



Ask Jerry

Jerry Helms

www.jerryhelms.com

Dear Jerry,

In first seat, partner opened 1♥ and I responded with a 2♠ weak jump shift that ended the auction. After I took 10 tricks rather easily, both of us felt the other was at fault for missing game. Partner's hand:

♠AJ ♥A8753 ♦AK6 ♣Q103.

My hand:

♠KQ9854 ♥— ♦J7532 ♣82.

Please assess blame.

Missed Game Michael

Dear MGM,

The very best types of arguments to arbitrate are those in which both parties are guilty. That is clearly the case here. Since it is your question, I will lash you first, then your partner.

Weak jump shifts have become one of the most abused treatments in modern bridge. Playing Standard American with zero conventional agreements, you held a perfectly normal 1♠ response to a 1♥ opening bid. If by doing so, your partner felt that you held four or more spades and six or more points, he would have been right on target. After 1♥-1♠, your partner has a normal 2NT rebid, over which you have a normal 4♠ "game try"! Weak jump shifts should be used for hands that you would ordinarily pass; this conventional treatment, however, allows you to act. Weak jump shifts should never con-

tain the strength of a simple, natural response. Depending on vulnerability and partnership style and sense of humor, typical 2♠ weak jump shifts should be more like:

1. ♠Q108764 ♥92 ♦Q752 ♣5

or

2. ♠1087652 ♥Q ♦J874 ♣94.

Now that your session behind the woodshed is complete, let's invite opener to come on back!

If responder holds a legitimate weak jump shift, suggesting 0-5 HCP, opener is still worth a game try. His hand is not just 18 HCP: It is a control-rich, primed-out moose! Forced to choose between passing or raising to game, I would take a chance and bid 4♠. The partnership agreement I prefer is to play that 2NT following a weak jump shift is a game try, asking responder about shortness. Let's try this method with your partner's hand and example 1 above:

| <i>Opener</i> | <i>Responder</i> |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1♥ | 2♠ |
| 2NT | 3♣ |
| 4♠ | Pass |

With this near-maximum weak jump shift and perfect shortness, game is an excellent proposition. Basically, you need hearts to come home, diamonds 3-3, or the ♠K doubleton on your left.

With example 2, the auction would be this:

| <i>Opener</i> | <i>Responder</i> |
|---------------|------------------|
| 1♥ | 2♠ |
| 2NT | 3♥ |
| 3♠ | Pass |

With this normal but minimum weak jump shift, including shortness that is not particularly useful, even the three level is in jeopardy.

In summation, your weak jump shift greatly understated values held and opener's pass was at best a very conservative position. At least this way both of you can be equally unhappy with my decision. □