

Learning Points – Mega Hands I

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by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

W Deals	♠ 73	
Both Vul	♥ KJ83	
	♦ Q964	
Mike	♣ 985	Steve
♠ KQ104	N	♠ 952
♥ AQ5	W 20 E	♥ 107642
♦ AK		♦ 2
♣ AKQ6	S	♣ 10743
	♠ AJ86	<u>Duplimate:</u>
	♥ 9	EW: 3N, 4♣,
	♦ J108753	4♥, 3♠
	♣ J2	NS: 1♦

Here's a beauty from the 2 session Strati-flighted Open Pairs in a tough B flight at the January Cleveland Regional. You don't often hold 27 HCP and many partnerships don't discuss what to do when you do have them.

The Bidding

Mike (West): Using Precision we open this monster 1♣ -- 16+ HCP any shape, but not 16-17 or 23-24 balanced (other bids).

Steve (East): I have zero points. 1♦ is the systemic response with 0-7 HCP any shape.

South: Preempting the Precision Club is usually right. 3♦ looks safe double dummy, and EW might stumble into a spade contract. *However South saw no good from a six card suit headed by the J10, and passed. What would you do?*

Mike (West): I could jump to 3NT but partner is likely to interpret this as a gambling big hand (Long running suit, with stoppers outside, typically 18-22 HCP). With the right 4 HCP

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠ (!!)	Pass	1NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥	Pass
6♥		Passed Out	

South led the J♦

(♥K, ♠J) we're odds on to make 6NT. I know that 1♠ is unlimited and could be a 4 card suit. While partner is expecting me to be 5422 or unbalanced if my spades are only 4 cards long this might be a good way to tease out partner's values. His next bid will show me 0-5 or 6-7 HCP. Seems right (!!)- this is a creative use of our partnership agreements that has little downside risk, and might get more information from partner than a jump to 3NT. We cannot do this routinely or it becomes our agreement. Besides our NT systems are not on over the 3NT jump bid.

Steve (East): Partner's got any 16+ hand with 4 spades (semi to unbalanced) or any 5+ spades. My response is 1NT – this is forcing just as in a 2/1 major suit auction and shows 0-5 HCP. We're headed to a partial with my hand. One of the benefits of using Precision here is that we can usually stop one level lower than 2/1 or standard bidders on hands like these. Sometimes that added insurance pays big dividends especially in pairs.

Mike: 1NT shows 0-5. We still have slam chance if partner is 4-5 HCP and at least one King. 3NT should be on against most leads, and this will wake him up!

Steve: I don't think 4♣ is Stayman, but it might be our Control Asking Bid. I don't think we agreed to play transfers here. Passing could be right. This hand is wrong sided in 3NT. However I think we have extra chances in hearts. Partner has either a chunky balanced rock of a hand or some 6322 type that might not mesh with East's hand. Since partner did not make a jump rebid in a suit (likely with a game-in-hand 6 card suit), the chances are small that he has the latter type hand so I will play him to be balanced. If partner has 3 (or more) hearts I think 4♥ will be safe. In that contract my small cards eventually become winners. Worst case is 5422. 5332 and 4432 are more likely. Either way this is a close call. I am as likely to bid here with 0-1 or 6-7 HCP. With 0-1 HCP I am trying to reach the safest game. I bid 4♥.

Mike (West): Partner is more likely to have useful values for his bid, and some distribution too. As long as he has ♥J10xxx there should be a play. Since 7♥ is unlikely, I will bid 6♥.

North: I'm not doubling even though they aren't going to make this contract. They might have plays at 6♠ or 6NT and I don't want to steer them there.

The Play

East declares, and the chances look poor. East really needs something unlikely in hearts like doubleton KJ or KJx in South to have a real chance. Transportation will be hard, and there are no swindle opportunities. East wins the ♦A and plays the ♦K pitching a spade. Then comes the ♠K won by South. Perhaps fearing a spade finesse for the J, South leads the ♥9. East now has to hope that this is from KJ9, and lets it ride to the ♥10. North wins the ♥J and exits with a club. North will win the ♥K for down 2. Minus 200 was worth 1.5 Matchpoints. Making 4♥ would have been a top, with 3N making 3 not far behind.

Post Mortem – The Bidding

Partner's creative use of a different bidding agreement helped us muddle through an area we hadn't discussed. We agreed to stay close to our agreements and not abuse the meaning of the one of a major response to the 1♦ negative bid. EW faced ambiguous choices from 3NT on.

Mike agreed that 4♣ was a control ask bid like Gerber, and suit bids were natural. However a natural 4 level bid by advancer is ambiguous for overcaller. We could simply agree to limit advancer to bidding on when at the top of their range, but then the right strain will often be missed on hands with a 5 or 6 card suit and little else. How can we eliminate this dilemma?

One way would be to use NT systems over the 3NT rebid by opener. This would apply to the 3NT rebid by the 2♣ opener in Standard or 2/1. (Note: the Kokish 2 Heart convention might help).

Responder would choose from the following bids:

- 4♣ Stayman; Garbage Stayman is on. Smolen at the 5 Level.
- 4♦/♥ Jacoby Transfer
- 4♠ Minor Suit Slam Puppet. Opener bids 4NT and Responder describes their hand.
- 4NT Quantitative, or Control Ask, or asking for 4 card suits up the line in search for slam. Pick one... (I like the control ask).

Here's how the Precision auction might have gone with the NT responses in place:

West	North	East	South	
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass	The transfer to a major protects West from having to choose between ambiguous alternatives. When East is weak, playing in the major will often be better than 3NT. If West has a chunky gambling hand (6-7 card semi-solid suit and 19+ HCP) then West can choose to bid 4NT over the transfer. Transferring here is right because East should captain the hand. When super weak, game is enough, when 6-7 HCP, slam is on. Even one King opposite such a hand makes a small slam interesting. Because East has a wider range and undefined shape, East is in a better position to get the partnership into the right place.
3NT	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass	

West	North	East	South	
2♣	Pass	2♦/2♥	Pass	How would 2/1 or standard bid these beauties? We get to the same point. Are your agreements current over a jump to 3NT? The likely auction would be as follows: East bids either 2♦ waiting or 2♥ immediate negative depending on their agreements.
3NT	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass	

Can you stop in 4♥?