

No Trump Interference

Don't you just hate it when the bidding goes P – 1N – P – P; P and the opponents end up with a good result? We learned about Balancing as a measure to keep opponents out of cheap contracts. Granted the 1N bid does show a bit stronger hand than a simple 1-of-a-suit Opener; but still the Opener's Partner Passed so where are the other 25-33 HCP? Perhaps the majority of them are with your side and you might have a long-suit advantage from the fact that the power hand is balanced in shape. This latter fact forms the basis of Bids designed to keep opponents from playing easy 1N contracts. There have been many Conventions designed to this end but by far the two most popular which we will show here are Cappeletti, named after its proponent Mike C. and D.O.N.T another Marty Bergen invention where the Initials stand for Disturb Opponents No Tump.

D.O.N.T

Because of the list's length it may seem intimidating at first, but it really is quite simple. The opponent opens 1N and if you have a one or two suited hand you show that information to your partner. The single suited hand contains a 6+ Card suit: you use the ubiquitous X = Double to let partner know you have a long suit. If you have a two suited hand i.e. you have two suits most commonly 5-4 but could be 5-5 or even 6-5, you bid the lower ranking of the two suits, It makes no difference which is the stronger or longer – you bid the lower ranking suit to show the two suited hand. If Partner has interest but doesn't like your first suit he can make an inquiry as to your other suit by bidding up-the-line. How Many HCP does one need to exercise the DONT Convention? Not Many, consider it to be the same manner as you would a balancing bid, as little as 5 HCP and a decent suit will do.

Some Examples:

1N – X – P – ? The Double indicates a single long suit. As Partner of DONT bidder you should bid 2♣ to ask Partner for the suit, in which case the DONT bidder replies by bidding his long suit. If the Advancer rebids his own suit it is to play.

1N – 2♣ – P – ? The 2♣ bid shows ♣'s and a higher suit. If Advancer isn't fond of ♣'s he can ask what the second suit is by bidding 2♦. If ♦'s is the second suit the DONT bidder can Pass, otherwise he bids the second suit.

Recall that the whole purpose of the DONT bid is to avoid the situation where the 1N Opening bid gets passed out. It is not necessarily a desperation attempt to find your own Contract. If the Opponents bid you can keep quiet and be satisfied that your or Partners DONT bid accomplished its purpose – not allowing a 15-17 HCP hand play in 1N. On the other hand if Partner of DONT bidder has a decent hand the Contract just may belong there.

Here's the full structure of the DONT bids

X – The Double shows a single suit (at least 6 Cards) Consider using suit Quality test!

2♣ – ♣'s and a higher suit

2♦ – ♦'s and a higher (Major) suit

2♥ – ♥'s and ♠'s

2♠ – ♠'s only since X could be used to show ♠'s only we use the 2♠ bid to show a weaker hand than X.

2NT – ♣'s and ♦'s. In this case since Partner must bid at 3-level to inquire so it is recommended that the 5-5 shape be a firm requirement.

So far we have considered the DONT bid exercised in the Direct seat only, what if the Player in the Direct seat can't comply with the 6+ or 5-4 holdings? He can't bid. Does that mean the 1N opener is in the clear if the Direct seat and Responder Pass? No, and we can relax the holding requirement to a good 4-4 holding by Player in the Pass-out seat. Therefore a X in the Pass-out seat following two Passes still shows a long suit, but any other bid is only guaranteeing 4-4 rather

than 5-4 or better.

Cappeletti

The structure, purpose and responses on the Cappeletti Convention are similar to that of DONT with the distinct difference being the meaning of the Double. The X retains its penalty flavor which means that Cappeletti has an advantage over DONT when the Openers are using weak NoTrump (10-12 HCP) Openings common in the ACOL bidding system. Over Strong NoTrump Opens (15-17/18) the X loses some of its luster and it is this authors opinion that it serves better as a hand descriptor as it does as in the DONT Convention. (note: In standard American – without these Conventions - the X generally means matching HCP.)

Here's the Cappeletti structure (the 2 suited hands are 5-4 or 5-5)

X – Penalty

2♣ – The long suit similar to that shown by DONT's X

2♦ – Both Major suits

2♥ – ♥'s and an Undisclosed Minor

2♠ – ♠'s and an Undisclosed Minor

2NT – ♣'s and ♦'s. In this case since Partner must bid at 3-level to inquire it is recommended.

Cappeletti also suggests a high HCP requirement for it's use (9-15 HCP).

As in DONT the Advancer can bid up-the-line to ask for the long suit or the second suit.

It should be obvious that, in the case of the 2♦ Cappeletti or 2♥ DONT bids, the suits held are known so the Advancer merely has to choose the suit that best fits his hand.

DONT be afraid to try these! You will be pleasantly surprised at their effectiveness.

MEL's Rule of 8

As with everything in Bridge, thought must be exercised whenever we do things that seem to defy reason. Bidding a weaker hand immediately after an opponent advertises a stronger than minimum hand might seem to defy reason. These conventions generally work even when, as generally advertised, you don't "have many HCP". The reason they generally work is their basis – two-suited hands play stronger than their HCP suggest, especially in the face of balanced hands, which are what NoTrump Opening hands are. Two suited hands play better because the implied shortness in two suits yields additional trumping power – but our long suits must have strength. Therefore to assure that we indeed have that additional power Mel Colchamiro recommends the application of the "Rule of 8" which requires some knowledge of [Losing Trick Count](#) (LTC). Briefly, LTC says that any card that is not an A, K or Q is a loser and the most losers you can have in any suit is 3. This means the maximum LTC for a hand is 12 – a Yarborough is a 12 LTC hand. So here's Mel's Rule of 8 (which is only applicable in the direct seat): take the total of your two longest suits and subtract your LTC Here's a couple of examples, from actual tournament competitions, of hands in the direct seats following 1N Openings: (a) ♠AKJ53 ♥Q86 ♦Q7 ♣K65; (b) ♠5 ♥AJ8 ♦JT7 ♣AK9654

Hand (a) has 15HCP and the holder might be tempted to make some kind of conventional Overcall in the direct seat (e.g. DONT, Cappeletti) but a disciplined player might just Pass and see what happens. If Opener's Partner Passes, Partner in the pass-out seat has an opportunity to balance; if he doesn't hand (a) which follows the strong hand has an opportunity for a bunch of tricks and that is what happened. 1NT got defeated by two tricks and the tables that interfered ending in 2♠ – down 1. In hand (b) the hands where a Convention implied a long suit was ended in a Contract of 3♣ – down 1. The opponents had 24 HCP between them and also got a positive score if they

competed. Applying the Rule of 8 to both these hands suggests the holder should have passed in both cases. Any hand applying a convention after 1N Open should have at least 6 HCP. Rule of 8 says take that value of 6 and add (Length of 2 longest suits – LTC of hand); if that result is less than 8 don't interfere. Else if Length – LTC < 2 → don't interfere.