



Billy Miller

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

Dear Billy

Dear Billy,

One aspect of bidding that is rarely discussed is the balancing notrump, *i.e.*, fourth hand balances with 1NT after an auction that begins: One of a suit-Pass-Pass-1NT.

I've seen experienced partnerships with mega-masterpoints not agree on the meaning of subsequent bids by the 1NT bidder's partner. Is 2♣ Stayman regardless of the opening bid or is it natural?

Or is only a cuebid of opener's suit Stayman? Are transfers on or off? What about the opponents' doubles? Are systems on or off?

I am an experienced player, but like most players, I rarely discuss these sequences with new or old partners. Please advise as to the preferred treatment.

What's the Deal?
Reno NV

Dear Wheeler Dealer,

You have hit upon an area that is certainly under-discussed among new and old partnerships. Allow me to provide a system for you to consider using. Here it goes.

When you balance over a minor, play 1NT shows 11 to 14 high-card points. **The range is wider over a major — 11 to 16 HCPs.** The reason is there is less room to operate over a major. Therefore, if you start with a double over a minor and rebid 1NT, that shows 15 to 17 HCPs.

Play that your systems are on, but over a major where the range is much wider, I play something called "Range Stayman."

Range Stayman is fairly easy to use and is quite logical, too. **After the 2♣ Range Stayman bid, responses at the two level are normal and show 11 to 13 HCPs.**

With a maximum 14 to 16 points, start by responding 2NT. This response simply shows the upper range. Now, partner can bid 3♣ if more Stayman is needed.

Try this gizmo out. You'll like it. Here is a sample auction:

West	North Partner	East	South You
1♠	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾
Pass	3♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass	3♥ ⁽⁴⁾
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

(1) Range Stayman.

(2) 14 to 16 HCP; says nothing about major-suit holdings.

(3) Still Stayman

(4) I have four hearts.

Dear Billy,

Can you please give me your opinion?

You hold:

♠K10943 ♥102 ♦983 ♣A43.

Here's the auction:

West	North Partner	East	South You
1♥	2♦	3♦	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5NT	Pass	6NT	Pass
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	

What do you lead?

Not Wanting to Be Led On
Wichita KS

Dear Born to Lead,

With all your stuff, it is hard to imagine them making this one, no matter what you lead.

It sounds as if your right-hand opponent has a heart fit and good diamonds for his ultimate 6NT call. He might have gotten nailed by his partner's 5NT bid — perhaps West was trying to show a diamond void and to compensate for some wasted values.

Had partner not doubled, he would expect you to lead a diamond. This double must be screaming for a heart lead, dummy's first-bid suit.

Notice that partner did not double either the 4♣ rebid or the 4♠ cuebid.

He should be thrilled with your outside stuff later, but my money is on a heart lead. □

Dear Billy,

North holds:

♠J10432 ♥10 ♦7 ♣AQ8743.

South is dealer and holds:

♠K8 ♥QJ4 ♦AK932 ♣K95.

South opens 1NT.

My convention card reads (responses to a 1NT opening):

3♣/3♦ = 6+/invite 3NT; 3♥/

3♠ = slam interest.

What do you think?

All or Nothing
Cyberspace

Dear Stop and Go,

Responder's hand is too shapely to invite game sensibly. You need to force to game, in turn showing both your spades and clubs.

Transfer to spades and rebid 3♣. If partner bids 3NT, pass

and hope he can run the clubs.

With 7 high-card points, you are not completely a goner. If partner goes back to 3♠, raise to four.

He will appreciate the confidence you show.

If he bids 3♦, he must love clubs or be worried about the other red suit. In that case, shoot out 5♣.

Bridge is an easy game.