

Mike's Bridge Lesson

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Rule of 20 continued

Here are some more hands to consider in the context of the discussion of the rule of 20.

♠82 ♥J762 ♦9 ♣AKQ1053

This "20-point" hand is different. If you open 1♣ and the opponents compete, you are not likely to be able to contribute meaningful bids later. It is also possible that your heart suit will be lost along the way. Passing and bidding, as often is the case, offers better chances. Or, if you would like to mix it up, open with 3♣. Do not, however, open 1♣.

♠5 ♥QJ76 ♦QJ3 ♣AJ763

You have 11 HCP this time, and you have nine cards in clubs and hearts. A fine "20-point" opener, except for the fact that the shape is dangerous. If you open 1♣ and partner bids hearts, terrific. If he bids spades, not so terrific. Far better to pass. As often happens, passing

may give you the chance to make a descriptive takeout double.

♠KQ ♥KQ2 ♦Q653 ♣9653

Now you have 12 HCP and two four-card suits. This is not an example that many use to show how "20" works, but it is in that family. Is it an opening bid? I certainly hope not. This is a pathetic 12 HCP with no aces and nothing resembling a suit.

♠A ♥KQ73 ♦K1053 ♣7542

Finally, a good 12-point hand, but still a good pass because it offers no safety in the bidding. If you open 1♦ and partner bids the expected 1♠, your choices are to rebid INT, not a terrible thing in general, or to rebid 2♣, a truly awful choice.

Here is some advice: If you have a hand that seems to be an opener, if using the 20-point rule, consider these things:

Is my shape going to give me easy

rebids?

Are my values quality points or are they junk?

Do I have any defensive values?

Should I preempt instead of opening at the one level?

Frankly, the big majority of "20-point" hands fail at least one of these four questions.

For those who like rules, the rule of 20 is a step in a useful direction. Here's a better idea: Change the rule of 20 to the rule of 21 and a half.

You will have to use your judgment as to what constitutes a "half" point, but having 10s and 9s in your long suits is a good start. Read on for how a simple adjustment can change a non-opener to an opener.

Change

♠AQ764 ♥4 ♦43 ♣A8764
to

♠AQJ76 ♥4 ♦43 ♣A10964

and you have a fine opening bid. You have defense, two quality suits, and you have increased the chances of making a game in one of your suits or even in notrump.

Change

♠8 ♥K8 ♦K8765 ♣KJ942
to

♠8 ♥A8 ♦K10874 ♣KJ984

and you have a hand with some defense and better spots in your long suits.

Change

♠7 ♥AQJ765 ♦K764 ♣94
to

♠7 ♥AKJ765 ♦K1076 ♣94

Your heart suit is better and the diamonds rate to be easier to play now that you have the ♦10 to work with. □

National 199er Pairs

Two longtime friends who have been playing bridge only about 18 months put together two solid sessions to narrowly win the National 199er Pairs at the Washington DC NABC by half a matchpoint. The winners are Roy (Tony) Robson of Arlington VA and Ken Marshall of Winchester VA.

They finished just ahead of runners-up Nick Trobovic of Belmar NJ and Richard Malus of Leonardo NJ.

National 199er Pairs

1. Kenneth Marshall, Winchester VA – Roy Robson, Arlington VA	61.90%
2. Nick Trobovic, Belmar NJ – Richard Malus, Leonardo NJ	61.76%
3. Kathryn Luft, Yorba Linda CA – Max Aeschbacher, Salt Lake City UT	58.78%
4. Mary Evangelisto – Carl Pfeiffer, Holland PA	57.59%
5. Gary Hinson, Springfield VA – Bruce Kasold, Alexandria VA	57.44%
6. Gary Cox, Georgetown TX – Shyamalendu Pal, Silver Spring MD	57.23%
7. Barry Dehlin, Dresher PA – Frank Aftowicz, Novato CA	56.87%