

Weak Two Openings

Dealer: South
 Vul: East-West
 Lead: \heartsuit 3

	North	
	\spadesuit Q 7 2	
	\heartsuit Q 9 5 4 3	
	\diamondsuit A Q 4	
	\clubsuit Q 7	
East		West
\spadesuit A 6 4		\spadesuit 10
\heartsuit K 10 6 2		\heartsuit 7
\diamondsuit 3		\diamondsuit K J 7 6 5 2
\clubsuit A 10 9 3 2		\clubsuit K J 8 6 4
	South	
	\spadesuit K J 9 8 5 3	
	\heartsuit A J 8	
	\diamondsuit 10 9 8	
	\clubsuit 5	

Bidding:

	West	North	East	South
				2 \spadesuit ⁽¹⁾
	Pass ⁽²⁾	3 \spadesuit ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁴⁾
	Pass			

Result: Down 2, -100 for North-South

- (1) An almost classic 'weak-two' opening hand – a good six card suit and less than a full opening 12+ points. This is a preemptive bid.
- (2) Before South's opening, West was going to try a 1 \clubsuit opening himself, based on 11 HCP's, the 5th club and a singleton in the diamond suit. After South's 2 \spadesuit opening, he hasn't the strength to overcall at the 3-level, nor the right shape to double for take-out.
- (3) North's 3 \spadesuit bid is purely preemptive. She was just raising the stakes and making it almost impossible for East to come into the bidding. She was happy she could provide a trick each in diamonds and spades.

- (4) Once he preempts there is nothing more to say. A bid to the game level was up to his partner. Partner only moved the bid to the 3-level, therefore, that's as high as the partnership belongs.

Weak two openings have been around almost as long as contract bridge has. In 1925 Harold Vanderbilt codified the game of contract bridge and developed a bidding system that included a prototype of today's weak two.

Opening a weak hand has the positive value of getting your side into the bidding first. Often it tips off partner when he is looking for a good lead if your LHO becomes declarer. Finally, it is protected from the penalty double because it is at a low enough level. On the other hand, it often sticks it to your opponents. Your 2-level bid forces them to come in at the 2 or 3 level. In the deal above, you've cut off the whole 2-level. Neither opponent had the strength to start the bidding at the 3-level without know if his partner had the right cards and the necessary points. Once you get into the habit of opening these hands with a 'weak two' you won't be able to conceive of bidding without this convention.

Some players stretch the classic definition of the 'weak-two' and open any 6-card suit that has an honor. This is called 'undisciplined' and I really recommend against it. Stay true to the classic definition of the 'disciplined weak two': A good 6-card suit and less than opening count (from 5-11 HCP). A good suit is one headed by 2 of the top 3 honors, or 3 of the top five. Your hand should promise at least 5 tricks. The reason I recommend not opening a hand such as:

♠Q 10 8 7 6 3 ♥K Q 10 ♦8 5 ♣9 8

is that partner won't know what to do with it. Remember she may want to raise your 2 ♠ to 3 ♠. Or worse, she may jump to 4 ♠ herself if he she is looking at 4 tricks in her own hand. Your hand promises 3 tricks at most. This miscommunication defeats your objective for opening; that was to stick it to the opponents – not to stick it to yourselves!

Here's another type hand that shouldn't be opened at the 2-level.

♠A K J 8 4 2 ♥J 9 4 2 ♦----- ♣9 8 4

There are two reasons why this hand shouldn't be opened 2 ♠, even though the spade suit is terrific. One is the 4-card heart suit. Your

partner may have 4 hearts and you would miss an excellent game in that suit in favor of a part score in spades. The other reason is the void in diamonds. Voids are powerful and mean extra tricks. Here again, you could be missing out on a game by opening 2 ♠ should it end there.

Notice, in the deal above, that you were set two tricks for a score of -100. What could your opponents have made if they found their club fit? There's one heart loser and one diamond loser. West's low spades can be ruffed in the East hand and after 1 diamond is ruffed in the West hand the rest of the diamonds are good. That would have been a -600 score for North-South. The 2 ♠ 'weak' opening netted your side 500 points.

Of course, if you open weak hands at the 2-level, you need a bid for very strong hand over 21 points - and that is the strong 2 ♣ opening bid. But that's a story for another time.