

17. Failing to respond the higher of fives (as in "high fives")

Whether opener, responder (or overcaller), it is normally better to bid the higher-ranking of two five-card suits, enabling you to bid the lower-ranking suit next time and so finish the two-stage process more economically.

Say partner opens 1♣ and you hold:

♠ AJ962
♥ AQ962
♦ 96
♣ 4

Say you erroneously respond 1♥ (perhaps thinking, "I'll bid 1♠ next time", clearly impossible as the bidding would have got past 1♠ when it next reached you). Let's assume partner repeats her clubs. You now bid your other suit, so we have 1♣-1♥-2♣-2♠. If partner wishes to give a preference back to your first suit, she must go up to the Three-level ie 1♣-1♥-2♣-2♠-3♥...

Better is to respond 1♠ "high fives". After partner (say) rebids 2♣, you can bid 2♥, which enables partner to give a preference back to your first suit at the Two-level ie 1♣-1♠-2♣-2♥-2♠...

What Happened

There was simply no way to make more than eight tricks in 3♥ — in practice declarer lost his way and went two down.

What Should Have Happened

Making even a lowly 2♠ is far from easy. West leads out ♦AKJ (best), you ruffing the third round. Knowing you lack the trump length in hand to be able to establish your hearts, you seek to scramble eight tricks.

At trick four, you cross to ♣A

Dealer: North, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ K3
♥ K3
♦ 532
♣ AJ5432

♠ J52
♥ J1062
♦ AKJ9
♣ K9

N	E
W	S

♠ Q106
♥ Q5
♦ 10764
♣ Q1086

♠ A9874
♥ A9874
♦ Q8
♣ 7

What Happened

S	W	N	E
		1♣ (1)	Pass
1♥ (2)	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥ (3)	end

(1) Rule of 20 opener — cards in two longest suits added to total points reaching 20.

(2) Oops.

(3) Thinks (as he should) partner has more hearts than spades, typically 5♥-4♠.

Contract: 3♥, Opening Lead: ♦A

What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
		1♣	Pass
1♠ (1)	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠ (2)	end

(1) Yes — "high fives".

(2) Able to give a preference back to partner's first suit at the Two-level.

Contract: 2♠, Opening Lead: ♦A

and ruff ♣2. You cross to ♥K and ruff ♣3 (with ♠7). West overruffs with ♠J and returns ♠2 (best) to cut down the cross-ruff. However, you beat East's ♠10 with ♠A, cash ♥A, ruff ♥7 with ♠K and ruff ♣4 with ♠9, West unable to overruff. Eight tricks.

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