

Learning Points – Bid or Defend over Preempts

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N Deals

♠ 107532

None Vul

♥ QJ82

♦ J

Mike

♣ A83

Steve

♠ AKQ8

N

♠ 964

♥ K965

W 1 E

♥ A10

♦ 10

S

♦ K965

♣ KJ102

♣ 9876

♠ J

DealMasterPro:

♥ 743

EW: 3♠ 4♣

♦ AQ87432

3N

♣ Q4

NS: 1♦

March 6, 2008 Thursday Evening Open Pairs Ms. Pat Newman,
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Preempts cause problems. They use up much bidding space making communication difficult. Sometimes the defend or bid decision opposite partner's take out double is far from clear.

The Bidding

South's 3♦ preempt is disciplined and traditional - a 7 card suit with 2 of the top three honors, no outside 4 card major, no outside ace. Opposite partner's pass making the same bid with a 6 card suit or less strength in diamonds could be right in many situations. West had a typical chunky takeout double. Even when your agreement is to overcall on a 4 card major occasionally, this is NOT the time nor the hand. West holds both 4 card majors and perfect takeout double shape. Besides, overcalling at the 3 level on a 4 card suit is unlikely to be right

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	3♦	Double

Passed Out

West leads ♠K

(Law of Total Tricks). East's pass over partner's takeout double is not reflex. With length in diamonds, passing for penalty looks attractive. The diamond king is not pulling full weight since Left Hand Opponent has 7 cards in the suit and probably holds the Ace. I have no 4 card major. The only option to consider seriously is whether we score better at 3NT or defending the double preempt.

Partner will have about 14 HCP and close to perfect shape for his takeout double (4414, 4423). He could have less strength but not much less. I know where 11 of the 13 diamonds are so Mike and North are both probably short. Mike could have a strong major suit overcall (17+ HCP) and my pass now blocks finding this out. I trust Mike would make a jump overcall with such a hand in 4th seat opposite a passed partner. I pass, believing that defeating the doubled contract will either yield more points than our game, or that my 7 prime HCP without a 4 card major are insufficient for game in the first place. I am a bit concerned about where our tricks will come from in 3 NT – partner is less likely to have a 5+ card major on this auction. Passing a takeout double of a 3 level preempt often works well with scattered values and modest length (3+ cards) in the trump suit.

The Play

Partner's ♠King lead is conventional. This asks me to signal count. We find the signal request opening lead to be extremely useful gathering defensive information. I play the ♠4 to show an odd number (standard count signals). Partner switches to the ♥5. This tells me he holds a Heart Honor. (We lead attitude spot cards from suits – low showing a high honor, 2nd highest from honorless length). I know it must be the King since the Queen is on the board. Declarer splits honors and I take the ♥A, returning the ♥10. Partner wins and gives me a heart ruff. We now have 4 tricks and need 3 more to protect against a game score our way.

Switching to clubs seems right since dummy's weakness and opener's preempt say partner holds some club assets. Declarer tries the Queen covered by partner and won by dummy's ace. A spade ruff back to hand and a small diamond toward the Jack come next. I win the ♦King and switch to a club, partner winning. A club return allows me to pitch a spade (I can't shorten my own trumps in this situation).

Declarer ruffs and is down to nothing but trump. This end play allows us to win two more trump tricks with my \heartsuit K and \heartsuit 9. We were lucky that the \heartsuit 10 and \heartsuit J fell on the very first trump trick.

Down 3 doubled for minus 500 was a top board.

Post Mortem

If declarer decides to run the \heartsuit Jack when in dummy with the \clubsuit Ace, I will duck. I have protect the run of trumps and a potential extra club ruff. This play however limits the losses in the trump suit to 2 tricks since I hold the \heartsuit King. When declarer leads a singleton honor for an expected finesse of the King it is often right to hold up to stop the run of the suit or preserve a winner for our side.

I am surprised that we had enough tricks to make 3 NT. In another field we might have scored only +300 and would have lost match points to all pairs bidding and making game. That's the dilemma preempts often present.