

Learning Points – Don't Be Timid Over 1NT

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Bidding LEVEL: Basic

North Deals
NS Vul
MPs

♠ 94
♥ A854
♦ 9862
♣ KJ8

Steve

N
W 5 E
S

♠ 10753
♥ QJ32
♦ 43
♣ 743

Mike

♠ AK62
♥ 7
♦ QJ1075
♣ Q96

NS: 3♦
N: 2♣, 2♦
S: 1♣, 1♦
EW: 1N, 3♥

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♦	1N
Double	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass!	Pass	Pass!	
South leads ♦9			

Tuesday Evening September 22, 2009 International Fund Open Pairs,
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It's often right to bid over opponent's 1NT opening or overcall.
The key is to know when.

The Bidding

West chose the NT overcall instead of a takeout double holding 2 stoppers in ♦. 1 NT communicates the value of the hand immediately. North's double shows 8+ HCP and a desire to defend. East scrambles to find a major fit (systems on – useful if for no other reason than it's easy on the memory).

The Play

North's ♦9 lead is indicated by partner's bidding. West can count 3 top tricks and 8 if we lose no more than the missing tops in ♥ & ♣. There are 5 losers for sure (2♣, 1♥, 2♣) and maybe a 6th in ♣s or a ruff somewhere.

West set about drawing trumps. An alert North won the ♥A and switched to the ♣9. South won two ♣ tricks and played a 3rd ♣ to give partner a ruff. In all West lost 2♣, 2♣ and a ♣ ruff, and the ♥A.

2♥ down 1 was -50 worth 6.5 of 7 Match Points to EW.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
MPs	2.5	6.5	5	2.5	0	6.5	2.5	2.5
Score	-130	-50	-120	-130	-800	-50	-130	-130

Post Mortem

Using 1NT to show a concentration of strength in opponent's suit(s) helps our side gauge when to stretch for game and when to lay low. Knowing partner has lots of points in their suit often means they have points in our suits or side suits where we need them... a sure indication to lay off. Playing systems on is a useful memory aid.

Garbage Stayman is a useful tool to find a 4-3 or 4-4 major suit fit when responder has a weak hand. Responder should have some useful shortness for declarer. In garbage Stayman, responder bids 2H after opener's 2D response, or otherwise passes partner's 2 of a major bid. With no ruffing values whatever, East would pass 1NT and hope making a 7 card contract is easier than making an 8 card contract. Here we found our 4-4 ♥ fit and the opponents allowed us to play there.

Either opponent could have bid instead of their last pass. Undoubtedly the unfavorable vulnerability made our opponents shy. North had values and shape for a 3♦ call, and South the shape and strength for a balancing double. South bears much of the responsibility for the result. With ♥ shortness and good strength, a balancing double is a standout call. North should remove to 3♦ and not pass for penalty (North's ♥s are just not good enough).

Learning Points

1. Balance when opponents have found a fit in one or 2 suits and stop at the 2 level. All you need is working points outside their suit and expectations that partner has a modicum of strength.

2. Add garbage Stayman to your arsenal if you play strong no trumps.
3. Bid over opponent's strong NT auctions – get them out of their best spot. Try to create a plus score for your side.

Key Words: Compete over 1NT, Systems on, Garbage Stayman, Balancing