



Ask Jerry

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Dear Jerry,

Perhaps this is a Dear Abby question, but maybe you could provide some bridge insight. I have started playing with a good player who is absolutely set in his bidding methods. Among other things, he refuses to play Drury. I can live with that. He insists that a 1NT opening bid must never contain a five-card major ... harder to live with. These two stipu-

lations are just the tip of the iceberg. Should I simply abide by his constraints or seek another partner?

Thanks, Brenda

Hi, Brenda,

With my dual role as a player and teacher, I often provide psychological insights to students and sponsors, so I do not view your question as out of my realm.

In one of his books, published in 1950, Charles Goren essentially addressed your issue. Goren wrote that a player who aspired to improve his game would be foolish to stick with the bidding methods of the early 1940s, and he offered this analogy: A person considering an extended airplane trip would be foolish to fly in a plane built prior to 1943 because of the incredible technological changes offered by machines built closer to 1950.

If he thought bidding methods had changed that greatly in the span of approximately 10 years, what do you think has occurred in the last 64? Or perhaps more importantly, what does your partner think? Then again, I guess we know what he thinks!

When doing seminars involving play techniques, I point out that a great card player from many years ago would be a great card player today. Then as now, an ace beats a king, ruffing losers in the short hand produces extra tricks, a well-thought-out endplay is good technique, etc.

Bidding, on the other hand, has changed drastically over the years, and generally for the better. A great card player from many years ago would not fare well in today's competitive world of bridge because of his antiquated bidding methods.

Although I strongly believe that card play is more important than bidding, bidding does matter. I do not suggest adding any conventional bid or treatment until you see the advantage to replacing a natural call with an artificial one. On just the two issues you mentioned: As a firm believer in active third-seat opening bids, some form of Drury is important in my partnerships.

In addition, I cannot understand the logic in refusing to open a strong notrump holding, something like:

♠ Q J ♥ K J 10 6 4 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ K 10 3.

Always planning a second bid before choosing an opening bid is key to good bidding. On this hand, anticipating a possible 1♠ response to a 1♥ opening makes 1NT a much better place to start.

If your partner is truly inflexible, you have a decision to make. Weigh the benefits of your friendship versus your desire to move forward with your bridge game. If it is possible to gracefully exit your current partnership and begin to play with others with similar goals and skills, then it is likely time to move on. ■