

Learning Points – Tales From the NAP 1

By Steve Moese. Edited by Mike Purcell

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Declarer Play Level: Intermediate

Cincinnati Sectional and North American Pair Qualifier - 2 sessions. The North American Pairs Event is a grass roots National competition held annually since 1979. Each ACBL district qualifies entrants at club and unit play during June through August. These qualifiers then compete at the District level to qualify for the Nationals. The top 3 pairs in each flight qualify to represent their District and Flight in the next Spring National Tournament (2011 Louisville KY). The National event is a 2-day 4-session qualification – finals format. See the history of this event at Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_American_Pairs

NAP Flight	Cup Awarded	Since
A - All	Baldwin	1979
B - < 2000	Golder	1992
C - < 500	Presidents	1987

My partner is Mike Purcell. We play a 2/1 version of Precision. In the past 4 years we have struggled to keep pace with the Flight B field in this pairs contest. We hope this year will be different.

West Deals None Vul MPs	♠ K7 ♥ KJ943 ♦ K ♣ AQJ104	Mike												
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>♠</td> <td>N</td> <td>♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥</td> <td>W 8 E</td> <td>♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♦</td> <td>S</td> <td>♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♣</td> <td></td> <td>♣</td> </tr> </table>			♠	N	♠	♥	W 8 E	♥	♦	S	♦	♣		♣
♠	N	♠												
♥	W 8 E	♥												
♦	S	♦												
♣		♣												
	♠ A9842 ♥ Q7 ♦ J872 ♣ 52	Steve												

The Bidding

North's takeout double of West's opening bid shows a 3 suit hand or a hand too strong for a takeout double. East inserted a forcing 1♠ call to create trouble. South might be tempted to double here (the double is for penalty) but is about a K short of proper strength for that bid. North's subsequent cue bid shows a strong 5-5 hand with 5+♥s and an undisclosed minor. South chooses to play in the 7-card major suit, content that Qx is often sufficient support. North shows the value of his hand, expecting partner to have about 7-8 HCP.

The Play

Declarer can count 3 losers. One risk: avoid - losing a 2nd trump trick to the ♥10. Another risk: ♠s might be 1-5. Declarer has to count the hand closely.

South decided the ♣ finesse had to be taken and so won the ♣Q. The ♣A then drew 4 more ♣s. The ♣J provoked the ♥5 from East, South over-ruffing with

West	North	East	South
1♦	Double	1♠	Pass
1N	2♠ ¹	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
West leads ♣3			
1= Pick another suit partner...			

the ♥7. Declarer led a small ♦ to improve communications. West won the ♦A and led the ♣K (East discarded the ♠3). South ruffed with the ♥Q and led the ♦2 to ruff in dummy. The ♥K ducked to East's presumed ♥A. East continued with the ♦10, again ruffed in dummy. The ♠K then ♠7 to the ♠A (all following) left 3 cards remaining. West followed to 2♠ tricks so West had to be 2=3=4=4 or 2=2=5=4 (With a singleton ♠ West would have led it at trick 1). The odds of a 3-3 trump break are only 38%. The specter of a 2=4 trump split is real. If West holds only 4♦s then the suit breaks 4-1-4-4 with East holding the ♦Q. Sensing that 3N would not make, just making game in ♥s should be close to a top board. Declarer decided to ensure 10 tricks against any layout. South led the ♦J and when West played the ♦3, pitched the good ♣, effectively endplaying East. Yes, by playing all out and ruffing the ♦, declarer might make 11 tricks if the trumps split 3-3. However 4♥ making 4 for +420 was worth 15 out of 17

Match Points.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MP	12.74				11.15	2.15	6.91	14.85	6.91	1.09	11.15	6.91
Result	400				230	140	170	420	170	120	230	170

Trick 10 South to lead:	♠ J9 ♥ J ♦ J ♣ J												
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>♠</td> <td>N</td> <td>♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♥ 8</td> <td>W 8 E</td> <td>♥ 106</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♦ 93</td> <td>S</td> <td>♦ Q</td> </tr> <tr> <td>♣</td> <td></td> <td>♣</td> </tr> </table>		♠	N	♠	♥ 8	W 8 E	♥ 106	♦ 93	S	♦ Q	♣		♣
♠	N	♠											
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♦ 93	S	♦ Q											
♣		♣											
	♠ 5 ♥ ♦ J4 ♣												

The NAP scores cross two sections. Here are the rest of the results:

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MP	16.97				3.21	14.85		6.91	6.91	0.03	6.91	14.85
Result	450				150	420		170	170	-50	170	420

One pair bid the game and made the overtrick for top score on the board. 3 pairs bid and made game.

Post Mortem

♦J872 suggested two things: Partner's minor was ♣s and NS likely has no ♦ stopper. That made 3♥ more attractive than 2N (tell me your minor suit).

When creating tricks, it's often right to ruff with trumps in the short hand, even with honors! Ruffing with trumps in the long hand almost never creates extra tricks (except when you can create a dummy reversal. A Dummy Reversal almost always requires: 1) 5=3 trump split and 2) Trump strength and entries to the short hand so that the short hand can draw trumps. This hand lacks both entries and trump strength, suggesting a cross ruff and end play.

Declarer chose at trick 10 to avoid defeat if East held ♥1086 at that point. That would mean West was 2=2=5=4. An attempt to ruff in dummy would promote 2 trump tricks for East. With the cards as they were, declarer could ruff the ♦J with the ♥9, play the ♥J drawing the remaining 2 trumps (the blessed 3-3 break) and win the last trick with the good ♣.

North Deals None Vul MPs	♠ K7 ♥ KJ943 ♦ K ♣ AQJ104										
♠ J6 ♥ A82 ♦ A1093 ♣ K763	<table border="0"> <tr> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>8</td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W	8	E		S		♠ Q1053 ♥ 1065 ♦ Q654 ♣ 98
	N										
W	8	E									
	S										
	♠ A9842 ♥ Q7 ♦ J872 ♣ 52	NS: 2♦, 2♠, 2N, 3♣, 4♥									

When you can make a game few are likely to bid, risking your game for an overtrick is silly. 50% of the time trumps will split 4-2. You have a near top score (15 of 17) do you really think risking your gain for an additional 1-2 MPs is right? You seek a 13% gain against a 50% chance of being right. That's 3-1 against.

Often matchpoint decisions require we accept the benefit we have established and avoid marginal risks that are foolish in the long run. This is one of them.

Learning Points

1. Do you and your partner use Michaels this way? Talk!
2. Would you find a raise with Qx in your partner's major? It can be right when NT is unlikely.
3. Are you disciplined about how you use your takeout double? North's rebid showed a hand too strong for a simple overcall.
4. When creating tricks, it's often right to ruff with trumps in the short hand, even with honors! Ruffing with trumps in the long hand almost never creates extra tricks (except when you can create a dummy reversal).
5. Making 4 when others will not bid a sound game is almost always a top. Don't spoil your day trying for 5 if you could go down.

Keywords: Takeout double, Michaels Cue Bid, Raising Partner's Major with Hx, Playing safe in MP