

The AGIUS Convention

Usage: The Agius Convention is used to help quantify the quality of a hand when the partnership uses the LTC (Losing Trick Count) in evaluating hands

It is used in the following situations:

1. Weak 2s:

Approach: The partner of the OPENER of a Weak 2 (e.g. 2♥) bids 2NT. The 2NT asks OPENER to define the number of Losing Tricks in his hand:

The responses by OPENER are:

3♣	– 9 losing tricks	e.g. ♠ J97	♥ QJ10976	♦ 109	♣ 97
3♦	– 8 losing tricks	e.g. ♠ 1093	♥ K98753	♦ 97	♣ K9
3♥	– 7 losing tricks	e.g. ♠ 962	♥ QJ10976	♦ K9	♣ A7
3♠	– 6 losing tricks	e.g. ♠ 1093	♥ KQ8753	♦ KQ	♣ 86

3NT AKQ of Hearts

Based on these responses the RESPONDER can decide to convert to 3♥ (which OPENER passes) or 4♥ or investigates slam.

Discussion: RESPONDER must have no more than 6 losing tricks, as a response of 3♣ commits the partnership to a 3♥ contract as a minimum, and if RESPONDER had 7 or 8 losers than they are in for losing the contract.

The responses to the 2NT reply; *which must be alerted*, are so simple that it is easy to remember, unlike say the OGUST convention where many forget the meaning of each of the steps.

The second bid by RESPONDER is final and the OPENER has no further role to play unless slam investigation is started.

Even if ops interfere it can be useful;

Op	op1	Res	op2
2♥	P	2NT	3♠

(Since OPENER knows that p has 6 losers and H interest, OPENER can decide, whether to pass, X ops, or go to 4♥)

2. 1NT Opener:

This is used where transfers are employed and the transferor is unsure about the quality of the OPENER's hand.

Approach: The partner of the OPENER of 1NT transfers and after the transfer, bids 2NT. The 2NT asks OPENER to define the number of Losing Tricks in his hand.

The responses by OPENER, for weak NT (12-14) are:

- 3♣ – 9 losing tricks
- 3♦ – 8 losing tricks
- 3♥ – 7 losing tricks; plus 2 cards of the trump suit
- 3♠ – 6 losing tricks; plus 2 cards of the trump suit
- 3NT AKQ of Hearts

Based on these responses the RESPONDER can decide to convert to 3 or 4 of the trumps suit or investigate slam.

Discussion:

Normal transfers are not in any way impeded. So 1NT / 2♦ / 2♥ / pass, is normal. Equally 1NT / 2♦ / 2♥ / 3NT, is normal in that OPENER can elect to remain in NT or convert to 4H.

Equally, if RESPONDER has 6♥ cards, he can bid directly 4♥ if he has the points to go to game, as OPENER guarantees 2♥ cards.

RESPONDER must have no more than 6 losing tricks, as a response of 3♣ commits the partnership to a 3 level contract as a minimum, and if RESPONDER had 7 or 8 losers than they are in for losing the contract.

Moreover there is always a good probability that OPENER may only have 2 of the trump suit. Therefore apart from having no more than 6 losers, RESPONDER should have at least 10 points so that the partnership can reasonably expect to make a contract in 3 of the trump suit with only 24 points.

The following are some examples:

1. Op Res
1NT 2♦
2♥ 2NT
3♣ 3♥
pass (OPENER must pass as RESPONDER is in charge)

2. Op Res
1NT 2♦
2♥ 2NT
3♥ 3NT
(OPENER must pass as RESPONDER is in charge, and knowing that OPENER HAS ONLY 2 cards in Hearts elects for the NT contract)

3. Op Res
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 2NT
 3♠ 3NT

(OPENER knows that RESPONDER has 5 cards in Hearts, but that they are not very good, so OPENER can elect to remain in 3NT or go to 4♥)

4. Op Res
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 2NT
 3♣ 4♥

(OPENER must pass as RESPONDER is in charge)

5. Op Res
 1NT 2♦
 2♥ 2NT
 3♣ 4NT

(OPENER responds to the partnership's agreed ace asking system, as RESPONDER feels slam is probably on)

6. Even if ops interfere it can be useful:

- | Op | op1 | Res | op2 |
|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1N | P | 2♦ | P |
| 2♥ | P | 2NT | 3♠ |

(Since OPENER knows that p has 6 losers and 5 Hearts, OPENER can decide whether to pass, X ops, go to 3NT, or go to 4♥)

In transfers the 2NT is not normally used by RESPONDER after a transfer and hence utilizes a vacant step.

The procedure can be adopted for strong NT OPENER with the number of losers reduced by 1 for each step.