

Claim with Colchamiro



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Mor(e)on Mel's Rule of 8 — part 1

Mel's Rule of 8 is used to decide whether to bid after a 15–17 INT opener on your right. It was previously discussed in the Oct. 2000 Bridge Bulletin. The rule doesn't advocate any particular convention. Rather it answers a different, more fundamental question: Should I bid at all?

To review, Mel's Rule of 8 suggests when you can compete over a strong INT opening on your right, but first:

1. Add the number of cards in your two longest suits.
2. Determine your loser count. To do this, in each three-card or longer suit, count one loser for each ace, king or queen you are missing. In a doubleton, only count the ace or king you are missing. In a singleton, only count the ace. There are other methods, but this is the one I use.
3. Subtract your loser count from the number of cards in your two longest suits.
4. If the number is one or less, then pass. If the number is two or more, usually bid.

You have to be sensible, though. You should have at least 6 high-card points.

The formula is: $2 + 6 = 8$, and, therefore, it's called The Rule of 8.

For example, with:

♠Q9863 ♥Q7432 ♦4 ♣82,

you should pass. You have the "2" part (you have 10 cards in your two longest suits, you have seven losers, so subtracting seven from 10, you get three which is greater than the magic number two), but you have only 4 HCP.

This hand is an example of the minimum you should bid with:

♠K8542 ♥K9765 ♦4 ♣76.

Some people will say to you, "only a moron" would enter the auction after a strong INT opening with six points. They may be right, but only if you take it too far.

Don't be a moron

Here's my suggestion: When you have minimum HCPs, before you bid, consider these questions. Are your honor cards in your long suits (good), or in your short suits (bad)? Are your honor cards connected to each other (good), or are they isolated in separate suits (bad)?

Compare these two hands:

♠K9743 ♥QJ843 ♦73 ♣3

versus

♠Q9743 ♥98432 ♦K3 ♣J.

They both have 6 HCP, and they both satisfy Mel's Rule of 8. You should bid with the first hand, however, and not the second. Why? In the second, your ♦K is in your short suit, your ♣J is worthless, and all your honors are isolated. At least in the first hand, the ♥QJ support each other and your ♠K is in your long suit where it can help the lower cards develop into tricks.

Mel's Rule of 8 quiz.

The person on your right opens INT (15–17) with none vulnerable. Should you bid?

1. ♠A9843 ♥K842 ♦K2 ♣76.
2. ♠AQ3 ♥KJ87 ♦KJ4 ♣Q73.
3. ♠A ♥98643 ♦Q8743 ♣53.
4. ♠4 ♥AK653 ♦K7632 ♣32.

5. ♠J873 ♥Q9863 ♦AK ♣64.
6. ♠AJ83 ♥KQ853 ♦84 ♣83.
7. ♠8 ♥Q8743 ♦K973 ♣Q74.

Answers to Quiz

1. Yes. Show the majors.
2. No. Despite holding 16 HCP, pass. Even if your system allows you to make a penalty double, don't do it. You need tricks, not points.
3. No. With very minimal points, have a good minimum. This is a bad minimum.
4. Yes. This is a solid hand.
5. Yes, but I wouldn't be so surprised if it were wrong. You have too much stuff in your short suits, but your overall values are okay.
6. Yes. Show the majors
7. No! It satisfies the Rule of 8, but puh-lease!

Next month, I'll discuss how vulnerability affects the Rule of 8. □

My first book, How You Can Play Like An Expert (Without Having To Be One), has great winning tips, Zia, Catherine Zeta-Jones and much more! It's available at my website: www.melbridge.com (lots of free stuff, too) or e-mail me at mcolch@optonline.net.