



Ask Jerry

BY JERRY HELMS www.jerryhelms.com

Dear Jerry,

I had this hand at our regular duplicate game today:

♠J ♥AJ4 ♦A10983 ♣AK74.

The bidding went:

<i>Me</i>		<i>Partner</i>	
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	All Pass		

2♣ making five! Half of the field

was in a notrump game making three or four, and some were in 5♣.

Partner gave me 100% of the blame for not finding a more original and forcing rebid like 2NT or 3♣ instead of 2♣.

His hand:

♠AK107 ♥Q85 ♦72 ♣10863.

Must I really bear all the blame?

Presumed guilty,
Roger Dunn, Montreal QC

Hi, Roger,

The title of a novel by John Grisham would more accurately reflect my opinion of the degree of blame on this issue: "Presumed Innocent"!

In a majority of suit auctions, the most important bid is the third one! Consider how little information is provided by the first two bids. 1♦ shows three or more diamonds, usually four or more (more than 95% of the time, if all of the statisticians who assaulted one of my previous utterances on this topic are correct), with 12–21 points, balanced or unbalanced. The 1♠ response shows four or more spades, 6 or more points, balanced or unbalanced.

At this point, neither player has done anything definitively to bracket his values to a meaningful level. In auctions such as this, the opening bidder's next call becomes critical. Consider the following auctions:

<i>Opener</i>	<i>Responder</i>
1♦	1♠
2♠/3♠/4♠	
1♦	1♠
2♦/3♦	
1♦	1♠
1NT/2NT	

In each case, opener has limited his values to a range of no more than 3 points and has effectively designated his partner captain for the remainder of the auction. Let's get back to your auction of 1♦–1♠; 2♣.

This "third-suit rebid" defines opener's hand as somewhere between the worst possible opening bid up to values not quite enough for a game-forcing jump shift. Therefore, 12–18 points. Although this rebid is not forcing, responder should be aware that opener could hold a near jump shift, and should strain to find a second bid, holding as much as 8 or 9 points.

Your hand was nowhere near a game force, and 2♣ would be the only action I would consider. Responder, with 9 HCP and four-card club support, has a simple raise to 3♣. If you are minimum, you will know what to do. If you have extras, you will also know what to do. On this hand, 3NT would be a fairly routine conclusion. ■