

## Beating The Experts At IMPs Part I

By Spencer Hurd

Bridge magazines and the ACBL Bulletin are filled with articles on how to succeed on a particular hand. But they have little to offer the advancing player on getting past that last hurdle - on beating players in a higher flight when your team gets in an unusually high bracket (for you), or on beating Flight A players when you get in a KO-bracket (or Swiss match) which seems to be rich in strength. In the discussions here, your opponents, The Experts, may be nationally known players or may be MABC stars, not necessarily professional, and in this series of articles, we will give concrete suggestions on how you might achieve victory over this "tougher" competition.

In order to set a proper stage, we assume you are in a Swiss match of seven hands against a stronger (or very tough) team or are about to play a K-O match against a very strong team.

There are several basic categories of suggestions which are sometimes related:

- ◆ - Understand the game.
- ◆ - Don't throw it away
- ◆ - Explore, explore, explore
- ◆ - Don't play what they do
- ◆ - DO play what they do.
- ◆ - If they throw it away, take it.
- ◆ - Clichés From Charleston Ace

Other possibilities will be considered later in the series, or in 2006. Ideas or comments are welcome (write the editor at [hurds@citadel.edu](mailto:hurds@citadel.edu)).

Before specifics, here are generalities (Understanding The Game) that are culled from experience and more or less well-known standard recommendations (including some of Marty Nathan's ideas also posted at [mabcbridge.org](http://mabcbridge.org)).

♠ Don't add new material at a tournament. Practice it at the local club first. If you are in a brand new partnership, *forget about your pet ideas or treatments*, and play as standard as possible (get a Standard American Yellow Card and a printout from the ACBL web site and use them at the partnership desk).

♠ If you are playing with friends from your hometown, arrange to play IMPs with other local teams or use DOOP playing with them as a foursome and IMP the results. Analyze the hands frankly (at home) especially with regards to recommendations in this series of articles.

♠ Arrive early, if only as a courtesy to your teammates. Arrive as rested as possible (strive for no long drive that morning), and never eat a large meal between sessions save alcohol until afterwards when everyone can congratulate you.

♠ Never ask, Why didn't you? Ever. During a break, you may ask, How could I have known that ?, or How could I have signaled that I wanted ? Or, How can we arrange invitational sequences with a hand like? You get the drift? Accusatory questions are for losers. Constructiveness is the sign of a winner. You can only teach by example. Give your partner a copy of these articles and underline this paragraph.

♠ Never psyche an opening bid of one of a suit or 1NT. Never. You have 3 teammates to answer to. Unless you repay them their entry fee. If you want to liven up the competition, it should be in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat, with liberal weak twos or pre-empts hands or extra light with wild shape, and put it on your card.

♠ Bid games aggressively. (Finally a bridge comment!) The math says so. The scoring is different, really different, from the more familiar matchpoint scoring.

♠ Bid slams which are over 50%. With RKC Blackwood, bid small slams with at least 4 key-cards and the trump queen. Missing the trump queen and one key card, avoid the slam. Whatever the theory about grand slams, ignore it. The Grand Slam Rule For Winners: bid them only if you can actually count 13 tricks or 40 high-card points. It's just too awful to be defeated in a Grand when the opponents miss the Small Slam! (And you need all the key-cards and the trump queen.)

♠ Always go for the safest slam. This may be hard to judge, but you can bid naturally in this sense: if the distribution is wild, with voids and/ or singletons everywhere, you have more chances with good trumps (when suits split badly). Save no-trump for the obvious situation.

♠ Doubling a suit contract below game for penalties is **always** based on a trump stack. Re-read that. Most doubles are for takeout or show extra high cards or both. Doubles in certain positions should always be defined for takeout. Let the experts worry about whether or not they agree on exceptions. For example:

North	East	South	West
1S	DBL	2S	P
P	DBL		

1S	DBL	1NT	P
2S	DBL		

1H	DBL	1NT	P
P	DBL		

1H	Dbl	1NT	P
2D	Dbl		

In each case, the second double is for takeout. Making that second double requires a very good hand with shortness in opener's (first) suit and extra high cards. If you are West (responder), and choose to pass partner's second double, you are announcing, I have enough length in opener's suit to insure defeat. Otherwise, if you can't stand picking a suit at the 3-level, bid 2NT. The doubler will know you are pretty broke. The other point: if

you (the doubler East) hold a penalty double of opener's 2<sup>nd</sup> suit, you can't make it just pass; remember, your second double is for takeout. (Some advanced partnerships may wish to refine this principle, but it is strongly recommended.) A minimum hand for the second double in that 4<sup>th</sup> sequence might be

♠ AQ87, ♥6, ♦A54, ♣KQT64 or

♠ AQJ7, ♥6, ♦Q54, ♣AQT64

Change doubler's hand to

♠ AQ87, ♥6, ♦AQT4, ♣AT64

and he should probably pass 2D. Most likely LHO will bid 2H whether or not you double again, but your best contract is 2D by opener.

♠ Obey The Law, that is, the law of total tricks.

North	East	South	West
1H	1S	2H	2S
P	P	3H	??

