



# Ask Jerry

Jerry Helms

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Dear Jerry,

In a recent game, my partner was very upset when I passed what she thought was a strength-showing reverse bid. The auction:

Partner	North	Me	South
1♣	1♠	Dbl	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

My hand:

♠Q7 ♥K964 ♦J873 ♣K87.

Partner's hand:

♠65 ♥A ♦AKQ5 ♣A96542.

After clubs broke 2-2, partner rapidly claimed 11 tricks and accused me of not appreciating the strength of her "reverse" and the power of my fitting diamond and club cards. What am I missing?

Joe S.

Hi Joe,

The only thing I can tell that you are missing is a partner who understands negative doubles! After a negative double, the opening bidder should always act as if responder has bid both of the unbid suits simultaneously.

Your partner's bid of 2♦ describes a minimum-value simple "raise" of your implied diamond suit. A typical hand might be:

♠653 ♥Q ♦K965 ♣AQJ106.

□ On the actual hand your partner held, even a non-forcing jump "raise"

to 3♦, showing 16-18 dummy points, would be considered by many a slight underbid. The other option would be to first cuebid 2♠, setting up a game force, followed by "raising" diamonds.

In retrospect, methinks you personally missed very little on this deal.

Dear Jerry,

My new duplicate bridge partner wants to use "weak" overcalls, i.e., overcalling at the one level with about 9 points and at least a five-card suit. This bothers me because, as my partner acknowledges, his overcall could be for anywhere from 9 points to (say) 19, and the problem I see is knowing how to respond to such a wide range.

I would prefer to overcall only with at least an opening bid, 12 or 13 points and up, or to make a weak-two or three-bid with 9 or more points and a six- or seven-card suit, where your partner knows within a narrow range what you have.

What's your opinion of the weak overcall at the one level that my partner wants to use?

John from VA

Hi John,

Sadly, I must side with your partner on this issue, as do most experienced duplicate players. For starters, it is important to understand the threefold function of a simple overcall:

1. To announce a desire to contest the auction.
2. To suggest an opening lead should the opponents buy the contract.
3. As an old friend of mine once said, "To mess 'em up!"

Consider the following hand:

♠AKJ106 ♥92 ♦764 ♣532.

Your right-hand opponent opens

1♣. One of my theories is that when you know what partner should lead, tell him. If the final contract is played by the opponents, clearly a spade lead is desirable. If partner has a smattering of values, competing in the spade suit seems very reasonable. If partner does not hold values, and you are in trouble, the quality of your suit often makes it difficult for the opponents to diagnose it and double. And by bidding 1♠, LHO can no longer respond 1♦ or 1♥, or even 1NT when holding a balanced 8 or 9 points that lacks a spade stopper. In short, this hand covers all three bases mentioned above, making it a clear decision.

Although you may tire of my "Jerry-isms," the appropriate one here is:

**Look for reasons to bid before finding excuses to pass.**