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Ask Jerry

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	2♠	1♣
Pass	?		Pass

Playing five-card majors, I would fear that we may have a fit in hearts and should be competing for the chance to either declare or at least drive the opponents to a higher level. All competitive options at this point seem flawed. A reopening double should suggest a better hand, a club raise should show better/longer support, and a bid of 3♥ would be forcing.

My theory, and the theory of others, is that after 1♣, if we have a secondary fit it is more likely to be in an unbid major than in diamonds. Unless he holds game-forcing values, responder tends to bypass even a five-card diamond suit to respond in a major in order to prepare for possible interference.

On the above hand 1♥ is my strong preference. With a much better hand, such as

♠92 ♥AQ83 ♦AQ73 ♣Q64, you plan to bid at least game.

1♦ is a good choice to explore all possible destinations in a constructive auction. If the auction turns competitive, you can either introduce your heart suit or make a value-showing double.

Perhaps you could arrange for your teacher to play with your duplicate partner. Both of them seem to be violating one of my favorite Jerry-isms:

**It's okay to be wrong,
but not okay to be
wrong loud!**

The fireworks could be interesting and perhaps the fallout enlightening.

Dear Jerry,

My bridge teacher is adamant that it is always right to respond "up the line" in four-card suits when partner opens 1♣. My new duplicate partner was very vocal when she expressed her opinion that I should never mention a diamond suit if I hold a four-card major. Who should I listen to?

Between a rock ...
Little Rock AR

Dear Between,

Hmm ... who should you listen to? For starters, I tend to avoid words like "always" and "never" and people who use them in regard to bridge-related questions. Because your teacher and your partner seem so opinionated, I suggest you consider the issue and decide for yourself what is better.

For many years it was standard practice to respond 1♦ to a 1♣ opening bid when holding a hand such as

♠J6 ♥QJ82 ♦QJ73 ♣J52.

In theory, 1♦ leaves room for opener to bid 1♥ if he holds four. This works well provided the opponents remain silent. In reality, the enemy often intrude in our auction and disturb our plan. Holding this same hand, how would you feel if the bidding went as follows?