HB25 – Defending against pre-empts

♠AQ75432 ♥65 ♦4 ♣Q84 ♠10 ♠K86 ♥J1032 ♥AQ ♦AK83 ♦QJ765 ♣10952 ♣A63 ♠J9 ♥K98 74 ♦1092 ♣KJ7	Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♠ 3NT All Pass The right way to approach bidding over an opponent's pre-empt is to assume the pre-emptor has about 8 points and then mentally give half the missing points to his partner and half to his other opponent. You can see it working here: East and South each have 8 points 3NT shows anything from 16-25 HCP plus a stopper in the pre-emptor's suit. Of course overcalling on 16 HCP is dangerous but passing is not an easy option. 3NT makes so long as East ducks ♠J lead. 3♠ for North/South also makes.
♠10 ♥J73 ♦AK832 ♣10952 ♠J9 ♠AQ75432 ♥109842 ♥65 ♦1095 ♦4 ♣763 ♣Q84 ♠K86 ♥AKQ ♦QJ76 ♣AKJ	Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♠ 3NT All Pass Here we see South overcalling 3NT on 23 points. North cannot even think of moving towards slam: he must be aware that balanced 16-18 HCP hands are far more common than balanced hands in the range 23-25. The priority is finding the best game contract after opponents pre-empt. Give up on borderline slams. Slam makes here because the club finesse works: you would hardly mind missing a slam on a finesse.
♠109 ♥AQ1054 ♦J93 ♣K102 ♠K3 ♠86 ♥2 ♥KJ763 ♦AKQ8654 ♦72 ♣965 ♣AJ87 ♠AQJ7542 ♥98 ♦10 ♣Q43	Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♠ 3NT All Pass Here is another type of 3NT overcall. West anticipates a spade lead and expects to make ♠K, 7 diamond tricks and hopes his partner can provide a ninth. East should not even think about removing 3NT to 4♥ because the 3NT bid doesn't necessarily have to be balanced. Note that the singleton heart doesn't deter West. He worries about the suit they have bid: spades. Look at it this way: if 3NT is right (as it is here) somebody has to bid it.
♠106 ♥AJ9432 ♦AQ2 ♣AQ ♠AQ98543 ♠K2 ♥5 ♥Q76 ♦J4 ♦1096 ♣743 ♣K1095 2 ♠J7 ♥K108 ♦K8753 ♣J86	Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♠ 4♥ All Pass The right way to approach bidding over an opponent's pre-empt is to assume the pre-emptor has about 8 points and then mentally give half the missing points to his partner and half to his other opponent. You can see it working here: East and South each have 8 points. 4♥ should make: the pre-empt should warn declarer to finesse for ♥Q rather than playing for the drop. Alternatively dummy's diamonds will provide discards. 3♠ by West is only one off.

♠104 ♥107 ♦AKJ9843 ♣109 ♠953 ♠AQJ76 ♥AQJ ♥854 ♦75 ♦62 ♣J6542 ♣AQ8 ♠K82 ♥K9632 ♦Q10 ♣K73	Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♦ 3♠ All Pass The right way to approach bidding over an opponent's pre-empt is to assume the pre-emptor has about 8 points and then mentally give half the missing points to his partner and half to his other opponent. Another way of describing it is to say he plays his partner for 2 tricks or maybe 8 useful HCP. Partner needs 3 tricks or 9 good HCP to bid on. A 3-level overcall shows the values of a sound opening bid. This East hand is a minimum 3♠ overcall.
♠K53 ♥AQ9 ♦75 ♣J6542 ♠982 ♠104 ♥KJ632 ♥107 ♦Q10 ♦AKJ9843 ♣K73 ♣109 ♠AQJ76 ♥854 ♦62 ♣AQ8	Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♦ 3♠ Pass 4♠ All Pass A 3-level overcall shows the values of a sound opening bid. This South hand is a minimum 3♠ overcall. With 10 good HCP North raises to game. Declarer should be able to set up dummy's clubs for a heart discard, making 10 tricks.
♠982 ♥J9632 ♦107 ♣K73 ♠AQJ76 ♠K53 ♥854 ♥AKQ ♦62 ♦K5 ♣AQ8 ♣J6542 ♠104 ♥107 ♦AQJ9843 ♣109	Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♦ 3♠ Pass 4♠ All Pass A 3-level overcall shows the values of a sound opening bid. This West hand is a minimum 3♠ overcall. East might think about a slam, but after opponents pre-empt the priority is finding the best game contract. Give up on borderline slams. In this case West's ♦K is unlikely to be useful. I know many club players would leap to 4NT after 3♠ but here 4♠ is the last making contract.
♠AQJ76 ♥854 ♦62 ♣AQ8 ♠2 ♠10853 ♥6 ♥QJ1092 ♦AJ98753 ♦4 ♣J1094 ♣K53 ♠K94 ♥AK73 ♦KQ10 ♣762	Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 3♦ 3♠ Pass 3NT All Pass South clearly has enough for game: but holding ♦K Q 10 3NT is likely to be safer than 4♠, despite the 5-3 spade fit. Look how the play goes on in 4♠: ♦4 to ♦A: ♦ ruff: switch to ♥Q. Declarer cannot avoid losing a heart and a club. 3NT is easy. Should South worry about the clubs? Worry about the suit they have bid, not the suit they haven't bid.

