

Watson Bridge Index

By Warren Watson

Kootenay Jewel Bridge Club

Warren.T.Watson@gmail.com

<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/bridge-index.htm>

Lebensohl

Last revised November 8, 2020

<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaBidding/Lebensohl.pdf>

There are three common cases of Lebensohl:

1. Interference over 1NT
2. Weak Two Doubled
3. Over a Reverse

Lebensohl, for all three cases, consists of a relay of 2NT demanding partner bid 3♣. The relay cannot be broken. Now the bids with the relay and the bids without the relay give a comprehensive bidding system described below. There are other circumstances Lebensohl can be used, but these three are the important ones.

1. Interference over 1NT

See *Two Over One Fourth Edition* or *Simply 2/1* available on Amazon by Warren Watson

Players strive to open 1NT as much as possible. They make excuses to open 1NT not excuses to refrain from doing so. It makes the bidding easier and the opening lead harder.

As a result, the opponents should compete as much as it is safe to do so. A system like DONT, modified DONT or Cansino can be used. To compete in the direct seat, the hand is best two suited or strongly one suited. Playability is a key not high card points. A hand, that needs several entries from a possibly broke partner, is best defending. In the balancing seat, shortness, not points, is needed. Interference is governed by tricks, not points.

A nifty form of interference is taking the opponents transfer as a three-suited takeout. This was in the *Bridge Bulletin* in the 1990s.

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♦	2♥	

If Opponents Double

- Stayman and transfers are on, just ignore the double
- Standard or Runout methods
 - Standard:
 - Redouble is business and you are sure partner can make 1NT
 - Pass means you can do nothing
 - Runout Method:
 - Redouble asks partner to bid 2♣ which will be passed or corrected to 2♦
 - Pass asks partner to redouble if his RHO passes the double
 - You can pass the redouble for business or bid four card suits up the line. Partner will pass with 3 or more cards or bid his four-card suit up the line. You will pass with 3 or more cards in this suit or continue bidding four-card suits up the line.

If Opponents Bid 2♣ (2♣ is artificial)

- Systems are on
- Double is Stayman (stolen bid)
- This is the only stolen bid to ever be used because the threat of the penalty double keeps the opponents in line
- For simplicity, one can play that this applies over all 2♣ bids whether 2♣ shows clubs or is artificial
 - To penalize 2♣, a player must pass and rely on the 1NT opener to reopen the bidding with a double. He must not even consider passing if he has nothing in clubs.
- Texas Transfers are always on over 3♣ and lower which keeps the cuebid available.

If Opponents Bid 2♣ meaning clubs or Bid 2♦ or higher

- Double is penalty
 - Cuebid is Game Forcing Stayman without a stopper (fast denies slow shows)
 - Because of the interference one loses invitational Stayman
 - Bite the bullet and make a game force with a good 9 or more
 - 2 level is natural and to play
 - 3 level is game forcing
 - 3NT is enough for game and no stopper (fast denies slow shows)
 - 2NT is the Lebensohl relay to 3♣
- Texas Transfers are always on over 3♣ and lower which keeps the cuebid available.

The Relay

W	N	E	S		W	N	E	S
			1NT				1♥	1NT
2♥	2NT	P	3♣		2♦	2NT	P	3♣
P	??				P	??		

2NT is the Lebensohl relay to 3♣. Going through the relay shows one thing, and skipping the relay shows another.

- Cuebidding (Game forcing Stayman) and bidding 3NT
 - Going through the relay shows a stopper.
 - Fast (without the relay) denies a stopper.
- If two cuebids are available, one of the following applies.
 - The lower cuebid is invitational Stayman, and the higher cuebid is game forcing Stayman.
 - The cuebid is a stopped suit asking partner to further describe his hand.

- Bidding a suit
 - Going through the relay is weak, to play
 - If the suit is available at the two-level, going through the relay is invitational.
 - Without the relay
 - The two-level is to play
 - The three-level is game forcing with a five-card suit.

Delayed Lebensohl

When the bid is artificial like the double of DONT or 2♣ of Cappelletti, a player can pass, and then Lebensohl is applied when the suit is known. Cappelletti is below left, and DONT is below right.

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
			1NT				1NT
2♣	P	2♦	P	dbl	P	2♣	P
2♠	2NT	P	3♣	2♠	2NT	P	3♣
P	3NT	all pass		P	3NT	all pass	

Lebensohl over Three-Level Interference

- Double is negative
- 3NT shows a stopper
- The cuebid is Stayman or slam interest

DONT Rescues

Two-Level minor runout

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
			1NT				1NT
dbl	rdl	P	2♣	dbl	P	P	rdl
all pass				P	2♦	all pass	

A redouble asks partner to bid 2♣ for a minor runout. The rest of the system like Stayman and transfers are on.

