



Ask Jerry

Jerry Helms

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Dear Jerry,

I enjoy reading your column in the *Bridge Bulletin* each month.

At a recent duplicate game, I held this hand in fourth seat after three passes:

♠J ♥108752 ♦AKQ8 ♣Q54.

I passed. I didn't have enough Pearson points, the heart suit was pathetic (and not what I would want my partner to lead if left-hand opponent ended up playing the hand) and spades looked like a real threat. Two players at the table disagreed and thought the hand should be opened.

Your opinion, please.
Sheila

Hi Sheila,

Pearson points (also known as the Rule of 15) applies primarily to close decisions on whether or not to open in fourth seat. It works like this: Add your high-card values to your spade length. If the total is 15 or greater, open.

Your hand is a good test case. Personally, I think your decision to pass was very reasonable. Despite your 12 high-card points, there are 12 spades and 28 points out there somewhere. If the opponents — who rate to hold nearly half the deck in high-card values — have them, I don't want to get into a partscore battle. If partner holds spades, I don't particularly want to encourage him to bid them. Bottom line: Wherever the spades are, I'm not going to like it!

In addition, the problem you mentioned about a possible heart lead from partner should you choose to open 1♥ is right on target.

It is my best guess that the criticism you received at the table came from your opponents for your decision to pass (which garnered a good result for you and a bad result for them) or from a partner who held the appropriate passed hand to make a plus score a certainty on this deal. Sigh. I have often told people that I think I am one of the world's great bridge analysts ... right after I have seen all four hands! On this deal, I am certain of that.

Continue to follow your instincts. They seem very good to me. □