

Newer Players

Ask Jerry

Balancing – part 2



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Dear Jerry,
Recently, one of my partners attended a lecture where you mentioned a few of your least favorite conventions. Among them: sandwich notrump, criss cross and, to my surprise, Bergen raises. Because we play and like all three of these, I would love to hear more about your objections.

Conventionally Confused

Hi C.C.,
Most of my theories on conventions are primarily based on frequency of occurrence and gain versus loss of alternative meanings.

Sandwich notrump

Proponents of this convention use a 1NT overcall after the opponents have bid two suits as a “light takeout.” Typically, this shows at least nine cards in those suits with more shape than strength. With the unbid suits and a good hand, they would double. They reason that it is illogical to enter an auction with values in the opponents’ suits by bidding a strong 1NT. Methinks this is misguided. In today’s bridge, there is a strong tendency for very light openings followed by equally light responses. For example, if the auction was: 1♣–Pass–1♥, holding:

♠K J ♥A Q 8 ♦Q J 7 5 ♣K J 8 5,
sandwich notrumpers would pass. If it now went 2♥ on your left, Pass, Pass ... now what? While it is true you *might* beat 2♥, there’s an excellent chance your side could make a partial in any of the other suits. To double now, with only two cards in the spade suit, is far too risky. It’s clear to me to immediately overcall

with a strong, natural 1NT. In addition, your immediate overcall of 1NT allows partner to compete with a long suit, play in notrump, which could be our best spot, or on occasion actually reach a game when he holds a shapely two-suiter! Is there a possible downside to the immediate strong notrump bid? Of course there is! But I will live by my Jerry-ism: Look first for reasons to bid, before settling for an excuse to pass.

Keep in mind on the above auction, you could have doubled immediately to show values and length in the unbid suits. To me, a sandwich means something about bread!

What is criss cross?

1♦–Pass–3♣ (3♣ = limit diamond raise)

1♣–Pass–2♦ (2♦ = limit club raise)
Playing criss cross, both auctions above identify a limit raise in opener’s minor. With a weak, preemptive hand, responder can jump immediately to three of opener’s minor.

With the above agreement, the immediate raise of opener’s minor can be played as game forcing.

1♦–Pass–2♦ (game force)

1♣–Pass–2♣ (game force)

While this has merit, what you gain is not worth what you lose in my opinion.

The problem: Say partner opens 1♦ and you have one of the example hands below.

♠6 ♥7 2 ♦8 6 2 ♣A K Q 8 7 4 3

♠J 6 2 ♥J 7 2 ♦6 ♣A Q J 10 7 3

♠6 2 ♥A 7 2 ♦8 6 ♣K Q J 7 4 3

Using criss cross, and playing 2/1 as a game force, I defy you to find an intelligent response unless you revert

to Standard American over 1♦, where a 2♣ response is not a game force. I prefer to keep two-over-one bids in noncompetitive auctions as game forcing.

My preference over 1♦ is to play that a jump to 3♣ would show a good six-card or longer suit with just under the values to force game. A perfect bid to express the values of each of the three hands above. Surely you cannot possibly consider bidding 1NT over 1♦ on these cards. If you do, I guess I don’t need to try to explain. ➡

CHALLENGE OF THE MONTH

Dlr: West ♠ 9 6 5
Vul: Both ♥ 9 8
IMPs ♦ K 5 3
♣ A J 6 5 4

♠ A K Q J 8 2
♥ 10 5 3
♦ A 10 4
♣ 10

West	North	East	South
2♥	Pass	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West leads ♥A K, East following with the ♥7 6 (standard count). West continues with the ♥Q. As South, what’s your plan?

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