



Cappelletti over 1NT — part 1

In first seat you hold
 ♠Q8 ♥AJ8 ♦AK105 ♣K986.
 You open 1NT and your left-hand opponent intervenes with 2♦ showing the majors. Don't you just hate that?

Bridge players have learned that it pays to compete over opening strong 1NT bids when they hold shapely hands. Generally, it's best to compete with hands containing a long suit or with two-suited hands — usually with 5–5 or even 5–4 distribution — and appropriate values.

The object of the interference is not to get to game, but rather trying to obstruct the opponents and to do so safely. You hate it when they bid over your 1NT — turn the tables and do it to them!

For this to be effective, however, you need a system to define your bids. One of the most popular of these methods is called Cappelletti, a treatment that is also commonly known as Hamilton.

How it works

Double shows a good hand, either a very strong balanced hand or (better) a hand with a running suit that can be used to defeat 1NT.

2♣ shows any one suit.

2♦ shows both majors.

2♥ shows hearts and a minor suit.

2♠ shows spades and a minor suit.

2NT shows both minors.

Three-level bids are natural and preemptive (weak).

Examples

Say your RHO opens 1NT (15–17) and you hold the following hands:

♠AQ952 ♥KJ1043 ♦86 ♣3
 Bid 2♦, showing both majors.

Yes, you only have 10 high-card points, but the shapeliness of this hand makes it more valuable.

♠KJ943 ♥6 ♦K7 ♣QJ1042
 Bid 2♠, showing spades and a minor suit.

♠A74 ♥KJ10732 ♦8 ♣653
 Bid 2♣ showing a one suiter.

This hand has only 8 HCP and may not be worth much on defense, but it should be quite good on offense. Remember, your aim is to interfere with the opponents' bidding.

♠74 ♥KQJ10742 ♦AQ3 ♣A
 Double. Do not bid 2♣ to show a one-suited hand. You are too strong.

If you end up defending 1NT doubled, you can lead a heart and expect to take at least six hearts and two aces. If the opponents scramble to safety, you can next bid your hearts and partner will know you have a good hand *and* a good suit.

♠J107653 ♥K92 ♦84 ♣62
 Pass. True, you have a six-card spade suit, but this hand is too weak to compete. Do not bid 2♣ to show a one-suited hand.

Full disclosure

When you fill out your convention card, don't simply write "Cappelletti" or (worse) "Capp" on the convention card. Fill in what suits each bid shows on the appropriate line.

For example:

DEFENSE VS NOTRUMP

vs: Strong _____
 2♣ one suit _____
 2♦ ♥ & ♠ _____
 2♥ ♥ & minor _____
 2♠ ♠ & minor _____
 Dbl: strong or running suit _____
 Other 2NT = minors _____

Notice that this defense (Cappelletti) against the opponents' 1NT openings is listed under the heading "vs. Strong," meaning that you play it only when the opponents use a 15–17 (or 16–18) 1NT range. If you play a different system against weak 1NT openings (such as 11–14 or 13–15 HCPs), write it in the adjacent column, and write the word "Weak" on the "vs" line. □

Next month: How to respond when partner interferes over the opponents' 1NT opening.

Get 'em while they're hot

Phyllis Prager, of Sarasota FL, was at a large Florida regional, playing in the Senior Pairs. Wilson Day was directing and made some jovial and charming announcements as the session was getting under way. One of those announcements was that the playing area was "a cell free zone." Will Martzloff of Rochester NY showed his quick wit, calling out, "I'll take two."