

# CAPPELLETTI CONVENTION

**Cappelletti** is a defensive bidding convention particularly recommended for use against a weak 1NT opening (12-14 HCP) but can also be used against stronger 1NT openings (15-17 HCP)

The High Card Points (HCP) range for Cappelletti overcalls is 9-14 points.

Its strength is that, by allowing overcaller to show a variety of two-suited hands, it maximizes the partnership's chance of finding its best fit quickly.

Over the 1NT opening, the over-calling opponent makes one of the following bids to indicate a one-suited or a two-suited hand:-

- 2♣ declares a one-suited hand (usually 6 or more cards, but some bid with a strong 5 card suit). Partner is expected to respond as follows:
  - 2♦, an artificial bid ('relay'), asking partner to pass if his suit is diamonds or to bid his long suit at the lowest level.
  - very exceptionally, if Advancer has a good 6 card MAJOR suit of his own, then bid 2 of that major in place of the conventional relay bid. (You are over-ruling your partner!).
- 2♦ declares both major suits (with a holding of at least 5-4 or 4-5). Partner corrects to his longest major, bidding at the lowest level.
- 2♥ (or 2♠) declares hearts (or spades) and also an as yet undisclosed minor suit; (at least 5-4 in favour of the major suit). With a tolerance of the major suit, Partner passes. Else Partner bids 2NT inviting Intervener to bid his minor as a last stop;
- 2NT declares both minor suits (at least 5-4 or 4-5). Partner corrects to his longest minor, bidding at the lowest level.

With 15 or more points, a Double for penalties by Intervener is recommended instead of Cappelletti over the 1NT opening; (generally showing values equivalent to a strong 1NT opening, i.e. 15-17 or 16-18 points by partnership agreement).

## Reverse Cappelletti or Multi-Landy

This variant reverses the 2♣ and 2♦ bids above so that for hands with both majors it is the same as the Landy convention. Description:

The power of this convention, rather than making a simple overcall, comes from its focus on showing two suited hands to partner and finding the best partnership fit between those two suits. Remember all 'conventional' bids and 'conventional' responses need to be alerted!

## Intervener Calls

After first seat opens with 1NT, the opposition may wish to indicate a hand worthy of an overcall; (a Cappelletti overcall is most usually made from second seat but if second and third seat pass, then fourth seat can also intervene with Cappelletti. Bearing in mind second seat has already passed, fourth seat would want their holding to be towards the upper end of the Cappelletti points range in order to make such a call).

Over the 1NT opening, the over-calling opponent (known as 'Intervener') makes one of the following artificial bids to indicate a one-suited or a two-suited hand:

- 2♣ declares a one-suited hand (usually 6 or more cards, but some bid with a strong 5 card suit). Partner (known as 'Advancer') after first alerting the bid, is expected to respond as follows:
  - most usually Advancer makes a 'relay' bid, 2♦, an artificial bid, asking partner to pass if his suit is diamonds or to bid his long suit at the lowest level.
  - very exceptionally, If Advancer has a good 6 card MAJOR suit of his own, then bid 2 of that major in place of the conventional relay bid. (You are over-ruling your partner!).

- 2♦ declares both major suits (at least 5-4 or 4-5). Advancer corrects to his longest major, bidding at the lowest level.
- 2♥ (or 2♠) declares hearts (or spades) and also an as yet undisclosed minor suit; (because you are inviting partner to pass with a tolerance for the Major suit, this should better to be at least 5-4 in favour of the major suit). With a tolerance of the major suit, Advancer passes. Else Advancer bids 2NT inviting Intervener to bid his minor as a last stop; before making the switch to the minor it is usually possible to deduce what that minor suit will likely be, since length in a suit in partner's hand is likely to reflect a suit shortage in your own hand!
- 2NT declares both minor suits (at least 5-4 or 4-5). Advancer corrects to his longest minor, bidding at the lowest level.

### Extending the bidding towards game

With a strong hand of his own, (14+ HCP) Advancer may think that the defensive partnership could have the possibility of a game call themselves.

