

Dear Billy



Billy Miller

Billy Miller will answer questions received via e-mail only at dearbilly@aol.com

Dear Billy,

This hand has been bothering me for days. Non-vulnerable vs. vulnerable, I dealt and held:

♠5 ♥QJ109 ♦6 ♣AKQ10984.

I bid 1♣. My left-hand opponent doubled. Partner bid 3♣. My right-hand opponent bid 3♥. I bid 4♣. LHO bid 4♥. Pass. Pass. 5♣ by me. 5♦ by LHO. Pass. 5♥ by RHO. Double by me. All pass.

Needless to say, 5♥ made. Partner felt I should not have doubled but simply should have let the opponents play. In view of the fact that I held two sure trump tricks and had a good chance of finding another defensive trick or two (possibly in spades), I thought the double was justified. What do you think?

Frustrated and
Disappointed
Princeton NJ

Dear Baffled,

Under normal circumstances, I would agree with you, but that did the 3♣ bid mean? I assume it showed a weak hand with long clubs.

If that's the case, this would negate your chances for any offense outside the heart suit. You may beat 5♥ on a tap-out but do not expect to cash anything on the outside.

Another clue that suggests they might make 5♥ is that partner failed to double 5♦. That says they rate to have an outside source

of tricks. Bad news for you.

If partner had doubled 5♦, then I would have doubled 5♥. Without that double, I'm taking out some insurance and opting for the very cheap save in 6♣.

Note: we will certainly be prepared if they try 6♥.

On this deal, you ignored the red flag waving.

✘ Dear Billy,

The following deal came up at the Sandestin FL regional. We were North-South playing 2/1 game force with Jacoby 2NT and splinters. North held

♠K10xxx ♥AKxx ♦— ♣AQJx and opened 1♠. South held ♠AQxx ♥x ♦AKxxx ♣Kxx and responded 4♥. Alerted as a splinter. North bid 5♣ and South bid 5♦. North, fearing the ♣K offside and a trump loser, bid 5♠. South passed.

Should North have bid 5♥ after South's 5♦? Should South have bid 6♠ after North's 5♠? An ace-asking sequence would have solved the problem, but it didn't seem appropriate with a void. Is there a better way to reach this lay-down grand slam?

Looking for
Better Bidding
Near The Gulf

Dear Explorer,

Learn from the past. Improve the future.

Consider limiting your splinter bids to 13-16 playing points in support of partner's major. If the hand exceeds this limitation, choose another course. With a defined limit, opener should be able to judge well regarding how high to take the hand.

Given that advice, responder should either make a 2/1 GF or use Jacoby 2NT, depending on what information he is trying to gather. With a relatively flat hand holding four good spades, using Jacoby 2NT seems fine. After

learning of diamond shortness, responder can continue with 3♠ to see if opener has anything else to say. Opener would rebid diamonds showing a void. Now responder can bid Blackwood, knowing that all the useful key cards will be in the other suits.

Opener will show that you have all the key cards — plus the ♥K, when asked. It's easy to see that a grand slam should make with reasonable breaks. Here's the auction:

North	South
1♠	2NT
3♦	3♠
4♦	4NT
5♣	5NT
6♥	7♠
Pass	

The 5♣ response shows zero or three key cards; 5NT confirms all the key cards plus the ♠Q; 6♥ shows the ♥K and denies any lower-ranking kings.

When both opener and responder have wide ranges, the auction is difficult to judge — particularly after taking up four levels of bidding. With defined ranges, it is much easier. Try it. □

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