



# Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

In a Swiss teams, I held:  
 ♠A Q 8 5 ♥A 8 6 5 4 ♦9 3 ♣J 4.  
 Partner RHO Me LHO  
 2♠ 3♥ 3♠ 4♥  
 All Pass

With my semi-balanced 11 high-card points, I felt a competitive raise to 3♠ was appropriate, and when the opponents reached 4♥, I was delighted. My emotions quickly went downhill when they made 4♥, and I became morose when I discovered we were cold for 4♠. Partner's hand was:

♠K J 9 7 6 2 ♥— ♦A Q ♣9 7 5 3 2.

Where did we go wrong?

NLM Jane, Atlanta

I agree with your bidding and would have suffered the same fate. The problem was created when your partner preempted with an opening bid. Many years ago, Marty Bergen published an article describing the "Rule of 20," which essentially said that if the length of your two longest suits and the total of your high-card points equals or exceeds 20, you should open the bidding.

The intent of this excellent theoretical observation was to help players understand that unbalanced hands should be treated more aggressively than balanced ones. There's an important catch, however, and requires a description of quick tricks:

## Quick Trick Table

K x = ½    A x = 1    K Q = 1  
 A Q = 1½    A K = 2    A K J = 2½

Most opening one-bids should contain a minimum of two quick tricks and conversely, opening preempts should tend to deny as many as two quick tricks (the exception would be when holding A-K in your long suit).

In bridge, "guidelines" are better than "rules." My "Suggestion of 20" was published shortly after the Bergen article. While agreeing in principle with his premise, I said that if points and suit length equaled 20, open the bidding provided you have at least two quick tricks.

I think your partner had a clear 1♠ opening bid. At some point, your hand would be worth an invitational limit raise. Your partner should then heed the advice offered many years ago by expert Grant Baze called, "6-5, come alive!" by bidding game.

Dear Jerry,

Holding:

♠A Q 6 ♥A 8 ♦K J 8 6 3 ♣9 7 3

the following auction occurred:

| Partner | RHO  | Me   | LHO      |
|---------|------|------|----------|
| 2♥      | 2♠   | Pass | Pass     |
| 3♣      | Pass | 3♥   | All Pass |

Making five! I told partner that there was no such sequence where a weak two-bid was followed by bidding a second suit! His hand:  
 ♠J ♥K 10 9 7 5 4 ♦— ♣K Q 10 6 5 2.

If I were an enthusiastic follower of the "Rule of 20" (which I am not) I would have opened 1♥ with that hand. Personally, I think that pass followed by using a Michaels cuebid or an unusual notrump if the opponents open would be best. Your opinion please.

Werner M.

See the answer to the first question for guidance on some of the issues you have raised. Weak two-bids, as taught for years, "never" contained voids and "never" were appropriate with two-suited hands! Life and bridge change, but my feelings about words like always and never are unwavering and well documented.

For me, 1♥ with 1½ quick tricks is not my first choice. I agree that pass, hoping for a chance to perhaps back in later, is a reasonable course of action. In the modern world, many players would scoff at pass and open 2♥ planning to aggressively bid clubs later. If I did open 2♥, which I might, and the auction came back to me as above, I would jump to 4♣ on my second bid to describe a massive two-suiter with lots of playing strength. If with "6-5," you come alive, then with "6-6," think lots of tricks! □