♠8 ♥532 ♦AK98732 ♣65 ♠65 ♠AQ432 ♥KQ4 ♥AJ7 ♦10654 ♦J ♣K1097 ♣AQJ8 ♠KJ1097 ♥10986 ♦Q ♣432	Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable ***West North East South*** 3♦ Dbl All Pass East is too strong for a 3♠ overcall and the suit isn't strong enough for 4♠. He can only double. West has no obvious response and reasonably decides to try his luck defending. From West's perspective beating 3♦ is no certainty but if 3♦ doubled makes it might be the least of evils. Of course West would not even consider passing a takeout double at the one level with such poor diamonds. East should lead ♦J and 3♦ doubled should go three off.
♠65 ♥KQ4 ♦10654 ♣K987 ♠1092 ♠- ♥A96532 ♥1087 ♦Q2 ♦AKJ9873 ♣J10 ♣653 ♠AKQJ8743 ♥J ♦- ♣AQ42	Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable ***West North East South*** 3♦ 4♠ All Pass South is really too strong for 4♠ but what is the alternative? If he doubles North would pass: the defenders cannot prevent declarer ruffing a club in dummy and making 9 tricks. Alternatively South might gamble 6♠, or try 5♠, but if he invites slam with 5♠ how is North then going to know that ♣K is a wonderful card whereas ♥K is useless? Give up on borderline slams after opponents pre-empt.
♠10987 ♥Q987 ♦K10 ♣A83 ♠AQ52 ♠KJ43 ♥A62 ♥K1043 ♦2 ♦983 ♣KQ654 ♣J7 ♠6 ♥J5 ♦AQJ7654 ♣1092	Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all ***West North East South*** 3♦ Dbl Pass 4♦ Pass 4♠ All Pass Double of a 3-level pre-empt is for takeout and shows roughly the values needed to double a one level opener: perhaps a little more. The doubler plays his partner for 2 tricks or maybe 8 useful HCP. Partner needs 3 tricks or 9 good HCP to bid on. Nobody could condemn West for settling at the 3 level, but if he bids 4♦ (asking East to pick a major) he will at least find the best denomination: that sways the decision.
♠A32 ♥KQ106 ♦93 ♣AKJ2 ♠86 ♠KQ109 ♥J3 ♥9875 ♦AQJ7654 ♦2 ♣54 ♣10987 ♠J754 ♥A42 ♦K108 ♣Q63	Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable ***West North East South*** 3♦ Dbl Pass 3NT All Pass What should South bid in response to North's double? 3♠ is the conservative option: but it might fail with 3NT easy. 4♠ might be best but it risks playing in a 4-3 fit with the missing trumps splitting badly (likely after the pre-empt). 3NT may not work, but it is unlikely to be totally stupid. It also gives a big reward if it works.

♠4 ♥AQJ87654 ♦54 ♣Q10 ♠J865 ♠A932 ♥32 ♥K9 ♦K63 ♦AQ87 ♣A865 ♣K74 ♠KQ107 ♥10 ♦J1092 ♣J932	Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 4♥ Dbl All Pass A double of 4♥ is traditionally for takeout, however modern theory states that you only take it out into a respectable suit. This hand shows why. If West bids 4♠ South doubles and routine defence leads to two off. If East passes then 4♥ doubled goes three off on best defence. Quite a difference. If West suffers in 4♠ doubled he should not feel sorry for himself over the bad spade break: it was to be expected after the 4♥ pre-empt.
♠A7543 ♥93 ♦97 ♣A943 ♠KJ1098 ♠Q2 ♥K10 ♥AQJ8764 2 ♦AJ10 ♦32 ♣Q75 ♣2 ♠6 ♥5 ♦KQ8654 ♣KJ1086	Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 4♥ 4NT Pass 5♣ All Pass 4NT is an unusual no trump, showing the minors. It is risky, but look at the result: in 5♣ North/South should pick up ♣Q and make 11 tricks: in 4♥ East/West easily make 10 tricks. Note that North should allow for his partner competing to sacrifice and not over stretch to a slam. If North wrongly bids 6♣ he discourages South from being enterprising next time. Give up on borderline slams after opponents pre-empt.
♠K10 ♥KJ10974 ♦A4 ♣1097 ♠73 ♠2 ♥AQ53 ♥2 ♦KJ2 ♦Q109863 ♣AQ83 ♣KJ654 ♠AQJ98654 ♥86 ♦75 ♣2	Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 4♠ Dbl Pass 4NT Pass 5♣ All Pass A double of 4♠ traditionally shows a strong, fairly balanced hand. Modern theory states that you only take it out into a respectable suit. 4NT shows a willingness to play in more than one suit: usually a two suiter. West assumes East has the minors and picks clubs. If East had held the red suits he would have removed 5♣ to 5♦.
♠K10832 ♥A7 ♦A75 ♣932 ♠AQJ97654 ♠- ♥653 ♥K1098 ♦J9 ♦Q10642 ♣- ♣AQ108 ♠- ♥QJ42 ♦K83 ♣KJ7654	Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** 4♠ All Pass North would love to make a penalty double of 4♠, but double doesn't mean that! If North does double, South will remove to 5♣ which will be doubled and defeated. North must be satisfied with picking up the penalty in hundreds against 4♠.