

The Multi 2 ♦ Does it really work?

By *Pietro Campanile*

Many players favor the use of a 2♦ opening with multiple meanings (hence its nickname Multi 2♦), with options including usually a strong balanced hand with 22-23 HCP, a weak major one-suiter and sometimes eight playing tricks in any suit, a strong minor or a strong three-suiter. This frees up the 2♥ and 2♠ opening which can then be used for the so-called Tartan Twos: weak two-suited hands with five cards in the major and four-five in an undisclosed minor (or sometimes with 2♥ as hearts and any other, while 2♠ is spades and a minor).

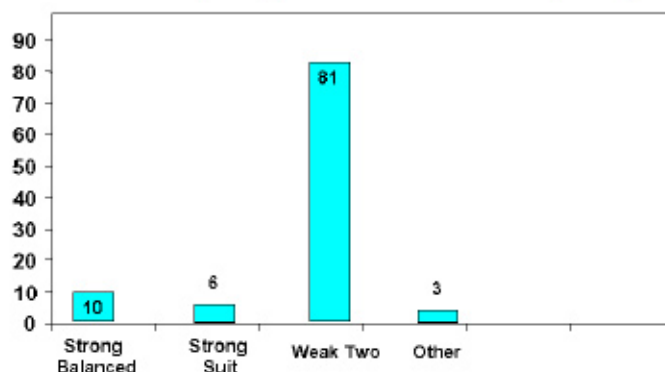
There is no doubt that this arrangement is very popular among tournament players in Israel as well as all over Europe (in the USA there are very restrictive systemic licensing regulations in place so the use of the Multi is much less common there), but is it effective?

Until recently the question could not have an authoritative answer as there simply was not enough data on the subject. However, by personally collating the data from a study published some time ago in "Bridge d'Italia" with more recent statistics from the "British Bridge Magazine" and "Revue du Bridge" it is now possible to answer such a question conclusively.

The data includes all the deals played in the European Championships from 1997 to 2004 and the knock-out stages of Olympics and World Championships from 1987 to 2003, whenever there are comparisons from all tables in play.

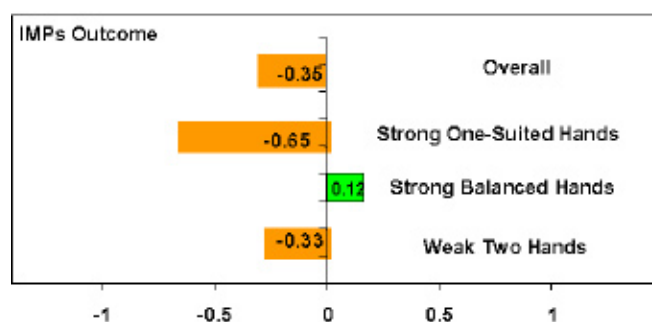
The analysis has been carried out taking into account the boards where there was a Multi 2♦ opening at one table and an alternative call at the other leading to a different final contract being reached (including the cases when the different opening meant that the same contract was reached but played from a different side). The resulting outcome and the relative IMP difference is then computed in order to ascertain the total net IMP gain/loss overall on the boards in the sample according to the respective opening types.

Hand Frequency in Multi 2 Diamond Openings



The first graph illustrates the likely hand types which one can expect when opening or playing against a multi 2 Diamonds: as one would have predicted the weak option is by far the most common with 81%, followed at a very long distance by the strong balanced type with 10% and the other odd options make up the remaining 9%.

