

## THE TWO ODDBALL FIVE-FIVES

Ordinarily, opening hands with two 5-card suits should be opened in the higher-ranking of the two. Because clubs rank just above spades in the spiral of suits, the normal opening bid with a black five-five is 1♣, unless the spades are much stronger or the hand is substantially better than minimum but just below jump-shift strength.

However, two oddball five-fives should be opened in the lower-ranking of the two suits, even when the higher-ranking suit is *moderately* stronger. These are the 5=0=5=3 and 3=5=0=5 hands.

With (a) ♠K93 ♥AJ1072 ♦void ♣AJ1072, open 1♣. Partner is much more likely to respond in diamonds, your void, than spades, your 3-card suit. And if he does respond 1♠, guess what? Your hand improves so much in value because of the fit that 2♥, a reverse, is not an overbid.

With (b) ♠AJ1072 ♥void ♦AJ1072 ♣K93, open 1♦. Partner is much more likely to respond in hearts, your void, than clubs, your 3-card suit. And if he does respond 2♣, again ... your hand improves so much in value because of the fit that 2♠, a reverse, is not an overbid.

In contrast, a 1♥ opening with (a) or a 1♠ opening with (b) leads to an awkward auction if partner responds in your void. You must either rebid your five-card major, suppressing your five-card minor, or bid a new suit at the three-level, overstating your values. 1♣-1♦-1♥ is a smoother start than 1♥-2♦-3♣. 1♦-1♥-1♠ is a smoother start than 1♠-2♥-3♦.

Be aware, however, that you're "going against the field" when you open a major-minor 2-suiter in your five-card minor. For several decades, bridge books and bridge teachers alike have largely ignored suit quality, rebid considerations and the likely course of the auction.

As usual in bridge, these are guidelines, not absolutes. You should make exceptions when your five-card major is much stronger than your five-card minor.

With (c) ♠K93 ♥KQJ98 ♦void ♣A9543, open 1♥: a 2-honor difference in suit quality should sway you.

Likewise with (d) ♠KQJ98 ♥void ♦A9543 ♣K93, open 1♠. Though your side's auction may develop awkwardly, three things provide ample compensation:

- (1) Your major suit is much more playable than your minor suit when no fit exists.
- (2) You'd much rather have partner lead your major than your minor if LHO becomes declarer.
- (3) You're much more likely to shut LHO out.