

# NVBA Unit Game 199ers Lesson

Aug. 02, 2007

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## Lebensohl (part one)

This convention is used in a variety of situations. You need to know the two basic ones: 1) When the opponents interfere over our 1NT opening, and 2) after we double an opponent's weak two opening.

Here's how it works. Taking as an example the first situation, let's say the bidding goes:

ME	East	YOU	West
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1NT	2H	<b>2NT</b>	p
<b>3C</b>	...		

Your 2NT bid here is **artificial, forcing (I must alert it), and requires me to bid 3C** on any holding. In other words, **2NT** is a **relay** to 3C. (C.f. Stayman 2C, which is a relay to 2D, unless Opener had a 4-card major.)

Your goal with this exchange is to play at the part-score-level. If your suit is clubs, you pass 3C. Otherwise you bid your suit, and partner is expected to pass. (Occasionally he may elect to bid again; see below.)

Imagine, in the above auction, that you have one of these three hands:

♠ K J 8 5 3	♥ Q 7	♦ 8 6 5	♣ 6 3 2
♠ K J 8 5 3	♥ Q 7	♦ 8 6 5	♣ K 3 2
♠ K J 8 5 3	♥ A 7	♦ 8 6 5	♣ K 3 2

In the first case, you'd like to bid 2S and play it there, if possible. That is, you don't want partner to bid again. In the second case, you'd like to invite game showing your spade suit. In the third case, you want to force game.

Using standard bidding, all you can do with these hands is rely on guesswork. Except for the game-forcing jump, you have no way of differentiating between them. But with Lebensohl, you can tell partner exactly which of these three you have. Here's how:

- With the weak hand, bid 2S. Pard will know you're weak and won't continue.
- With the invitationsl hand, bid 2NT Lebensohl and take Pard's 3C relay out to 3S. Pard will know you're inviting game, and will either pass with a minimum, or if stronger he will bid 3NT with with a doubleton spade, or 4S with good support.
- With game-going values, bid 3S straightaway (i.e. without the Lebensohl exchange). This bid forces to game.

**IMPORTANT!** Playing Lebensohl after 1NT means changing our customary style.

- We don't use the "stolen" double. Playing Lebensohl, when the enemy overcalls our 1NT openings, a double by Opener's partner is negative, for takeout. Eight HCP or so, and no 5-card suit. This comes up frequently. It's a much more effective use for the double than treating it as "stolen."
- We don't use transfers after the opponents overcall in a suit. Once they come into the auction, transfers are no longer of much use.
- If they interfere with a double or a 2C overcall, conventional or otherwise, ignore it and use your negative double (or redouble) to show values and no biddable suit. With a suit, use Lebensohl, as detailed here, to let Pard know what sort of hand you have.

With Lebensohl, if your suit ranks lower than Overcaller's (note: in the above example that was not the case), there are only two ways to differentiate your hand. As before, when you bid three of your suit outright, not via Lebensohl, it's a game force. But in this situation you no longer have a way of inviting game. With competitive values (i.e. when you want Pard to pass), or

when you can't force game, you have to show your suit starting with Lebensohl 2NT. When you do, Pard may take a chance on game in your suit, if he has extra strength and a good fit.

Examples:

ME	East	YOU	West	
--	----	---	----	
1NT	2S	2NT	p	
3C	p	3D	...	I know you're only competing, and I probably won't bid again.

ME	East	YOU	West	
--	----	---	----	
1NT	2S	3D	...	I'm forced to bid game.

There you have the basics. Some refinements can be added, once you and your Partner have mastered the foregoing

\* \* With game going values, after interference over 1NT, you have **two ways to bid 3NT**.

- Bid 3NT straightaway, with no stopper in the overcaller's suit. If opener also has none, your bid warns him to bail out in a suit.
- Bid 2NT Lebensohl, and then 3NT over Pard's 3C relay. That promises a stopper. This approach follows the principle "fast denies; slow shows."

\* \* With game going values, after interference over 1NT, you have **two ways to bid Stayman**.

- Cue bid the overcaller's suit. This shows support for the unbid majors **and no stopper** in the enemy suit.
- Bid 2NT Lebensohl, and then cue bid the enemy suit over Pard's 3C relay. That's Stayman, **with** a stopper. This also is "fast denies; slow shows."

**QUIZ.** Pard opens 1NT and your RHO overcalls 2S. How do you bid these hands?

1. ♠ Q 5 3      ♥ 9 7 6      ♦ K 6 5 2      ♣ Q 3 2
2. ♠ 5 3      ♥ K Q 9 7 6      ♦ 6 5 2      ♣ Q 3 2
3. ♠ 5 3      ♥ K Q 9 7 6      ♦ A 5 2      ♣ Q 3 2
4. ♠ J 5 3      ♥ A 7 6      ♦ K 6 5 2      ♣ K 3 2
5. ♠ A 5      ♥ J 10 9 6      ♦ K 6 5 2      ♣ K 3 2

On hand one, you want to compete, but have no suit to bid. Use your negative double.

On hand two, you want to compete at a heart part-score. Bid 2NT Lebensohl, and then 3H over the 3C relay. Pard will pass, unless max with a fit.

On hand three, bid 3H at your first turn. That's a game force. Pard will bid 3NT with a doubleton heart, or 4H with a fit.

On hand four, bid 3NT at your first turn, warning Pard that you have no spade stopper. (If you had one, you'd go through the Lebensohl routine first.)

On five, bid 2NT Lebensohl. Over Pard's 3C relay, cue bid 3S. This is Stayman, promising a spade stopper, and forcing game.

That's the end of Part One. Lebensohl Part Two will cover the convention's use after we double a weak-two opening.