



## The Unusual NT

*Courtesy of Stan and Louise Dorn*

This is a convention to show two suited hands with one bid. Confusion will arise unless both partners realize when a no-trump overcall is unusual, and when it shows a legitimate no-trump hand. (A balanced hand with 15 1/2 to 18 points.)

First we will analyze no-trump overcalls by a passed hand.

South	West	North	East
pass	pass	pass	1H
1NT			

No, South has not lost his marbles; No, South did not overlook 2 Aces. South has the lower unbid suits and they are at least 5-5. A typical hand might be Kx x A8765 QJ876 and he wants to prepare a place to compete.

South should NOT have a balanced hand of 13 or fewer points which he or she passed, unless he enjoys being beat on and getting zeros.

NOTICE that in the example the two lower suits were promised. This is always the case unless opponents have bid two suits. In that case the unusual no-trump is for the two unbid suits. I have seen this abused many times. ONE BID CANNOT MEAN TWO THINGS.

What if the unusual no-trump bid is made over a minor?

Example:	Pass	Pass	Pass	1D
1NT				

Partner is showing the two lower-ranking unbid suits. A possible hand might be: x KQxxx xx Axxxx  
 ANY DIRECT OVERCALL OF ONE OR TWO NO-TRUMP BY A -PASSED- HAND IS UNUSUAL AND SHOWS THE TWO LOWER RANKING BID SUITS. THE DISTRIBUTION WILL ALMOST ALWAYS BE 5-5 OR 6-5. (EXCEPT OVER WEAK TWO-BIDS) which will be clarified later.

Another way of stating this is the unusual no-trump over a major suit shows both minors; the unusual no-trump over a minor suit always shows hearts and the other minor. (A GOOD MEMORY ASSISTOR IS THAT PARTNER CAN NEVER BE ASKING FOR SPADES UNLESS TWO SUITS SUCH AS HEARTS AND CLUBS HAVE BEEN BID BY OPPONENTS.)

NOTICE THAT A NO-TRUMP CALL BY A PASSED HAND IS UNUSUAL ONLY IF MADE IN THE DIRECT SEAT. THIS IS BECAUSE THERE IS A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN UNUSUAL NO-TRUMP AND A BALANCING NO-TRUMP BY A PASSED HAND.

Picture this bidding sequence:

South	West	North	East
Pass	1H	Pass	Pass
1NT			

South has not made a DIRECT overcall of 1NT but rather a reopening bid of 1NT. This is called a balancing NO TRUMP, since if South passes, the bidding will die. Reopening bids are NEVER unusual and when made by a passed hand promises 10-12 high card points and at least one stopper in the opponents bid suit. The range for a non passed hand is 11-15 points.

In the above bidding sequence, South might have:

Axx KJx QJxx J10x

If South had something like Kx x Q10987 AJxxx, HE MUST REOPEN WITH 2NT. REOPENING BIDS OF 2NT BY A PASSED HAND ARE UNUSUAL AND SHOW THE TWO LOWER UNBID SUITS.

#### NO-TRUMP OVERCALLS BY AN UNPASSED HAND

The most common is 1H by East overcalled with 1NT by South. There is certainly nothing unusual about this--South has an opening 1NT bid 15-18 H.C.P. with at least one stopper in openers suit. Just because East opened the bidding does not mean that South should be shut out. BRIDGE IS A BIDDERS GAME AND IT DOES NOT PAY TO BE TIMID.

Direct overcall of 2NT Example: 1D - 2NT is unusual showing the same type of hand as before, the two lower ranking suits, in this case Hearts and Clubs.

WITH A HAND THAT WAS A 2NT OPENING, (20-21) (22-24) (depending on your range) ONE WOULD DOUBLE FIRST AND THEN BID NO-TRUMP.

RESPONDING TO THE UNUSUAL NO-TRUMP.

Rather than trying to memorize a list of rules on responding, try to visualize partners hand. You should see two long suits and you know what they are. If you have a good fit for one of these suits and as much as an Ace outside, you are close to game if partner is an unpassed hand.

THE UNUSUAL NO TRUMP BIDDER (unless a passed hand) SHOULD NOT USE THE BID LIGHTLY.

IN CLOSING: A DIRECT OVERCALL OF 2NT OVER A WEAK TWO BID (2 -2 -2 ) SHOWS AN OPENING 1NT (15 1/2 to 18 POINTS) BY AN UNPASSED HAND. IF A PASSED HAND BIDS 2NT IT IS OF COURSE UNUSUAL.

WATCH YOUR VULNERBILITY WITH THIS BID/ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT GUIDES.