

## Ask Jerry



Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to [jeryhelms@aol.com](mailto:jeryhelms@aol.com).

**Dear Jerry:** I opened  $\spadesuit A J 3$   
 $1\diamond$  with this hand as  $\heartsuit 6 2$   
 South and the auction  
 continued:  $\diamondsuit K Q 9 5$   
 $\clubsuit Q J 7 4$

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			$1\diamond$
Pass	$1\heartsuit$	Pass	1NT
Pass	$2\clubsuit$	Pass	Pass
Pass			

I passed  $2\clubsuit$  because I had a minimum opening and preferred clubs to hearts. Partner was annoyed and said I couldn't pass. We made  $2\clubsuit$  but could have made 3NT. Should I have bid a third time?

—Dorothy Myers, WV

**Dear Dorothy:** You might have been right to pass  $2\clubsuit$  and you might have been wrong. Not being very helpful am I? However, it doesn't depend as much on the hand you held as the methods you were playing.

Although a new suit by responder is usually forcing, there are several exceptions—when responder is a passed hand, for example. Using “standard” methods, **a new suit by responder at the two level is not forcing after a 1NT rebid by opener if it is lower-ranking than responder's first suit.**

To make a forcing bid, responder either has to jump in a new suit or reverse—bid a higher-ranking suit at the two level than responder's first suit. For example:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			$1\diamond$
Pass	$1\heartsuit$	Pass	1NT
Pass	$3\clubsuit$	Pass	?

Responder's  $3\clubsuit$ , a *jump shift*, is forcing to game. Similarly:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			$1\diamond$
Pass	$1\heartsuit$	Pass	1NT
Pass	$2\spadesuit$	Pass	?

Responder's reverse is game forcing. Spades rank higher than hearts.

So, playing these methods, you were fully entitled to  $\spadesuit 8$  pass  $2\clubsuit$ . Responder  $\heartsuit Q 8 7 4 3$  might have a hand  $\diamondsuit J 4$  like this. Partscore in  $\clubsuit K 10 5 3 2$  clubs is the best spot and the partnership needs some way to get there.

Unfortunately, standard methods can sometimes give  $\spadesuit 8$  responder a problem.  $\heartsuit A Q J 7 3$  Suppose North has  $\diamondsuit 10 6 2$  this hand.  $\clubsuit K 9 5 2$

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			$1\diamond$
Pass	$1\heartsuit$	Pass	1NT
Pass	?		

With 10 high-card points plus 1 length point, North doesn't have quite enough to force to game. North would like to make an invitational bid but  $3\heartsuit$  promises a six-card suit and a jump to  $3\clubsuit$  is forcing. A raise to 2NT is unattractive with such an unbalanced hand.

Responder could  $\spadesuit 8$  also have a problem  $\heartsuit A K J 7 3$  with a hand like this.  $\diamondsuit A J 5 2$  Responder is strong  $\clubsuit 9 5 2$  enough to bid game but is 3NT the best spot?  $4\heartsuit$ ,  $5\diamond$ , or even  $6\diamond$  might be better. Responder needs a forcing bid and neither  $2\spadesuit$  or  $3\clubsuit$  is attractive.

For reasons like this, many modern partnerships play that **responder's bid of new minor suit is forcing after opener's 1NT rebid** (*new minor forcing*). With this agreement, responder can rebid an artificial, forcing  $2\clubsuit$  with either of the above hands to get more information from opener before deciding what to do.

Your partner may have assumed you were playing new minor forcing and that's why partner didn't expect you to pass  $2\clubsuit$ . If you were unsure, you might have raised to  $3\clubsuit$ . That would cover you whether partner meant  $2\clubsuit$  as non forcing or forcing! —JH  $\heartsuit \spadesuit$