After this frequently occurring auction, if your 2S raise is remotely normal or average, you will automatically pass. You may bid 3S ONLY with (1) a 4<sup>th</sup> trump, or (2) a singleton heart, or (3) two doubletons and at least Qxx in trumps and your 5-card suit should hold some promise example: Q65, 86, KQT75, 75. If you pass the 3H bid, the requirements for partner are similar. He usually passes with a 5-card suit and only considers bidding with a 6-card spade suit. One other point in this auction, a dangerous possibility is that one opponent will try 4H. If this seems like a real possibility, just pass 3H. Very often, in competitive auctions, one opponent or the other or both will greatly misjudge their possibilities. If partner, the spade overcaller, has about 10 points and only 5 spades, he will pass 3H 100% of the time.

North	East	South	West
1H	1S	2H	2S
3H	DBL	P	??

First, this double is never for penalties. **Never!** Simple. There are NO matchpoint doubles. You are playing IMP scoring. This double means I was going to bid 3S (or something else) anyway as a game invitation. Either accept the invitation and bid 4S or sign off in 3S according to the size of your initial raise to 2S. If you pass the double, you are guaranteeing a heart stack and a defensive card: J76, QJT8, A976, T6 (and this is minimum). Change this to J76, Q6, A976, JT84 and one should bid 3S. With J76, 97, AQ76, JT97 bid 4S.

Suppose you are East in the auction just above and hold: AQ876, QJT9, QT3, 8. If the opponents are to be trusted, partner has a singleton heart. Why didn't he bid 3S? Maybe his raise is so terrible; he KNOWS to get out of the auction. Maybe South has taken a liberty and really has 2 hearts only. Maybe South has a big spade stack! At any rate, *a double would be a strong game try in spades this is not such a hand*. You have a shot at beating 3H but no certainty. A clear pass.

♠ Doubling bids of 2C, 2D or 1NT are occasionally for penalties. If made, game is not scored. One example:

North	East	South	West
1NT	P	P	2D
P	P	DBL	

Most pairs have the agreement that all 2-level doubles by responder after a 1NT bid are for penalties. A good rule. A suggestion: at matchpoints or imps, *the double is never made unless you have discussed it*. West can just pass this time and then discuss, What if I had doubled...? By the way, two special auctions must be discussed:

(a) Pard RHO    You    LHO  
1NT P    P    2D  
DBL

(b) Pard RHO    You    LHO  
1NT 2D    P    P  
DBL

The 1NT opener almost always passes automatically in these situations. The opener's partner is usually better placed to judge the combined possibilities of the two hands. The exception occurs when opener can re-evaluate his hand. In Hand (b), Opener should be saying, I have a doubleton in diamonds (nothing wasted) and a very good 16-17 points. Please compete (I have 3-4 or 4-3 at least in the majors). You may pass only with a couple of tricks in diamonds. Opener might hold:

♠ AQ87, ♥KQ96, ♦54, ♣KQT or

♠ AQJ7, ♥A96, ♦54, ♣AQT4

Even here, if the vulnerability were adverse, it may be much safer to pass the 2D at IMPs; but at matchpoints, competing is even more attractive.

The double in Hand (a), on the contrary, says I have a good holding in diamonds, and we will beat 2D by at least one trick. I expect you to pass. Notice the diamond bidder is on opener's right. Example for opener:

♠ AT, ♥KQT, ♦KJ98, ♣A9752.

With the overcaller on his right, opener expects 3 diamond tricks, and 3 more tricks outside diamonds. Opener will lead the heart king. Holding this latter hand in auction (b), however, opener should just pass 2D. Indeed, the danger in either case is that the opponents may discover they have a great spade fit (partner has not bid spades).

♠ One last note about part-scores. In contrast to matchpoints, where a risky 1NT is usually preferred to a secure 2C contract, at IMPs one prefers the safest part score. For example, with

♠Q72 ♥A85 ♦QT863 ♣82

suppose partner opens 1D. Then you should bid 2D not 1NT. If you like inverted minors, consider not playing inverted minors at IMPs. With that same hand, if partner opens 1C, then certainly bid 1D not 1NT. If you play Walsh consider whether at IMPs it is really useful.

The point here is that from the matchpoint point of view, a bid that gives two tops and one bottom the 3 times it occurs during an evening is leading to a winning evening. But at IMPs, there are no tops, only IMPs. That is, if a bid occurs 3 times and you win one IMP on the first hand, get two IMPs on the second hand, and lose 7 on the third hand, maybe the convention or treatment is not a winner for you in team games.

---

## **Beating The Experts At IMPs - Part II** **Don't Throw It Away** By Spencer Hurd

*We focused in Part I on tactical ideas associated with the theme of Understanding The Game. Here, we consider Don't Throw It Away.*

Most players use their matchpoint tactics and matchpoint experience in team events. Unfortunately, this usually means they are consistently doing the wrong things. *The clearest example of what we mean is in the area of pre-emptive bidding.* At matchpoint scoring, all hands count the same. If the results of your pre-empts seem more often right than wrong, you are in a plus position. Not so at IMPs, where some hands count more than others.

A risky pre-empt down 500 against minus 620 if they find the right contract may be a TOP at matchpoints a dream result in your club game every Monday night. But at IMPs, it is a modest gain of 4 IMPs only. But down 500 against a part score is a disaster. Being defeated at the 5-level when their game wasn't making (and wouldn't have been bid except for your competition) is another disaster. It may decide the whole match. Worse, if your pre-empt guides the terrific declarer you are now playing against into the perfect line of play or into the perfect contract, or both, you have found another path to tragedy.

The Experts have developed their own style, and risky pre-empts are often met in matchpoint events. The recommendations here are for IMP play. Here are some general ideas and specific applications.

