FOURTH SEAT OPENINGS

In a duplicate game, you may open light in fourth position, but there is only one reason: to obtain a plus score rather than settle for a draw.

What are the requirements? Just this: a 51% chance or better of getting a plus score. With more than your share of high cards (10 HCP), or more than your share of major suit length, the chances of a plus score begin to outweigh those of a minus.

A hand with 11 HCP will often qualify for a fourth seat opening in a suit, but with a hand this weak you should have either 1) four or more spades, or 2) at least three cards in each major. With no spade suit, or few cards in the majors, the hand should be nearer to an opening bid. A full opening is rarely passed out, although one might pass a borderline hand with a singleton or void in spades.

Choice of suit will sometimes be a problem. With ♠KQ103 ♥J65 ♦AJ83 ♣64, you should open 1♦. In third seat 1♠ would be right, for both lead direction and preemptive reasons. In fourth seat these considerations are less important (both opponents having passed), and the main objective is to avoid getting too high. A 1♠ opening with this hand might provoke a dangerous jump raise or 2NT response from partner. After a 1♦ opening she is less likely to jump, and you can perhaps get out of the bidding at a low level by passing a major suit response. Of course you pass a 2♣ response.

Fairly strong opening preemptive openings are acceptable in fourth seat, since partner can't have much. Open 3♦ with ♠4 ♥63 ♦QJ109765 ♣AKQ, which is normally a 1♦ opening.

Fourth seat weak two bids need not adhere to the usual requirements for suit quality, but will be near-maximum for HCP, perhaps with opening-bid strength.

Fourth seat openings should be fairly decent in IMP or rubber bridge games, but you can open a little light with a good spade suit.

Also see section 5-1, Weak Notrump - Fourth Seat Only.