W	N	E	S
			1NT
dbl	P	P	rdl
P	??		

A pass of the double asks the 1NT opener to redouble. North passes for business. It is much better playing 1NTxx than it is playing 2NT or 3NT undoubled.

If he bids a suit, he is showing the lower suit of a two-suited weak hand (four-four or better) trying to rescue his partner. Partner bids like in DONT. With only two cards or fewer, the next step asks for the second suit.

Lebensohl and Jacoby

W	N	E	S
			1NT
2♠	2NT	P	3♣
	3♣	P	3♦
	3♦	P	3♥
	3♥	P	3♠

In addition to the relay of 2NT to 3♣, the bids at the three level can be transfers¹. A transfer to the opponent's suit is Stayman without a stopper. Bidding 2NT as a transfer to 3♣ and then a cuebid is Stayman with a stopper. Transferring and then cuebidding shows the suit and a stopper if there is bidding room.

Some people play that a transfer to a major is invitational, so partner must bid game with three card support and a maximum. The transfers to a minor and the cuebid are game forcing.

¹ Andersen, Ron, The Lebensohl Convention Complete in Contract Bridge. Port Chester, New York: Barclay Bridge Supplies, Inc, 1987, pages 53 to 54.

Negative Doubles

Any double at both the two and three levels show shortness in the opponent's suit and support for the unbid suits. It shows enough to compete (5+) and the rebid clarifies the range.

Double followed by a pass shows 5-7

Double followed by 2NT or a simple raise shows 8-9

Double followed by bidding game or making a cuebid shows 10+

Texas Transfers are always on over 3♣ and lower which keeps the cuebid available.

Double of 2♣ is Stayman

Two-level is to play

Three-level is game forcing

Cuebid is game forcing Stayman

Examples:

Directly bidding 3NT or a cuebid shows no stopper (fast denies)

W	N	E	S
1NT	2♥	3NT	no stopper (fast denies a stopper)
1NT	2♥	3♥	4 spades no stopper

Bidding notrump or a cuebid after 2NT relays to 3♣ shows a stopper

W	N	E	S
1NT	2♥	2NT	P
3♣	P	3NT	no 4 spades, and a stopper

What happens when one's side has no stoppers?

Bid four card suits up the line and partner passes with three or more cards or bids his next higher four card suit.

The two-level is to play and the three-level directly is forcing

W	N	E	S
1NT	2♥	2♠	to play, 5+ ♠'s
1NT	2♥	3♠	forcing, 5+ ♠'s

1NT	2♥	3♦	forcing
-----	----	----	---------

1NT	2♥	2NT	P
3♣	P	3♦	to play

1NT	2♥	2NT	P
3♣	P	P	also to play

1NT	2♥	2NT	P
3♣	P	3♠	invitational

2. Weak Two Doubled

W	N	E	S
2♥	Dbl	P	2NT

2NT is a relay to 3♣ and shows 0 to 7 HCP's

2 level is also 0 to 7 HCP's

3 Level directly is 8+ HCP's

Examples:

W	N	E	S
2♥	Dbl	P	2NT
P	3♣	P	3♦ 4 or more ♦'s with 0-7 HCP's

W	N	E	S
2♦	Dbl	P	2♠ 4 or more ♠'s with 0-7 HCP's

W	N	E	S
2♥	Dbl	P	2NT
P	3♣	P	3♠ Not a bid

W	N	E	S
2♠	Dbl	P	2NT
P	3♣	P	3♥ 4 or more ♥'s with 0-7 HCP's

Using Lebensohl over a weak two doubled, the cuebid can have two different meanings.

W	N	E	S	
2♥	dbl	P	2NT	
P	3♣	P	3♥	Western Cuebid

W	N	E	S	
2♥	dbl	P	3NT	Two ♥ stoppers

W	N	E	S	
2♥	dbl	P	3♥	Cuebid in support of ♠s

The system also applies when a simple raise of 6 to 9 has been doubled.

3. After a Reverse

W	N	E	S	
1♣	P	1♠	P	
2♥	P	2NT	P	a relay to 3♣
3♣				

The relay is the only bid that shows a desire to play below game. All bids other than 2NT and the two-level are game forcing.

W	N	E	S	
1♣	P	1♠	P	
2♥	P	2NT	P	a relay to 3♣
3♣				

W	N	E	S	
1♣	P	1♠	P	
2♦	P	2♥		FSF
		2♠		Forcing one round

W	N	E	S	
1♣	P	1♥	P	
1♠	P	2♥	P	
2♠	P	2NT	P	a relay to 3♣
3♣	all pass			

Reference

Andersen, Ron, *The Lebensohl Convention Complete in Contract Bridge*. Port Chester, New York: Barclay Bridge Supplies, Inc, 1987.