



BY JERRY HELMS

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Newer Players

Ask Jerry

Dear Jerry,

While we often open light, 99% of the time we will have two defensive tricks.

♠K Q 8 7 5 3 ♥8 ♦7 ♣Q J 8 7 6

This is a hand we would not open. There is a school of thought, however, that the earlier you get into the bidding the better.

We use reverses, so if we open 1♠ we could not bid clubs without totally misleading partner about the strength of the hand. I would not want to open 2♠ because we might miss game. Any thoughts on the advantage of opening versus passing and competing later?

Charles

Hi, Charles,

Over the course of my bridge lifetime, I have had the opportunity to have partnerships with a number of strong bridge players. Often we discovered differences in theoretical style, but I think that experience in hearing how others view things has contributed to my own growth as a bridge player. One such partner provided a guideline that I have always remembered. "Pass is never an option holding a strong six-card (or longer) major suit."

Many times I have heard, "I passed because my hand was too good for a weak two-bid, but not good enough to open at the one level." This totally flies in the face of one of my Jerry-isms:

Always look for a reason to bid before you settle for an excuse to pass.

Now that we have clearly decided to bid something, is it a one-bid? Or is it a two-bid?

You mentioned your reticence to open 1♠ for fear of reversing later and misleading partner on your strength. I suspect you are referring to the "high reverse," which in Standard happens in auctions like: 1♠-2♥-3♣. Because 2♥ could have been bid on as few as 10 HCP, in Standard bidding – with no fit established – the introduction of a new suit at the three level guaranteed extra values in opener's hand.

Some 2/1 practitioners still espouse this theory, but I think a majority recognize that in a game-forcing auction, shape and strength share in importance. For instance, some 2/1 players who open 1♠ holding:

♠Q 10 9 8 5 ♥Q ♦A K J 7 6 ♣9 8

would rebid 2♠ rather than 3♦ to avoid showing extra values. This seems very wrong to me. In my partnerships, we play that 3♦ in this auction suggests either extra values or extra shape.

I have gotten this far into the column before answering what some people think is a simple opinion question. That will teach you to ask Jerry.

Holding the hand you presented, opening 2♠ would be the only action I would seriously consider. Throw in the ♠10 and ♠9 and the ♣10 and ♣9, and I might open either 3♠ or 4♠!

Opening 1♠ with only one quick trick has no appeal to me whatsoever, which actually renders the whole discussion above about high reverses rather pointless, huh?

The old conservative "rules" for opening weak two-bids have been generally cast aside by the newer

kamikaze style. Opening this hand 2♠ seems relatively mild – almost conservative – compared to some of the actions I have witnessed lately.

I suppose I could have just said 2♠ to begin with. ■

East hands for the December Bidding Box

Bid these hands with a partner. The West hands are on page 47. The North-South players are silent unless otherwise noted. Scores on page 36-39.

Problem 1. North deals. None vul.

♠Q ♥7 ♦A K Q 9 6 ♣K Q J 10 7 5

Problem 2. East deals. N-S vul.

♠A 3 ♥10 8 6 5 ♦J 8 6 4 2 ♣K 4

Problem 3. South deals. E-W vul.

♠7 6 4 ♥10 3 ♦9 7 5 2 ♣A J 8 6

Problem 4. West deals. Both vul.

South overcalls 4♥ if possible.

♠J 10 8 7 ♥— ♦A Q J 6 5 3 ♣10 8 2

Problem 5. North deals. N-S vul.

♠J 5 2 ♥A ♦A Q 10 8 ♣A Q J 9 3

Problem 6. East deals. E-W vul.

♠5 ♥Q 9 7 ♦A Q 10 9 7 6 ♣Q 6 2

Problem 7. South deals. Both vul.

♠A 10 6 ♥K J ♦7 5 ♣A 10 8 7 4 3

Problem 8. West deals. None vul.

North overcalls 2♣.

♠9 6 ♥K 5 ♦10 8 7 3 2 ♣9 8 6 2