



Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

My right-hand opponent opened 1♥. We were vulnerable, they were not. My hand:

♠A J 10 4 3 2 ♥8 4 ♦Q 6 ♣10 6 2

I wanted to bid, but I thought my hand wasn't strong enough for a simple overcall and too balanced for a weak jump overcall. So I passed. LHO bid 1NT, and RHO jumped to 3NT. After a club lead, they took the first 10 tricks. Obviously I was wrong to pass, because a spade lead would defeat 3NT. What should I have done?

PM

to bid before settling for an excuse to pass. Apparently, your partnership had filled out the convention card with a range that did not dip quite this far. If so, get over it! A simple overcall at the one level *suggests* 8 or more points, and *suggests* the presence of outside defense in addition to a reasonable quality suit. Change your holding to:

♠A Q J 10 4 3 ♥8 4 ♦6 2 ♣10 6 2

and it becomes more a matter of partnership style. The maniacal sorts who disdain vulnerability considerations would bid 2♠ automatically. Many experts would choose 1♠ if vulnerable, and bid 2♠ only at favorable. Once again, some spade bid — *any* spade bid — is preferable to passing.

In all likelihood, had you overcalled 1♠ or 2♠, it is improbable that LHO would respond 1NT, since apparently their spade stopper was in RHO's hand. It is possible that your action may have prevented the opponents from reaching a notrump game or, if they did, it would have been played by RHO and they may still have taken nine or more tricks. Since you failed to bid, we'll never really know.

I have been on record many times in these articles touting the virtues of "finding reasons to bid before excuses to pass." Bridge expert David Berkowitz summed it up a little differently: "You never give the opponents a problem when you say pass." □

Dear PM

Bid!

When I had approximately 50 masterpoints under my belt, I was fortunate enough to become a frequent teammate of William B. Woodson, who was an extraordinary card player and creator of the Woodson Electronic Bidding System and Two-Way Notrump. Among other things, Bill helped me more fully appreciate the importance of the spade suit. In his system, as dealer, holding:

♠5 4 3 2 ♥A K Q J 8 3 ♦Q 5 ♣4

the Electronic Bidding System suggested opening bid was 1♠! Over the top? Yes, and not a system that I would recommend, but the point is that the spade suit is very important. Incidentally, Woodson was one of the best declarers I have ever had the privilege to be around. Perhaps the possible shortcomings of his system helped develop his expert play.

My point is that when holding such a strong spade suit, look for a reason