1. Have classic values for your pre-empts and be careful with the vulnerability.
2. Don't bid unsoundly, deliberately trying to "take a chance." Don't take chances of this sort. In other words, don't throw it away.
3. Beware of pre-empts missing top cards in the pre-empt suit. Especially dangerous are holdings like KT8 or the like. If there is a penalty double available for them, they will find it. If they need a blueprint to bid or to make 3NT, you are giving it to them.
4. Never pre-empt red vs. white without massive distributional strength.
5. Watch out for unattractive distributions like 6-3-2-2 or 7-2-2-2 especially in combination with questionable suits.
6. Be predictable (to your partner) don't have an outside ace and have at most one outside king. This is especially true in first or second seat. On the other hand, outside values are a big plus since the declarer will not play you for them.

7. Have some agreement about weak two bids in first or second seat.
- 7a. Example: always have 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the top 5 in the suit bid.
- 7b. Example: show exactly 9-11 high card points.
- 7c. Agreement: in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat, the hands are pushy Partner, don't raise me without something good in my suit.
- 7d. Example: very varied and we play Ogust. These are possibilities. But you need some standards. Pick one of these and stick to it.

If you don't know what I mean, then here are "good" and "bad" opening pre-empts. "Equal" will mean you are both vul, both non-vul, or they are vulnerable and you are not. The term "fav" means favorable - you are not vulnerable but they are. Here are a baker's dozen of hand's to bid. Consider whether (or how high) you would pre-empt or at what vulnerability. In first seat, it's your bid:

1. xx, QT9xxxxx, x, xx
2. --, KJT8743, QJT4, 62
3. 87, QJT8632, 87, Q4
4. 87, QJT8632, 8, Q74
5. 8, KJT853, QJT4, 52
6. 8, KT86432, JT6, K6
7. 87, KT96432, 76, 83
8. 985, Q976432, 76, 2
9. T4, KJ86432, KJ, 52
10. T, KJ86432, KJ4, 52
11. 62, AQJT732, 865, 2
12. 75, AKT7543, KT, 54
13. X, KQJ76543, 76, 76

#### Solutions:

1. xx, QT9xxxxx, x, xx      open 3H, equal vul. The top cards are poor but avoid passing 8-card suits. This is too weak for a 4H call. With say, xx, QT9xxxx, xx, xx do not pre-empt at any vulnerability.
2. --, KJT8743, QJT4, 62      open 3H, equal vul. A classic attractive pre-empt with a sensible suit and very attractive distributional surprises.
3. 87, QJT8632, 87, Q4      open 3H, only fav. This is rock bottom minimum.
4. 87, QJT8632, 8, Q74      open 3H, equal. The singleton turns the previous hand into an acceptable pre-empt. A minor point is that the club holding, poor as it is, is much better than #3.
5. 8, KJT853, QJT4, 52      open 2H equal (After Pass-Pass to you, open 3H at Fav.). Look for the opportunities to open at the 3-level on chunky suits when you know (since partner passed already) they can make at least a game.
6. 8, KT86432, JT6, K6      pass unless fav. Maybe open 2H at equal. When you are vulnerable, many doubtful 3-level pre-empts become acceptable as weak two bids.

- 7. 87, KT96432, 76, 83 pass
- 8. 985, Q976432, 76, 2 pass
- 9. T4, KJ86432, KJ, 52 pass, open 2H at equal
- 10. T, KJ86432, KJ4, 52 open 3H if not vulnerable only.
- 11. 62, AQJT732, 865, 2 open 2H in 1st or 2nd seat, any vulnerability; open 3H after two passes at equal vulnerability; open 4H after two passes at fav.
- 12. 75, AKT7543, KT, 54 open 1H and rebid 2H. Treat the hand as a minimum opening. (Which it is.)
- 13. x, KQJ76543, 76, 76 open 3H even at Un-fav, open 4H at fav

In general, only sound suits should be considered for a pre-empt. This may not be a majority choice at matchpoints, but at IMPs, bidding with weak suits attracts penalty doubles and 3NT bids like honey attracts bees and bears.

If you play weak jump overcalls, here are recommendations. Right hand opponent has opened 1H and you hold:

- 1. KTxxxx, x, QJx, xxx pass
- 2. KJT875, 87, J74, T2 bid 2S at fav only; pass otherwise (suit ok, hand too weak)
- 3. KJT875, 6, QJ43, 52 bid 2S at equal (typical minimum)
- 4. AKxxxx, x, xxx, xxx bid 1S (avoid the weak jump with such a strong defensive holding in your suit) even if the hand is not as good as you would want for a 1-level overcall.
- 5. QJT965, 765, 86, QJ pass, the QJ doubleton is especially bad; compare next hand
- 6. QJT875, T, QJ86, 52 2S at equal vul
- 7. QJT875, T, AQ86, 52 1S - with significant outside strength, don't pre-empt.
- 8. AKQ742, 7, 864, 984 bid 1S.
- 9. With either of the last two hands, if partner invites game, you will decline. If partner jumps to game, you will make it.  
A main idea is to avoid entirely giving them an easy penalty double or a giveaway 3NT.

**Beating The Experts At IMPs Part III**  
**Explore, Explore, Explore**  
 By Spencer Hurd

Have you ever said, Sorry, Partner, I bid too quickly? Most of us have. In the context of Throwing It Away, bidding (or taking a decision) without seeking information is a very common error. Here we consider the responsibility to avoid bidding too rashly.  
 In the following familiar auction, do you and your partner have methods or agreements?