To explore this possibility, any bid by Advancer beyond the natural conclusion of the Intervener calls described above, is invitational to game.

Such a bid shows most importantly the High Card Points range in Advancer's holding (which should be 14+ HCP; - at weakest, Intervener has promised only 9 HCPs, and since bidding is now advancing to the 3-level, 14 HCP in advancer's hand guarantees a minimum joint holding of 23 HCP for the partnership!).

(Note that, before extending the bidding in this way, Advancer should consider that if he makes a 3-level bid in a suit ranking above the 'Cappelletti' suit, then there may be no exit to bidding short of a Game Call anyway; - consider if you will be forcing a de facto game call by advancing the bidding in this way, and what are the probabilities of the partnership holding supporting this?).

The most common and most useful circumstance for this, is when the defender's own game call is likely to be 3NT. Look at the following scenarios:

1. In this scenario, a Cappelletti bidding sequence between Intervener and Advancer of, for example, overcall 2♣-2♦-2♠ shows Advancer that partner has 9-14 HCP in a spades suit.

So, if Advancer's holding is 14+ HCP and with stops in the other suits, (bearing in mind that partner might have shortage in at least one of them so those stops need to be dependable), Advancer might extend the bidding to 2NT asking Intervener 'are you top or bottom of your points range partner?'

With only 9-10 HCP, Intervener either passes, or if his own suit is likely to perform better, signs-off by re-bidding his own suit.

But with 11+ HCP, thus promising a partnership holding of at least 25 HCPs, Intervener advances to a game call of 3NT.

Finally, if Advancer has shortage in the Cappelletti suit then 3NT is passed, but with 3+ card support for partner's Cappelletti MAJOR suit, then sign-off by correcting to a game call in the major suit.

(With the opposition opening 1NT it is unlikely you would want to go beyond 3NT if the Cappelletti suit is a minor).

2. In this scenario, a Cappelletti bid from Intervener of, for example, overcall 2♥ shows Advancer that partner has 9-14 HCP in a hearts suit and also another undisclosed 4 card minor suit.

So, if Advancer is holding 14+ HCP and three cards in hearts, Advancer should extend the bidding to 3♥ asking Intervener 'are you top or bottom of your points range partner?'

With only 9-10 HCP Intervener now assesses the shortage points using, possibly, the method of 'Losing Trick Count' and thus decides whether to pass 3♥ or sign-off with a game call of 4♥.

Of course, with 11+ HCP Intervener doesn't need to think before signing-off with a game call of 4♥.

3. Of course there are many examples like this; I will give one more which is similar to the last one but in a minor suit; in this scenario, a Cappelletti bid from Intervener of, for example, overcall 2♥ shows Advancer that partner has 9-14 HCP in a hearts suit and also another undisclosed 4 card minor suit.

So, with Advancer's holding of 14+ HCP but only two cards in hearts (happens to be merely two small values for example) Advancer bids 2NT inviting Intervener to bid his minor. So, the bidding sequence has now been 2♥-2NT-3♦.

Advancer now has to assess what the joint holding is; Partner likely has stopping values in Hearts, but anyway partner's length assures the Heart suit is safe. Provided that Advancer has stopping values in the other three suits in his own holding (bearing in mind that partner may not have stopping values in Diamonds, merely 4-card length, the only question for Advancer is whether or not the HCP holding for the partnership is strong enough for 3NT.

Unless Advancer has 16 HCP minimum, this becomes a judgement decision (can we afford the risk of 1-off? do I hold 14 HCP? 15 HCP or better?)

Given that Partners range could be as little as 9 or 10, if I hold 14 HCP then the balance of our holding is more likely than not to equal 25+ HCP, and finally, with our holding being this high, we know where most all outstanding cards are i.e. in Opener's hand, so does that possibly help us to place the lead into Opener's hand leading towards a ten/ace perhaps in ours, or to finesse?

Much to consider but so many likely situations that support a 3NT call for our partnership!!