pass-Pass-Dbl

Pass-1
 ♠ 10 8 7 5 4
 ♥ K 10 5
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ 8 6 5

Three spades. If you had the jack of heart pass for penalty. But only at matchpoints have a good place to play, i.e. spades.