

Mini-Roman

The mini-roman is a variation on a convention referred to as the Roman bid. The difference is that the original bid, used successfully by the Italian Blue Team, required 17+ HCP. The mini-roman only requires the bidder to have the standard 11-15 HCP for an Mini-Roman opening bid.

To use this convention the partnership is required to 'give-up' the weak 2♦ bid, which is in my opinion a very poor and usually unsuccessful opening bid (showing a weak hand and a long minor it presents an opportunity for the opponents to find a fit in a major and in a competitive bidding situation the weak 2♦ bidder will generally not get the contract).

Many experts (I am not an expert) consider the distributions required for the mini-roman bid to be limiting; however I view them as very opportunistic in the sense that having either 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 distribution provides an excellent chance that the partnership can find a 4-4 or better fit with very little risk. Thus the mini-roman conditions are: 11-15 **HCP** and either 4-4-4-1 or 5-4-4-0 distribution. With this holding the opening bid (or jump over-call) is an **alert-able 2♦!**. If asked about the alert – say “it’s a 3-suited hand with opening points” Note the HCP requirement – are not Playing Points.

The Responder has two options (neither of which, because the 2♦ is conventional, is PASS)

(1) OPTION 1: Weak hand (no interest in looking for game) is shown by bidding up the line showing his lowest 3-Card suit 2♥/2♠/3...

In the case that Responder's suit is the openers void or singleton Opener corrects to next higher suit

- (a) If the Responder hold 3 or more of that suit the bid is PASS (partnership plays a 2-level contract in a 7+card fit – not the end-of-the-world.
- (b) If Responder holds fewer than 3 in that suit he corrects to his best minor (3♣ or 3♦) and opener passes.

(2) OPTION 2: Invitational (or better) hand: (10+ HCP) bid 2NT! this asks opener to bid his short suit and is alertable

If after Opener bids short suit the response reveals an 8+ card fit:

a) with 10-12 PP bid that suit at 3 level

Opener can advance bid to Game Level with appropriate points.

b) with 13+PP bid that suit at 4 level

Note: unless Responder holds a 4-3-3-3 distribution where the 4-card suit is the openers singleton* an 8-card fit is practically automatic.

Important: Opener with minimum hand PASS 3-level bid. Remember reaching game is not always the object; the 2♦ bid is like a preemptive 2-level bid – it makes it harder for the opponents to enter the bidding; in this case it is constructive in the sense that it makes finding a fit less than hit or miss. Most important, it impeccably describes your hand.

(3) OPTION 2 – extended: Game Forcing response (13+ HCP): 2NT! – same as Invitational hand

Opener bids short suit (same as before) now Responder has more options

- (a) With 2 stoppers in short suit bid Responder can bid 3NT or
- (b) Choose appropriate game contract
- (c) Continue with standard slam attempt methods

Caveat: What happens if Responder holds a (6+) long suit in opener's short suit?

- (1) Responder can choose to play in 7+ card fit in that short suit, or
- (2) start a special control bid process by rebidding that suit

example: 2♦ – P – 2NT – P ← 2NT as always, asks for short suit
3♦ ← diamonds is opener's short suit,

Responder holding: ♠Q, ♥AT9, ♦AKT653, ♣KT8 might choose

- (a) 3NT – knows for sure there are 2 (maybe 3) 7-card fits or with bigger hand
- (b) jump to 4NT – RKC or Blackwood or
- (c) 4♦ by Responder starts control bidding (note: once control sequence starts 4NT is used as escape (shutout) bid and thus is not in control sequence)

CONTROLS are shown as follows:

0 or 4 controls - bid 4♥ (up the line) ← opener showing controls

5 controls bid 4♠

6+controls bid 5♣[#]

After opener shows controls Responder chooses contract;

CONTROLS ARE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS A= 2, K=1 CONTROL(S)

ex: ♠AK86, ♥K765, ♦A, ♣QT97 – this hand has 6 controls (note controls is a euphemism for (pretty) sure tricks. An **A** is only 1 trick but in any 7-card suit it provides some confidence that there will be another trick available).

* If this happens upon you just remember: 'the gods can't always be on your side'^{**}

^{**}if you feel the gods are never with you: 'don't use mini-roman'

[#] Since 4NT is the escape bid normal RKC or Blackwood becomes unavailable so with partnership agreement a bid of 4♠ by Responder can be RKC or Blackwood