

MEL COLCHAMIRO'S RULES

A. Mel Colchamiro's Balancing Rule of "2"

Whether or not to enter the auction by balancing in the 4th seat, after a strong, 1-NT, opening bid by one's left-hand Opponent (LHO)

"When one's left-hand Opponent (LHO) has opened a strong, 15-17 HCP, "1-NT," which is then "passed" around to you, enter the auction if holding at least "2" or more shortness points (either a void, a singleton, or two doubletons," regardless of HCP and vulnerability!")

Suppose you hold ♠ Q753 ♥ 9 ♦ AT5 ♣ J8642, and the bidding has gone 1-NT — Pass — Pass — ? Should you balance, for example with only 7 HCP's? "Mel's Rule of 2" says an emphatic *yes!* Here's why:

We know the Opener has 15-17 high card points (HCP's); i.e., an average of 16, but we also know that the Responder has 0-8 HCP's; i.e., an average of 4. So whenever the bidding comes around to you, their side has 20 HCP's, on average, and your side also has 20 HCP's, on average. So your side has just as equal a right to the contract as they do!

You know a lot about Partner's hand! Returning to the hand with 7 HCP's, we know our Partner has, on average, 13. Also, he/she probably has a balanced hand since he/she didn't originally bid. So whenever we are faced with a balancing decision after a strong, 1-NT opening bid, *high card points are essentially irrelevant. The controlling factor is our distribution, notwithstanding vulnerability.* Remember, the fewer points you have, the more your Partner has, because each side will have approximately 20 HCP's.

Returning to our example hand, we know that Partner has 13 HCP's and that our finesses will usually win because Partner's 13 points lie over the No-Trump Opener. However, if we have ♠ A74 ♥ K962 ♦ KT3 ♣ K98, we should "Pass" with this balanced hand. Our finesses figure to lose since Partner will have only 7 points on average. The fewer of our side's 20 theoretical points we have, the more eager we should be to balance, providing we have 2 shortness points. But even if we have the bulk of our side's 20 theoretical points, *we should balance only if we have at least 2 shortness points.*

The best results are frequently reached by using "DONT" in the balancing seat. "DONT" works fine in the direct position, but it's a particularly big winner in the balancing seat, when used in conjunction with "Mel's Balancing Rule of 2." Using the "DONT" convention, any suit bid shows that suit plus one or more higher-ranking suits. Spades shows Spades only, and a "double" shows an unspecified, single-suited hand.

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| A. Q842, A76, 5, J7532 (Bid 2C) | F. KQ542, 84, K865, K5 (Bid 2D) |
| B. Q742, A95, 743, J62 (Pass) | G. 6, K8643, 76, J7643 (Bid 2C) |
| C. KJ8543, 6, 853, 763 (Bid 2S) | H. 654, 976, KJ5, AK53 (Pass) |
| D. 7, K852, Q8754, 762 (Bid 2D) | I. 75, A853, KQ843, 62 (Bid 2D) |
| E. KJ5, A83, K76, AJ54 (Pass) | J. AQ642, K8732, QJ 9 (Bid 2H) |

B. Mel Colchamiro's Rule of "8"

Whether or not to overcall in the Direct (2nd) Seat after a strong, 1-NT opening by one's right-hand Opponent (RHO)

"When one's right-hand Opponent (RHO) has opened with a strong, 15-17 HCP, '1-NT,' enter the auction only if 'Mel's Rule of '8' has been satisfied!"

1. Add the number of cards in your two longest suits.
2. Compute your **Losing Trick Count (LTC)**, having assumed that a fit with Partner is present.
3. Subtract your LTC from the number of cards in your two longest suits.
4. If the number is one or less, then "**Pass!**" If the number is two or more, consider overcalling, but,
5. Lastly, one must hold at least six (6) HCP's – Therefore, the "**Mel's Rule of 8**" (2+6=8).
6. Responder needs at least 8 points in the 2 longest suits if Partner pre-empts at the 2-level, 4 points if Partner pre-empts at the 3 level.

"If the subtraction results in a number of 2 or more, then the Player should decide to compete and make an overcall."

If the subtracted number is less than 2, then the Player should not make an overcall, but rather defend."

<u>North</u>	<u>East(You)</u>
1-NT	????

Your Hand: Q8742, K7654, 3, 82

10 cards – 8 Losers = 2

2 + 5 HCP's = 7 (Insufficient to satisfy "**Mel's Rule of 8**")
("**Pass**")

Your Hand: A7532, K743, K2, 74

9 cards – 7 Losers = 2

2 + 10 HCP's = 12 ("**Mel's Rule of 8**" is satisfied)
(Using "**DONT**," Bid "**2H**")

Your Hand: AQ873 K63 85 K95 Within this hand, the number of Losing Tricks, is 7. The total number of the cards in the two longest suits equals 8. Subtract 7 from 8 and the number equals 1. The Player, according to the guidelines of the "**Mel's Rule of 8**," should not overcall. The Player holding this hand should actively defend.

