



BY **JERRY HELMS**  
askjerry@jerryhelms.com  
jerryhelms.com

Newer Players

# Ask Jerry

**Dear Jerry,**  
**I opened 1♦ with the following:**  
**♠A Q J ♥K Q 10 4 ♦Q 10 9 5 ♣7 2.**

**My LHO overcalled 1♠ which was passed around to me. Now what? I'm tired of letting the opponents play at the one level and getting bad results. I wanted to bid 1NT, but without revealing my action, or the actual result, what should I have done?**

**Steven**

Hi Steven,  
Pass!

**Jerry**

Hi Steven,  
Perhaps you would like a little clarification. The first assumption is that your partnership plays negative doubles. Let's proceed from there. On this auction:

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	Pass	Pass
?			

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What options did your partner hold at his turn?

- 1 With limited values and four or more hearts, he could have made a negative double.
- 2 With a spade stopper and depending on values held, he could have bid some level of notrump.
- 3 With four or more diamonds, he could have raised your suit immediately to the appropriate level.
- 4 With 10 or more points and a suit of his own, he could bid it at the two level. Recognize that once your LHO bid, you are no longer in a 2/1 game force auction, but back to Standard American.
- 5 Pass – the option he chose.

Factoring out the first four options leads to the assumption that your partner would only pass in this situation with one of two hand types. Length and strength in the opponent's spade suit, waiting for you to reopen with a takeout double so that he could pass and convert to penalties, or a *bad* hand.

Looking at your spades, which of the two hands do you think responder holds? Your spade holding negates any possibility that your partner held a penalty pass. Clearly he has a *bad* hand. The opponents are attempting to play in your strongest suit. Let them!

You mentioned reopening with 1NT. The standard meaning of that action in this auction is to show 18 or 19 points with a spade stopper; the type of hand if your partner had responded freely instead of an opponent overcalling, you would have jumped to an invitational 2NT.

Holding 18 or 19 points with a spade stopper, your 1NT bid allows your side to compete. If responder holds a balanced bad hand, he passes. If he holds a bad hand with a long suit, he bids it. If he holds a bad hand with support for your suit, he gives a belated raise.

Keep in mind that any action taken in this auction after partner passes the overcall shows extra values or extra shape.

Holding your exact hand from above, if instead, the auction had gone:

West	North	East	South
1♦	2♣	Pass	Pass
?			

You have a clear obligation to reopen the bidding with a takeout double. Doing so covers virtually all contingencies. If your partner held length and strength in clubs, he could pass. If he held length in an unbid suit, lacking the values to have bid it immediately over the overcall, he could now show it in reply to your takeout double. If he held a club stopper(s), with less than the invitational strength that would have been shown by an immediate 2NT, he could now bid 2NT. With a ghastly balanced hand, he should probably defer to your suit. At least he doesn't have to play it!

My friend Sarge says when deciding to compete, "Look at your holdings in your suits and your holding in their suit." My first very brief answer to your question remains ... Pass! ■