

Thirteen Tricks

Trick 8: EVIL Systems

If you have decided that you will try the “Evil Twos” and still play your own system, it's easy to do. Let me show you how you can fit it into your preferred system. Let's start with Acol:

All 1 level bids are NATURAL and 4+ cards except for 1C which is more than likely natural as well but is a “One Round” force because it could be VERY big, i.e. 20+ high card points or equivalent in playing strength. Responses to 1C are normal except that 1D could be less than SIX points. Then, after a 1D response, 1H is 20+. Anything else is just normal Acol. That is all you have to remember, the particular sequence of 1C-1D-1H that defines the big hand. Everything else is natural, as you would bid in Acol. If you do happen to have a hand that you would open 1C in Acol and rebid 1H when partner responds 1D, then you just have to make alternative arrangements! I have never had a problem with this. The Very Big 1C opening has a number of advantages, as you will appreciate when you see it in action.

A 1NT opening bid is the same as in standard Acol, 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand. Unless you want to open a stronger 1NT which changes the basic system from Acol, but not by much. Or, if you want to play 'five card majors' then it becomes closer to Standard American, especially if you also open a 15-17 1NT, when it really does become “Standard American”. But with five card majors it might be advisable to open 1D rather than 1C when you don't have a five card major or 1NT opening.

Thus, there is “Evil Acol” and “Evil SAM”(Standard American).

The 'prepared' 1C opening in standard Acol can be made with only a three card club suit if you are playing “5 card spades” and that does not need to change with Evil Acol. Open 1C and if partner bids 1D you now bid 1S, or if you prefer, 1NT which I don't recommend with a four card biddable spade suit.

I will cover continuations after a 1NT opening in later chapters, which will include “Evil Transfers”, but for now let me discuss what can happen after the 1C-1D-1H sequence, which is the only variation from standard Acol, to allow for the “Evil Twos” to include a 2C opening.

The sequence 1C-1D-1H specifically says: “I have a VERY big hand, please keep bidding.” The responder then continues as follows:

1S: the original 1D response WAS in fact 0-5

1NT: the original response was natural with diamonds, and the 1NT rebid is 6-9 HCP as in normal Acol. We are now in a 100% forcing situation and bidding continues naturally, to game at least.

2C and up are all natural and confirm that 1D was a normal response. As after the 1NT bid, we are now in a game forcing situation and bidding continues until game at least.

After 1C-1D-1H-1S:

1NT now is 20-22 and balanced

2C,2D,2H, and 2S are natural and game forcing

2NT is 23-25 and balanced.

Let's now take a look at some hands with a big 1C-1D-1H sequence:

1.

West	East
♠ 102	♠ 743
♥ K84	♥ J5432
♦ AKQ9	♦ 106
♣ AKQ8	♣ J2

The Bidding:

West	East	
1C	1D*	*natural and 6+ HCP or under 6, forced.
1H	1S	
1NT	2D**	** transfer
2H	NB	

2.

West	East
♠ AQ86	♠ J76432
♥ K84	♥ A5
♦ AQJ9	♦ 106
♣ A7	♣ 862

The Bidding:

West	East	
1C	1D	
1H	1S*	*under 6 HCP
1NT	2H**	**transfer
2S	3S	
4S	NB	

3.

West	East
♠ A1086	♠ KQJ2
♥ K84	♥ A52
♦ AQ	♦ KJ92
♣ AQJ3	♣ 92

The Bidding:

West	East	
1C	1D	
1H	2S*	* not expecting a 1H bid, now game force
3S	4NT**	** Roman Key Card
5C***	5NT****	*** 0 or 3 key cards
6D	6NT	**** Grand slam try, asking for kings

And some that would start with 1C-1D playing standard Acoll

4.

West	East
♠ K86	♠ QJ7
♥ K843	♥ J542
♦ J92	♦ K643
♣ KQJ72	♣ 92

The Bidding:

West	East
1C	1H*
2H	NB

* avoiding a possible 1C-1D-1H sequence, bidding the hearts first.

5.

West	East
♠ KJ	♠ A93
♥ K874	♥ J65
♦ AJ	♦ 109762
♣ AQJ92	♣ K2

TheBidding:

West	East
1C	1D
2H	2NT
3NT	NB

No different to a normal Acoll sequence

6.

