

Learning Points – Give Them Some Rope

by Steve Moese (Mike Purcell ed.)

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Defense LEVEL: Intermediate

North Deals
Both Vul
MPs

♠ J1086
♥ 1085
♦ KQJ74
♣ K

Mike

Friday Morning November 27, 2009 Open Pairs, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Kay Mulford, Director. Today my partner is Mike Ma. We play Precision.

♠ Q9
♥ 92
♦ A983
♣ AJ753

	N	
W	13	E
	S	

♠ 752
♥ J764
♦ 102
♣ Q864

NS: 1N, 3♦,
4♥, 4♠,

♠ AK43
♥ AKQ3
♦ 63
♣ 1092

Steve

Here's an example where our opponents couldn't resist overextending themselves. Preempting in a competitive auction can make delicate decisions impossible. Many like to use two-suited overcalls: Unusual NT and Michaels cue bids. Some hands are more suited to these treatments than others.

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♥!	2N ¹
Double ²	3♣	Double ³	Pass
3♠	4♣	Double ⁴	Pass

The Bidding

Texture – how your high cards distribute in your suits – has a big impact on the value of your hand. Strong hands with balanced texture offer help in 3 or more suits. Concentrated texture might need more help from partner. Context matters.

All Pass

South leads ♥A

1= Unusual NT-2 lowest unbid suits

2= Suggest Penalty – I have 1 of their suits.

3= Cards 4= Penalty

South has an interesting opportunity after 2 passes. While most would open 1NT (typically 15-17 HCP balanced), this hand is distinctive because it is top-heavy in the majors and has 5 losers in the minors. In 3rd seat opening in a major (even just 4 cards long) where you have concentrated strength can get you to a game others might miss. Here South can have several bites at the

apple – if partner raise hearts, a game invitation is on the way. Since partner will respond in spades when holding 4 or more cards, we'll find the right major strain. If North tries a semi-forcing 1NT, then a NT contract will be played from the right side (we want opponents leading up to partner's minor suit holdings, not through them on opening lead).

LHO commits an Unusual 2NT. This hand is now gaining in interest. Partner's double says he is interested in defending with values (10+ HCP) and one of LHO's 2 suits firmly under control. RHO offers 3♣ and South judges EW are in trouble. North likely holds ♦ cards on this bidding. South's double sends a two way message – we can defend, and South has extras. (Bidding either major here overly distorts South's shape). West passes and North chooses to show his 4 card ♠ suit, knowing that if South is 4-5 in the majors ♠ will play better. East bids 4♣ continuing what West started. South must now decide whether 4♣ can be beaten 3 tricks. Since partner shows control of one of the minors (likely ♦) we control 3 of 4 suits. Doubling is more appealing than bidding the game, an action that puts us back with the field.

The Play

Start where you live, so South leads ♥A (A from AK) followed by the ♥Q to show the BOTTOM of a running honor sequence (This little signal is worth its weight in gold – use it!). South chooses to clear the majors for a one trick set and leads the ♦6 at trick 5 to establish partner's ♦ tricks. Whether declarer ducks or wins the ♦A is irrelevant. Declarer ducked and partner won his DJ. Partner led his 3rd ♥, declarer played the ♥J from hand and ruffed South's ♥K on the board. Now declarer tried ♦A and ♦8 to ruff in hand, over-ruffed by South. South's 4th ♥ promotes North's ♠K (West ruffed with the ♣J). And a ♦ return promotes South's ♣10!!! East goes down 4 tricks in 4♣ Doubled for -1100.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
MPs	10	10	5	6	10	1.5	8	12	1.5	1.5	1.5	4	7
Score	650	650	150	200	650	-100	620	1100	-100	-100	-100	140	240

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