

September 2020 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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Page 47, Jerry Helms, Ask Jerry – *When a 1N response is unbalanced*

In response to a reader's question about a poor result on a 1N contract, Helms discusses what partner is promising with a 1N response. The North hand below opened a spade, South bid 1N and there they played.

♠ Q 7 6 4 3 ♥ K 10 ♦ K 4 ♣ A 8 6 3
♠ 2 ♥ Q J 9 6 5 2 ♦ A 6 3 2 ♣ 7 5


Playing Standard American, a two-over-one response promises at least 10 points (some players promise 11). When partner opens 1S and responder holds fewer than 10 points, his choices are limited to 2S or 1N. A 2S call would promise three spades, so 1N it is. This bid says nothing about the shape of responder's hand. If they were playing 2/1, responder would need a game-forcing hand (not just 10 or 11 points) to bid anything but 2S or 1N.

Opener should realize that responder's options are limited and bid 2C, showing his second suit. The 2C bid gives responder a chance to show his own suit. In this case, responder would bid 2H. After 1N has been bid, 2H is not forcing.

The auctions below indicate that responder is not strong enough to make a two-level bid:

- **1C – 1NT:** Responder can bid any suit he wants. So, the 1NT bid guarantees a flat hand. Opener should feel free to pass with a poor hand.
- **1D – 1NT:** Responder can bid any suit but clubs. So, most of the time he will have a flat hand. The opener can pass with a poor hand, although there are times a diamond contract is best. Who wants to play diamonds, anyway?
- **1H – 1NT:** Now responder is limited to 2H, 1S or 1NT. So, there is a reasonable chance that responder has a shapely hand with one or both minors. It is dangerous for opener to pass this auction, although not as dangerous as passing the 1S – 1NT auction.

Page 48, Mike Lawrence, Mike's Bridge Lesson – Avoiding danger

♠ 8 2	♠ Q J 3 ♥ 4 3 ♦ A K 7 2 ♣ K Q J 4	♠ A 10 9
♥ K Q 10 7 5 2		♥ 9 6
♦ J 10	♠ K 7 6 5 4	♦ 9 6 5 3
♣ 9 8 7	♥ A J 8	♣ A 6 5 3
	♦ Q 8 4	
	♣ 10 2	
West	North	East
2♥	Dbl	Pass
Pass	4♠	3♠
	All Pass	

West leads the HK and East starts a high-low with the 9. Now what?

If South wins the HA, he will go down. This is what will happen:

First scenario: try to ruff a heart in dummy.

South leads a spade to the Queen. East wins and returns a heart. West wins the heart and returns a third heart. Since East will overruff the S3, declarer will have to ruff high in dummy or lose two spades. Ruffing high sets up one of East's spades. Down 1: defense takes two spades, a heart and the CA.

Second scenario: try to establish the clubs to discard a heart

South leads a club to drive out the CA. East will win the CA and return a heart. West will win and play a third heart. Down 1, just like the first scenario.

South can see the ruff coming as West opened a weak 2H showing six hearts. Since North/South have five hearts, East can have only two.

So, South should duck the heart. West will not continue hearts, as he doesn't want to play away from his Q into the AJ. After South wins the non-heart return, he has time to pull trump. When West gets in with the SA and returns a heart, South can win the ace and finish pulling trump. Then he can set up the clubs to discard a heart.

Yes, it is necessary that East hold the CA, so that West doesn't get in to cash a heart. But the odds are that it is the partner of the weak 2H opener who has the outside ace, not the weak 2H opener himself.

Page 56, Mike Lawrence, Mike's Advice – *When in danger*

♠ 7 ♥ 97 ♦ AK1032 ♣ Q10653			
♠ Q9653 ♥ KJ52 ♦ 98 ♣ A7	N W — ○ — E S	♠ 104 ♥ A1043 ♦ 7654 ♣ 982	
♠ AKJ82 ♥ Q86 ♦ QJ ♣ KJ4			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	2NT
All Pass			3NT

North's 2S bid was minor-suit Stayman. South 2N denies a four-card minor. North's 3S bid showed shortness in spades. Spades is South's favorite, so he bids 3 NT.

West led the S5.

Hearts are a problem. Unless both the ace and king of hearts are in front of our queen, it looks like we are goners. However, if we can deceive the defense into thinking they should continue to attack spades – they can't see through the cards – we have a shot.

The first thing we do is win the opening spade lead with the king! Playing the king makes it look like we don't have the jack (or we would have won the trick more cheaply). But it also makes it look like we don't hold the ace. In this situation, a good declarer would hold up the ace if it were his only stopper in the suit. Playing the king implies that we are taking it while we can, so it doesn't fall to "their" supposed ace.

Usually we like to run our long suit, and make the defense discard, but not in this case. If we let the defense discard, they will have an opportunity to signal. And if they signal, they will switch to hearts. We immediately lead clubs, hoping that, after they win the CA, they will continue spades. Maybe they will.