



Ask Jerry

BY JERRY HELMS  jerryhelms.com

Dear Jerry,

My partner and I recently played a hand in a partial where slam was laydown. My right-hand opponent opened 2♥, and I held:

♠K9632 ♥K ♦A107 ♣QJ76.

Despite the weak suit, I opted to overcall 2♠. Under "Simple Overcall," our convention card indicates that new-suit bids are nonforcing and constructive. When partner bid 3♣, I passed. He held:

♠AJ108 ♥AJ6 ♦5 ♣AK1083.

Needless to say, 3♣ making seven was not a good result. I now know I should have raised, but how should the auction proceed after my original overcall?

Paul

Hi, Paul,

Occasionally I get a question that I think may stretch the limits of the word count I am permitted in an article. Yours is one of those.

For starters, holding such poor spades and minimal point count, I would have passed the weak 2♥ bid. With that off my chest, let's move forward.

In all of my regular partnerships, we also play that new suits after a simple overcall are nonforcing but constructive. This is clearly a partnership agreement which is not shared by all experts. This agreement, however, does not involve actions after a preempt.

In any partnership, when partner

makes an overcall of a preemptive bid, a new-suit advance should clearly be forcing. This approach follows the generally accepted premise that when the opponents express weakness, we need to reserve our bids to show strength. Therefore, your partner's 3♣ bid was forcing.

Before I turn my attention to your partner's sins, I don't care whether you thought 3♣ was forcing or not.

SUPPORT WITH SUPPORT

What could be wrong showing a little love for partner's known five-card (at least) suit, holding four-card support and a singleton?

Now that I have chastised you ... What on earth was your partner thinking when he failed to cuebid 3♥, confirming spades as trump? What was the point of introducing clubs, even if it was forcing?

Holding four trumps and approximately 20 support points, his only question should have been whether to bid 6♠ or 7♠. The only reason to cuebid before launching into some form of Blackwood was to make sure you did not interpret an immediate 4NT as some form of a quantitative invitation-al bid. In this fashion, your partner was guilty of one of your sins. He also failed to **support with support**.

When your key-card response reveals all the key cards but no trump queen, settling for a small spade slam seems routine.

In summation:

- I prefer the partnership agreement that a new-suit advance of an overcall after a one-level opening bid be defined as nonforcing and constructive. Be sure to verify this agreement in your partnerships as it is not a 100-percent mainstream treatment.
- New suits following the overcall of a preempt are forcing unless the new suit is a game bid. For example, an auction such as: (2♥)-3♣-(Pass)-4♠.
- Finally, **support with support** may be my all-time favorite Roth-Stone precept. It is such an important principle that I have adopted it as a Jerry-ism. ■

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