

THE ACES ON BRIDGE BOBBY WOLFF

Dear Mr. Wolff:

With ♠ Q-4, ♥ A-Q-9-3, ♦ Q-3, ♣ K-Q-8-3-2, would you open one no-trump? Would vulnerability or position influence you?

Fast and Loose, Richmond, Va.

ANSWER: A 15-count with this pattern and guarded honors in the doubletons can qualify for one no-trump, both for tactical reasons (to close out the opponents) and strategic ones (to protect the tenaces). Some might chicken out and open one club if vulnerable at pairs, planning to re-bid one no-trump to show 12-14 points. But as my guru used to say, "Who gets to no-trump first wins the board."

Dear Mr. Wolff:

I opened one heart and when my partner bid two no-trump, Jacoby, to show a forcing heart raise, I jumped to four hearts to show a minimum with no shortage. Over that, my partner bid five hearts. What does that bid mean?

Raising the Bar, Sunbury, Pa.

ANSWER: Five hearts says, "I hear you have nothing extra, but I'm prepared to try slam if your trumps are better than expected." Your partner's trumps should be no better than 10-fourth for this auction; hence, he will have all the side-suits controlled plus a source of tricks.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

In third seat you hear partner open one

spade and the next hand double. You hold ♠ A-8-4-3, ♥ 9-7, ♦ K-J-7-3, ♣ 10-6-4. Your methods only allow you to raise to two or three spades, the latter being pre-emptive, or to bid two no-trump as a limit raise. Which is the least lie?

Augean Stables, Houston, Texas

ANSWER: I agree nothing fits, but a limit raise is not such an unreasonable bid, so go for two no-trump. May I make a suggestion? Use a jump in the OTHER major to be this hand — too good for a pre-empt but not enough for a limit raise, with four trumps.

Dear Mr. Wolff:

If your opponents lead third and fifth against you, what is the rule that you should substitute for the rule of 11?

Algebra Class, St. Louis, Mo.

ANSWER: If your opponents lead a fourth-highest card against you, subtract that card from 11 to work out how many higher cards the other three players have among them. As defender or declarer you can see dummy and your own hand and can do the math. If you believe the lead is fifth highest, the number is 10; if third highest, the number is 12.

If you would like to contact Bobby Wolff, e-mail him at: bobbywolff@mindspring.com. 09/13