

Article 20 What “to respond or not to respond, that is the question”

Opposite a 1NT opening hand or indeed partner’s rebid holding a 10hcp hand often presents an awkward response. Should you pass, invite game or in some cases bid game.

Opposite a 1NT opener (12-14hcp) an unexceptional 10hcp hand is not enough to encourage game whereas opposite a 1NT rebid (15-17hcps) it is enough to insist on game.

The Choice is Yours

You hold the following three hands as responder.

(i)	(ii)	(iii)
♠ KJ6532	♠ AJ83	♠ Q10432
♥ 97	♥ Q9	♥ AJ4
♦ AJ2	♦ Q974	♦ 42
♣ J6	♣ Q108	♣ K72

What would you respond with the above hands in the following auction?

1NT – p - ?

- (i) **2♠** (2♥ if playing transfers, and passing partner’s 2♠). Lacking the strength for game make a weakness take-out.
- (ii) **PASS**. 10hcps opposite even 14hcps Is very unlikely to make game
- (iii) **2♠** (2♥ for transfer) Weakness take-out

What would you respond with the same hands in this auction?

1♥- p - ♠ - p - 1NT - ?

- (i) **2♠**. The partnership have 25+hcps and 8+ spades therefore game on.
- (ii) **3NT**. Again, game values but no obvious 8-card major fit
- (iii) **3♥**. An 6-card major fit is invariably better than 3NT. This provides partner to decide the best game contract. He knows you have 5♠ and 3♥ and insisting on game depending on whether opener prefers a 5-3 heart fit, perhaps a 5-3 spade fit or even 3NT

Example

♠ KJ9
♥ K832
♦ A65
♣ A54

♠ 765
♥ Q1075
♦ KQ10
♣ J103

♠ A8
♥ 96
♦ J9873
♣ Q986

♠ Q10432
♥ AJ4
♦ 42
♣ K72

Bidding

S	W	N	E
		1♥	p
1♠	p	1NT (1)	p
3♥ (2)	p	3♠ (3)	p
4♠ (4)	All Pass		

- (1) 15-16hcps balanced
- (2) Game-force with only 3♥s (otherwise he would have supported hearts immediately)
- (3) Just 4♥s but showing 3♠s in case S has 5♠s.
- (4) With 5♠s then it is more likely that with an eight card-fit that game in the major will be better than 3NT

Lead: ♦K

Play

Declarer takes the first trick with the ♦A. and can see 4 potential losers i.e. one in each suit so must create another winner. So declarer leads ♠K to eliminate the ♠A and E defence lead 2 further rounds of diamonds with declarer ruffing the 3rd round. He draws trump and leads ♥2 to the ♥J as is somewhat dismayed to find W with the ♥Q (finesses are 50/50% anyway). W returned the ♣J which is won by ♣K. Declarer plays ♥A and notices that E plays the ♥9

and leads the ♥4 to West's ♥7 and dummy's ♥8 (key play). He then **makes the contract** with ♥K discarding his ♣2

Note. 3NT will fail on the ♦ lead from E