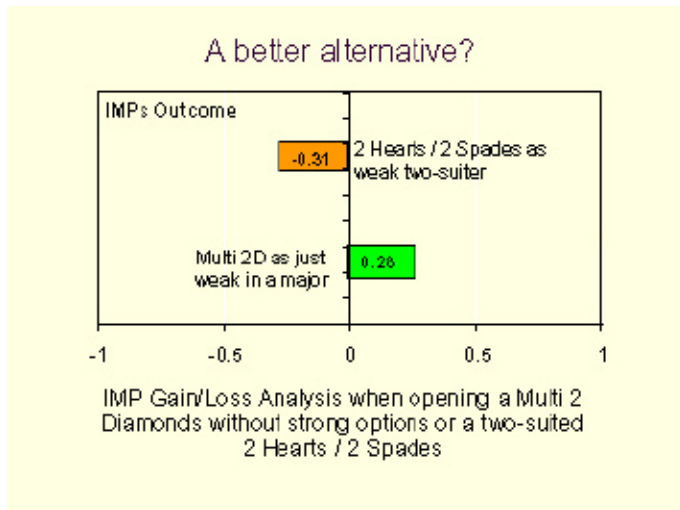
Is the Multi worth it?



IMP Gain/Loss analysis for Multi 2 Diamonds type hands in championship boards from 1987 to 2003

The second graph analyzes the IMPs gained or lost when at one table there was a Multi 2♦ and at the other an alternative opening (including Pass) and the resulting contract was different. To enable a more detailed analysis the data is grouped under hand type. As we can see the only hand type among the traditional Multi 2♦ options which actually gains is, quite surprisingly, the strong balanced one, which probably offers a better point definition and some extra bidding space. The big loser is the strong

one-suited type which includes the option of an ACOL 2 hand with eight playing tricks in any suit or simply the ACOL 2 in a minor. The most frequent type hand, the weak two in a major, is also a definite loser probably due to the inability to identify immediately the long major which can often lead to an easier auction for the opponents. It is important to remember that all the boards considered were played at international level and thus one can expect that all the pairs had detailed agreements on how to tackle the Multi. It is quite likely that at normal club level, where most pairs are not as well prepared, the outcome would have been different.



Finally, the third graph shows a positive IMPs outcome when the Multi 2♦ includes only a weak major option, thus allowing partner to immediately preempt for all that is worth. However, strangely

enough, the 2♥ and 2♠ Tartan Twos suffer an average loss of -0.31. This last data was, in my opinion, the most surprising of the lot as I would have instinctively assumed that the Tartan Twos are quite effective. Maybe such a result is due to the fact that they do reveal quite a lot about the shape of opener's hand and that may be of crucial importance in the opposition successfully declaring some borderline contracts.

Which conclusions should we draw from this set of data? Despite its superficial attractiveness, the Multi 2 Diamonds in its traditional version is a weapon which can be easily blunted by expert opposition while at the same inhibits a first round preemptive action by advancer. While this particular drawback can be offset by using a weak only type Multi 2♦, the most damning feature of the opening is the fact that its users dedicate the 2♥ and 2♠ openings to weak two suiters with five card in the bid major and a minor and those openings present a heavy negative IMP outcome. All in all, the expert player should probably do best by sticking to traditional weak twos all round (including 2♦) or by dedicating the 2♦ opening to a strong balanced range to better clarify the other balanced rebids. It is not a coincidence that one of the strongest international pairs around, the Italians Lauria-Versace, are using normal weak twos and 2♦ as 18-19 balanced which allows them a much greater definition for the natural jump rebids, since the strong one suited jump shifts can now be described with a 2NT rebid instead of having to make up a jump shift in a short minor, with all the misunderstandings that such an action can often lead to.

Around the world with 52 cards

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This is the position we have reached after declarer played two more rounds of spades:

♠ -	♠ -	♠ -
♥ A6	♥ N	♥ KJ
♦ -	♦ W	♦ -
♣ AJ43	♣ E	♣ Q987
♠ -	♠ S	♠ -
♥ 432	♥ Q	♥ Q9
♦ QJ	♦ -	♦ -
♣ 10	♣ K52	♣ -

Klukowski played the last spade (discarding a heart from dummy) and East was well and truly fixed: East couldn't discard a club, else declarer simply gives up a club, setting up a club trick. So East pitched the ♥J. Declarer now cashed the ♥A and claimed when the ♥K dropped. Note, however, that if West started with the

♥K, declarer was still OK. He comes back to the ♣K and ducks a club to East, endplaying him in clubs. East was squeezed in this position even if he held two little hearts! A great effort by a Grand Old Man of Polish bridge!



Julian Klukowski