

Learning Points – Overtricks in Partials Worth Their Weight in Gold

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E Deals

N/S Vul

Mike

♠ AQ9
♥ QJ1072
♦ A9
♣ A94

♠ K73

♥ A5

♦ J653

♣ K1082

Steve

♠ 6

♥ 8643

♦ Q1072

♣ J753

N
W 2 E
S

♠ J108542

♥ K9

♦ K84

♣ Q6

Deep Finesse:

NS 2♠, 1♦

EW 3♥, 2♣,

1N, 1♣

Red Ribbon Pairs 1st Qualifying Session (Afternoon), Detroit NABC

The key in part scores is to find the elusive overtrick. The extra trick in Match Points can be worth as much as bidding and making a game.

The Bidding

South's weak 2♠ bid is common at competitive tournaments, even with such a weak suit, even vulnerable. The bidding room consumed by this action makes E/W bidding difficult. Partner's double is either a 3 suit takeout with sound (14+ HCP) values, or a big hand 17+ HCP of several shapes. Note, partner could have overcalled 2NT, but that tends to deny interest in ♥, the other major. 2NT is a misrepresentation of West's hand type. Either way we will play in ♥ if opponents don't attempt a sacrifice.

East	South	West	North
Pass	2♠	Double	Pass
3♥		Passed Out	

South leads ♠J

East's 3♥ bid is a standard response to a takeout double. East has a weak hand and 4 hearts. South passes (once you've made your

preemptive call it is never right to bid again, ever, unless partner forces you to do so), and West faces temptation. West knows that with a good 8 HCP and a feature East will stretch to 4♥. Since losing hands are more likely than winning hands, partner rightly chooses to pass (Would you?).

The Play

South's opening lead looks like top of a sequence. West can count 5 losers (2♥, 1♦, 2♣) so developing a winner is critically important. Winning the ♠A seems best – wherever the ♠K is, the ♠Q might still score a trick. There are several ways to continue – drawing trumps immediately looks to help eliminate risk of ruffs and seems right since we want opponents to open the other suits for us.

North wins the ♥A and continues the ♦3 lead. Perhaps declarer's ♠6 looked like a singleton. Ducking by declarer causes South to play ♦K, the ♦A winning in dummy. One club loser can go away on the 3rd♦ (the finesse for the ♦J is marked by South's failure to play it). No need to finesse diamonds right away.

A 2nd high heart from West fetches North's ♥K. South decides to return the ♣Q, won in dummy with the ♣A. The ♦9 led to the ♦10, and the ♦Q cashed for a club discard. We lose 2 hearts and 1 club – making 4 for +170 and 21.5 Match points out of 25 (an 86% board).

Post Mortem

Whether North leads a spade or not has little impact on the outcome of the hand. In fact the diamond lead didn't give declarer anything s/he couldn't do themselves! Careful play makes defense difficult.

Discipline over takeout doubles is critical (See Mike Lawrence's books and recent articles in the monthly ACBL Bridge Bulletin magazine). Responder's simple suit bid shows 0-8 HCP, a jump promises 4 cards or more and 9-11 HCP, and a cue bid promises a good fit for (both) unbid majors and 12+HCP – a game force. A double jump is usually preemptive with a long suit and 0-8 HCP. Passing a takeout double for penalty requires trumps good enough to draw opponents trumps with 1 loser, or enough outside strength to compensate.

Partner's rebids after the takeout double depend on how you play simple overcalls and the 1NT overcall. With 8-16 HCP overcalls, a new suit bid by doubler would typically show 17-19 HCP, a jump in a new suit would show 20-21 HCP, and a cue bid would show 22+ HCP. Similarly, a simple NT rebid shows 18-19 HCP if you play a 15-17 HCP simple NT overcall. A Jump NT rebid would show 20-21 HCP. Cue bid first with 22+ the rebid NT to show bigger hands. All NT rebids by double promise stoppers in all suits bid by opponents.

Note, some experts practice *equal level conversion*. This allows takeout doubles of a major suit with two suited hands including the other major and the diamond suit. This approach complements the use of the top and bottom cue bids of a major suit for handling all 2 suited competitive hands (Michaels Cue bids and Unusual No Trump for the 2 lowest suits complete the possible pairs).

When playing equal level conversion after the takeout double, a correction by doubler to diamonds over responder's club response does not show extra values – it shows a 2-suited hand with the other major and diamonds. Equal level conversion gives up handling large single suited diamond hands at lower levels in the auction. It also restricts responder's choices of level when bidding with long clubs. Responder can no longer count on at least 3 clubs in partner's hand.

If you feel the need to have specific bids for all possible 2 suited hands, you might like this approach.

Mike and I do not play equal level conversion. We judge the benefit to be small for the impact it has on our thinking.