

Cappelletti - a defense to One NoTrump

When the opponents open 1NT it is best to overcall only on shapely hands (especially over a strong No Trump). Since you are already at the two level, you really need something more sophisticated than simple natural overcalls in order to show two suited hands. There are numerous different defences to 1NT around, but one of the most popular by more advanced players in America is Cappelletti (also known as Hamilton – it depends on which coast of the USA you are on) and sometimes called Pottage in the UK.

This defence is not common in Europe ; but a popular defence is Multi-Landy, which is the same as Cappelletti except that the meanings of 2♣ and 2♦ are reversed. I believe that Multi-Landy is a definite improvement over Cappelletti and advise you to look it up. However, if you really want to know about Cappelletti: -

Playing Cappelletti, over a 1NT opening by opponents the bids are :-

- 2♣ a single suited hand (6+ cards; could be any of the 4 suits, but usually a major)
- 2♦ both majors (9+ cards)
- 2♥ 5 ♥'s and a minor suit
- 2♠ 5 ♠'s and a minor suit
- 2NT both minors (at least 5-5)
- 3♣ ♣'s
- 3♦ ♦'s

Double penalties (15+ pts).

Let's start by looking at typical hands for using Cappelletti: -

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4	Hand 5	Hand 6
♠ AQ98	♠ KQJ642	♠ 6	♠ KJ763	♠ 4	♠ AQ
♥ KJ763	♥ A8	♥ KJ763	♥ 6	♥ 84	♥ K98
♦ 6	♦ 652	♦ AJ985	♦ AQJ9	♦ AQ985	♦ QJ1095
♣ Q75	♣ 75	♣ K7	♣ Q76	♣ KQ763	♣ KJ8

Hand 1: A typical major suited hand. 5-4 is OK for a 2♦ bid.

Hand 2: A single suited hand, so overcall 2♣. Partner will 'automatically' relay with 2♦ and you will then bid 2♠ which partner will pass unless he has game interest.

Hand 3: A 2♥ overcall - showing ♥'s and a minor.

Hand 4: A 2♠ overcall - showing ♠'s and a minor. The minor suit is usually 5 cards, but a decent 4 card minor is acceptable. Note that the major for these 2♥/♠ overcalls must always be 5 cards.

Hand 5: Bid 2NT - Much the same as the UNT but you need a few points, especially over a strong NT. You do not normally expect to make a contract but this may make it difficult for the opponents to find a major suit fit at a safe level.

Hand 6: Double - You have good points sitting over the opener and a safe lead.

Responding after partner has made a Cappelletti bid.

Now let's cover what the partner of the Cappelletti bidder does. We'll call him responder.

a) Partner bids 2♣ - a single suited hand.

2♣ is usually a major suit. If you have a decent minor suit, it will often pay to defend 1NT – especially if you are on lead with a suit that is good to lead from. Also, if your suit is ♣'s, then you have to play at the 3 level so it is usually best to defend. Thus this 2♣ is usually (but not always) a major suit. Anyway, responder usually simply relays with 2♦ and the Cappelletti bidder will pass if ♦'s is his suit or else correct to his suit.

b) Partner bids 2♦ - the major suits.

Over 2♦, responder normally bids his best major. If he is equal length in the majors it is a lottery as responder must choose a major and you can easily end up playing in a 4-3 fit when there is a 5-3 fit in the other major. There is no solution to this guess unless you insist upon 2♦ being 5-5 in the majors. The best solution is to play **Multi-Landy**.

Hand 7	Hand 8	Hand 9	Partner has overcalled 2♦ :-
♠ 9854	♠ J74	♠ J7	With hand 7 we simply bid 2♠ .
♥ Q43	♥ Q43	♥ Q4	With hand 8 we have to 'pick' a major as we may well end up in a 4-3 fit.
♦ 64	♦ A764	♦ A7642	And with hand 9 it would be disastrous to pick the wrong one and end up in a 4-2 fit.
♣ J62	♣ J64	♣ J642	

c) Partner bids 2♥/♠ - the major bid + a minor suit.

Over a 2♥/♠ overcall, responder normally either passes or bids 2NT which over-caller will correct to his minor. If responder bids a suit (so 2♠/3♣/♦ over 2♥; or 3♣/♦/♥ over 2♠) then that is simply to play (presumably a 6+ card suit). A jump to 3 of partner's major is invitational to game.

d) Partner doubles – penalties.

Dbl should be passed unless responder has a very weak hand (4- points), in which case he should attempt to bail out by bidding a 5 card suit. With a very flat weak hand it is usually best to pass; partner may just have 1NT set in his own hand, and even if 1NT doubled makes it is usually not total a disaster (it is not a game contract).

Note that the double should have an upper limit of about 18-19 points. Now it would be nice to defend 1NT doubled when you have a huge hand but partner is very likely to have less than 5 points and will pull it!