

The “Meckwell” Convention (Responding to Partner’s Balancing 1-No-Trump)

A balancing (4th seat) 1-NT overcall shows fewer HCP’s than does a direct (2nd seat) 1-NT overcall. By Partnership agreement, a Balancing 1-NT shows a HCP range of 10-14 points. The question arises as to how should the 2nd-seat Partner, the so called “*Advancer*”, who then becomes the bidding “Captain”, bid in response to Partner’s balancing 1-NT call.

The benefit of the Meckwell Convention is that the Partnership can remain at the 2-level on occasion where the balancing Partner holds the lower limit 10-12) of his/her originally-shown 10-14 HCP’s. The Meckwell Convention utilizes Jacoby Transfers and a modification of the standard “2C” Stayman response, and here is how it works:

(1) - If the Responder, “Advancer”, HAS NO NEED TO KNOW where within Balancer’s range of 10-14 HCP’s, he/she falls:

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1B	Pass	Pass	1-NT
Pass	????		

With fewer than 12 HCP’s the Advancer can “Pass”, else with a long suit, bid “2D”, “2H”, or “2S” as a Jacoby Transfer, then drop the bidding. With 12-13 HCP’s, Advancer can invite to game in No-Trump or in either Major suit utilizing Jacoby Transfers if needed. And finally, on rare occasions, if Advancer holds 14 HCP’s or more, he/she can obtain any Game-Level final contract.

(2a) - If the Responder, “Advancer”, holds 12 or more HCP’s and HAS A NEED TO KNOW Balancer’s Point Count so as to determine if game be present and/or what the best final contract denomination be: The Advancer bids a non-Stayman, artificial, alertable “2C”:

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1B	Pass	Pass	1-NT
Pass	“2C”	Pass	(“2D”, 2H or 2S)

After the “2C” non-Stayman bid, responses by the Balancer of “2D”, or 2H, and 2S all have their usual meaning except that they also show a hand having a point count at the lower end of the HCP range (10-12 HCP’s). Finding Balancer with only 10-12 HCP’s, the Advancer can then “Pass”, invite to game in a favoured Major, or go to game in that Major, else invite to 3-NT, or even go directly to 3-NT.

(2b)

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1B	Pass	Pass	1-NT
Pass	“2C”	Pass	“2-NT”

After the “2C” non-Stayman bid, a response by the Balancer of “2-NT” irrespective of Balancer’s Major suit holdings, shows a hand having a point count at the higher end of the HCP range (13-14 HCP’s). Finding Balancer at the top of his/her range, the Advancer can go directly to 3-NT, else (2c):

(2c)

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1B	Pass	Pass	1-NT
Pass	“2C”	Pass	“2-NT”
Pass	“3C”, “3D” or “3H”		

(“Re-Stayman” - either Standard or Puppet), or use Jacoby Transfers on the way to a final Game-level contract.)