



ALERT OF TWO CLUBS OPENING BID

by Al Edwards
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The announcement of the January 2021 change in the ACBL Alert Procedure includes this note:

"An opening 2 Club bid that does not meet the definition of **Very Strong** requires an Alert. (This tends to apply to partnerships who agree to open 2 Clubs on hands with good playing strength, but many fewer high cards than normal. See the Convention Chart for the exact definition to see if it applies to you.)"

Before the change, those who open 2C showing either 22 HCP or 8.5 tricks (a common agreement) just needed to have that noted on their convention card.

The "**Very Strong**" definition in the Convention Charts allows for hands with fewer High Card Points combined with playing tricks from a long strong suit.

Very Strong: a hand that contains:

1. at least 20 HCP; or
2. at least 14 HCP and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands; or
3. at least 5 Control Points (A=2, K=1) and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.

Note that this **Very Strong** definition would require 9 tricks in a Major, 10 in a minor - not 8.5. These do not need to be quick tricks; just probable tricks - i.e. tricks that will be there if suits break normally. For example, 11 spades to the QJT have no quick tricks but 9 sure tricks with spades as trump, 10 if the two missing cards break normally so A & K drop on same trick or one is in partner's hand. Note a hand with all 13 spades would fail the **Very Strong** test – 13 tricks, but too few HCPs or Control Points.

These are **Very Strong** hands:

S – Q6 H – AKQJ D – AQ6 C – A763 (22 HCP)

S – A5 H – KQJT762 D – AKJ C – 5 (18 HCP or 6 CP, 9 tricks in spades)

In a game covered by the Basic or Basic Plus convention Charts (LBC's games up to 300MPs), the relevant rule is quite restrictive; it allows an Artificial 2C bid that is **Very Strong** (as defined above). An agreement to open 2C with a hand with lots of playing tricks that does not meet the

Very Strong definition is prohibited. "If an Agreement would be disallowed unless it satisfies a specific High Card Point or shape requirement, a player may not use judgment to include hands with fewer HCPs or a different shape."

In a game covered by the Open or Open+ Charts, the rules give more flexibility. Any opening bid that promises a **Very Strong** Hand is allowed. An agreement to open an Artificial 2 Clubs (strong, artificial and forcing) with 22 points or 8.5 tricks is permitted, but must be alerted if the agreement might open 2 Clubs with a hand that would not satisfy the **Very Strong** definition. It must also be noted on the players' convention cards.

Under all ACBL Convention Charts, psyching an Artificial Opening Bid is prohibited.

At a F2F table, if the agreement allows opening with 8.5 tricks, partner would say "Alert" when the 2 Club opening bid was made. If asked to explain, "22 points or 8.5 tricks" would be a reasonable explanation.

At a BBO table, the 2 Club bidder would alert with a simple explanation like "22 HCP or 8.5 tricks" on all opening 2 Clubs bids. "**Very Strong or Strong**" is another possible alert, depending on your agreement.

There is no automatic penalty for a failure to alert; score adjustment would happen only if the opponents were damaged as a direct result.

You should be alerting if you would open this hand with a strong artificial forcing 2 Clubs:

S - KQJ8762 H - A7 D – AQ C - 54

- 16 HCP; 5 control points; 8 tricks if suits break evenly and have to lead diamonds from hand (six spades and two As) - so two tricks short of game. Fails the **Very Strong** test by one trick. (If DK is onside and get a D lead or can get to dummy, that would be the ninth trick; so reasonable to open 2C with the 8.5 tricks agreement.) This hand meets the **Strong** criteria.

Strong: a hand that contains:

1. at least 15 HCP; or
2. at least 14 HCP and meets the "Rule of 24" {i.e., HCP + number of cards in two longest suits;}; or
3. at least 5 Control Points (A=2, K=1) and is within one trick of game assuming suits break evenly among the other hands.

This new Alert requirement is not obvious on first reading of the Jan. 1, 2021 Alert Procedure [AlertProcedures2.pdf \(acbl.org\)](#)

The text states "Alert all Artificial Bids except as listed below;" and then in the list below "Do Not Alert a **Very Strong** Artificial 2 Club Opening Bid." The implication is that an Alert is required if the 2 Club opener may or may not meet the **Very Strong** definition - which is in the Convention Charts, not in the Alert Procedures.

In a related change – a **response of 2 Diamonds** to a strong Artificial 2 Clubs Opening Bid is no longer alertable, regardless of its meaning. Opponents may, of course, ask for an explanation. A response of 2 Hearts however is alertable unless it shows hearts.