You	Partner
1S	2S
?	

In 2/1 (Two Over One) or SAYC (Standard American Yellow Card), the 2S bid is mildly constructive. With weak hands, but hands with spade support, one uses the forcing 1NT followed by a return to 2S. Opener doesn't know that you have more than 2 spades and neither will the opponents.

Therefore, after a simple raise to 2S, don't rush to pass or to jump to 4S. *Consider an intermediate bid when you have an intermediate hand.*

The experts have many forward going bids which force only to 3S and which are game tries. You should play some of them or simple variations of them. For instance, you as opener might rebid as follows after a major suit raise:

Pass no apparent game opposite even a nice 9-point response.

2NT either natural (16-17 and semi-balanced with 5 spades, good stoppers) or inquiring with some other hand (and forcing in either case).

This bid should be alerted: Not necessarily natural, and forcing one round.

3C some holding in clubs which could use help, a so-called help-suit game try.

3D same thing, a help-suit

3H a 4-card suit, natural. You expect a raise to 4H or a bid of 3S or 4S by partner.

(Of course, all these bids might show a very long second suit or a hand where you will eventually insist on game but we are concentrating on hands which are in-between and in which the final contract desirable is not obvious.)

### Example hands (You opened 1S and partner raised to 2S.)

1. ♠KJ875 ♥AQT ♦852 ♣AQ - Bid 2NT. Many probably would have opened 1NT but things are going well. If partner raises to 3NT (probably 9 points with 3-3-3-4 shape) just pass. If he bids 3S, pass. If he bids three of a new suit (showing where his values are) bid game in spades unless he bids 3D in which case bid 3NT. Don't jump to 4S or 3NT (and certainly don't pass) with this hand. Explore and ask partner.

2. ♠KQJ875 ♥AT9 ♦8 ♣A62 - If you bid ssgt or short suit game tries (alertable), this is the hand for it and you will bid 3D. For the rest of us, something else is necessary. But the hand is too good to pass, and not good enough to jump to 4S (each is rash). I suggest **either** 3C or 2NT. The 3C bid is cheap and semi-natural and asks for help in clubs partner has room to bid 3D or 3H to be forward going but not going past 3S). Partner can't pass 3C you are committed to playing a spade contract. On the other hand, if you bid 2NT, you intend it as inquiring not natural (partner doesn't know which). You must listen to Partner's response and decide whether to stop in 3S or bid 4S. If he raises to 3NT, you will have to bid 4S on this hand (NEVER bid 3NT on blind auctions with a singleton it's bad matchpoints and horrible IMP bidding). If he bids 3C or 3H, showing where some of his values are, I would go to 4S. If he bids 3D, I would sign off with 3S.



3. ♠KJT85 ♥AQT3 ♦J5 ♣A3 - Pass is close, but I would make the value bid of 3H. I think this is best played as forcing to 3S at least (so partner can't pass 3H), and yes you might get overboard once in a while but you will be playing the same contract as the experts at the other table.

4. ♠KQT75 ♥AJT ♦8 ♣AK65 - Bid 3C. Slam is possible if the responder has a hand like this:

♠A843 ♥9 ♦765 ♣QJ743.

Opposite almost any raise to 2S, game is of course very likely, but jumping to 4S is rash. Explore you can't find a miracle slam-fit if you don't look for it. A possible auction with these cards:

You	Pard
1S	2S
3C	4C
4D	4H
4NT	5C*
6S	

\* showing one key-card.

Notice honest cue-bidding will be unsuccessful. If you cue-bid 4H over Pard's 4C bid, he has little choice except 4S. But if you cue-bid your singleton (the cheapest bid possible) Pard has room to bid 4H. As you have the ace, you might wonder what he holds for his bidding, but he is slam bidding! On the same auction, Partner might hold

♠A843 ♥K97 ♦76 ♣Q743.

We can milk the hand

♠A843 ♥9 ♦765 ♣QJ743

for one more idea.

You	Pard
1S	2S
3C	4H

4H is a splinter bid showing support for clubs with heart shortness. Most unnecessary jumps are splinter bids in Flight

A. Now slam is clearer and 6C is a good contract too.

5. ♠KQJxx ♥QJT ♦8 ♣AJ65 - Again, a pass is close, but you should bid 3C and hope your partner has Axx, Kxx, xxx, T9xx. With this, she responds with 3H (which would mean, I don't have quite enough to bid 4S but I do have a heart card.). And you can bid 4S. If Pard responds 3D, just bid 3S signing off.

6. ♠KQJxx ♥QJT ♦85 ♣AJ6 - Pass, compare with hand 5.

In all of these hands, notice what an advantage you have over others who do not play 1NT Forcing. They must raise to 2S on many hands less robust than in your system, and game tries would be risky opposite such lighter raises.

As an offshoot of all these ideas, look at this auction:

You	Pard
1S	1NT
2C	2S

The 1NT bid is forcing one round. Opener may have only a 3-card club suit. In theory, pard, for his return to spades, may have up to about nine points with usually 2 spades only. In theory, this is not a fit auction. However, most two-over-one players use this auction for many minimum raises which do not qualify for an immediate 2S bid. For example, these are all possibilities for Pard's hand:

6a. ♠Qxx ♥9 ♦J6532 ♣QJ3.

