Splinters and Jacoby 2NT - Commentary

Hand 1

North opens 1♠.

With 4-card support in a 7-loser hand, but only 10 high-card points South splinters with 4♦.

North might sign off in 4♠ facing the limited high-card holding opposite.

Alternatively he can show his control with 4♥.

South might try again with 5♦ if void, but as it is he closes out the auction with 4♠.

11 tricks are routine losing just the 2 minor suit aces.

Hand 2

East opens 1♥.

With 4-card support and 13 points in a balanced hand West has a full-value game raise and so bids 2NT, agreeing hearts and forcing to game.

With little to spare and poor top cards East jumps to 4♥ – weaker than 3♥.

Declarer will make 11 tricks, throwing a club loser on the third spade.

Hand 3

South opens 1♠.

With 4 spades in a 7-loser hand North should force to game.

I bid 2NT, though some would jump to 4♠ with just 12 high-card points.

A control-showing auction of 3♣, 3♥, 4♦, 4♥ might follow the 2NT bid, but the auction is likely to finish at 4♠.

11 tricks are made without too much difficulty.

11 tricks can also be made in no trumps, but it is a difficult contract to find.

Hand 4

West opens 1♥.

With 5-card support and a probable 10-card fit in a weak hand with minimal defence East jumps to 4♥, probably ending the auction.

10 tricks are fairly straightforward losing just 1 trump and 2 clubs.

North might double the opening bid for take-out, but 4♠ would still be a brave bid for a vulnerable South. As it is, S can make 9 tricks in spades and so 4♠ for 1 down is an excellent sacrifice, but can they find it after this pre-emptive onslaught?

Hand 5

North opens 1♠.

South can see the major suit fit in a game-going hand with no shortage and so bids 2NT agreeing the suit and forcing to game.

Playing first-round controls North might venture 3♦ just in case partner has extra strength and South can return 4♣ (below game level) but neither partner has the extra strength to take the auction beyond 4♠.

10 tricks should make for the loss of a trump, a heart and a diamond.

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Hand 6

East opens 1♥.

With only 8 points in a balanced hand (9 if you add one for the small doubleton) West raises to 2♥.

If South reopens with 2♠ then West can raise to 3♥ on a probable 9-card fit.

North might overcall the opening bid with 1♠, in which case North will raise to 2♠. As above West should then compete with 3♥ to end the auction.

3♥ makes 9 tricks for the loss of a heart, a spade, and 2 diamonds, although declarer will have to avoid a club loser either by dropping the Queen or by getting one away on a diamond.

NS can make 7 tricks in spades making 2♠ a good sacrifice over 2♥ but 3♠ would be a step too far.

Hand 7

South opens 1♠.

West does not have the shape for a take-out double.

North may have only 5 points but he must raise to 2♠ with 4-card support.

East will pass, and with 17 points (or 6-loser) South will make some form of trial bid – 3♦ is the most natural.

If West can find a take-out double at this point then EW will find 3♥. Otherwise North will sign off in 3♠ with his minimum.

EW can make 10 tricks in hearts when the clubs finesse and split, but it is far from easy to bid.

NS will go two down in 3♠ – a poor sacrifice against 3♥.

Hand 8

W and N each pass and East opens 1♠.

South will surely overcall – probably 3♦.

West should show his support with 3♠. Note that this would also be the bid without interference as he values his hand at 10 points (including 3 for the singleton) or 8-loser. Note also that a pass from West in the hope of a reopening double from East and a penalty pass is probably not a good idea – the big fit reduces the number of likely losers in the opponents' hands.

East might be minimal on points but he can now value his hand as 6-loser and so raises to 4♠.

Three losers cannot be avoided – 2 in spades and 1 in hearts – but when both minor suit Kings finesse declarer will be home and dry.

Meanwhile, NS can make 8 tricks in hearts or 7 tricks in diamonds.

Hand 9

Norh and East each pass.

South opens 1♠ and West passes.

North should respond pre-emptively with 4♠, not particularly expecting to make. Do not be tempted by 4♦ – that would suggest more points.

