

General Auction Defense to Weak Two Openings

If your RHO opens a "weak two," you have the following options to overcall:

1. Bid a good 5-card (or preferably 6-card) suit. You need strength (at least an opening hand) when you do this. (* See below for what happens next.)
2. Jump in your suit is INVITATIONAL, with 6/7 pieces and 14-19 HCP.
Something like this: ♠ AQ109865 ♥ AQ6 ♦ 6 ♣ Q4
3. Do not EVER preempt over a preempt. We have agreements, and we agree that when you overcall a weak two with a suit of your own, that it represents a nice suit and some strength. Remember that you are already at the 2-level, and partner's hand is as yet unknown. You'd better have what you promise ;)
4. All doubles are 3-suited "take-out doubles" showing shortness in the opener's preempting suit, and tolerance for the 3 unbid suits. You have 14+ HCP.
5. A 2 NT overcall = 15-18 HCP, and it promises a stopper in the weak two suit.

As the Preemptor's Partner, what exactly would your responses show?

When you just raise partner's 2-level preempt by one, it's furthering the preempt. This is NEVER invitational. The preempting hand is DONE bidding after their opening bid, unless you ask them a question. So your raise by one level is weak, shows at least 3 pieces in partner's suit, and is trying to further get in the way. Your raise to 4 is because you have 4 pieces, 10 pieces together, let's preempt higher and get in their way.

* The general system of responding to a weak two is called RONF -- Raise (is the) Only Non-Forcing (Bid). (THIS MEANS THAT AS THE PREEMPTING HAND, YOU MAY NEVER, EVER PASS WHEN PARTNER BIDS A NEW SUIT!) If responder bids any new suit, you are showing 5+ cards and asking responder to raise with 3 card support. If partner does not have 3-pieces in your suit, they will rebid their own. So make sure your hand is strong enough to support playing at the 3-level when you change suits!

If your partner opens 2 of a major, and you raise to game, you might be pre-empting, with very few points and a long suit, or you might have a stack of points (possibly 20 or more). How does partner know which I have?

The answer is that he doesn't know, and it doesn't matter. He passes either way. The limited hand is never in control, and is expected to pass this. Who also "doesn't know" are the opponents. They aren't sure if you are stealing the hand from them, or if the hand really does belong to you. If they end up overbidding their hands, you can score on defense if you're strong. And if you're NV and they're VUL, you might think about a sacrifice :)

Board 5
North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q J 10 2	♠ 5 3	♠ 9 7 4
♥ K J 3	♥ A Q 10 9 7 4	♥ 5 2
♦ 9 7 4 2	♦ K 6	♦ Q J 10 3
♣ K 2	♣ 7 6 5	♣ Q J 10 9

♠ A K 8 6	♠ A K 8 6	♠ A K 8 6
♥ 8 6	♥ 8 6	♥ 8 6
♦ A 8 5	♦ A 8 5	♦ A 8 5
♣ A 8 4 3	♣ A 8 4 3	♣ A 8 4 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 NT?
All pass	3 ♦	Pass	4 ♥

Auction Commentary: When opening a "weak two" in 1st or 2nd seat, you require a 6-card suit with at least 2 honors, and 5 to 11 HCP. In 3rd seat anything goes!! 2 NT by responder asks a question and is conventional. To make that bid you require 4 defensive quick tricks. DO NOT LOOK AT POINTS An Ace=1 trick, K = 1/2 trick. AQ = 1-1/2 tricks.

When responder asks you 2 NT? You cannot PASS. It asks for an outside "feature" in the hand. Partner wants to know where you might have an outside Ace or King, or or QJx. Think of it as partner asking if you have a way for him to travel to your hand, outside your long suit. (A maximum weak two opener, 8+ points, usually has an outside entry to the hand.) If you do have one of these "features," you answer the 2 NT with the suit where the feature exists. If you don't have an outside "feature," then just rebid your weak-two suit. And if you hold AKQxxx of the suit (without a feature), rebid 3 NT over 2 NT.

Opening Lead: Q♣ (the top of a sequence of 3 honors is a very safe lead!)

Planning the Play: A double finesse or a DEEP Finesse is needed to make this hand. Play 8♥ and duck it! You are praying that the KJ♥ is with your RHO. If you finesse to the Q♥ instead, you will lose a ♥ trick to one of those honors (KJ♥), and be defeated.

Takeaway:

2 NT asking for a "feature" is a standard treatment after partner bids a weak two, and RHO passes. (It's so standard that the 2 NT question is not alertable.) If you play this any other way, that 2 NT is still asking a question (but it asks something else), the question is still not alertable, but the answer would be.

When answering partner, holding an outside feature, bid the suit of the feature. With no feature, rebid your own suit. And with no feature, but a solid AKQxxx suit, bid 3 NT.

Board 8

South Deals
None Vul

♠ 8 3	♠ Q 10 9 5	♠ A K 7 4						
♥ K 5 4	♥ A 8	♥ 10 6 2						
♦ A Q 10 8 7 3	♦ J 6 2	♦ K 5						
♣ 6 5	♣ J 9 7 3	♣ K Q 10 4						
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W	N	E						
S								
♠ J 6 2	♠ J 6 2	♠ J 6 2						
♥ Q J 9 7 3	♥ Q J 9 7 3	♥ Q J 9 7 3						
♦ 9 4	♦ 9 4	♦ 9 4						
♣ A 8 2	♣ A 8 2	♣ A 8 2						

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♦	Pass	2 NT?	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	3 NT	All pass

Auction Commentary: When partner opens a "weak two" in 1st or 2nd seat, expect 2 of the top 3 or 4 honors. As responder here, East shouldn't count the points -- count the tricks: and you should expect to take 6 ♦s, 2 ♠s and a ♣. Unstopped in hearts, 2 NT asks for an outside feature. *A feature is either an Ace or a King (or a protected QJx) outside the suit.* Finding a ♥ feature, responder bids 3 NT hoping to run 9 tricks. (Note that it would be very rare to find 2 Aces in a weak two. That hand is too good for a weak two opener.)

Opening Lead: Q♥ (the top of a series... or almost one - Q-J-9 "almost T" ;)

Planning the Play: You hold the 10♥, so it is vital to duck the 1st trick. If they play the J♥ next, cover with the K♥ to promote your 10♥ to a winner. If they play low, let it ride to your 10♥.

The defenders should play the the A♥ over the Q♥, because it's a doubleton, and the suit would be blocked otherwise. This defense holds the declarer to 9 tricks. If the unblocking doesn't happen, EW will make an overtrick.

Takeaway:

When planning your opening bid, with 6 pieces you might be automatically tempted to bid a 2-level opener (in anything but ♣s!). But look at (1) your seat -- if you are in first or second seat, you're promising a good suit, with at least 2 top honors. Remember that the partner who limits their hand is NEVER in charge in the auction, so your partner is going to take what information you feed her and steer the contract accordingly. (If you're in the 3rd seat, all bets are off and you can open with less.)

Also look at your points. If you have the equivalent of an opening hand, open this at the 1-level! Your partner doesn't HAVE to bid after your weak two, and you could miss game!