



Ask Jerry

BY JERRY HELMS  jerryhelms.com

Dear Jerry,

Your discussion in the December issue (page 47) of the Bridge Bulletin came just at the right time. In first seat, holding:

♠KJ98743 ♥— ♦KJ97 ♣84,

I opened 3♠. Partner, holding:

♠Q ♥Q65 ♦Q1065 ♣AKQJ10,

passed and we made five. Partner said she would have opened 1♠ with my hand. Help.

Mary

Dear Jerry,

I read your December column yesterday, which significantly influenced one of my calls during a club game. I held:

♠K97643 ♥AK5 ♦754 ♣10.

Previously, I would have passed, thinking the spade suit was too moth-eaten for a preempt and not strong enough to open 1♠. After reading your column, I revved it up and opened 2♠. Partner, holding:

♠AQJ85 ♥Q1076 ♦AK ♣QJ,

managed to get us to game. I made six. In the postmortem, he suggested if I had passed, we could have easily reached slam. Partner and I both are of the opinion I should have passed originally, Jerry-ism or not.

Jonathan

Sigh ... First and foremost, virtually all bridge decisions are greatly influenced by partnership style and agreement. It is my strong contention that those who wait to bid in bridge lose far more often than people who seize opportunities at the earliest moment.

Mary

Open 1♠? Really? No aces, one quick trick and 8 high-card points?

Say you open 1♠ and partner doubles the opponents for penalty: Now how do you feel about your opening bid?

Perhaps there was a superior game or slam in diamonds and my 3♠ preempted us out of it. That's life. Missing the heart suit, the club suit and all four aces makes me strain to find a reason to bid, and opening 3♠ describes the cards I actually hold: long, reasonable spades with minimal defensive strength (compared to 1♠ which shows some defense). Personally, I can find no reason in the world to pass, but if that's your partnership style, then so be it.

Jonathan

Someone once asked me my style of opening the bidding. In my early youth (as opposed to my current youth), my rather flippant reply was: I open my opening bids, I pass my passes and I preempt with my preempts.

Your hand may have "only" 10 HCP, but it contains a six-card spade suit and two and a half quick tricks. If you open 1♠, you have an easy rebid after any response partner might make.

Look at the difference between this hand, with its two and a half quick tricks, and Mary's hand (am I repeating myself about quick tricks?). Note that it qualifies perfectly for my Suggestion of 22:

Suggestion of 22

If HCP plus length of two longest suits equals at least 20, a hand qualifies as a one-level opening bid *provided it contains at least two quick tricks.*

If you open 1♠ with your opening bid, a simple Jacoby 2NT auction makes it easy to reach slam, certainly easier than if you start with a pass.

Mary and Jonathan

I stand my ground. Look for reasons to make the right bid before finding an excuse to make the wrong one. It is usually better to be in the auction at the earliest possible moment rather than on the outside trying to get in. ■