

Esther Discusses "A Very Special 'Support Cuebid' After Opponents' 'Unusual 2NT!' Overcall: 'Disturbing Opponents' Unusual No Trump' ('DO-UNT')"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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Scenario #1: You or Your Partner as Dealer, or You or Your Partner Sitting 2nd After an Opponent's PASS, Open 1**H** or 1**S**. The Next Opponent Then Bids "Unusual 2NT!"

For example, you hold:

S: Q J T 7 **H**: K T 9 6 **D**: 9 8 5 **C**: A 8 (10)

Bidding

Partner	RHO	YOU	LHO
1 S	2 NT!	???	

Or

LHO	Partner	RHO	YOU
PASS	1 H	2 NT!	???

Your RHO's "artificial" bid is "Unusual 2NT!"² showing a Hand that is 2-Suited in the Minors with good "Suit Quality" in both Minors. The "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall of Opponents' opening bid of a Major

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¹ As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

² For more information about "Unusual 2NT!" within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see: "Convention Lesson #8: 'Unusual 2NT!': https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/unus_2NT.pdf Because this 2NT! Overcall bid is "artificial", this bid **must** be Alerted!

at the 1 level is a "Demand" bid that **requires** the Overcaller's Partner, unless there is an intervening bid, to bid his "longest and strongest" Minor at the 3 level.³

Probability of an Opponent Holding 5-5 or 5-4 or 4-5 in the Minors

Some Partners play the "Unusual 2NT!" *only* when one Partner holds 5-5 in the Minors with both Minors having good "Suit Quality", while other Partners play the "Unusual 2NT!" when one Partner holds 5-5, or 5-4, or 4-5 in the Minors.

Probabilities of a 5-5 or 5-4 or 4-5 Distribution

Any 2			Only	
Dist.			Any 2	Both
			Suits	Minors
5-5-2-1	3.448%	Any		
5-5-3-0	0.895%	5-5	4.343%	0.724%
5-4-3-1	12.931%			
5-4-2-2	10.580%	Any		
5-4-4-0	1.243%	5-4	24.754%	4.126%

A player sitting behind Opponents' Opening of a Major will very rarely be 5-5 in the Minors, but a player will hold 5-4 or 4-5 in the Minors with some frequency.

Bidding After Your RHO Bids "Unusual 2NT!"

In 1992 Larry Cohen published his influential bridge book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks. This book won the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) "Bridge Book of the Year Award". The "**Law of Total Tricks**" ("**LOTT**") says that you will generally make a *Suit contract* set *no higher* than the number of Trump cards your Partnership holds - 6. The emphasis on Trump card counts and distributions rather than on HCPs means that most contemporary duplicate bridge players when setting final *Suit contracts* place a heavy emphasis on bridge conventions that allow Partners to communicate *specifically* how many Trump cards they hold!

³ **NOTE** that many Partnerships play "Unusual 2NT!" instead as showing a 2-Suited Hand in whatever are the **2 lowest unbid Suits!**

What should you bid over the "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall in the auction described previously? It will depend on how many Trump cards you hold, assuming you have *at least 3* of Partner's bid Major.

1. Holding Exactly 3 Cards in Partner's Bid Major. If you as Responder hold (1) ~10 HCPs and (2) 3 of Partner's bid Major, bid 3H if Partner opened Hearts, and bid 3S if Partner opened Spades.
2. Holding Exactly 4 Cards in Partner's Bid Major. If you as Responder hold (1) ~10 HCPs and (2) 4 of Partner's bid Major, your correct bid is a *very, very special* "Support Cuebid" of 3D!. This "Support Cuebid"⁴ says, "Partner, I have 4 of your Trump cards, and about 10 HCPs. According to the 'Law of Total Tricks', because $5 + 4 = 9$, and $9 - 6 = 3$, we will make a 3-level Spade contract! If you have extra HCPs, extra Trump cards, or 'side features', go to Game. Otherwise, bid 3S, and stop!"

This 3D! has the extra *nice, sweet* feature that, if Opponents want to explore any fit in the Minors, they will now have to do so at the 4 level, which is likely to be, in technical bridge parlance, "quite dicey!" This 3D! Overcall to an "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall is "artificial" (i.e., not showing Diamonds), and therefore **must** be Alerted!

Note. Bidding in this manner allows you to communicate *exactly* how many Trump cards you hold. That is a special feature of this convention system!

⁴ See "Esther Bridge Lessons" "Convention Lesson #20: 'Support Cuebids'"
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/cue_supp.pdf

Scenario #2: You or Your Partner as Dealer, or You or Your Partner Sitting 2nd After an Opponent's PASS, Open 1**H**. The Next Opponent PASSes, and the Responder Then Bids 1**S** Thus 'Denying' Hearts, and the Next Opponent Then Bids "Unusual 2NT!":⁵

Bidding

Partner	RHO	YOU	LHO
1 H	PASS	1 S	2 NT!
???			

Or

LHO	Partner	RHO	YOU
PASS	1 H	PASS	1 S
2 NT!	???		

Or

Partner	RHO	YOU	LHO
1 S	PASS	2 H	2 NT!
???			

Or

LHO	Partner	RHO	YOU
PASS	1 S	PASS	2 H
2 NT!	???		

Option #1: Cuebidding to Show a **Strong** Rebid of Your First-Bid Suit

When both you and Partner have **bid different Majors**, bidding the **lower** of the Unusual No Trump bidder's Minor Suits, by bidding 3**C!**, you show a **strong** rebid of **YOUR first-bid Major**.

Option #2: Cuebidding to Show Exactly 2 Cards in Partner's Bid Major and a **Strong** Raise of Partner's First-Bid Suit

When both you and Partner have **bid different Majors**, bidding the **higher** of the Unusual No Trump bidder's Minor Suits, by bidding 3**D!**, you show (1) exactly 2 cards in **PARTNER'S**

⁵ The bidding system described here is somewhat based on suggestions by Mike Lawrence in his excellent article, "A Useful Competitive Bidding Trick", in the November, 2024 ACBL Bridge Bulletin.

first-bid Major,⁶ (2) and *extra HCPs* or *side-Suit features* and says to Partner, "Partner, I have 2 of your bid Suit, but a pretty 'strong' Hand. Do you have a **6th** card in **YOUR first-bid Major**, and want to play in your Suit, or would you *instead* like to play in **MY first-bid Major**?"

Note. These bidding sequences "**limit**" the Responder's Hand by very *specifically* showing Responder's holdings. Therefore, Responder will not bid again unless Opener asks a question. The Opener has become "**The Captain**" and will set the final contract at either the 3 level for a "part score" or at the Game level.

⁶ These bids are "artificial", and therefore **must** be Alerted!