

Claim with Colchamiro



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Got the horse right here

The title refers to the well-known Broadway show-tune lyrics: "Got the horse right here, his name is Paul Revere." It opens "Fugue for Tinhorns," one of the many familiar songs from *Guys and Dolls*. Just like the horse-players and gamblers from *Guys and Dolls*, bridge players sometimes have to "pay your money and take your chances."

Trifecta of bad choices

Suppose you have the following:

♠3 ♥A 9 6 ♦Q 7 6 2 ♣A K 8 7 3.

This is an awkward hand to bid because of the potential rebid problems. There are three possible approaches, and each of them is flawed. Let's assume you open 1♣ and partner responds 1♠, the most likely bid. You could:

- ❖ Open 1♣ and rebid 2♣
- ❖ Open 1♣ and rebid 1NT
- ❖ Open 1♦ and rebid 2♣

If you choose 1♣, then 2♣, partner would presume that you have six clubs. She might overvalue her ♣Q 5, and suggest notrump, hoping for six club tricks. For example, partner

might rebid 2NT with:

♠K 9 8 7 4 ♥Q J 5 ♦K 9 5 ♣Q 5,

and 2NT would be a precarious contract. Opposite that responder hand, a 1NT rebid would work better because responder, with her 11 high-card points, might pass opposite opener's 12-14.

Those who try the 1♦-2♣ approach, would find themselves in the same 2NT soup. In fact, in some cases they could land in 3♦ if responder makes a jump preference:

West	East
1♦	1♠
2♣	3♦

Remember, partner will usually presume you have five diamonds and four clubs for this auction.

On the other hand, rebidding 1NT works poorly if the responder holds:

♠J 10 8 7 5 4 ♥K Q 5 ♦A J ♣Q 5.

Many players would jump to 4♠ after a 1NT rebid, assuming partner had at least two spades. Of course, 3NT would be a much better contract, more easily reachable after a 1♣-2♣ or a 1♦-2♣ start.

The 1♦-2♣ approach has its moments, too. Suppose the responder's hand this time is:

♠A 8 7 5 4 ♥8 7 4 3 ♦K J 5 ♣6.

This auction:

West	East
1♦	1♠
2♣	2♦
Pass	

would probably win the day.

Place your bets

So which approach works best? Ask different experts and you'll get different answers. I usually place my bet

on the 1♣-and-1NT-rebid horse. I like that approach best because:

1. It defines my point count accurately: 12-14.
2. It doesn't give partner a false sense of my trick-taking ability for notrump.
3. It keeps the bidding low.

The bet I like the least is the one on the 1♦-and-2♣-rebid horse. Why?

1. You can't play 1NT when that is right.
2. You don't define your points. Opener's rebid in a lower ranking suit has a wide range (11-18 HCPs).
3. You get to an inferior contract sometimes when your partner takes a preference to 2♦ with a weak tripleton and your four-card diamond suit is weak, or you get to a disastrous contract when partner takes a preference to 2♦ on a doubleton.
4. You sometimes miss a big heart fit.

My second choice is opening 1♣ and rebidding 2♣ — at least it defines your HCPs and gives you a fair chance of staying low.

So, when the "horses" come down the stretch, I'm rooting for "Rebid 1NT" on the rail, hoping to hold off "Diamonds First" or "Clubs Twice." But, like at the track, no matter whom you bet on, there's no sure thing. □

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 web site: www.melbridge.com (lots of free stuff, too) or e-mail me at mcolch@optonline.net.