



Ask Jerry

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Hello Jerry,

My partner and I differ in the meaning of two bidding sequences, both involving a responding bid of 1NT. In the first, my partner opens one of a suit other than spades, RHO overcalls at the one level, and I bid 1NT. I contend that bid should imply a stopper in the opponent's suit and 7–9 high-card points. My partner does not agree that I should have a stopper in the suit. It can simply show values and 7–9 HCP. Which do you recommend and why?

The other sequence is where I bid one of a suit, my partner responds one of another suit, and I then bid 1NT. There is no interfering bid, so no support double. I contend that my bid of 1NT should have at least two-card support in my partner's suit. He would bid 1NT with a singleton in my suit. Again, your comments.

JCG

Hi JCG,

I think there is a relatively logical premise that should apply in this and other similar situations. In any competitive auction, where the opponents have named a specific suit, if either of us offers notrump as a possible final contract, that player has a stopper or something he hopes will become a stopper!

Each of the following hands qualify or somewhat qualify if the auction began:

	Partner		You
	1♦	1♠	1NT
A	♠A Q x	♥x x x	♦J x x ♣Q x x x
B	♠Q 10 x	♥K J x	♦Q x ♣J x x x x
C	♠10 9 x x	♥A Q x	♦Q J ♣J x x x

A is perfect! B is just fine. C is a little squirrely, but ...

With 10 HCP, some action seems in order. It would not be unreasonable to bid 1NT, praying for partner to have either ♠J or ♠Q to give us a stopper, in case we end up in notrump. Sometimes this response just gives opener a chance to rebid his suit, or introduce a new suit, expecting values, and at least tolerance from our hand for his suit or suits. If partner raises to 3NT, and the opponents manage to take the first five or six tricks, simply apologize! It's an entirely different matter to open notrump without a stopper, or to respond notrump without stoppers before the opponents identify a likely lead. If, on the other hand, we held:

♠10 9 3 ♥A Q 7 ♦Q J 7 6 ♣8 6 3,
a simple raise to 2♦, in my opinion, would be the best choice.

As for part two of your question: Just as the ACBL has sanctioned opening 1NT with a singleton ace, king or queen, sometimes a 1NT rebid might contain a singleton in responder's suit,

but in all of my partnerships, we try to avoid this. I firmly believe that the best available bid is often the least bad alternative. Holding:

♠Q ♥K Q J 4 ♦A J 6 4 ♣8 6 3 2,

I would open 1♦, and if partner responded 1♠, 1NT seems better than introducing such a paltry club suit. Surely the singleton queen will be almost as good as a low doubleton if partner rebids his suit. If however, I held:

♠4 ♥A 8 7 4 ♦A K J 7 3 ♣Q 5 3,

after opening 1♦ and hearing a 1♠ reply, I would rebid 2♦, which in most cases, indicates a six-card or longer suit – which I almost have.

My justification? When your partner opens 1NT, and you hold a weak hand with a five-card major, it is almost automatic to transfer and pass, potentially playing a 5–2 fit. In an analogous auction:

1 minor	1 Major
1NT	?

there is perhaps similar justification. It is often better for responder to sign off by rebidding his five-card suit even with a weak hand – provided he will not frequently find a low singleton in his partner's hand.

More than you wanted to hear and likely will light up my inbox with objectors to my theories. Oh, well, I can handle it. ■