



# Ask Jerry

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In the last issue, I examined this auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
1♦	1♥
4♥	

Opener's leap to game describes a semi-balanced 19–20 points and four-card trump support. This descriptive action is definitely not a “close-out bid,” because the values in responder's hand have yet to be limited. Responder may choose to pass, bid Blackwood or initiate a control-bidding sequence.

The confusion arises with a similar sounding, but vastly different auction.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
1♥	4♥

The opening bidder has shown at least five hearts with 12–20 high-card points. Here, *responder's* leap to the four level describes a *weak* distributional hand, typically with at least

five-card support and fewer than 6 or 7 points. It's the type of action that I refer to as “constructively obstructive.” Here are a few typical hands for this action following a 1♠ opening:

♠K 8 7 3 2	♥6	♦Q 8 6 3 2	♣9 7
♠J 8 7 6 5 4	♥8	♦Q J 10 3 2	♣8
♠9 8 5 4 2	♥—	♦7 5 4 3 2	♣5 4 2

The consistent element in each hand is five-card or longer trump support with a singleton or void. Lest you think I've taken complete leave of my senses with the third hand, let's look at how it fares across the table from an average 1♠ opening bid.

♠K Q 7 6 3	♥J 9 4	♦A Q 8 6	♣7
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Opposite the last example, declarer would be a strong favorite to make 4♠, likely losing a spade, a diamond and a club.

On the flip side, consider how many hearts the opponents can make. Because we have 10 spades, they have only three, and one of them holds the

ace. So they have no spade losers. They have no heart losers, no club losers and at most, two diamond losers. This translates into at least 11 tricks for their side. Granted, I created the perfect example to illustrate my point, but the fact remains that while responder has a hand with a tremendous amount of offensive potential, he has nothing to offer in the way of defense.

In my seminars I try to illustrate this point with the following exercise. Each table is instructed to create an opening bid of 1♠ that can be anywhere from a dead minimum up to a maximum opening one-bid. They turn this hand face down, then create a second hand that has 0–5 HCP, five or more spades and a side-suit singleton or void. At this point, both hands are placed face up on the table, and the assignment is to predict how many tricks can be taken with spades as trump. They then predict how many tricks the opponents can take playing in their longest trump fit.

For many, the results are surprising. Sometimes we can make 4♠, but in those instances when we can't, the opponents are often cold for at least game and sometimes slam.

This constructively obstructive action by responder is intended as close-out. If, however, opener holds an exceptionally strong, distributional hand, he is permitted to continue bidding. To do so, however, opener needs an abundance of what responder has made it clear he doesn't have: *controls* in the form of aces and kings. ■