This should end the auction.

In fact the extras in the South hand together with well-placed honours in the opponents' hands enable 10 tricks to be made.

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Hand 10

East opens 1♠ and South passes.

This time West has a big fit in a 7-loser hand with invitational high-card points, and should show his feature with 4♦.

This does not particularly improve East's hand but he must at least try 4♥. This bid improves the West hand and so he stretches to 5♣. 5♦ by East might be all that is required for West to try 6♠.

In fact, 13 tricks are almost lay-down. The grand is not a great contract depending as it does on a 2-1 trump split and the heart finesse, but 6♠ is an excellent contract.

Hand 11

South opens 1♣ and North splinters with 3♦.

Playing first round controls South can do no better than 4♦ denying first round controls in both hearts and spades.

With two immediate losers evident North signs off in 5♣.

11 tricks are straightforward losing just the two major suit aces.

Note that NS can make only 7 tricks in no trumps.

Hand 12

West opens 1♥ and North does not quite have an overcall.

With a big fit in a weak hand East should raise pre-emptively to 4♥, which will end the auction.

Declarer can make 9 tricks with the help of the ♦A lying right and 2 diamond ruffs.

This is an excellent sacrifice as NS can make 9 tricks in spades.

Hand 13

North opens 1♠, and with 4-card support and a full value raise to game South bids 2NT.

North rebids 3♥ – his cheapest 1st-round control – South returns 4♣ and North shows his second-round control with 4♥.

South should perhaps sign off with 4♠ at this point but might be tempted by 4NT or 5♣.

In fact, spades make 12 tricks but only because the ♦K lies right. 4♠ is a better contract than 6♠.

Hand 14

East opens 1♥.

A 4♦ splinter from West would not be wrong, but he is a little strong in high cards for this action and I prefer 2NT.

East cue-bids 3♣ and West can West returns 3♠.

West could now bide his time with a bid of 4♦ having denied a diamond void with his previous bid, but East can do no more than sign off in 4♥.

He will come to 11 tricks when North finds himself endplayed, but that's as good as it gets..

Hand 15

South opens 1♥ which North raises to 2♥.

South now bids 3♦, a natural trial bid promising 17 or 18 points, and with 8 points North will jump to the game.

10 tricks are readily available in hearts.

No trumps also make 10 tricks, but declarer is relieved to find the QTx of clubs behind the AJ.

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Hand 16

West opens 1♦.

If North remains silent then East responds 1♠, West rebids 2♣, and East looks for a no trump stop with 2♥.

West can offer no better than 3♦ which East should raise to 5♦.

Note that East has the values to push to game immediately in diamonds, but the 2NT support bid does not exist in the minors and in any case the search for a major suit fit should take priority.

If North comes in with a weak 2♠ jump overcall (I would) then East might be tempted to pass, looking for a redouble from partner and a subsequent penalty pass, but at the prevailing vulnerability it looks a better bet to support diamonds immediately. A jump to 5♦ would work, unless you have a cue-raise of 3♠ in your armoury.

EW can make 11 tricks in either minor.

Hand 17

North opens 1♥, South responds 2♣.

North must be tempted by his big fit in a 6-loser hand facing the 2-level response.

The more pessimistic action would be to bid an invitational 4♣ if that exists in your system. The optimistic approach would be to splinter with 4♦.

With a count of only 4 losing tricks, South can now see every hope of a slam.

An immediate 6♣ would not be ridiculous, particularly facing the splinter bid.

Alternatively a bid of 4♠ might be all that is needed to guide the partnership into a contract of 6♣.

Note that Blackwood is not helpful. Any response other than the rather improbable 5♣ will commit you to 6 anyway.

12 tricks are routine for just the loss of a top diamond.

Hand 18

East opens 1♥ and West responds 1♠.

With 4-card support and 16 points (17 if you add one for the doubleton) in a balanced hand, I jump to 3♠ on this East hand.

West must raise to 4♠ on his 8-loser hand.

When the heart finesse works declarer will lose just 2 clubs and a diamond.