

Learning Points – Tales From the NAP 4

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Bidding Level: Intermediate

North Deals
EW Vul
MPs

♠ Q964
♥ A8
♦ AJ107
♣ J52

Mike

Cincinnati Sectional and North American Pair Qualifier - Session 1 of 2 sessions. My partner is Mike Purcell. We play a 2/1 version of Precision.



Kit Woolsey said it best – our objective in any competitive auction is to cause the opponents to make the last decision. They might just get it wrong. Here the HCP are split evenly between the 2 sides.

♠ K873
♥ 1062
♦ K64
♣ K63

Steve

The Bidding

South's negative double shows a 4 card ♠ suit and a desire to compete (8+ HCP) West raised partner's overcall and North confirmed an 8 card ♠ fit. West did not want to sell out at the 2 level. Given favorable vulnerability South decided to give the opponents one last chance to go wrong. When East chose to bid game, South trusted partner's opening bid (11-15 HCP and 2 or more quick tricks) to double on side-suit strength.

North	East	South	West
1♦ ¹	2♥	Dbl ²	3♥
3♠	Pass	Pass	4♥
Dbl	All Pass		

The Play

An attacking lead seems best so South leads North's "suit".

North Deals
EW Vul
MPs

♠ Q964
♥ A8
♦ AJ107
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South leads ♦4

1= 11-15 HCP at least 2 cards in ♦
2= Negative

(Precision requires us to open 11-13 HCP balanced hands 1♦. But this opening bid should be the same at most all tables). North wins the ♦A and returns the ♦J. East covers with the ♦Q (not best). South now chooses the ♣3. Declarer ducks this to the ♣9 to no avail. North wins the ♣J continues ♦s forcing declarer to ruff in dummy. Now partner can win the trump lead and return a trump, voiding the dummy of trumps. Declarer manages to lose 1♠, 1♥, 2♦s and 1♣ for down 2. +500 gained 16.5 of 17 Matchpoints for NS. One other NS pair achieved this result.

♠ K873	NS: 2♠
♥ 1062	EW: 1♠, 1N,
♦ K64	3♥
♣ K63	

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MP	2.15				10.62	4.79	14.85	16.44	10.62	6.38	10.62	16.44
Result	-110				110	-50	140	500	110	100	110	500

Two different sections played these hands, here are the rest of the results:

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MP	1.09				0.03	3.21		10.62	10.62	10.62	4.79	10.62
Result	-150				-200	-100		110	110	110	-50	110

Post Mortem

Declarer could have done better in 2 ways: 1) refuse to cover the ♦J. South might just have ♦K?4 as was the case. The ♦Q is a threat card. We don't want to give away threat cards. Secondly, when missing the KJ in a 7 card fit, finesse the K not the J (unless you have specific information to the contrary). Then you can test to see if that suit breaks 3-3. If it does you have long suit tricks to cash. Playing this way East would still be down 1 for -200. Notice that this score is better than -500 by only 0.5 Matchpoints!

Bidding game without sufficient distribution when strength is evenly split is a losing proposition. Doing so when vulnerable against a non-vulnerable opponent is foolish. Had EW doubled 3♠ and set it 1 trick, they would have scored 14.5 Matchpoints, a 14 MP gain on one decision!! East should respect West's

pass and pass out the hand. With 16 likely tricks, if opponents can make 9, EW can make only 7. Better to go plus quietly.

So you see, South's 3♠ bid was not without its risks. This competitive raise was an error that the opponents chose not to exploit.

Learning Points

1. With a 9-card fit, and 18 tricks in a hand, bidding 3♠ over 3♥ is almost always right when not vulnerable.
2. Competitive auctions can be hard to read. Bidding one more (safely) to force the opponents to make the final decision can be a winning tactic.
3. When the opponents have bid too high and distribution is not wild, trust partner's opening bid and double. Count partner for 2 defensive tricks. If they already are at a spot you can't beat, the double will cost you nothing – they already earned their top score. If they have grossly overbid, they might just give you a better than average result.

Keywords: Competitive Auctions, Give Opponents the Last Decision, Favorable Vulnerability.