

DEFENSES TO 1 NT OPENINGS by Mel ColChamiro

One common thread, however, is that most experts believe it pays to come in aggressively directly over a strong 1NT opener. I agree. It is not the purpose of this article to argue for one method over another.

I wish to cover a more fundamental question: On what types of hands should one enter the auction after a 1NT opener?

I have developed a guideline that will help you answer this question. I call it Mel's Rule of 8. At the very least, it is an effective guide to "get you into the ball park."

It's okay to overcall 1NT directly on this formula:

Take the number of cards in your two longest suits
Subtract the number of losers by loser count (see below)
If the answer is 2 or higher, bid something
If the answer is 1 or zero, pass

Figuring losers

Rule of 8 examples

Example 1	Example 2
♠K 7 5	♠K 7 5 3 2
♥A Q 8 6 5	♥K 8 6 5 4
♦K 4 3	♦4 3
♣7 6	♣7

In No. 1, there are eight cards in the two long suits but seven losers (two each in spades, diamonds and clubs and one in hearts). You should pass despite the 12 high-card points and five-card major.

In No. 2, you have 10 cards in your two long suits and seven losers (two each in spades, hearts and diamonds and one in clubs). The difference is three, so you should get in there. It's only 6 HCP, but distribution is the key

Here is an example from the 2000 Bermuda Bowl. Paul Soloway held

♠A K J 7 3 ♥Q 8 2 ♦Q 7 ♣K 6 5

and heard Brazil's Roberto Mello open 1NT (15-17) on his right. Did Soloway bid or pass?

Mel's Rule of 8 suggests a pass: eight cards in the two longest suits minus seven losers equals one, so pass is recommended despite the 15 HCP and nice spade suit. Soloway did indeed pass and defeated 1NT two tricks. Soloway had not heard of the Rule of 8, but he did what it suggests nonetheless.

Here is another example from the Silver Ribbon Pairs at this tournament earlier in the week.

With a strong 1NT opener on his right, a player held a hand something like ♠Q 7 6 ♥A K 3 ♦A 10 6 5 4 ♣8 5 and entered the auction with a natural bid of 2♣.

The result was a doubled contract and a score of minus 800, what he deserved. With a five-card suit and a flat hand, he should have opted for defense.

If you use the Rule of 8, it will tell you when and when not to bid over their 1NT, and you will avoid disasters of this type.

Mid-Chart conventions are not permitted in events that are restricted to the General Convention Chart. Players should check the director-in-charge for details

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