

STAYMAN CONVENTION

The Stayman Convention is an artificial response of 2 C to an opening bid of 1NT. It is used to ask if opener has a four-card major suit. With a four-card or longer major suit, opener bids it at the 2 level. Without a four-card major suit, opener artificially rebids 2 D .

In yesterday's **Standard** bidding...when responder uses **Stayman** after opener's notrump bid...he usually had 8-9 HCPs and at least one four-card major...*except when he holds a specific hand*. That exceptional, *specific* hand is one which contains a 5 card major and only 8-9 pts. **Standard** bidding does not allow responder to show a 5 card major and invitational points immediately...(1NT...2H shows 0-7 pts) and (1 NT...3H shows 10+ pts) Therefore responder must invite game by showing the 8-9 points with the Stayman bid...then show possession of a five-card major suit by freely bidding the suit himself at the 2 level.

The ACBL Convention card offers Modern bidders a choice of **Forcing or Non-forcing Stayman...**

FORCING STAYMAN...bidders promise 8+pts and also promise to keep the bidding open to 2NT or 3 of a suit...even if at the minimum point level.

NON-FORCING STAYMAN... bidders do *not* promise any HCPs...The non-forcing Stayman bidder can pass any rebid opener may make...if, in their estimation, the final contract will be improved.

If, on the other hand, responder does continue with a second bid, he then promises 8+ pts. and also promises to keep the bidding open to 2 NT or 3 of a suit... If responder chooses to pass...this pass infers that a 7 card or longer fit has been found and that the new contract has more promise than 1 NT. Magic Stayman or Drop-Dead Stayman are colorful names given to this variation of the convention...*When responder intends to pass any rebid made by opener...the use of Stayman may be done with no values at all*. The classic hand pattern this action is 4-4-5-0 distribution. If opener does show a major suit, a much better contract will have been reached. If on the other hand, opener rebids 2 diamonds... responder can pass knowing that a diamond fit is likely...If opener's shape happens to be 3-3-2-5...the gamble may or may not pay off. However, remember that Standard bidders with five diamonds and 0 pts will still be placing the contract in 2 diamonds...and the strong 1NT hand will even be exposed! If responder chooses to stretch the envelope and make this bid with a 4-4-4-1 or even a 4-3 (3-4) 5-1 hand pattern...he takes a much greater risk, but may well improve the contract... *"Do you feel lucky?"*

One of my very favorite bridge quotes is ... "There are no great bridge players, only great partnerships." Whenever a new (or old) partnership begins to grow and adds more tools...it is imperative to have clear understandings about not only the meanings of conventions...but also about the continuations of the bidding... Partners must discuss their understandings to ensure that the same continuations are played. They should also discuss if these continuations are still in effect if the opponents should intervene in the bidding. Following are some Stayman questions that partnerships should answer and then settle upon their own agreements.

CONTINUATIONS...PARTNERSHIPS MUST DISCUSS

Does the 2C response promise possession of a four card major?

How does opener respond if they hold both major suits? Stayman, wrote the convention at a time when four card majors were the style..therefore he recommended that Spades be bid first. Dorothy Truscott in Bid Better, Play Better, advises that opener bid the better quality suit...The modern trend is to bid four-card suit "Up the line"... therefore a 2 S response denies a heart suit, but a 2 H response does not deny a spade suit. You and your partner must decide...

What does opener rebid when they do not hold a four card major suit? Stayman...40 years ago, had opener rebid 2D with a minimum hand and 2 NT with a maximum hand. *Almost no modern players follow this practice today!* Today, it is almost universal to rebid 2D on all hands which lack a four card major. **It is mandatory to rebid 2D if "Non-Forcing Stayman" is played by the partnership...**