

Learning Points – GNTQ Sacrificing at IMPS

by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

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LEVEL: Intermediate

E Deals
NS Vul

♠									
♥									
♦									
♣									
	N								
	W	??	E						
		S							
♠									
♥									
♦									
♣									

Spot Cards
Approximate

Steve

♠ Kxx
♥ J9xx
♦ xx
♣ QJxx

Mike

♠ AQxxx
♥
♦ K10xxx
♣ xxx

Saturday January 31, 2009. Flight B Grand National Team Qualifying Round, District 11, CBA Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. Thanks to our teammates Rob Weidenfeld and Jim Edmiston.

What makes the difference between a weak-2 bid and a one level opening bid? How much risk is right to take at favorable vulnerability in an IMPS Knockout Team game? Is it ever right to break discipline when holding important undisclosed assets? Let's see how this pair handled this hand.

Bidding

While Mike and Steve use Precision, this weak-2 auction is like what most do, until the final bid by East. Now the problem is to stop NS from taking more than 6 tricks. Down 500 rates to be a plus as long as our partners make game in hearts. The 4-0 trump break is not very encouraging.

East	South	West	North
2♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
4♠	Double	Passed Out	

West Leads small ♠

The Play - South can count 4-5 winners in spades and not much else.

Leading up to the ♣QJ twice will develop a winner as long as the honors are split (75 % chance). Leading toward the ♦ in hand will work if the ♦A is with North or if ♦ sit favorably. Declarer Wins the SK and leads a small ♦ to ♦10 losing to South's ♦J. Back comes another small ♠ won by declarer in hand. Now declarer plays a ♣ toward dummy, South winning the ♣K and continuing the last ♠. Winning in hand, declarer leads a 2nd ♣ playing the ♣Q over South's ♣10 and won by North's ♣A. North tries a ♥ ruffed by East. A 3rd low ♣ wins on board, South showing out. Declarer tries a ♦ to the K but South wins the ♦A. South continues ♦ to North's ♦Q and returns a ♥ clearing East's trumps. East has 2♦ to cash but must surrender 1♥, 3♦, and 2♣ for 4S^X-3 or -500. Sometimes having finesses fail when we sacrifice is a good thing. This means game has more chances for NS. Let's hope our partners made their Vulnerable 4♥ game. They did. Partner's sacrifice appears to have earned us +3 Imps.

Post Mortem

Partner's hand is on the strong side defensively for a weak-2 opening, especially playing precision. However favorable vulnerability makes this look like the winning auction. West's raise is a standard Law raise (9 trumps = 3 level) *with tolerance for defending* ♥. There is growing sentiment in expert circles (Larry Cohen) that a weak-2 bidder should take additional action at favorable vulnerability with an undisclosed asset that increases the value of the hand. Were West to have as little as the ♦Ax and ♠Kxx, game in ♠ is not far-fetched and certainly any losses at 4♠ are minimized. Note those same cards will set 4♥ often unless opponents hold a pointed suit void. Alas East did not find partner with those cards. The void in ♥ and the 5-5 shape work together to make partners apparent break with discipline understandable. Normally once a preemptor has bid, they stay silent unless forced to bid by partner.

One defensive strategy we have adopted is that any immediate raise of a preempt presupposes some defense (that is, wasted values or length in their trump suit). Many prefer to bid to the Law of Total Tricks level immediately, claiming to make bidding very hard for opponents. Our approach is more conservative and allows us to pass 1st and sacrifice later. This brings an added advantage that we get more information about the opponent's final destination before committing to a sacrifice. Sometimes our opponents don't bid game.

Learning Pointers:

- 1) Once you preempt, don't bid again unless forced by partner – unless you agree that an unusual asset can cause one more bid after support. (See ACBL's Bridge Bulletin December 2008 pp 18-19)
- 2) Choose your preempting strategy. Talk with your partner about what to do with defense and without defense.