

# ASK JERRY

BY JERRY HELMS



*Well-known teacher and player Jerry Helms answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to [askjerry@jerryhelms.com](mailto:askjerry@jerryhelms.com).*



*Dear Jerry: What are your feelings about playing constructive major-suit raises?*

—Bob G.

DEAR BOB: Constructive raises as suggested in *2/1 Game Force* by Max Hardy are played as follows: A single raise of a major-suit opening requires trump support plus 8 to 10 points. With support and 6 or 7 points, first bid 1NT (forcing) followed by supporting partner's suit.

It is probably best that I restrain myself from expressing my true feelings about this agreement. Years ago, I was fortunate to be on an American Bridge Teachers panel with Hardy, who despite having championed this style of raise earlier in his career, acknowledged that strict adherence was probably a mistake.

Say your partner opens 1♠ and you hold:

♠KQJ ♥94 ♦8742 ♣9653

I cannot imagine any system that would suggest that an immediate raise would be inappropriate. What you don't want is to bid 1NT so that your left-hand opponent can overcall 2♥. Being a simple soul, I adhere to the Roth-Stone-ism, "Support with support." Playing constructive raises, when an auction starts:

OPENER	RESPONDER (you)
1♠	1NT (forcing)
2♣	2♣

is opener to assume you have 6 or 7 points with three trumps? What would you do with 8 or 9 points

and a doubleton spade? The auction would be identical, yet opener would have no clue as to the length of your actual support. Certainly, judgment is always desirable. With:

♠874 ♥J75 ♦QJ5 ♣Q863

I would respond 1NT, and then take a preference back to partner's major. That's because to me, this hand filled with "quacks," i.e., queens and jacks, is so bad that I would like to slow partner down by making him think I have only doubleton support.

With honor-third of partner's major, I raise directly with 6 to 10 points. With three woeful trumps and an otherwise bad hand, I first bid 1NT, and then give delayed support.

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"BEING A SIMPLE SOUL, I ADHERE TO THE ROTH-STONE-ISM, 'SUPPORT WITH SUPPORT.'"



*Dear Jerry: In a recent lecture, you mentioned offensive values versus defensive values. Could you clarify?*

—Janelle

DEAR JANELLE: Think of offense as when your team has the ball, and defense when the opponents have it. Consider:

♠32 ♥QJ10987 ♦QJ109 ♣5

This hand provides excellent offensive values if your side were to declare a heart contract. If your partner tabled as little as:

♠654 ♥32 ♦432 ♣76432

you would be a favorite to take six tricks in a heart contract. Defensively, if these were the two hands, the opponents could likely take 13 tricks in spades or notrump. Depending on your partnership style and the vulnerability, I would consider this to be a normal weak-two bid or reasonable weak jump overcall. Now consider:

♠AJ2 ♥Q5432 ♦Q32 ♣K2

Despite having twice the high-card points, this hand is far better suited for defense than offense. Opposite the previous pointless dummy, in a heart contract, your offensive prospects are dismal at best. Defensively, if the opponents declare, you have the potential of taking two spade tricks, one club trick and perhaps some tricks from the red queens. Once again, depending on your partnership style, this is a marginal 1♥ opening bid, or one-level overcall, but not even close to a two-level overcall.

Recognition of offensive strength should prompt you to bid aggressively despite the absence of high-card strength.

Any time you have length in a suit that partner has shown length in, your defense is negated, and your offense inflated. With fitting offensive cards, always look for reasons to bid before settling for excuses to pass. With balanced hands, and poor intermediate cards, be aware that your hand is more defensive than offensive.

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