6b. ♠Qxx ♥976 ♦J7652 ♣Q3.

6c. ♠Jxx ♥K95 ♦7652 ♣QJ6. (about max)

6d. ♠876 ♥KQT9 ♦765 ♣743.

6e. ♠876 ♥T96432 ♦7 ♣A43

6f. ♠J976 ♥QT96 ♦7 ♣7432

6g. ♠Q76 ♥T943 ♦7652 ♣74

All of these are too weak for a direct raise to 2S in two-over-one.

Normally, opponents are well advised not to balance against auctions in which the opponents employ a forcing NT. If they haven't found a fit, why should you hunt for a fit at the 3-level? But opponents may well have a good fit on some of these hands! They may even have a game. Opener, with any minimum sort of hand, doesn't need to know if you have real trash with some spade support or a chunky nine count with only 2 spades. If 6g is an extreme case to you, well, it was bid against me by a player with over 50 thousand master points.

One principle is this: try to keep the bidding open despite the lack of high cards when you have a little support for opener's major suit.

A little warning. None of this applies to a 3<sup>rd</sup> seat 1S opening. We play a 1NT response to a third seat one spade as semi-forcing. This means opener will pass 1NT with all 12-13 point hands which have 5-3-3-2 distribution, and will pass with most 14 point hands which are of this type.

By Spencer Hurd

We continue this series of recommendations with some ideas which may help the weaker team show up well against the favorites. Some of the possibilities here are intended for mature audiences. This article is rated PG-13.

**Don't Play What They Do** - Use alternative treatments. If you play precision or KS, you are already doing this. I will assume you *and* the opponents play something like Two-Over-One (2/1) or Standard American Yellow Card (SAYC).

Consider playing **Montreal Relay**, a common short club system which grafts well on top of two-over-one. Open 1NT with 15-17. Openings of 1H or 1S guarantee a 5-card suit, and a 1D opening guarantees a 4-card suit. A one club bid is used when there is no 5-card or longer holding in spades, hearts, or diamonds (so, a one club bid may be made on a doubleton club). Responding to 1C, partner bids 1S or 1H as usual but guarantees a 5-card or longer suit. A 1NT response to 1C is natural. Partner bids 1D meaning no five card or longer major (and does not promise any specified number of diamonds). Study up on this and practice it first! But go back to standard bidding if they are not standard bidders at the other table. *The idea is to play something different from the other table.*

Consider playing **Two-Suited Weak Twos**. (After trying this out in the local club for a month or so.) The bids are simple;

2D = 4-5 or 5-4 in the majors, 6-10 points (other variations are possible)

2H = 5-5 in hearts and a minor, 6-10 points

2S = 5-5 in spades and a minor, 6-10 points

If vulnerable, you need extra suit quality.

Play **Transfer opening pre-empts**. The simple version:

2NT = a standard pre-empt in clubs

3C = a standard pre-empt in diamonds

3D = a standard heart pre-empt

3H = a standard spade pre-empt

Notice that, when partner accepts your transfer, the lead comes to his hand, which may be an advantage. If you play this, you will want a way to open strong balanced hands with 20-21 points. If you want a suggestion, ask me about Modified Kokish.

Don't bid 1NT the way they do. Vary the openings so as to play to your strengths even risking the occasional backfire. The idea is that having a few differences in your bidding systems will be a plus. Your auction will be DIFFERENT but NOT INFERIOR. You will have different declarers, different opening leads, and so on. The theory is, try to be lucky, because you will not win otherwise. (And the hope is that what we recommend will help you be lucky.)

1. Open 1NT with 14+ to 16+, and with 17 open 1C or 1D and jump to 2NT (as if you had 18 or 19) when the hand has anything extra. (Of course mark this on your card.)
2. Open 1NT, not 1S or 1H, whenever possible. The opponents will often "always" open 1H or 1S if possible. Examples:

