

Illegal Switches

[Pete Matthews](#) – July 18, 2009

In North America, the tournament player's bidding repertoire is largely determined by the ACBL General Convention Chart (GCC). In most tournament events, only GCC-legal conventions are permitted. Even regular partnerships are reluctant to change their methods depending upon the event, so few pairs knowingly stray from the GCC.

The GCC has achieved the major goal of stabilizing bidding to make playing more comfortable for the main customer base of the ACBL, older players who took up the game later in life. However, it stifles innovation, even minor innovation. Four to five decades ago, Jacoby transfers were esoteric; now they are taught in beginner classes. The general acceptance of this excellent convention was possible only because everyone has been permitted to actually play it over all those years. Bridge in North America needs a way to approve use of specific innovations outside the bounds of the current GCC, for use in all but the most limited events.

In this article, I present several minor switches of the meanings of bids that improve existing bidding methods:

- Modified Brozel (Pete-zel)
- Modified Cappelletti
- Modified NAMYATS
- The Kaplan Interchange

Only the first of these is GCC-legal.

Pete-zel (Modified Brozel)

Brozel is a defense to the opponent's 1NT opening, an ancestor of DONT (Disturb Opponents NoTrump).

	DON'T	Brozel	Pete-zel
Double	Single suited hand; advancer normally bids 2♣ (pass or correct)	Penalty with a long suit; with a bad hand, advancer may bid 2♣ (pass or correct)	Single suited hand; advancer normally bids 2♣ (pass or correct)
2♣	Clubs and a higher suit	Clubs and hearts	Clubs and a major, advancer's 2♦ (or redouble) asks
2♦	Diamonds and a higher suit	Diamonds and hearts	Diamonds and hearts
	Hearts and spades	Hearts and spades	Hearts and spades
2♠	Spades	Spades and a minor; advancer's 2NT (or redouble) asks	Spades and diamonds
2NT		Clubs and Diamonds	Clubs and Diamonds

Marty Bergen recommended aggressive use of DONT, which proved both popular and effective, while Brozel was historically used with good hands. Played aggressively, my modified Brozel, dubbed Pete-zel, is superior to DONT. Using any of these methods, the double is used with a single-suited hand. The differences are in the two-suited overcalls:

- In DONT, a bid in a suit shows that suit and a higher ranking suit.
- Brozel suit bids revolve around the heart suit.
- In Pete-zel, the meaning of the ambiguous 2♠ bid of Brozel is narrowed, and the cheaper 2♣ bid is expanded, reducing the likelihood and risks of being driven to the 3-level.

Modified Cappelletti

For pairs who want to play penalty doubles of 1NT, Cappelletti (also called Hamilton or Pottage) is a common system. This modification, recommended to me by David Metcalf, is a substantial improvement:

	Cappelletti	Modified Cappelletti
Double	Penalty	Penalty
2♣	Single suited hand, advancer bids 2♦ (pass or correct)	Hearts and spades; with equal length, advancer bids 2♦ for overcaller to choose
2♦	Hearts and spades	Single suited hand, advancer bids 2♥ (pass or correct)
2♥	Hearts (at least 5) and a minor, 2NT asks	Hearts (at least 5) and a minor, 2NT asks
2♠	Spades (at least 5) and a minor, 2NT asks	Spades (at least 5) and a minor, 2NT asks
2NT	Clubs and Diamonds	Clubs and Diamonds

Switching the meanings of the 2♣ and 2♦ bids provides two substantial benefits:

1. When the opponents interfere with 2♣ over 1NT, an effective offense is, “systems on” with double replacing Stayman. Opponents often brush aside the standard Cappelletti 2♣ bid, but this standard offense has little appeal when 2♣ is for majors.
2. The extra space makes it likely you will play in the correct major, as the 2♣ overcaller is likely to be 5-4.

The main cost is the inability to play at the 2-level with a single-suited diamond hand – and that the 2♦ bid is not GCC-legal.

Modified NAMYATS

Some pairs want a second way to pre-empt at four of a major, showing a good hand. Playing NAMYATS, The 3NT bid is substantially inferior to a natural jump to four of a minor, one of my favorites. Richard Lee likes switching these meanings, but his 3NT bid is not GCC-legal:

	NAMYATS	Modified NAMYATS
3NT	Pre-emptive, with either minor.	Strong pre-empt to four of either major
4♣	Strong pre-empt of 4♥	Natural, pre-emptive
4♦	Strong pre-empt of 4♠	Natural, pre-emptive

The Kaplan Interchange

A minimum opening hand with four spades and five hearts presents substantial problems:

- Over a forcing 1NT, the 1♥ opener may have to pass, or rebid a 5-card heart suit or a 2-card minor.
- Playing 5-card majors, opening 1♠ distorts the distribution and may lead to trouble.
- Opener will often raise spades on 3-card support, leading to an inferior contract when responder has a bad suit and a doubleton heart. Opener may be in a quandary with 3-card support and extra values.
- Many responders bypass a bad 4-card spade suit, and bid 1NT instead, sometimes missing a spade fit.

Some pairs are willing to give up a valuable weak two bid for the Flannery 2♦ (or 2♥) bids, showing an opening hand with four spades, five hearts, and not enough strength for a reverse. However, Flannery is complicated and introduces problems of its own. I played *lots* of Flannery in college, and I concluded that 2NT “natural and invitational” is the most likely constructive response desired – that makes a mess of the other responses.

The Kaplan Interchange, named after Edgar Kaplan, addresses these problems:

	Modern Standard Responses to 1♥	Kaplan Interchange
1♠	Natural, forcing. By agreement, may promise any four, a good four, or five spades (with Flannery).	Forcing one round, zero to four spades, and usually 5-11 HCP. Opener’s non-forcing 1NT rebid promises four spades and less than reverse strength.
1NT	Forcing one round, spades insufficient for a 1♠ response, and usually 5-11 HCP.	Forcing with at least 5 spades. Opener rebids as over a natural 1♠ response and may “raise” to the appropriate level with 3-card support (we played 2-card support at 2♠).

The Kaplan Interchange is superior to both standard methods and to Flannery, but it’s not GCC-legal. The ACBL Bulletin published an article by Marshall Miles on this in the 90s, with no mention of the GCC. My partner and I played it for about a year, with success. Then it came up on the last board against a seeded pair in the flight A pairs event at a regional in Saratoga, NY. Upon being called, the director offered them the choice of playing the hand or average plus. They took their score and departed, as we revised our convention cards.