

Learning Points – Pass for a Top

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Bidding LEVEL: Intermediate

*Saturday Afternoon January 8, 2010, Cincinnati Bridge Association
 Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513)
 631-8070 . Ms. Kay Mulford, Director. Mike & I use Precision.*

East Deals Both Vul MPs	♠ - ♥ Q754 ♦ 1092 ♣ Q87432	Mike
♠ KQJ107 ♥ A6 ♦ KJ8 ♣ J106	N W 10 E S	♠ 643 ♥ J32 ♦ AQ64 ♣ AK9
Steve	♠ A9852 ♥ K1098 ♦ 753 ♣ 5	EW:3N, 4♠, 4♦

The **trap pass** is part of the Negative Double that most players find uncomfortable especially at the 1 level. Here's a hand where small choices make a big difference.

The Bidding

Standard and Precision start with the same bid. East's overall is a normal minimum. West's Pass looks for a big score (with Precision, partner cannot have more than 15 HCP so slam is unlikely our way). North has nothing to say. East has a sound opener and with support in all other suits and reopens with a double. South passes, though

East	South	West	North
1♦	2♠	Pass ¹	Pass
Double	Pass ²	Pass ³	2♣ ⁴
Double ⁵	All Pass		

East leads ♠6

- 1 = Trap – we play Negative Doubles
- 2= Missed opportunity to bid ♥
- 3= Converting to PENALTY
- 4=Safe? Well 6 cards anyway.
- 5=I don't think so.

a ♥ rebid is a possibility. West passes, licking his chops. North adjusts to 2♣ for safety. Here a redouble by North would have been more flexible and gotten them to 2♥. With the lie of the cards NS have plays for 3♥!! Not

to worry. EW would be in 3NT on this auction if NS find their ♥ fit.

East Deals Both Vul MPs	♠ - ♥ Q75 ♦ ♣ Q	Mike
♠ QJ ♥ 6 ♦ ♣ J	N W 10 E S	♠ ♥ J3 ♦ 6 ♣ A
Steve	♠ 98 ♥ 109 ♦ ♣	East Leads the ♦6.

The Play

Declarer wins the ♠A pitching ♦2, and plays the ♠2 ruffing in hand. The ♣2 is passed to West, and West continues ♠K. Declarer ruffs, shortening trumps. ♥4 to the ♥K is won by West's ♥A. Now 3 rounds of ♦ forces North to ruff. A 2nd ♣ to East allows East to play the 4th ♦. West pitches the ♥6. North tries to cash the ♥Q to no avail. West ruffs and EW win the last 2 tricks. Down 4 doubled is +1100 - a top board.

EW Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
MPs	5.46	4.38	8.71	8.71			3.29	8.71	2.21	8.71	0.04	8.71	1.13	11.96
Score	660	630	690	690			620	690	400	690	-200	690	150	1100

Most pairs played in game (♠ or NT). One overreached to slam and went down. One defended undoubled and set NS 4 tricks, and one failed to bid game.

Post Mortem

New players are uncomfortable with the penalty pass when playing negative doubles. Here, West knew NS were headed for trouble. East's double of 2♣ should show 3 or more ♣ cards. Therefore declarer can have 5 or 6 ♣s.

North missed a chance to reverse fortune. Redoubling for escape (to keep ♥ in the picture) would have landed NS in ♥, an interesting spot. A ♥ contract is to be difficult for EW to defend. Against 2♥ by South, West must lead a ♦, or a ♣ with East finding the immediate ♦ switch. Any other lead and a losing ♦ goes away on the ♠A. Now South plays EW for a doubleton ♥A. With a good guess for the ♥J, NS might make 3♥ (losing only 1♥, 2♦ and 1♣). EW cannot afford to let NS play in ♥, with the likelihood of a vulnerable game elsewhere.

Declarer made an unlucky guess in ♥. Playing East for the ♥A is reasonable given the opening bid. East never cashed high trumps - better to make defense's trumps singly against low level doubled contracts when ruffs in dummy (the short hand) are not possible. Notice West switched to ♦ before North could take a 2nd pitch. The 4th ♦ created a loser-on-loser play, promoting an extra under trick.

Learning Points

1. Remember the power of the penalty pass when playing negative doubles.
2. A forcing defense might make sense when you suspect partner is long in their trump suit. Count declarer's trumps. You can't go wrong.
3. Be sure to cash side suit winners before they go away.
4. Try to score your trumps separately defending a doubled contract where you own the preponderance of the HCP, and declarer cannot get ruffs in the "short hand".

Key Words: Penalty Pass, Negative Double, Rescue Redouble