

## The Courtship of Miss No Trump



A tongue-in-cheek story to help beginners learn the responses to a 1NT opening bid.

**Miss No Trump** was an elusive rarity and, when she appeared, she was always on the lookout for a partner. She was a beauty, a *femme fatale*, and men enthusiastically sought her hand! The moment she announced her name, it brought the table to attention. She was no ordinary lady! With **15-17 points and a balanced shape**, she was a most desirable partner and had plenty of suitors.

Courters **without a 5-card major and holding fewer than 8 points** were no match for Miss No Trump. They had no option but to **pass** her by. She wasted no time on them. No chumps for Miss No Trump!

However, she was especially charmed by two particular gentlemen: Mr. Stayman and Mr. Jacoby Transfer. Their advances were welcome and she enjoyed flirting with them! Both had a secret language of codes for communicating with her which she found quite intriguing. Not only that but, in their pursuit for the perfect contract, she appreciated the fact that they were very careful to keep her well-endowed hand out of sight from the curious opponents.

**Mr. Stayman** was very keen and known to court her many times. Hearing his predictable pick-up line of “**2♣**,” she would sigh and think to herself, “Here we go again!” Stayman only ever wanted to know just one thing — did she have a 4-card major that matched his own? She was willing to entertain him since this meant he had **at least 8 points and a 4-card major**.

**If she had a 4-card major in hand**, she would answer “**2♥**” to show she had 4 hearts (and possibly 4 spades) or “**2♠**” to show 4 spades (and denying 4 hearts). If he found an 8-card fit, Stayman would decide how high to raise the stakes. With 8-9 points, he would raise to “**3♥**” or “**3♠**” leaving her to pass or bring them to game. With 10+ points, game was guaranteed, so he would seal the contract at **4♥** or **4♠**!

Without the major-suit fit, Stayman would be obliged to answer “2NT” with 8-9 points and “3NT” with 10+ points. It was Stayman’s responsibility to do the calculations because he knew more about her assets than she did about his.

From his response back to NT, she also gleaned some extra information. Having asked for a 4-card major, he must have at least one of his own. Naturally, if her answer was “**2♥**” and he responded in NT, then he must have 4 spades or he wouldn’t have asked! So she had another option if she had 4 cards in both majors — she could now bid spades with complete confidence. Their complete trust in each other made them an extraordinary and clever duo!

**Without any 4-card major at all**, she must truthfully answer “**2♦**.” In this case, he would now bid 2NT with 8-9 points or 3NT with 10+. Stayman was flexible and knew when and how to appease this lady. He was willing to do whatever he needed to make their partnership work — he was the captain “steering this ship” but ultimately allowing her some control, too.

So her answers to Stayman's "2♣" proposition were simply "2♥" or "2♠" to show her 4-card major and "2♦" to indicate that she had none.

Stayman's rival, **Mr. Jacoby Transfer**, would occasionally appear on the scene. He was quite a different character compared to Stayman! Jacoby did not *ask* Miss No Trump for anything — he *told* her exactly what to do! She dared not disobey his instructions! She must do exactly what he commanded, no questions asked. Her future was in his hand.

Though Jacoby could have as few as 0 points, he always flaunted his **5-card major**.

It's not easy for a woman of her eminence to be told what to do, but whatever Jacoby may lack in strength, he made up for in good manners. Whenever he could, he would pass the contract to her and let her play the hand, keeping her valuable assets hidden while his weaknesses would be displayed on the table for everyone to see! He could be bossy to start, but he always had her best interests in mind.

If Jacoby ordered "2♦," this meant that he had **5 hearts** or more. She must immediately say "Transfer" and then respond "2♥" on her turn to bid. If he commanded "2♥," he was guaranteeing at least **5 spades**. With that, she was forced say "Transfer" and then bid "2♠." Once she followed his command, he would make his next move — bid 2NT with 8-9 points and 3NT with 10+ points. With that added information, she had the option to leave the contract in NT or change it back to his major. Unfortunately, if he had fewer than 8 points, he could not give her any options at all. In that case, she was stuck with his major suit whether she liked it or not, but most of the time, she knew it would be the most advantageous option for the two of them.

She had one other response to give Jacoby after his initial command — this pleased him very much on the rare occasions when it happened. She could "**super-accept**" his offer. With **4 cards in his suit and her maximum 17 points**, she would immediately jump to the **3-level**. Though difficult, Jacoby must contain his excitement and be careful to press to game only when the strength of his hand warranted an increase to game level.

So which of these two gentlemen would be her choice for the night? Was it the courteous Mr. Stayman with his polite way of propositioning her or the demanding Mr. Jacoby Transfer who always bossed her around? It turns out that Miss No Trump was one of the biggest two-timers ever — sometimes she picked Stayman and, other times, it was Jacoby she preferred. To their dismay, she used her wily whims to shuffle them around like a flimsy deck of cards!

Summary of Responses to 1NT opening bid:

Fewer than 8 points, no 5-card major = Pass

Any number of points (even 0) with a 5-card major = use Jacoby Transfer

At least 8 points and a 4-card major = use Stayman