

THE ACES ON BRIDGE BOBBY WOLFF

Dear Mr. Wolff:

Do you have any strong opinions about how to lead from K-10-9 or K-J-10 in the middle of the deal? My partner has been trying to persuade me to lead the lower card from the sequence.

Leading Edge, Columbia, S.C.

ANSWER: With the queen in dummy, partner may need to distinguish K-10-9 or K-J-10 from 10-9 or J-10. That is the only time that I would advocate playing coded 10s or nines (the jack denying a higher honor). I think that method generally gives away too much information to declarer, especially on opening lead.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

I held ♠ K-J-2, ♥ A-Q-2, ♦ K-Q-4, ♣ K-10-3-2 and my RHO opened one spade. Would you elect to double, or to bid one no-trump? I chose to bid one no-trump, my partner passed with five diamonds to the A-J, and we could have made game.

Yellow Flag, Doylestown, Pa.

ANSWER: Your hand is a fraction too strong for your chosen call, especially because your spade suit is actually worth a lot more than four high-card points. I'd choose to double, then rebid in no-trump to show 18-20. But if my RHO had opened one heart, I might overcall one no-trump because my cards are not working quite as well. (Too many points are tied up in stoppers in their suit.)

Dear Mr. Wolff:

Do you have any simple rules on what sort of hand passes over an opening bid, then comes into a live auction (i.e., not in the balancing seat) at his next turn?

Lurk Theory, Elmira, N.Y.

ANSWER: The simple rule (as you imply) is that passing and then reopening in the balancing seat conveys no special message. But backing into a live auction (when responder could still have a good hand) guarantees length in opener's first-bid suit. You have a good hand; ergo, you must have length in opener's suit or you would already have bid.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

With neither side vulnerable I held ♠ A-4, ♥ Q-4, ♦ A-10-9-8-6-5-4-3, ♣ 2, and my right-hand opponent opened one club in second seat. Would you pre-empt in diamonds. If so, to what level?

Bronx Bouncer, New York, N.Y.

ANSWER: Nonvulnerable, a jump to four diamonds seems right (as opposed to a vulnerable three diamonds). But it is a guess! In these situations, you do not know if you want the next hand to bid on or not, so it's hard to judge which direction to push them.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

A recent deal you ran featured a nice defense against a game after one opponent had opened one diamond with six solid diamonds, jack-fourth of hearts, and a bare jack of clubs. Would you ever consider preempting to three diamonds with that hand?

Going Solo, Nashville, Tenn.

ANSWER: A three-level opening shows a weak pre-empt, but the opener had 150 honors in diamonds in only a six-card suit along with a side four-card major and 12 high-card points. One flaw might be acceptable, but this hand has three good reasons not to open a weak pre-empt. But in third seat you might mix it up like that.

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