

Learning Points – Tales From the NAP 5

By Steve Moese. Edited by Mike Purcell

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Bidding Level: Intermediate

East Deals
EW Vul
MPs

♠ 98
♥ KQ842
♦ 8732
♣ 63

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.

♠		♠
♥	N	♥
♦	W 6 E	♦
♣	S	♣

When there is a fit, it's often right to play in the long suit of the weak hand – that way the weak hand contributes tricks to the contract. Not all 18 HCP hands should drive for game. Sometimes making 10 tricks is as valuable as bidding game. In matchpoints it's the number of pairs you beat, not the total score per hand.

♠ KQ32
♥ A109
♦ KQJ104
♣ K

Steve

The Bidding

Our Precision auction showed us at the 1 level that game was not in the cards even with a great ♥ fit. South's hand is barely worth 16 HCP (The ♣K is not worth 3 HCP, please!). The Standard or 2/1 auction would begin 1♦-Dbl-2♥-3♣-3♥-P-P-?? East would have much more information to continue to 5♣. Anyone wanting to rebid 2N with the South hand deserves the result they get.

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♣ ¹	Pass	1♦ ¹
Pass	1♣ ³	Pass	1N ⁴
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥

All Pass

East leads ♣4

1= Strong Forcing & Artificial. 16+ HCP
2= 0-7 HCP any shape
3= 4+ ♠s (unbalanced) Unlimited
4= 0-5 HCP, no ♠ fit.

The Play

East's lead is a sound attack. The ♣K suffers its expected fate. West shifts to the ♦5 and East's ♦A wins.

East faces the 2nd test. On this hand East failed to read the singleton and returned a ♠. The ♠K was taken by West's ♠A and West returned a ♠. Careful trump play allows declarer to pick up the trump suit with no loser (♥9 to the ♥Q then small to the ♥A exposes East's singleton trump. It's an easy feat to finesse the ♥J once, then ruff a ♠ in hand to draw West's last trump. Once the trump are gone the ♦s run easily. Bidding 2 and making 4 was a better than average result. +170 was worth 14.32 Match points out of 17 (84%).

North Deals
EW Vul
MPs

♠ 98
♥ KQ842
♦ 8732
♣ 63

♠AJ54		♠ 1076
♥J753	N	♥ 6
♦ 5	W 6 E	♦ A96
♣AJ82	S	♣Q109754

♠ KQ32
♥ A109
♦ KQJ104
♣ K

NS: 2♦, 3♥
EW: 2♠, 2N, 5♣

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MP				14.32	16.97	7.44	7.44	14.32	15.91	11.15	1.09	11.15
Result				170	430	130	130	170	420	140	-100	140

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				11.15	3.21	0.03	7.44	11.15	3.21	3.21	5.32	
Result				140	-50	-150	130	140	-50	-50	110	

Post Mortem

There are many interesting themes from this one hand. Defenders failed to interfere in the strong ♣ auction allowing NS to own an easily makeable contract. South should not overvalue the hand as the singleton ♣K is a major flaw. Good signaling will defeat 3N by South. If North happens to declare the NT contract, East will lead ♣s until they establish (by card 3 of the 1st trick). NS should choose to play the Major suit fit - it's more valuable than the better minor suit fit at Matchpoints. Remember we are trying to beat the other pairs.

Good defense should defeat 4♥ by North too. After a ♣ lead and ♦ switch, East has no reason to fish elsewhere. Partner's switch to dummy's long suit screams singleton. Return a ♦ to get a ruff. Partner can count to 4 so the ♠A will cash next, setting North's ambitions appropriately.

Once East failed to return a ♦ for the desired defensive ruff, declarer took advantage. If the opponents fail to get a defensive trick, find a way to make an extra overtrick before they recover. You might get 80+ % for your efforts.

Natural or 2/1 bidders will open 1♦, allowing West to make a takeout double and East to value the long ♣ suit in a different light. East knows that West's shortness in ♦s and East's shortness in ♥s complement each other. Useful shortness often translates to extra tricks when the remaining points are all working. Here they are. The ♠ position means NS take only one trick in that suit!

Learning Points

1. Don't overvalue singleton Kings. You are headed for trouble unless partner has sufficient back-up.
2. When you can't see values for a game, bid your best strain. Sometimes that's not your best suit, but the better scoring strain.
3. Keeping the auction low when one hand is very strong and the other very weak has its advantages.
4. When possible, interfere in the opponent's big club auctions. Small steps can unbalance their bidding enough to affect their choice of strain or level. Sometimes the sacrifice you expect will actually make!
5. When partner switches to Dummy's long strong suit and you hold the Ace, play partner for a singleton – or a strong desire to find another partner.

Keywords: Singleton Kings are overvalued, Read Partner's switch as a singleton, Competitive bidding