

OPENING MAJOR VERSUS 1NT by Maritha Pottenger

I've answered this query so many times, decided I needed a handout on it. When you have 15-17 HCP and a 5-card major, should you open 1NT or the major?

ONE OPTION: If you play 3C as Puppet Stayman (with 10 or more HCP), you can always open 1NT and partner will check back for a 5 OR 4 card major if she has at least 3 cards in one of the majors. (Many people do this with opening 2NT. Some also do so with opening 1NT.)

If you don't want to do that, here are my suggestions (based on recommendations from Eddie Kantar):

- 1) When you have 17 HCP and a 5-card major, open the major and JUMP to 2NT (or bid 2NT over 1NT forcing). You are treating your 17 HCP as 18 HCP thanks to your 5 card suit
- 2) If you have 15-16, look at your hand. With a lousy suit, open 1NT. With a worthless doubleton in the other major, open your major. With most of your values in your suit, open your major. If you are 5-4 in some permutation, open your major. If you are 5-3-3-2 in some variation with "scattered honors" in all suits, open 1NT. If your hand is very "quacky" (lots of Queens and Jacks), open 1NT. The greater number of Kings I have, the more I want to open 1NT to protect them from the opening lead.
- 3) All other things being equal, 1NT avoids the rebid problem
- 4) Kantar did say that he is more likely to open 1NT when his major is hearts because 1NT is more likely to shut out the spade suit than 1H is.
- 5) Kantar also said that he is more willing to open 1S when that is his major because he has the "boss suit."

So, you and your partners will have to make your own "executive decisions" on this topic, but you have some more data.