

The Not-So-Short Club

To me, the ‘short club’ is more of a bludgeon than a club, and one whose lethal effect is usually directed at one’s self or one’s partner.”

Helen Sobel Smith, greatest woman bridge player of all time

Many players believe that an opening 1♣ bid is frequently based on a three-card suit. Others go even further and open 1♣ with only two cards in the suit when they have no attractive alternative. This is not my cup of tea. It is time to tell it like it is: **A player opening 1♣ almost certainly holds four or more clubs.**

The following statistics regarding opening bids of 1♣ will give you a basis in fact. Four-card suits occur most often. Five-card suits occur second most. Six-card suits have the next highest frequency. Three-card suits? They do occur more often than seven-card suits.

In short, when a player opens 1♣, assume a four-card club suit.

“An opening 1♣ bid is usually based on a three-card suit” is only one of many popular misconceptions. In addition, there are others that apply to rebids and responses after a 1♣ opening.

1. “Opener should rebid a five-card club suit to inform partner that he has a real suit.” no, No, NO. If opener opens 1♣ and rebids 2♣ after partner’s 1♣ response, he deserves to languish in his 5-1 *non-fit* when responder holds:

♠ A754 ♥ J8543 ♦ J65 ♣ 6

2. “You need five cards to raise opener’s minor.” Balderdash! Partner opens 1♣ and RHO overcalls 1♠. You are missing the boat if you would not raise to 2♣ with:

♠ 6 ♥ J74 ♦ Q8764 ♣ KQ106

3. “Respond up the line to a 1♣ opening.” That is just fine when you have four hearts and four spades. I cannot see the slightest merit in responding 1♦ instead of showing your major with a hand like:

♠ 5 ♥ QJ76 ♦ QJ76 ♣ Q854