

Learning Points – Mega Hands II

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N Deals
EW Vul

♠ J873
♥ J53
♦ 106542
♣ 7

Mike

Steve

♠ AKQ6	N	♠ 1052
♥ A98	W 9 E	♥ K
♦ AJ		♦ K93
♣ AKJ6	S	♣ 1098543

♠ 94
♥ Q107642
♦ Q87
♣ Q2

Duplimate:
EW: 7N, 7♣,
3♦, 3♥, 6♣

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	2♥	Double
3♥	Pass	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

North led the 3♥

Here's another from the 2 session Stratiflighted Open Pairs in a tough B flight at the January Cleveland Regional.

The Bidding

South's 2♥ opening bid was inspired, but not as inspired as North's raise to 3♥. Note that South's opening would have been equally effective on a 5 card suit!

Mike (West): While we use Precision, our competitive bidding is largely standard. We start all big hands with a double and this one is no different. Partner might have a black suit fit or we have some number of NT play. A direct jump to 3N should show 21-22 HCP. Our 2NT overcall is 15-18 here. So a double and a 2NT rebid (if I get the chance) is 19-20 HCP.

Steve (East): Partner's double says he can compete to the three level in 3 suits. Only half my strength is working. I could bid 4♣ but I get us past 3NT. This is why I like to make preempts and not defend them. A pass seems prudent.

Mike (West): Looks like I need to show partner we are on for at least 3NT. Perhaps with values he can bid once more. I'll bid 3NT to avoid missing a likely game for us.

Steve (East): Partner's 3NT could be 23+ Balanced, 18+ with a long suit (a sound gambling bid) or any hand with 9 tricks and not 5 immediate losers. I now have a problem and rue my pass over 3♥. I should have bid 4♣ then.

Now 4♣ seems too forward going and could be confusing to partner. Will partner interpret 4♣ as a weak bust in clubs (since I passed at my second turn. Besides I'm too strong for that)? That risks me declaring 4♣ for a poor score. Will partner think this is our control asking bid where A=2, K=1 (I wouldn't have passed 3H with hands worthy of that ask. Even though I hold 2 controls, he would have to have 8 in hand for a slam to be likely. In general, 10 controls are needed for a small slam, and 11-12 for a Grand Slam.

There are 12 controls in a deck. If we allow any one hand to hold 36 HCP, then there are 3 points per control. So partner would have to have a hand worth 24 points or more for a slam sequence to be right. I judged the risk to be too high and passed 3NT. Large balanced hands like this one are very unlikely.

The Play – Straightforward. 13 tricks off the top. We scored +720 for 4.5 Match Points. We had a lot of company. Bidding any slam was a good board, and bidding a grand slam was a top.

Post Mortem – The Bidding

East's pass of 3♥ is not as strange as it looks since partner could be on 14 HCP and a 3 suited hand. We probably cannot make 5♣ unless partner has extras. The difficulty really stems from the preempt by opponents. Both of them. If North does not bid 3♥, then East has an easy 3♣ bid and West comes alive. If South chooses to pass then we can get to slam directly using our slam bidding arsenal. Is there a better way to handle the questions West faces?

One approach we are looking at makes a direct cue bid of a weak two be a **Western Cuebid/Control Ask**. A direct cuebid of a weak two is often not discussed. We don't need Michaels here. Many experts prefer Leaping Michaels where jumping to the minor at the 4 level shows a 2 suiter with a 5 card or longer other major. We don't need a void showing 3 suited cue bid either – the takeout double does just fine there. Many play the simple cue as Western – asking for a NT control. All we need to do is to graft on the control responses...

Using the **Western Cuebid Control Ask** advancer's 1st responsibility would be to show a NT control of the opponent's suit by bidding 3NT (say QJx or better. Q108 for those inclined to skirt the edge. J9x for thrill seekers). This is the same as the standard approach and keeps alive any hand needing partner to have a stopper for game.

If the cue-bidder wants to know controls, they can bid 4♣ over advancer's stopper showing 3NT. Otherwise they pass 3NT.

Without a stopper for NT and holding 4+ Spades, advancer can bid 3♠ with ZERO CONTROLS.

Without a stopper for NT, advancer responds by showing controls directly using step responses. First step shows 0 controls, and every step thereafter adds a control to the total. After overcaller's cuebid, the advancer begins responding controls starting with 4♣ (as 3N shows a NT Stopper).

Cuebidder's continuations:

4NT is to play.

A new suit is a grand slam try looking for 4-4 fit.

5NT is likely a request for extras – length or Queens not already shown. Advancer should bid 6 with something extra.

Slams are to play.

Here's how the auction might have gone with the **Western Cuebid Control Ask** in place:

North	East	South	West	
Pass	Pass	2♥	3♥	Let North raise to 4 hearts to further complicate matters. Even in the face of this barrage, we can still bid safely. [1] shows 2 controls (3 steps over 4NT). Opener counts 12 controls and trots out [2] 5♠ looking for a grand slam strain. East can contribute 6 ♣ implying at least 5 cards and useful values. West chooses to bid 7♣ expecting to ruff a diamond in hand. East will correct to 7NT counting a surprise 6 th club as a key asset.
4♥	5♥ [1]	Pass	5♠ [2]	
Pass	6♣	Pass	7♣	
Pass	7NT	Pass	Out	

Sometimes 20-20 hindsight leads to bidding innovation. It certainly leads to continual improvement. Here's to stronger partnerships.