

Newer Players

Ask Jerry



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Dear Jerry,
In a virtual club game, I held the following hand:

♠K6 ♥K103 ♦AQJ4 ♣K643.

The auction:

LHO	Pard	RHO	Me
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

They made 2♥, and we can make 2♠. I wanted to balance, but only two cards in the spade suit made that seem not a good choice. I could not overcall 1NT directly because we play sandwich notrump. Partner held:

♠QJ1072 ♥5 ♦10865 ♣Q52.

We got a terrible matchpoint result. Help!
Dave

Hi Dave,
Thank you for such a great question which will allow me to fully express my disdain for this particular conventional treatment! First let's bring everyone up to date on the meaning and application of the sandwich notrump convention.

Proponents of the sandwich notrump use a 1NT overcall after the opponents have bid two suits as a "light takeout" for the unbid suits, typically showing at least nine cards in those suits, with preemptive-type values. Perhaps something like:

♠K863 ♥103 ♦KJ974 ♣64.

With similar shape, and more values such as:

♠AK63 ♥103 ♦AQ974 ♣64,

they would make a takeout double.

The sandwich notrumpers contend that it is illogical to enter an ongoing auction with a natural strong notrump bid with values in the opponents' suits. In my opinion, the sandwich notrump is an attempt to muddy the waters, occasionally steal partscores, or sometimes set up profitable sacrifices. In reality, I often find these early entries into an ongoing auction simplify both the bidding and the play for the opponents. I have long been on record that it is best to define our actions in a manner which allows us to intelligently reach the best partscores or games, and the sandwich notrump doesn't really

help with this. I strongly prefer that 1NT in this auction describes 15–18 HCP, with stoppers in both of the opponents' suits. A fact of bridge in the real world today is the tendency to open very light hands and to respond on equally light hands. Sometimes LHO opens with 11 HCP, and RHO responds on 4 or 5 HCP. Proponents of the sandwich notrump often are frozen out of the auction when they might hold as much as game values.

On the deal in question, a strong 1NT overcall gets you in the auction. When LHO raises hearts, your partner has a clear obligation to bid 2♠ despite holding a meager 5 HCP. It's not about what *partner* holds, it's about what *we* hold! I often say that good players integrate what they see with what they hear. Looking at 5 HCP, a reasonable five-card spade suit, and the knowledge that partner holds 15+ to 18, he is the player aware that your side holds at least 50% of the total values, and that there is a place that offers a reasonable chance to compete. Another of my sayings: The one who knows, goes! 🤖



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