

DEFENDING AGAINST WESTMAGIC AND VIENNA

Westmagic is a convention that requires 4=4=3=2 hands that do not fall into the partnership's notrump ranges (usually 15-17 HCP for 1NT and 20-21 HCP for 2NT) to be opened 1♣, rather than 1♦ on three or in a (strong) 4-card major. It is increasingly popular among Los Angeles bridge players who remember great Laker guards Jerry *West* (#44) and *Magic* Johnson (#32) fondly.

Approximately 29% of the balanced hands in the 12-21 HCP range will fall in the 15-17 HCP range for 1NT, and another 3% of the balanced hands in the 12-21 HCP range for 2NT. Using these estimates, and guessing how most players would choose between 1♣ and 1♦ openings on hands where either might be suitable, I calculated these estimates for the frequencies of different lengths of club suits when *Westmagic* users open 1♣:

2 clubs	4%	
3 clubs	17%	or fewer 21%
4 clubs	32%	or more 79%
5 clubs	30%	
6 clubs	14%	
7 clubs	3%	

Vienna is a convention that requires all 4-4-4-1 hands, as well as 4-4-3-2 and 4-3-3-3 hands that do not fall into the partnership's notrump ranges to be opened 1♣ rather than in any other 4-card suit (no matter how strong). It was used by the Stern team in Austria in the 1930s, by George Kennedy and his followers in New York in the 1960s, and has recently been adopted by a small group of Los Angeles players.

Here are my estimates for the frequencies of different lengths of club suits when *Vienna* users open 1♣:

1 club	2%	
2 clubs	10%	
3 clubs	24%	or fewer 36%
4 clubs	30%	or more 64%
5 clubs	22%	
6 clubs	10%	
7 clubs	2%	

How should opponents cope with these conventions?

First, by requiring full disclosure: "Could be short," the formula taught by the ACBL, is not adequate. For the *Westmagic* 1♣, the announcement should be, "Possibly only two if four-four-three-two." For the *Vienna* 1♣, the announcement should be, "Possibly only one or two if no five-card suit elsewhere."

Second, by using a 2♣ overcall as *natural* (like a 2♣ overcall of a 1♦ opening) and using a 2♦ jump overcall as *Michaels* (showing both majors).