

15 / DON'T LET THE OPPONENTS PLAY AT THE 1-LEVEL

Never let your opponents play at the 1-level. Well, I say 'never', but I mean almost never. If my opponents have a 60 part-score, and the bidding runs 1H-NB-NB around to me, I might leave them to make their 30pt score. If, at Duplicate Pairs, an opponent opens 1D and there are two passes to me and I hold 8pts with a singleton spade, I may suspect that they have missed a superior major suit contract and leave them to moulder in a minor-suit contract. However, these situations are relatively rare and, generally, if a 1-opener is being passed by responder, it is time to apply some pressure. Either your side has a making contract, or you need to push the opponents to an unsafe level.

♠ 65432
♥ 3
♦ QJ98
♣ 974

N	E	S	W
—	—	1H	NB
NB	1S	2H	Dbl
all pass			

♠ 9
♥ K10864
♦ AK76
♣ KJ5

♠ AJ1087
♥ 9
♦ 102
♣ 108632

♠ KQ
♥ AQJ752
♦ 543
♣ AQ

The key is that good competitive bidding is based on shape and not on points. If your partner is a good enough player to pass over an opponent's opening bid with a flat 14pts, then you must be good enough to 'protect' or 'balance' in the fourth seat, to ensure that you either steal the contract, or bully your opponents upwards.

This deal, from the semi-final of a big teams event, proved the point admirably. At Game All, South opened 1H, West correctly passed, and after two passes, East protected with a weak overcall of 1S. Now, when South re-bid 2H, West doubled for penalties. East gritted his teeth and passed. Best defence takes 800, but even the +500pts East-West achieved represented a substantial swing against the other table where East left 1H to play and fail by only one trick.