

Just bidding and making game was sufficient for a good NS score. The declarers who went down at 4♠ likely got a ♦ lead and with good stewardship by West lost the ♦A, ♠Q (losing finesse), ♣A and ♦-ruff by East. Declarer should realize a trump finesse is risky after a ♦ opening lead and continuation.

Post Mortem

3rd seat openings offer special opportunity – partner doesn't have an opening hand so you need to find the right strain quickly. You might not agree with South's initial action, but it has its place in your bidding thoughts. Opening 1NT with 2 open suits misleads partner about your TEXTURE. This can lead to wrong strains or levels. Bidding where you live often helps the partnership land on its feet.

West got a bit too rambunctious in 4th seat. Yes, West holds 9 cards in the minors, but that's not enough for an Unusual NT, particularly when vulnerable. The 2 doubletons limit the trick taking power of the combined hands. Compare:

A	B	C	D
♠ Q9	92	2	2
♥ 92	92	92	9
♦ A983	AQ93	AQ983	AQ983
♣ AJ753	AJ753	AJ753	AJ7532

Hand **A** has only 9 working points (we can't count the SQ). Hand **B** has all 11 HCP working but is flawed – two small doubletons suggest 4 quick losers. Both **A** and **B** suffer from the absence of a side singleton. Hand **C** looks more like a classic Unusual NT – yes 5-5 in the 2 unbid suits is important – you want to help partner manage the Law of Total Trick decision. Even so, down 2 is the likely result if West holds Hand **C** and -500 would save EW 5 MPs. Hand **D** might allow EW to make their doubled contract! Working points and useful shortness should guide when to use 2-suit bids.

Learning Points

- 3rd seat openings offer special opportunities. Even if you play 5-card majors, you might consider opening a 4-card major. Consider opening 1♥ in 4th seat when holding both 4-card majors and an opening hand.
- Be disciplined when using two-suited treatments like Michaels or Unusual NT, especially when vulnerable. Help partner make the right Law of Total Tricks decision. S/he will thank you by playing with you more often.
- When opponents make a 2-suited call and both suits are known, consider using the double to show values (10+HCP) and at least one of their suits well stopped. With 10+ and BOTH of their suits stopped consider NT as an alternative depending on vulnerability. You might want to bid that vulnerable NT game when they are not vulnerable since you have to set them 4 tricks to make up the difference!
- Be clear with partner how to handle doubles. One scheme that works well: 1) If either partner makes a penalty double, then all doubles thereafter are penalty. 2) If partner makes a TO double then a 2nd double by advancer or the original doubler is takeout (we give a special name to advancer's double – Responsive – to show cards and a shape not readily biddable in the context of the auction).
- When leading from (honor) sequences longer than 2 cards, lead the top then the BOTTOM of the sequence, promising all the cards in between. This helps partner know how to defend accurately (leading K from KQxx, should partner overtake the Q with Axx or not?).

Key Words: 3rd Seat Opening Bids, Unusual NT, Working Points, Double of 2-suit bids, Honor sequence leads