

- The 2 suited 5 cards major in few words and a bit of history...

Fifty years ago , the debate between natural and artificial bidding systems partisans was still very much alive. Today such debate is definitely buried under the weight of the numerous trophies won by artificial bidders.

Even the strongest American pairs , once the staunchest opponents of artificial bidding systems , adopted it in an irreversible way.

The bidding revolution , was started by the Italians in the 60's. First the " Neapolitan Club " of Professor Chiaradia, then the Manca's " Roman Club " and finally Garozzo and Belladonna " Blue Team Club " , brought a totally new approach to the game together with an astonishing number of international victories.

Not everybody knows though, that the origin of strong Club based bidding systems does not have its roots in Italy but instead in USA.

Actually the great Harold Vanderbilt, who among other things set the rules for Contract Bridge, around 1920 invented an artificial bidding system based on strong Club

Unfortunately for Vanderbilt and unfortunately for our game , his system did not have the time to be divulgated due to the arrival on the scene of the histrionic Ely Culbertson.

Ely Culbertson , a master in communication technique and a great card player , managed to impose to the public his own natural bidding system , selling trillions of copies of his book and making a lot of dollars also with radio programs promoting bridge and most of all Culbertson bridge..

We certainly do not deny Culbertson great merit of making the game of Bridge a very popular one in Usa and not only in USA, but we would like to draw your attention on the fact that without Culbertson , strong Club based bidding systems would be today far more popular than they are.

Italians have been the ones that re-discovered and modernised Vanderbilt Club , making it an instrument of numberless and outstanding triumphs .

We should not forget that following the Blue Team example , more artificial systems have bloomed in Italy , like Benito Bianchi's " The Leighorn Diamond " and " The Italy Diamond " that , although using a strong Diamond instead of a strong Club, have followed the route of their predecessor adding new improvements.

It has then been the turn of C.C.Wei , a Taiwan engineer, to take the relay with his " Precision Club " that has certainly made a step forward. Lately in Norway , Grotheim's " Viking Club " introduced some brilliant intuitions.

The Strong Club based systems family is going on but still the majority of bridge players, intimidated by the complexity of artificial systems, keeps on playing simpler and more or less natural systems like the 5 cards major.

Undoubtedly easier to learn , such systems facilitate newcomers entry into the Bridge world but request later the entry ticket payment in the bidding sequences where , due to approximate information , it is often difficult to reach the best contract.

Such difficulties materialise mostly with strong hands where it is of paramount importance to know exactly partners hand shape and in the weak hands where we have to be able to stop in the most rewarding partial score.

Although I am a staunch supporter of a strong club based system , because it is much easier to be played , thanks to the abundant information supplied, I have been asked to try to transfer into the 5 cards major bidding structure , the guiding principles of " The 2 suited Club ". The main characteristic of this bidding system is the one way communication instead of the two ways communication used by the traditional bidding technique that implies an exchange of information between the two partners.

Information exchange between partners , presents various draw backs.

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The first one, and the most important one, is the fact that both hands will become known to opponents who, thanks to the information received, will have an easy job in organising their defence.

Moreover, traditional bidding technique, takes place in a democratic / anarchic environment where, often, partners role is not clear and most of all there is no agreement about who is going to have the responsibility to decide the final contract. This is often the source of painful misunderstandings.

Information exchange is also expensive in terms of bidding space because we might have to jump bidding steps in order to bid the suit we own.

I have therefore transferred the one way communication principle from the 2 suited Club into the 2 suited 5 Cards Major.

Thanks to this principle, a strong hand or a forcing hand will continue to ask questions to the hand in front and the latter's role will be limited to give disciplined answers.

Interrogation is made using the relay technique that consists in bidding the first available step as an asking relay that will be answered with step responses. At the end of the process, the asking hand, still mysterious to all, has the clear responsibility to decide the final contract.

This technique allows the strong hand to remain unknown to opponents that will, obviously, have more difficulty in organising their defence and, at the same time, saves a lot of bidding space because not a single step is wasted.

Partners roles are very clear: one asks questions, the other one answers and the asker decides the final contract.

Life is also much easier when you have weak hands, because any bid different from a forcing relay is, by definition, passable and costly misunderstandings can be avoided.

Does it look complicated? I assure you that it is far simpler than it might look. The bidding technique used is simply different from the traditional one but once you got it, it is quite simple because it keeps on repeating itself. Questions asked by the forcing hand are always the same, and the same thing can be said about responses. We are using standardised bidding schemes that are always applied with the same criteria. When an expert bridge player uses this bidding technique the first time he has, usually, a negative feeling because he feels bound by the constraints of such automatism. He feels deprived of the possibility to give a personal contribution to the bidding.

After using the technique few times though, expert players do recognise that their personal evaluation ability can, sometimes, go wrong and, most of all, can be misperceived by partner. This bidding technique mechanism instead, tend to minimise the need of personal evaluation thus making life much easier and increasing bidding transparency.

2 suited 5 cards major opening bids

1♣ = 11-18 HCP, promises at least 1♣ and denies any 5 carder

1♦ = 11-18 HCP 5+♦.

1♥ = 11-18 HCP 5+♥.

1♠ = 11-18 HCP 5+♠.

1NT = 15-17 HCP, balanced, denies a 5 cards major.

2♣ = 19+ HCP, any shape

2♦ = 6-11 HCP, minimum 4-4 in majors

2♥ = 6-11 HCP, 6♥ or 5+♥ and any minor 4+ on the side

2♠ = 6-11 HCP, 6♠ or 5+♠ and any minor 4+ on the side

2NT = 6-11 HCP, minors 5-4 or longer.

Balanced hands opening bids:

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- 1♣ with 1NT re-bid = balanced 11-14 HCP
- 1NT = balanced 15-17 HCP
- 1♣ with jump re-bid at 2NT = balanced 18-20 HCP
- 2♣ with NT re-bid = balanced 21+ HCP