- 2a. AT754, QJ7, K6, AJ7    open 1NT, classic
- 2b. KJ542, AQT, KJT, J2    open 1NT (the opponents will often lead a major suit when totally in the dark (when 1NT is passed out or when partner just jumps to 3NT) - and remember, when you or the opponents open 1S, you cannot stop in 1NT if 1NT is "Forcing One Round" as most play it. Often you will automatically get a different part-score or game contract than at the other table - you have an extra chance to get lucky. (If you don't get lucky, you won't win they are better, remember.)
- 2c. K74, A5, AKJ987, J4    Open 1NT rather than 1D followed by a jump to 3D.
- 2d. AQJ4, AKJ5, T4, J87    at matchpoints I would usually open 1NT. At IMPs, trying to vary the contract, open 1H. If partner bids 1NT, raise to 2NT with 16-17. If Pard bids 1S over your 1H, raise to 3S. If he bids 2C or 2D, bid naturally to game. Remember, the idea is to have a DIFFERENT auction resulting in a different contract or different declarer - but not an inferior contract.
- 2e. AQT, KT9, AJT7, 98    open 1NT - look at all the useful tens and nines, clearly worth a point or two. If they open 1D at the other table, maybe the wrong hand will declare NT even when you both get to 3NT.
- 2f. AQ8, K87, AJT87, T6    open 1NT, adding a point for the excellent 5-card diamond suit.
- 2g. AJ3, KQ, A976, T753    open 1C. The KQ tight is a small minus. There is no 5-card suit, no bunch of 9's or tens. So, this is a 14- hand.
- 2h. AJ9, KQ9, AT96, 875    open 1NT - compare with the previous hand. The diamond, heart, and spade holdings are each improved and worth at least another point more.
- 2i. K6, AQ6, KJT652, A5    open 1D and (plan to) jump rebid to 2NT
- 2j. K5, AQ6, KJT652, AQ    open 2NT
- 2k. KJ53, AQ65, A75, T5    open 1D, nice but not THAT special. Also, with two 4-card majors, a standard 1D will work well don't stretch to open a so-so 14-point one NT (especially with 4-4 in the majors), wait for the real 14-plus.
- 2l. T5, AT5, AQ65, KJT9    open 1NT. It may be critical that you prevent them from overcalling cheaply. And the extra values in clubs are worth a point.
- 2m. When they open in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat with one of a suit, be ready to overcall 1NT if even fairly close to normal.
- 2n. AQT76, KJT, AK6, 82    open 1S. A 17-high card hand rates a 1S bid followed up strongly. This is almost a jump-shift strength hand. You can bid 2NT if partner bids 1NT forcing, and over a 2-over-one you are well placed to look for slam. There are hands where partner can bid 2S in response to 1S (or will not pass 1S) but must pass a 1NT opening. [One of my partners reverses the idea: wait for 16+ to 19 to overcall 1NT, he says. His idea is to avoid getting overboard on hands in which the points are split. This has merit also it's your entry fee, take your choice.]
- 2o. AJT54, K3, AQ72, Q2    open 1S. Don't open 1NT with a 5-card major when you are 5-4-2-2. No need to be THAT different.

### When they open in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat.

The auction goes

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
P	P	1C	?

You should compete for the part score very aggressively at the 1-level and your Partner should be aware that this is a spot where you are going to be extra active. Examples after RHO opens in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat with 1C: What would you bid?

1. ♠KJ8 ♥AQT ♦852 ♣AQ4
2. ♠KJ8 ♥AT9 ♦852 ♣AQ98
3. ♠KJ87 ♥AQT ♦A543 ♣54
4. ♠KJ87 ♥AQT ♦JT54 ♣54
5. ♠KJ87 ♥AQT ♦T54 ♣J54
6. ♠KJ85 ♥JT752 ♦AQ ♣xx
7. ♠KJ87 ♥97 "Q52 ♣AQJT
8. ♠T5 ♥AJ5 ♦T98 ♣AKQT6
9. ♠T5 ♥AKJ5 ♦K98 ♣T765
10. ♠T5 ♥J5 ♦KJT98 ♣KT96
11. ♠QJT8652 ♥8 ♦T98 ♣AQ6

Solutions:

1. ♠KJ8 ♥AQT ♦852 ♣AQ4      Bid 1NT. No problem this is standard.
2. ♠KJ8 ♥AT9 ♦852 ♣AQ98      Bid 1NT. Be aggressive with good clubs and anything close to a natural 1NT bid. Announce 1NT overcalls as 14+ to 17 in 4<sup>th</sup> seat mark this on your convention card.
3. ♠KJ87 ♥AQT ♦A543 ♣54      Double, no problem
4. ♠KJ87 ♥AQT ♦JT54 ♣54      Double, and then pass partner's response (If partner bids 2C, showing both majors and about 10 points, just bid 2S. Partner will pass an ordinary hand. If you had Hand 3 just above, you would bid 3S over the 2C cue-bid.
5. ♠KJ87 ♥AQ4 ♦T54 ♣J54      Pass; save this double for match points. Most of the time, a double this light will just show declarer how to play the hand.
6. ♠KJ85 ♥JT752 ♦AQ ♣xx      Double. With 5-4 or 4-5 in the majors, one usually overcalls when the 5-card suit is fairly good. But here it is quite poor. Treat it as a 4-carder. If partner bids 2D later so what?
7. ♠KJ87 ♥97 "Q52 ♣AQJT      Pass. Do not double without 3 cards in an unbid major unless the hand has substantial extra high cards. Leave a double on this hand to players weaker than you. Good players will eat you alive if your tactics are unsound.

8. ♠T5 ♥AJ5 ♦T98 ♣AKQT6 Bid 1NT. It may be critical that you prevent them from responding cheaply. And the extra tens and extra values in clubs are worth a point or two (and if doubled you can run to 2C which is natural).
9. ♠T5 ♥AKJ5 ♦K98 ♣T765 Bid 1H. If ever there is a time for a 4-card overcall, it is here. Partner will not go wild without a fit. At matchpoints, this would be a commonplace bid; at IMPs, this is the time for it.
10. ♠T5 ♥J5 ♦KJT98 ♣KT96 Probably you bid 1D. Not much of an overcall, from the constructive point of view. But consider 2D. Since partner passed, you know they have a game or slam. Maybe 2D gets in their way a little. And it may mislead a declarer in the play. Not a big deal either way. Look at the diamond spots again. Nobody will ever double 2D.
11. ♠QJT8652 ♥8 ♦T98 ♣AQ6 Here vulnerability is significant. If red against white, bid 2S. If both red, bid 3S. If white against red, bid 4S. They may not have a game; partner may hold too much. But sometimes a player with a so-so holding in hearts, like your LHO, gets reckless

Warning when you make these bids with minimum values, you are playing with fire. A good rule is this one: when your values are minimum, they should be perfect. Evaluate your holdings honestly. If you have wasted points, be a little more careful.