West	East
♠ K2	♠ A106
♥ KQJ2	♥ A963
♦ A	♦ 109762
♣ AQJ92	♣ 2

TheBidding:

West	East
1C	1D
1H*	2D
3C	3H
4H	4NT**

*The Big One

**Slam must be close, asking, Roman Key Card

5S*** 6H ***Two key cards plus queen of trump
7.

West

♠ K2

♥ KQJ972

♦ A

♣ AQJ9

East

♠ A10765

♥ A63

♦ KJ62

♣ 2

TheBidding:

West

East

1C

1S

3H*

4NT

5C

5NT**

7H***

*to show the big hand, after a 'positive' response, West jumps to show their suit and strength. We do not play splinters in such situations, so the 3H bid sets the suit and shows the strength as 20+. Note that the West hand is probably better opened 1H because if East does not respond that is about the right level anyway.

** grand slam probe. To ask with 5NT always guarantees all aces are accounted for. West has six solid hearts therefore bid 7H. A good grand slam is reached, though it is not a gimme but West will have fun testing his declarer skills.

When the opening is 1C with the intention of bidding 1H if partner responds 1D (as usually happens) and partner responds with 1H or 1S, there may be a bidding difficulty but that's what lateral thinking is about. Usually, we can find a way to force the bidding along one way or another, as in this case.

And finally, while we're talking about our natural Evil Acol with a 1C one round force, let me show you a very recent deal from teams play, one which will illustrate a number of advantages and disadvantages of different systems.

I was playing Precision this time, and can say that it would not have landed us in the best place unless opponents had cooperated in the bidding, but they did indeed help us get to the right contract.

Let me show you why:

Dealer S ALL Vul

♠ J1074

♥ 1074

♦ Q75

♣ 963

♠ A63

♥ AK9862

♦ 942

♣ 2

♠ 2

♥ J53

♦ KJ10863

♣ KJ5

♠ KQ985

♥ Q

♦ A

♣ AQ10874

Playing Precision, I opened 1C (16+). West overcalled 1H and North passed (0-5). East raised to 2H. What was I to do? I had little option but to bid 3C and hope I could get the chance to bid 3S. West did help out by now bidding 3H. After two passes, I was able to bid 3S. North saw the value of his three points (the diamond queen was no use as it turned out) and raised to 4S. He had valued his hand extremely well, basing it on the fact that I had a) opened 1C and b) bid to 3S showing what had to be 6-5 in clubs and spades. But you can see what would have happened if West had called it quits after my 3C bid. North and East also would have passed and I would have played in 3C.

That same scenario might have happened had we been playing Acol, except that I would have opened 1C and later been able to bid 3S and that should have been enough for North to raise to 4S. We are always mindful of our winners and losers and base our bidding accordingly. The way I would value the South hand is: there are three spade tricks and four club tricks, allowing for two losers in each suit, and one diamond trick. That adds up to eight tricks, given that partner has NOTHING. Conversely there are five losers. With eight tricks and vulnerable, that means that you should be able to bid to a level one or two tricks more than your trick count. Thus, you can bid to 3S quite comfortably as long as you have shown partner your shape and can expect partner to give preference to the better fit. Now look at the North hand. How much is it worth in light of the bidding by South? North has at least ONE more trick in spades than South has allowed for. What about the clubs? You may think North has no tricks to contribute there, but North should know that South has SIX clubs and has probably allowed for two losers there. But even if South's clubs are somewhat empty, the chances of a 2-2 break in the suit make North's support worth one more trick. Therefore North can happily raise to 4S. As you can see, on this particular deal, South can actually make FIVE spades, but that is not how I would play it nor how I did play it when I was in 4S. I actually cashed the ace before leading a second one from dummy. I did not want to take a finesse first, lose it and then not know whether to finesse again or have to guess whether to try and drop the second honour. And what about EW? As you can see, THEY can make eleven tricks as well, thanks to the secondary diamond suit and favourable placement of the queen.

What does all that prove? The value of fit and the value of bidding your hands to the limit. The EW bidding would have been much better had they employed 'Intermediate Jump Overcalls' or even

'Variable', with West bidding 2H when South opens 1C, be it Acol or Precision. When East raises to 3H that would make the Precision sequence very difficult if not impossible, but would still give South the chance to bid his hand accurately after a natural 1C opening.