

Ask Jerry



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Dear Jerry,

Left-hand opponent opened 1♣ and after two passes, I had a problem deciding what to bid with the following:

♠K5 ♥AK932 ♦AQ ♣QJ64.

After thinking a little, I decided to reopen with 2♥. Everyone passed. Ten tricks later, my partner remarked that she thought we played weak jump overcalls. I explained that I felt my bid showed a strong hand in this position. She countered that I could have doubled, which I considered, but decided not to with only two spades. What do you think?

Steve

Dear Steve,

I think that you were right, but perhaps you could have been "righter." In fourth position, it is illogical to use a jump bid to show a weak hand. If your partner could not voluntarily act over 1♣, why would you want to reopen the bidding, allowing LHO another opportunity to express the extra values he would surely hold in this scenario? This being said, there is no perfect bid to describe your holding, but I think the action you chose could have been improved upon. For a jump bid in the pass-out position, I would have expected something more like this:

♠A5 ♥AQJ10632 ♦K8 ♣64.

Values like this scream for offense, not defense. A takeout double could be a mistake for a number of reasons. First and foremost, if partner opted to

pass, converting your takeout to penalty with club length, this might not work out very well. In addition, why ask your partner's opinion via double, when in reality, you don't much care what she thinks. A jump to 2♥ in this position shows a hand of intermediate strength with a long, strong suit. Hmm, an action that clearly resembles the cards above. After this descriptive bid, partner is invited to take action, but should not be terribly concerned about the length or strength of support for your suit. The hand you actually held could best be played in any of the three available suits or notrump, and should partner pass for penalty (not likely, but possible, the way some people open two-card club suits), you would be delighted.

My preferred action with your hand would be a jump to 2NT. Although typically played as some type of weak, two-suited hand when bid in the direct seat, 2NT in the passout seat is best defined as a natural bid, showing 19 to 21 high-card points with a stopper. After this action, your partnership should play the same response structure you play to an opening bid of 2NT. Although this action is not perfect (because it conceals your five-card heart suit), I think it is the best compromise.

One of my Jerry-isms covers this very topic:

The best available bid is often the least bad alternative.