



## Ask Jerry

BY JERRY HELMS  [jerryhelms.com](http://jerryhelms.com)

Hi, Jerry,

I would like your opinion on the following hand:

♠ K ♥ K J 9 4 ♦ A 7 5 2 ♣ A 10 6 4.

With both sides vulnerable, I hear two passes and decide to open 1NT (15–17). Unconventional, but I have seen support for the 1NT opening on similar hands in *The Bridge World* magazine. My partner and I have no agreement about making this type of bid. We ended up in 4♥, making. Upon completion of the play, my opponent called the director to document my bid. He also criticized me because my singleton king was in a major suit. What is your opinion of this situation?

Tom

Hi, Tom,

Let me start with a couple of quotes that will give you an early indication of my opinion:

*"Always plan a second bid before you choose a first."* – Alvin Roth, c. 1958

*"The best available bid is often the least bad alternative."* – Jerry Helms

Personally, I think you followed Alvin Roth's advice, making a reasonable decision to describe a difficult holding – so reasonable that it would have been my first choice and, truthfully, my only choice. Your partner will play you to have 15–17 high-card points, with no singletons or voids, which is almost exactly what you have. Surely the singleton ♠ K has value equivalent to a small doubleton.

Although it doesn't matter, I wonder what alternative auction your opponent would have suggested. I suppose he would have opened 1♦, but when his partner responded the probable 1♠, now what? This hand does not remotely resemble a reverse to 2♥, which should describe an unbalanced hand with at least 16–17 HCP, with most values in the two suits bid and almost always more length in the first suit.

Perhaps after 1♦, he planned to make the "descriptive" 2♣ rebid? This sequence leaves much to be desired. Did he intend to rebid 1NT over a spade response to describe a balanced 12–14? This rebid both understates values and

brings up the same shape issues your opponent took exception to when you opened 1NT.

It appears to me that you chose the best available – albeit off-shape – bid as the least bad alternative. I do not make a habit of opening 1NT with a singleton, but if the appropriate hand comes up, I do whatever I think is best.

I endorse the right of your opponent to call the director when he feels there has been an infraction. I do not endorse or condone any opponent attempting to give lessons at the table. I find it ironic that those who think they have been injured and insist upon providing corrective information are often completely and absolutely wrong. I am reminded of another quote – a plaque my brother received many years ago:

"A closed mouth gathers no foot."

*Editor's note:* Problem 1 in this month's *It's Your Call* (pg. 40) addresses this same subject. ■

*Send your questions to  
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