



Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

Recently we had the following auction:

	Partner		Me
1♣	Dbl	Redbl	1♠
Pass	4♠	Dbl	All Pass

My partner, who made the take-out double, had 19 high-card points, with three-card spade support, and insisted that my “free bid” of 1♠ was value-showing. When RHO started drooling before he pulled out the double card, I almost called the director because I thought the drool should have been Alerted. What I actually held was 1 HCP along with five spades. Was I wrong to bid?

Mike

Hi Mike,

Irrespective of anything else, I admire your style. Perhaps you are right that “penalty drools” should be Alerted. On your behalf, I will contact rulings@acbl.org and get an official opinion.

Once upon a time, I created a Jerryism that I have had to amend because of the widespread use of bidding boxes as opposed to verbal bidding. The amended version:

“Good players integrate what they see with what they have seen.”

Let’s apply this to your partner. His RHO pulled out the 1♣ card, suggesting an opening bid, which frequently

contains at least 11 HCP. Peering into his own hand, he counted 19 HCP. His LHO pulled out the redouble card, which usually conveys the presence of 10 or more points. Applying high level math, $11 + 19 + 10 = 40!$ Based on this analysis, the 1 point you held would exceed the top range of values you could be expected to hold! This simple application of the math involved should clearly have warned your partner of what was going on.

In auctions like this, where both opponents have shown values, advancing a new suit after the takeout double does not express any values whatsoever. Essentially, your bid would have the effect of saying, “It sounds like we are in trouble, partner. Since you have asked me to pick a suit, I will pick the suit that I hope we are in the least amount of trouble. Your action showed four or more spades and values that could be as weak as you actually held. In this sequence, you are not involved in a constructive auction, but merely an auction where you are trying to survive. In most cases, your partner will not have such a strong hand, and the opponents will be the ones with the preponderance of values. They may have a game, or may have the ability to double for penalty, even at a very low level. Your 1♠ advance should be viewed as an escape mechanism. Your partner’s raise to 4♠ ... well, perhaps the drool was the first clue!

As a matter of fact, even a jump bid after a redouble is weak. Consider this auction:

1♣ Dbl Redbl 2♠

This would also be weak! Perhaps something like:

♠ x x x x x x ♥ x ♦ J x x ♣ J x x

Opposite a normal takeout double, your jump on a collection like this would be preemptive, *not* constructive, or in any way, shape or form, invitational. When the auction identifies the fact that you are near “pointless,” all of your actions are merely an escape.

If the auction had been:

1♣ Dbl Redbl ?

and your shape was something like:

♠ J x x ♥ J x x ♦ J x x ♣ J x x x,

pass would be in order. Pass should be typically an acknowledgment that the auction suggests we are in trouble, but you have no strong opinion about which suit partner chooses.

If your partner had such a tremendously strong hand that he feared one of the opponents may have “psyched” an action, he should follow his double by cuebidding the opponent’s suit as an announcement of great strength, and follow that by a simple raise of your suit. In my lifetime of playing bridge, I’ve yet to encounter this auction, but if and when I do, I would know that my partner’s double was based on holding nearly the world’s fair!

I will let you know about whether drools are currently Alertable. ■