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Claim with Colchamiro

Strike three

Recently, I played at a local club. A fairly new player was playing with Chip, a 92-year-old who reminds me of Jim Anderson (Robert Young) of *Father Knows Best*, the TV show that ran from 1954 until 1960. Chip's partner held this hand:

♠KQ986 ♥8 ♦AKJ1054 ♣3.

This was the bidding:

<i>New player</i>	<i>Chip</i>
1♠ ⁽¹⁾	2♣
3♦ ⁽²⁾	3NT
4♣ ⁽³⁾	Pass (!)

Let's look at some of the things that were wrong with this auction:

- (1) With six diamonds and five spades, it is normal to open 1♦ and then to bid and rebid spades. Bidding spades twice as the second suit shows five cards, and six or more diamonds. Strike one.
- (2) 3♦ is a jump shift, which by opener shows 19–21 high-card points after a one-over-one response — it's forcing to game. But, after a 2/1 response, there is no need for the opener to jump. The expert community recommends that a jump shift by the opener — the 3♦ bid — is a splinter bid. It shows a singleton or

void in diamonds and a big fit for responder's clubs. In the above auction, 3♦ might have been bid holding:

♠AK986 ♥K83 ♦5 ♣K763.

Strike two.

- (3) The new player meant 4♣ as Gerber, and Chip should not have passed. Then again, Chip is 92, and I cut a little slack to anyone with 92 trips around the track. The 4♣ call is natural, shows club support and makes the responder (Chip) the captain. The captain decides whether to ask for key cards.

The new player pontificated condescendingly: "The 4♣ bid was Gerber because 4NT would be quantitative (following a natural notrump bid). Thus, we have two bids: 4NT quantitative and 4♣ to ask for aces."

The part about 4NT being quantitative is true, but the part about 4♣ being Gerber is false. This situation is typical of bullies — the player with the stronger personality berating the weaker. It pained me because Chip — ever the gentleman — took his punishment with his sad, life-weary eyes staring back gently and silently saying "I'm sorry." The combination of it all meant a big strike three.

Why 4♣ over 3NT is not Gerber

Should the new player have been asking for aces after the 3NT bid? The answer is no — 3NT gave the new player no new information.

If the opener had a big two-suiter (like he actually did), then he should bid 4♦ over 3NT. If the new player had held a self-sufficient spade suit and was heading towards 6♠, he

should have jumped to 3♠ after 2♣ (instead of introducing diamonds). And, if he had club support and was heading towards slam in clubs, then he should supported over 2♣.

The bottom line is this: 4♣ is Gerber only when it follows a natural notrump bid and is a jump.

Gerber or not Gerber?

1. 1NT 4♣

This is Gerber. He could have:

♠Q2 ♥AQ4 ♦KQJ873 ♣K3

2. 1♣ 1♥
1NT 4♣

This is Gerber. He could have:

♠KQ4 ♥KQJ1087 ♦2 ♣AJ3

3. 1♠ 2♥
3NT (15–17) 4♣

This is not Gerber. He could have:

♠3 ♥AKJ87 ♦J3 ♣KQ1053

4. *Partner* *Opponent* *You*
1NT 2♠ 4♣

This is Gerber. He could have:

♠7 ♥KJ3 ♦AKJ873 ♣K98

5. *Partner* *Opponent* *You*
1NT 3♥ 4♣

This is not Gerber. He could have:

♠K43 ♥— ♦A874 ♣KQ9843

6. 1♦ 1♥
2♣ 3NT
4♣

This is not Gerber. He could have:

♠73 ♥7 ♦AK874 ♣AKQ84

7. 2NT 3♣
3♥ 4♣

This is not Gerber. He could have:

♠K643 ♥Q54 ♦3 ♣AJ984