---

**Beating The Experts At IMPs - Part V**  
**DO Play What They Do**  
 By Spencer Hurd

We continue with another in a series of articles designed to help the aspiring partnerships succeed in matches against better players.

We return to the theme of rash bidding jumping to game or passing without properly inquiring any information from partner. The topic also falls under the heading: DO Bid What They Do.

**Responding and Rebidding**  
**After Jacoby 2NT**

Partner	You
1S	2NT
?	??

Partner opened and you have a good hand with spade support (2NT = Jacoby 2NT, a spade raise forcing to game). If partner now bids a new suit, he shows a singleton or void.

After the singleton is bid, WHAT WOULD A 3<sup>a</sup> OR 3NT rebid by responder mean? If opener hasn't got a singleton or void. What would his 3S or 3NT bid mean? What would it mean to jump to the 4-level in a new suit. The 3♣ and 3NT responses (by either player) should mean something special we assume the fairly standard meanings below.

Opener's Rebids after a Jacoby 2NT response:

**3C, 3D, 3H** Shows a singleton in the suit bid

**3S** Shows a good hand with good spades (6-cards or if only 5-cards then 2 or top 3 in the suit and usually 16+ points). What should you as the 2NT-er now rebid? I am going to argue that you should avoid 4S or 6S immediately (rash bids). Try to be informative. There is no hurry.

**3NT** Many experts have a simple bid after a Jacoby 2NT which has various names; we like the name Serious 3NT probably coined by Eric Rodwell. It means, I am interested in slam but don't want to cue-bid I think a cue-bid would be inconvenient. Certainly I don't intend to play 3NT. Please bid something helpful. Opener, with 3NT, is not trying to play 3NT (this will NEVER happen). The 3NT rebid by opener should show no singleton, an imperfect spade suit (or he would have bid 3S), and by inference extra highs (16+) or possibly a second suit. And no desire to rashly jump to 4S. **DO NOT USE THIS 3NT BID WITHOUT DISCUSSION.**

**4S** Minimum hand, no singleton (Textbook is 12-15 points but I rarely bid this with 15 points).

The main point here is a discussion of the 3S, 4S, and 3NT bids and some follow-up auctions you and your serious partner need to discuss these bids. See if they would have helped on recent slams you missed.

#### A special example:

Partner	You
1S	2NT
3D	3S
3NT	?

Here 3D shows a singleton diamond, and 3S suggests slam interest (responder can bid 4S over 3D to suggest minimum values and diamond wastage).

The 3NT is another version of serious 3NT. Under no circumstances will anyone pass 3NT.

*By the way, if you bid Jacoby 2NT, what does it mean if Partner next bids four of a new suit? Originally, it showed a void. For many expert partnerships nowadays, it shows a second 5-card suit with 2 of the top 3 in the suit. (Yes, there is a singleton or void somewhere too.) If the second suit is not this good, show the shortness at the 3-level. In particular, a 4C response to Jacoby 2NT is NOT Gerber, it shows a good club suit. Discuss these bids before you try them.*

---

**Beating The Experts At IMPs Part VI**  
**If they throw it away, take it**  
By Spencer Hurd

**In routine situations, do you bid routinely, have you discussed things with your partner. Even apparently very simple things?**

Responding to Partner's 1 Spade Overcall

When responding to partner's overcall of 1S, as in the following sequence:

LHO	Pard	RHO	You
1C	1S	P	??

Use the following schedule of bids.

1. 2S - 5 to 9 points, 3 trumps; you are not obligated to bid with 5-7 points and a blah hand; bidding with so few points usually means an additional distributional feature such as a singleton or side 5-card suit, or a very nice spade holding like KJT or QJxx.
2. 3S - 0 to 6 points and 4/5 trumps\* - the pre-emptive jump raise; you must agree on this before hand (don't make this bid, ever, red against white; also, when minimal in points, have two doubletons or a singleton partner needs all the help you can give.)
3. 3C - the mixed raise\*; this jump cue bid shows four trumps and 7-9 points, just below a shapely limit raise. This is alertable, of course, and you should discuss it and put it on your card before trying it.
4. 1NT usually two spades and 9-11 points; and a sensible holding in clubs. With 7/8 points and two or fewer spades just pass.
5. 2NT same but with 12-13 points; with even more points you should insist on game. Partner is expected to pass 2NT with a balanced 11-12 count.
6. 2D, 2H your minimum bid in a new suit is best taken as a one-round force (partner is asked not to pass); you either have values to insist on game somewhere or you intend to pass Pard's minimum rebid (2S or 2NT or 3 of your suit); a new suit or jump by partner would now be a game force.
7. 3D, 3H after an overcall, a jump in a new suit\* is best played as a fit jump showing a limit raise or better in Pard's spades but with a decent suit of your own. This is not game forcing in spades partner can sign off. Discuss this bid before you actually make it. (And alert it.)

