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Newer Players

Ask Jerry

Dear Jerry,
Recently my partner and I had the following auction in a Swiss team game:

1♣	**1♥**
2♠	**All Pass**

With all suits behaving, 11 tricks in spades were routinely available. I thought I had made a forcing bid. My partner, who had responded with:

♠Q 5 4 2 ♥Q 8 6 5 ♦6 4 3 ♣8 3,

insisted that because I failed to open 2♣ that my bid showed a strong hand but was not forcing. One of us is right! By the way, I held:

♠A K 7 3 ♥7 ♦A 5 ♣A K J 9 5 2

Passed Out

Dear PO,
Let's start with a simple fact. A jumpshift by opener is not only forcing, it is game forcing. My guess is that your partner felt that perhaps he should have passed the first time, rather than taking the position to respond on his aceless 4-count. Before getting into the specifics of your auction, let me provide you with a principle that I strongly believe, sort of like a Jerry-ism:

It is OK to take one speculative position on a deal, but you should not take two speculative positions on the same deal.

Applying this to your auction, choosing to respond 1♥ rather than passing was a position, maybe even the same one I might have made. The next decision to pass a game-forcing bid was a second position on the same deal, which violates the principle. Your partner had two options in my opinion: 1) Pass the 1♣ opening bid, 2) Respond and then respect your game force. Once he chose to respond, he cannot pass your game-forcing jumpshift!

The comment about the requirement to open 2♣ to create a forcing situation doesn't really hold water. Essentially when you open 2♣ you are suggesting a hand so powerful that your partner might pass a one-level bid and there might still be a game. When you open one of a suit and partner chooses to respond, suggesting some values, your jumpshift says, in effect, "Now that I know that you have a little something, my hand is strong enough to command at least a game contract."

It is important to understand that the artificial 2♣ opening bid shows great strength but it does so at the expense of not showing any sense of direction. For this reason, experienced players try to *avoid* opening an artificial 2♣ bid on a distributional two- or three-suited hand pattern. Using your actual hand as an example, a 2♣ opening bid would be an overstatement of values and trick-taking potential. Once your partner opted to respond 1♥, theoretically showing at least 5 or 6 points, your hand was strong enough to insist on a game contract somewhere. With his actual holding, he should jump to 4♠ over your 2♠ jumpshift. The jump to game would be following the principle of fast arrival. Loosely, this means in any auction where the final contract must be *at least* game, the faster one of us bids to game, the less interest we express in going any higher. With a better responding hand, like:

♠Q J 4 2 ♥A K 6 5 ♦6 4 3 ♣Q 3,

a simple raise to 3♠ would be correct to show cooperative values. On this layout, assuming reasonable breaks, 13 tricks are likely.

I am on record that I tend to respond to an opening one-bid if I hold an ace and no other high-card points. If you held the same hand, and partner held as little as:

♠5 4 ♥A 8 6 5 2 ♦6 3 ♣8 7 6 3,

6♣ is an excellent contract!

I have committed many sins at the bridge table involving bidding and playing. I am however proud to say that I have never knowingly passed a forcing bid. ■