

Esther Explores Various Ways to Show Partner Your Strong Holdings

Bruce Thompson

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Bruce: Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us through some of the **various ways to respond to Partner's strong 2C opening bid**. Esther, thanks for taking time to be with us today!

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to NEVER call me Esther. Instead, call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you talk us through some of the ways that Opener can show Partner points?

Esther: Well, Bruce, sure. Most players show opening or more points in the following manner:

1. **12-14** HCPs: Open 1 of a suit; 1 of a Minor if holding 4 of a Major.
2. **15-17** HCPs: Open **1NT** *only* if no void or singleton, and *no more* than 1 doubleton, **even if** holding 5 of a Major.
3. **18-19** HCPs: Open 1 of a suit; jump later to a higher **NT** bid.
4. **20-21** HCPs: Open **2NT** if no void or singleton, and *no more* than 1 doubleton.
5. **22-24** HCPs: Open **2C**, shifting later to **2NT** or a suit, as appropriate given Partner's response.
6. **28-30** HCPs: Open **2C**, later shifting to **4NT** asking.

Bruce: OK. Are there other ways to show points?

Esther: *First*, all players play that if in your first bid you double a suit opening by your RHO, and you later bid a suit, you are showing **17-18** HCPs, and your bid is not forcing. *Second*, all players play that if you open bidding and then "jump shift" by both (1) jumping levels and (2) shifting suits (e.g., you: **1H**; you in your next bid **2S**) you are showing **19+** HCPs, and if your Partner has bid this is **game forcing**. *Third*, some pairs play that a "reverse" where you in your second bid *bypass* your first-bid suit shows **16-17** HCPs (e.g., You: **1C**; Partner: **1H**; You: **2D**, thus "bypassing" with you Diamond bid your originally bid Club suit).

Bruce: Well, let's talk further about the **2C** opening bid, and more specifically about ways to respond to **2C** opening bids. Is there anything especially **important** to know about responding to this opening?

Esther: Well, the single most important thing to remember is that **you as Responder must (almost) never PASS your Partner's opening 2C bid**. Never, ever leave your Partner in an artificial bid that may show **zero** cards in the bid suit (unless, of course, you have both near-zero points and a boatload of cards in that suit).

Bruce: Who would leave Partner in an opening **2C** bid? I can't believe anyone would do that.

Esther: Well, Bruce, I recently watched an actual competition in which in every pair Responder left **2C** Opener in a **2C** contract! And on this Board Responder had only 3 Clubs. Happily, Opener also had 3 Clubs. But this could have been disastrous. What if Opener bid **2C** with 2, 1, or even 0 Clubs? What if Opener ended up playing **2C** with 0 Clubs in Opener's hand and only 3 Clubs in Dummy? This is a road to bridge *perdition*! Think about it. Your partnership has at a minimum a majority of the HCPs. And in in this context of having lots of points you set a **2C** contract, with points but few Clubs, so you likely will be the low

Board pair (unless all the pairs make the same mistake)!!!

Bruce: OK. Point well (and firmly) made. Well, how should Responder respond to Partner's 2C opening?

Esther: Well, as you might expect, there are numerous various systems for responding to a strong 2C opening. I will briefly summarize 4 of these response systems.

#1. **Two Diamonds "Waiting"**

This is an artificial bid making no claim about holding Diamond cards, and nothing about points. This bid asks Opener to bid a long suit, or instead to show a "balanced" hand by bidding NT. If Opener bids 2NT, then all systems (Stayman and transfers) are "on" with respect to Responder's second bid. Opener then bids in the normal process, and Responder then "captains" the ship toward what is felt to be the optimal bid.

#2. **3 Point "Steps"**

In this system all responses are "artificial," and Responder shows Opener point count: (1) 2D = 0-3 HCPs, (2) 2H = 4-6 HCPs, (3) 2S = 7-9 HCPs, and (4) 2NT = 10+ HCPs. Because *all* these response bids are artificial, each one of them **must** be *Alerted and explained*.

#3. **Danish "Controls"**

Because with so many points a 3NT or 6NT contract is quite likely, "control" cards or "stoppers" become especially important. In this system Responder shows Opener Responder's "control" card "points," either Aces or "protected" Kings (i.e., K,x or preferably K,x,x), where each Ace = 2 "control" points and a "protected" King = 1 "control" point, as follows: (1) 2D = 0 or 1 "control" card points in the form of a single King, (2) 2H = 2 "control" card points, in the form of either 1 Ace or 2 "protected" Kings, (3) 2S = 3 "control" card points, *et cetera*. Because Opener has a boatload of HCPs, Opener can then often make good guesses about exactly which honors Responder is likely to hold.

#4. Roth or Modified Roth

In this system Responder shows Opener a "bust" hand, or else describes holding points and distribution.

1. **2H** = no Aces or Kings. Because this bid is artificial, the **2H** response **must** be Alerted!
2. **2D** = at least 1 Ace or King, and denies a 5-card suit with multiple honors. Because this bid is artificial, the **2D** response **must** be Alerted!
3. **2S**, **3C**, and **3D** = 5-card suit which contains either **2** of the top **3** or **3** of the top **5** honors.
4. **2NT** = 5+ **Hearts** and either **2** of the top **3** or **3** of the top **5** honors. The **rationale** for why Responder's **2NT** bid does not seek a **NT** contract set in Responder's hand is that this "wrong sides" the contract by exposing the strong hand as Dummy, so in this system Responder does not bid **2NT** even if Responder thinks a **NT** contract is best.

If Responder's RHO "interferes" by bidding, (1) Responder's PASS shows a "bust" hand, (2) Responder's DOUBLE shows a game-going hand with at least one Ace or King, and (3) Responder's natural bid shows 8+ HCPs and a 5+ card suit with honors. If the Opener later DOUBLES, the bid is "takeout" and Responder must bid.

Bruce: Well, which **2C** response system do you prefer?

Esther: I have played them all. **2D** "waiting" has the advantage of being simplest, but also wastes bidding space to convey not much information to Opener. Put simply, I like Roth.