Some examples:

- 7a. Qxxx, xx, KQJxx, xx typical hand for a jump to 3D.
- 7b. Axxx, xx, KQJxx, xx this is a good limit raise; we suggest a fit jump and bid on to 4S if partner signs off. (The reason you don't just jump to 4S is that partner is not placed well to judge what to do if somebody bids 5C (and you don't know either). Bid it honestly and trust partner.
- 7c. JTxx, x, AQTxx, xxx Bid 3D.
- 7d. JTxx, Ax, KJxxx, xx Bid 2C, a limit raise especially when your points are more scattered and your other suit is rather modest in quality.
- 7e. JTxx, xx, Kxxxx, Ax Bid 3C, a mixed raise. The diamonds are nice but not good enough for a 3D call.
8. 4S classically a two-way bid; it shows a pre-emptive raise with 5 or more spades and not promising any high card points. Or, you may have some surprise value but don't promise it.
9. 2C the immediate cue bid of opener's suit shows either a limit raise in spades (3 or 4 spades with 10-11 points) or another hand (in which case you will bid strongly to game even opposite a minimum response by pard). This cue bid, followed by a change of suit by you, is a game force.
10. 3NT two types of hands, either fairly balanced with points, at least 14, or slightly gambling with a long suit of your own (xx, Tx, AKQJTxx, Kx or better).



11. With the values in points and spades to force to game, don't just jump there. Bid 2C, the cue bid first; then jump to 4S after partner's response. Now partner will know it is your hand and can judge what to do if the opponents go to the 5-level. If partner thinks you might be sacrificing (with a jump directly to 4S), he might take a phantom sacrifice when you should be doubling them.

12. Consider playing a simple version of the Rosenkranz Double and Rosenkranz Redouble\*. The bid is made when your RHO cue bids 2S or makes a negative double. Your double of a 2S cue bid by RHO or redouble of the negative double shows that you hold a high card in spades (the A, K, or Q) AND that you would have passed 1S or maybe bid 2S (no higher). You can do this with a doubleton honor. Partner knows it is okay to lead away from his possibly poor spade suit, even if opener now bids 2NT or 3NT. The immediate raise to 2S by you (if they negative double) denies a high spade. Partner is warned off a spade lead if his suit is poor. These are alertable bids.

12. Consider playing that, if RHO now raises to 2C, a double by you is takeout (responsive) showing at least 6-10 points and both unbid suits: for example, double with:

x, KJT<sub>x</sub>, KQ<sub>xxx</sub>, J<sub>xx</sub> or

x, QJ<sub>xxx</sub>, KT<sub>9xx</sub>, xx

These are typical holdings; if 5-5 or longer you may have minimum points but otherwise have nearer maximum points. You usually deny more than a doubleton spade (usually you have a spade singleton). Partner will almost never pass the responsive double YOU haven't promised anything in their suit. But a penalty pass is possible if he has a good hand and an unexpected stack in their suit.

13. When in doubt, give the overcaller some leeway. If you make one of these descriptive bids and partner signs off, let it go. If your partner makes a responsive double after your overcall, support one of his suits unless your spades are just too good. Here are examples:

RHO You LHO Pard

1C 1S 2C DBL

P ??

You hold

13a. KQJ962, 4, J54, K72 Bid 2S. If this seems obvious, consider that Pard likely has a singleton in spades. However, this is about what it takes not to select one of partner's suits. (This is pretty close to a weak 2S overcall initially.)

13b. AQJT7, K3, K8xx, xxx This is a great hand since both your kings are really worth 4 points. Bid 2S (even though it's only a 5-carder) and if they try 3C only then bid 3D. If partner has 86, A9862, QJT32, 6 you have play for 4S. Weaken the spades at all and 2D (or 3D) is clear.

13c. KQT76, Q64, 987, A5 Bid 2H. You are okay as pard probably has 5 of them. He knows you may only have a 3-card heart suit.

13d. KQT76, 987, Q64, A5 Bid 2D. You bid whichever of partner's suits you have more of, and when length is equal just select the better holding. Don't worry about major/minor issues. This is not matchpoints.

---

## Beating The Experts At IMPs Part VII

### What Went Wrong?

By Spencer Hurd

Sometimes, it can be very hard to suggest opportunities for success when something went wrong. Here is a case in point. Playing natural methods, Player A overcalled a 1NT opening with 2H holding

♠---, ♥AQ976, ♦AJT43, ♣T62.

Her partner, Player B, passed holding

♠JT87532, ♥J82, ♦K8, ♣A.

They avoided the spade trap, but missed a good 4H contract (on only 20 high card points). How could they have improved the auction? Clearly one or the other has to provide more information. For example:

North	East	South	West
1NT	2D*	P	3H
P	4H	all Pass	

\* 2D is Brozel, showing diamonds and hearts (2D, showing diamonds and a major is DONT, which could lead to the same auction in this case, West knows that East's second suit is hearts).

North	East	South	West
1NT	2H*	P	3H
P	4H	all Pass	

\* 2H is Cappelletti showing hearts and a minor.

North	East	South	West
1NT	2H	P	2S
P	3D	P	4H
all Pass.			

Here is a natural auction is 2S forcing? No. West was lucky. But he tried to move the auction forward, he tried to explore.

If you want to improve your defensive game, learn some system for bidding two-suiters.

Do you learn from the experts? Ask them how to bid a hand that gave you trouble. Write down the hands and give a top player in your local club the hand. Most players love to be consulted.

In the end, you will see most of your improvements in IMP games when your own play of the hand and your own defense improve. But that's the hard way to improve. Show your partner the articles in this series. That's the easy way to improve results rapidly.

[http://www.mabcbridge.org/mabc350/378\\_BeatingTheExpertsAtIMPs.htm](http://www.mabcbridge.org/mabc350/378_BeatingTheExpertsAtIMPs.htm)