

Competing Over Preempts

Unit 363 Saturday Afternoon Game (updated 6/7/2008, speaker: Jon Gustafson)

These notes generally discuss direct actions. Balancing bids require less strength. Don't be tempted to preempt over a preempt – your partner, whether a passed hand or not, will assume you are strong.

I. Over a Weak Two-Bid¹. Traditional methods include,

- Double is takeout and requires little more than a one-level takeout double with good shape.
- An overcall shows sound opening values at the two-level and extra values at the three-level.
- 2NT shows a good strong notrump opener.
- A jump overcall shows a very strong hand but it can be passed.
- Double followed by notrump or a new-suit is stronger or more flexible than direct action.
- Four of a minor shows a strong two-suiter with the bid minor and the unbid major (Leaping Michaels).
- A three-level cue-bid asks for a stopper for three notrump (suggesting a long solid suit).
- After a takeout double, lebensohl enables advancer to distinguish weak hands from moderate holdings – two notrump by advancer is a marionette to three clubs, most often to show weakness.

What do you bid with the following hands after a 2♥ opening bid by dealer?

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) ♠A87 ♥– ♦KJ87532 ♣AK3 | d) ♠A87 ♥65 ♦AKQ10865 ♣J |
| b) ♠A87 ♥– ♦AK3 ♣KQJ10753 | e) ♠AKQ52 ♥– ♦K3 ♣AKJ762 |
| c) ♠AQJ52 ♥– ♦K3 ♣AQ8762 | f) ♠K87 ♥AQ5 ♦AKQ3 ♣KQ2 |

Answers:

- Three Diamonds*. Start by bidding your suit. After the expected heart raise, double for take-out showing a good suit with support for the other two suits.
- Double*. First double to show the huge playing strength. You are not afraid of further competition. After two spades (0-7) jump to four clubs. After three diamonds (8-11) bid four clubs which is forcing. After two notrump (lebensohl, requesting three clubs) jump to four clubs, not forcing.
- Four Clubs*. Shows spades and clubs, at least 5-5 and a strong hand (forcing). This hand is close.
- Three Hearts*. Asking for a heart stopper. Would prefer to have K or Qx of clubs.
- Four Clubs*. Show slam interest by bidding five clubs over north's attempt to signoff in four spades.
- Double*. Plan to raise north's expected lebensohl two notrump bid to three. With such a lack of tricks you might bid only two notrump over two spades. If north shows constructive values with a three-level new suit bid, investigate slam.

II. Over a Three-Level Opening Preempt². Preempts work because they greatly reduce our chances of reaching the best contract, but we must do the best we can.

- Double is takeout but requires more high card or playing strength than a 2-level takeout double. As preempts occur at higher levels, doubles become more cooperatively penalty.
- A suit overcall, similarly, requires more high card or playing strength.
- 3NT can show three different types of hands: a huge balanced hand, a source of tricks or a balanced "stretch". Some play that a 4♣ advance by partner asks about your hand type.

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) over 3♥: ♠AQ1085 ♥62 ♦KQ4 ♣876 | d) over 3♣: ♠AJ8 ♥K105 ♦AK108 ♣AJ10 |
| b) over 3♦/3♥: ♠AQJ1042 ♥4 ♦54 ♣A1042 | e) over 3♥: ♠J86 ♥K2 ♦AKQ9872 ♣A |
| c) over 3♠: ♠65 ♥AQJ1083 ♦KJ2 ♣109 | f) over 3♣: ♠AQ8 ♥J5 ♦A1086 ♣AJ98 |

Answers:

- Pass* in direct seat, bid *Three Spades* in the balancing seat.
- Three Spades* in direct seat, bid *Four Spades* in the balancing seat.

