

Minors After Notrumps

by Ed Barnes

It's rare that we have occasion to investigate a minor fit after a notrump opening or a notrump overcall. When it does happen, though, our methods are often somewhat agricultural. There are a simple set of agreements available to bring your minor bidding up to date, however. Here they are:

Minor Suit transfers after 1NT

These guys are pretty simple. 2♠ transfers to clubs, and 2NT transfers to diamonds.

What do you do then with flat invitational hands, if not "2NT"? Go via Stayman.

And how does opener "super-accept"? Simply bid the shown suit. In the minors, a super-accept tends to show Honour-x-x or better. Using that method, if you have a weak hand, with 5-5 in the minors, you can transfer to diamonds (2NT) and then pass partner's response.

Splinters after 1NT

We sometimes have game-going, or slam-going hands with a major-suit shortage. Splinters at the 3-level are a great use for these rarely used calls: 3♥ = 3145 or 3154, game forcing, and 3♠ = 1345 or 1354, game forcing. Opener can often find a sensible 4-3 ("Moysian") fit in the other major, or a great minor-suit game or slam when 3NT would be ruined by the opponents taking the first 5 or 6 tricks in responder's short major.

Minor Suit Stayman after 2NT

Slam is more often in the picture after a 2NT opening than after a 1NT opening, and sometimes the only slam that makes is that in a minor suit fit. For this reason, it's essential to have a way to reach 4-4 and 5-4 fits in a minor after a 2NT opening. Many partnerships use "Minor Suit Stayman" - a bid of 3♠, which asks; "Do you have a 4+ card minor?". Opener simply bids it if they do, or bids 3NT if they don't.

All of these agreements require some practice to be used effectively. Think about how you might go about finding the best spot after a 1NT or 2NT opening with the following hands:

♠5	♠654	♠54	♠6	♠J432
♥A43	♥	♥J2	♥43	♥5
♦KQ874	♦KQJT72	♦543	♦AQT43	♦KQJ8
♣JT76	♣K985	♣AJT654	♣Q9873	♣AT97