

Learning Points – Defending Against a Weak Notrump

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S Deals

Both Vul

Mike

♠ AQJ98
♥ 1083
♦ 1052
♣ K2

♠ K654
♥ Q5
♦ KJ972
♣ Q7

Steve

♠ 72
♥ A97642
♦ A4
♣ A98

♠ 103
♥ KJ
♦ Q86
♣ J106543

Duplimate:

NS: 1♣, 1♦
EW: 4♥, 3♠, 2N

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1NT	Double*
Passed Out			
East led the ♥6			

Here's another hand from the recent Independence Ohio Regional January 2008 Open Pairs Flight B.

Weak Notrump Openings (12-14 HCP in this example) are popular. They arise more often than their strong counterparts and can have preemptive benefits. Some play 10-12 HCP 1 NT openings for just this advantage. The strength you choose for your 1 NT opening impacts your 1 NT rebid and other NT opening ranges. In this hand NS made it hard for EW to get to a makeable but unbidable 22 HCP game.

The Bidding

North's opening falls within a Weak NT range of 12-14. Some would quarrel with the 4252 shape. Qx in both doubletons might not be enough to stop opponents from running off too many tricks. North decided to eliminate rebid problems and start at 1NT.

What if North-South were using strong NT instead?

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♥
1N	2♦	Double	3♥
Pass	Pass /4♥	Passed Out	

One possible outcome would be that East-West find their heart fit and maybe their game. South's 1NT reply is aggressive – a pass might work best. However West has a limit raise in Hearts for partner. North can Double (aggressive) or pass (better) and East can jump in hearts asking for a little more help. 2♥ by East would be discouraging. Whether West goes will depend on

how west visualizes the tricks available given power in the North hand. It's up to you to decide who benefitted from NS using the Weak NT on this hand.

East's double is the "balanced equivalent hand" penalty type (even with 6 hearts) and West's pass is reasonable holding 10 HCP and 2-5 tricks.

The Play

East led the ♥6 and West began unblocking the suit by playing the ♥10. Declarer attacked ♦'s, won by East who cleared hearts (Partner unblocking the ♥8 on the 2nd trick). The defense came to 8 tricks: 1 spade, 5♥, 1♦, and 2♣.

Down two scored +300 and was worth 7 match points out of 11. A 64% board is pretty good.

Getting to 4♥ with the EW hands might be best double dummy, but seems improbable given the bidding tools and hand valuation. If NS get frisky and try to play in a minor suit, EW might find their ♥ fit, but it's still not clear bidding 4♥ is right.

Partnership Agreements

	Vs Strong 13-15+ or more	Vs Weak 12-14 or less
Call	DONT	Cappelletti/ Hamilton
Double	Single Suit [1]	Penalty [2]
2♣	♣ & a higher suit	Major & Minor or Minor Only
2♦	♦ & a higher suit	♥ & ♠
2♥	♥ & ♠	♥
2♠	♠	♠
2N	Both Minors	Both Minors

We play different defenses against strong and weak NT openings. We consider a weak NT as any bid with an upper limit of 14 or fewer points. Having a penalty double available to us over a weak NT seems reasonable. We play Cappelletti/Hamilton over weak NT, and DONT over strong NT. (Over strong NT the penalty double is rarely rewarded and often gives away too much information helping declarer). Notes: [1] *Advancer bids 2♣; overcaller corrects suit or passes.* [2] *Equal or stronger balanced, or Brozel - 6+ card suit missing 1 honor, with one side entry.*

Check out these URL links to the ACBL website for more details on these conventions:

Cappelletti Part 1: http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/cappellettipt1.pdf

Cappelletti, Part 2: http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/cappellettipt2.pdf

DONT: http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/dontover1nt.pdf

Over a weak NT all 12-15 HCP hands in immediate position will go through the double. Strong 15+HCP single suited hands are handled with a jump overcall, inviting partner to game. A 2 level bid simply requires shape (5-5 please) and some working points (typically 7-9 HCP) in the two suits. By agreement an overcall of 2♠ is weaker than a double followed by a spade preference.