- c) *Pass* in direct seat at unfavorable vulnerability, bid *Four Hearts* at favorable vulnerability, and bid *Four Hearts* in the balancing seat, regardless.
- d) *Three Notrump*. You might not make 3NT but partner needs very little to make it a good bet.
- e) *Three Notrump*. Holding a stopper and a source of tricks. If they lead a spade maybe that will give you the ninth trick.
- f) *Three Notrump*. This is a stretch, to be sure, but the only alternatives of *Pass* or *Double* make partner's decisions more critical and difficult. You can dream of passing and hope that partner will find a take-out double, but that is just a dream. Partner's hand was ♠K32 ♥A987643 ♦74 ♣10 (Board 1, Tues. Aft., May 27, 2008, NorthernColoradoBridge.com).

III. Over a Four-Level Opening Preempt³. In Bridge World Standard,

- Double of any natural suit opening bid through four spades is for takeout.
- 4NT over 4♠ shows a two-suiter, over 4♥ shows the minors, over 4 of a minor, 4NT is natural.
- How do you judge when to act? Adequate strength indicated by not too many quick losers and sufficient prospect of an adequate number of winners. Experience is key, so consider these hands:

What do you bid with the following hands after a 4♠ opening bid by dealer?

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|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) ♠7 ♥K875 ♦A532 ♣A1064 | d) ♠K87 ♥AQ2 ♦AJ104 ♣K83 |
| b) ♠7 ♥AQ87 ♦KQ108 ♣AJ106 | e) ♠K87 ♥AQ2 ♦AKJ4 ♣AQ6 |
| c) ♠7 ♥AKQ8 ♦KQ108 ♣AK62 | f) ♠– ♥QJ765 ♦A3 ♣KJ9743 |

Answers:

- a) *Pass*. Perfect shape, but not strong enough. If north has enough to make a game opposite this hand he will be on his way to six.
- b) *Double*. This hand has perfect shape and good strength. If no contract makes you will have lots of company. A fit is likely and north's expected strength puts you in the game zone.
- c) *Double*. The shape, not the strength, dictates the takeout double. You will be very unlucky to go negative unless you take a stab at an unmakeable slam.
- d) *Pass*. Doubling with this type of hand is no longer considered standard expert practice. If you double with both this hand and hand c), north's decisions will be much too difficult. Pass and go plus.
- e) *Double*. Finding the par spot will be difficult for everyone. If north has a relatively flat hand with which his best tactic is to pass, all should be fine. Otherwise bidding more requires guesswork.
- f) *Four Notrump*. Shows a non-specific two-suiter. North will start by choosing between the minors, giving preference to clubs. If partner bids diamonds, you will correct to hearts, showing hearts and clubs. This hand is marginally strong enough to compete at this level, but with a void and 6-5 shape, pass would be difficult.

IV. After a Four-of-a-Major Preempt in Competition⁴. After partner has doubled or bid a suit, a response of 4NT is for takeout (for the unbid suits) only if an opponent has bid 4♥ or 4♠, you have not previously bid or passed, partner has not made a weak bid nor overcalled a weak enemy bid, and there are at least two unbid suits among clubs, diamonds and hearts. Otherwise a 4NT response is ace asking.

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| (1♥) - 1♠ - (4♥) - 4NT (minors) | (4♠) - X - (P) - 4NT (3-suit takeout) |
| (P) - 1♦ - (4♠) - 4NT (clubs & hearts) | (1♥) - 2♠ - (4♥) - 4NT (RKB, 2♠ = weak) |
| (1♥) - X - (4♥) - 4NT (minors) | (P) - 1♦ - (4♥) - 4NT (RKB) |
| (2♥) - 2♠ - (4♥) - 4NT (RKB) | (1♦) - X - (4♥) - 4NT (Blackwood) |

¹ Beverly Kraft, "Improve Your Bidding", *The Bridge World*, December 2004, pp 70, 74.

² Marilyn Hemenway's Bridge Library, "Bidding Over the Opponents' Preempts", <http://www.omahabridge.org/Reference.html>.

³ Beverly Kraft, "Improve Your Bidding", *The Bridge World*, November 2004, pp 66, 74.

⁴ Richard Pavlicek, *Pavlicek System*, February 5, 2004, p 78.