Your Hand: K8653, K8754, 85, 4 This second example holds only 6 high-card points, whereas the first example holds 12 points. The number of Losing Tricks, here, equals 7, as in the first example, but the total number of the cards in the two longest suits equals 10. Subtracting 7 from 10, and the number equals 3. The Player, according to the guidelines of the "**Mel's Rule of 8**," should actively compete and should, therefore, overcall, **2H**, in this instance.

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C. Mel Colchamiro's Rule of "9"

Whether or not to convert Partner's Take-Out Double to a penalty scenario by passing, rather than opting to bid onward

"If the number of cards you hold in the Opponent's suit, added to the number of honors you hold in that suit (including the 10), plus the level of the contract equals 9 or more, "PASS", if fewer than 9, bid something.

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South (You)</u>
1C	Dbl.	P	???
<u>Your Hand:</u> 86, K73, 42, KJT874 (6 + 3 + 1 = 10)			
("Pass")			863, Q732, 842, KJT (3 + 2 + 1 = 6) (Bid
1H)			

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South (You)</u>
3H	Dbl.	P	???
<u>Your Hand:</u> 76, QJT5, K863, 865 (4 + 2 + 3 = 9)			
("Pass")			K642, J853, KQ6, 65 (4 + 1 + 3 = 8) (Bid
3S)			

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South (You)</u>
2H	P	1-NT	P
P	DBL.	2S	P
		P	???
<u>Your Hand:</u> AQT65, 8, J743, 842 (5 + 3 + 2 = 10)			
("Pass")			AQ86, 87, J743, 842 (4 + 2 + 2 = 8) (Bid
3D)			

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South (You)</u>
P	1C	2S	P
P	DBL.	P	???
<u>Your Hand:</u> AT972, 3, QJ953, Q5 (5 + 2 + 2 = 9)			
("Pass")			

D. Mel Colchamiro's Rule of "17"

Whether or not to try for a game-level contract when Partner has opened the bidding with a weak 2-bid

"When Partner has opened with a weak 2-bid, if the number of high-card points in your hand plus the number of cards you hold in Partner's suit equals 17, or more, bid game."

In general, conventional wisdom is that since Opener holds between **5-11 HCP's**, Partner should hold no fewer than **15 HCP's** to even consider the possibility that a game-level contract is possible.

<u>North</u>	<u>South (You)</u>
2S	????

Partner has opened **2S**. Should you, holding the following, try for game?

5, KJ5, KQ7532, AQ7

You hold 15 HCP's. You hold 1-card in Partner's suit.

15 HCP's + 1-card in Partner's bid suit = 16

"Mel's Rule of 17" is, here, **not** satisfied

"Pass!"

K8, AQ84, A832, QJ6

You hold 18 HCP's. You hold 2-cards in Partner's suit.

18 HCP's + 2-cards in Partner's bid suit = 20

"Mel's Rule of 17" is satisfied

Try for Game!

3, KQ98, A653, AQ32 - With 15 HCP and 1 spades (total of 16), "Pass"
AQ32, KQ98. 63, A32 - With 15 HCP and 4 spades (total of 19, bid 4S
QT96, KQJ9, A63, A4 - With 16 HCP and 4 spades (total of 20), bid 2-NT. After
Partner bids 3H, showing the heart feature, bid 4-NT (RKC)
If Roman Key Card Blackwood reveals enough keycards bid 6S, else 5S
QT96, KQJ92, AK3, A - With 19 HCP and 4 spades (total of 23), bid 2-NT.
If Partner bids 3H, bid 4-NT. Missing one control, stop at 6S.

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E. Mel Colchamiro's Rule of "23"

Whether or not a Partnership holds sufficient HCP's strength to either bid 2-NT, in a competitive auction, else "double" the Opponents for penalty

"When the game is in match points and you are in a competitive auction, if, from the bidding you can ascertain, with reasonable, certainty that you and your Partner have a combined 23 HCP's, either you play the contract or they play it 'doubled'."

Do not let the Opponents steal the bid when you know your combined point count. If you know your side has at least **23 HCP** and the Opponents "*have the bid*," you have only two options. "*Double*" or "*Bid on*." To "*Pass*," is ***not*** an option.

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>You</u>
1D	1S	Dbl.	4S
5D	P	P	???

Your hand: AT732, KJ65, AJ, K4 (Double)

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>You</u>
	1S	P	1-NT
2H	P	P	???

Your Hand: A7, K832, 7542, KT7 (Bid 2-NT)

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>You</u>
	1-NT	2S	???

Your Hand: 973, Q83, 542, AT74 (Pass)

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