

15. Failing to respond with a low point-count shapely hand

The six-point rule for responding tells you to respond to partner's One-of-a-Suit opener when you have six or more points — partner may have 19, in which case you'll have the 25 for game. Agreed.

However, that does not necessarily mean you should pass partner's One-of-a-Suit opener when you have fewer than six points. In these days of Weak Two openers, partner may have more than 19 points. Even if she doesn't, there may be a good fit and a low point-count game can be made. Even if partner has a normal 12 or 13-point opener, responding is tactically better than passing — and ceding the initiative to the opponents.

I would respond 1♠ to partner's 1♣ opener with each of these hands.

♠ KJ952	♠ QJ9532	♠ J109532
♥ J982	♥ 82	♥ 82
♦ 742	♦ J1042	♦ Q9842
♣ 2	♣ 2	♣ -

What Happened

North was left to languish in a piffling 1♣. He made nine tricks, losing two clubs and two hearts (following a line of drawing trumps, then running spades).

What Should Have Happened

After scraping up a 1♠ response, South would soon find herself in 6♠. She wins ♥K lead with ♥A and sets about establishing clubs. She cashes ♣A and ruffs ♣3. She crosses to ♠K and ruffs ♣4.

The 3-3 club split revealed, declarer crosses to ♠A and cashes ♠J65, throwing ♥8 and ♦42. She cross-ruffs the remainder and is

Dealer: North, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ AK64	♠ 87
♥ A65	♥ 10943
♦ -	♦ AQ93
♣ AJ6543	♣ KQ9
♠ 10	
♥ KQJ7	
♦ K8765	
♣ 1087	
	♠ QJ9532
	♥ 82
	♦ J1042
	♣ 2

What Happened

S	W	N	E
		1♣	Pass
Pass(1)	Pass(2)		

(1) Oops.

(2) Wisely lets the opponents play 1♣. His (lack of) spades is the warning sign (that the opponents have a better contract).

Contract: 1♣ (by N), Opening Lead: ♥10

What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
		1♣	Pass
1♠(1)	Pass	6♠(2)	end

(1) Yes — with a shapely hand, try to respond even with fewer than six points.

(2) What an amazing fitting hand. Because partner would respond the cheaper of four-card suits eg 1♦ with 4♦-4♠, there's a good chance North-South have the invaluable ninth trump — here ten.

Contract: 6♠ (by S), Opening Lead: ♥K

soon chalking up all 13 tricks. Small slam made plus one (you would not wish to be in Seven — which requires clubs 3-3 and spades 2-1).

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