

## **But Partner – I only had four points**

### Pointers to Valuing Your Hand

Quite often your hand does not remain at 12 points, or 8 points or even 4 points. Many factors affect the value of your hand. eg If partner opens the bidding with 1 Spade and you have 4 High Card Points, three Spades + a singleton then your hand becomes stronger. Ron Klinger suggests things which can add or detract points to your hand.

#### **Deduct Points**

Deduct 1 point

- for a hand shaped 4-3-3-3 unless bidding No Trumps
- a hand with a singleton K, Q or J
- Qx, Jx, or QJ doubleton
- an Aceless hand

#### **Add Points**

- add 1 point when holding four Aces
- add 1 point when holding 13 points in the form of Aces and Kings
- to open, count your High Card points + Length points (add on 1 point for each card in excess of four. 5 cards = +1, 6 cards = + 2)

Ron Klinger suggests keep counting the length points until you find a fit and then switch your counting to that fit. Now you count 5 points for a void, 3 points for a singleton and 1 point for a doubleton.

- Shortages are valuable when playing in a suit contract.
- Length is valuable in No Trumps.
- When partner opens 1NT be sure to count High Card Points + Length Points. A 7 High Card Count with a five card suit becomes 8 points if you intend to play in No Trumps.

Another "Bridge Expert" Larry Cohen has his way of hand evaluation :-

### ***Points for Honors***

It is well known that Aces and Kings (A=4 and K=3) are undervalued by the 4-3-2-1 count. Also, Queens and Jacks (Q=2 J=1) are overvalued. Probably 6=4=2=1 would be more accurate, but nobody wants to overhaul things that much.

Some teachers like adding 1/2's and subtracting 1/4's. Too complicated. I like this simple approach: "When your hand is prime (mostly aces/king), take the higher road. When you are very queeny/jacky, take the lower road." In other words, upgrade a bit when you have aces/kings and be pessimistic when you are full of mostly queens and jacks.

### ***Spot Cards***

What about 10's and 9's? When stray (such as 10xx or 9xxx), I don't pay much attention. But, when they are in conjunction with higher honors, such as A109x or J109x, then I upgrade. I "bid one more" when in doubt.

### ***Short Suits/Long Suits***

The age-old question: Do I count for these and how? The quick answer is: Not too much until after you've heard some bidding. When you first pick up your hand and have to decide if you should open, the [Rule of 20](#) is a decent enough guideline. Add your HCP and 2 longest suits and if that is 20, open the bidding. I recommend opening most 12 counts (if 4-3-3-3 and vulnerable and it is junky/queeny/jacky then I can live with a pass).

Long suits are definitely worthwhile in notrump contracts. Add for a decent 5-card or longer suit (rule of thumb is to add 1 for each card starting with the fifth card). If opening 1NT, add for a decent (not Jxxxx) 5-card suit. If responding to 1NT, do the same. However, if partner opens 1♥, for example, and you have:

♣Q32♥2♦J32♣AQ6543,

I wouldn't go crazy adding points for those long clubs. Those extra clubs will often be completely useless, especially if partner is short in clubs.

Long suits that get raised are surely worth extra. If you open 1♠ holding ♠KJ876 and get raised to 2♠, life is good. Picture partner with ♠Qxx. Now, your side is likely to take 4 spade tricks. Contrast that with if partner responded 1NT, maybe with ♠x. Now, you are nowhere near 4 spade tricks. So, clearly add points for long suits that get raised.

Short suits are nice, but rarely worthwhile when supporting partner. If you are dealt, say ♠Qxx and a singleton heart and partner opens the bidding 1♥, your singleton is actually a negative. Not good at all. But, if partner opens 1♠, then your singleton heart is great. Add 2 points for a singleton, and 1 for a doubleton (and 3 for a void). If you have more than 3-card trump support, add even more. Exact numbers aren't important, but a decent guideline for counting shortness when supporting partner is as follows: "Subtract your shortness from your trump support and count accordingly." Example: 3-card support and a singleton is 3-1=2 points (what you are already used to). 4-card support and a singleton is 4-1 = 3 points. 5-card support and a void is 5-0=5 points.

### ***I Feel Good***

This is one of Larry's favorite teaching examples:

♠4♥KJ654♦32♣A8765.

Should you add for the 5-card suits? Should you count the singleton and doubleton? Answer: Not yet. Listen to some bidding first. Partner opens 1♠. You respond 1NT and partner's rebid is 2♦. How are you feeling? Ugh. Your long suits and short suits all seem worthless. You pick up the same hand the next day and again partner opens 1♠. You respond 1NT, but this time, partner's rebid is 2♥! Do you know the iconic James Brown song, "I Feel Good?" Don't you? Now, your 5-card heart suit is golden. Your short suits are ruffing values. You'd raise all the way to a heart game. You Feel Good!