## DEFENSE AGAINST GAMBLING 3NT OPENINGS

This defense is a variation of "Ripstra," a convention that was originally aimed at a 1NT opening: "Bid your better minor to ask for a major." That usage is obsolete now, but has been resurrected for use as a counter to the gambling type of 3NT opening (showing a solid seven-card minor and little outside).

-- A double is for business.

-- A major suit overcall is natural.

-- A minor suit overcall asks for partner's better major. The overcaller is showing his longer minor, Ripstra-fashion, so partner can pass (or raise) with extreme shortness in the majors and length in the minor. This call can also be made with spades and a minor when the spades are not good enough to bid at the four level. If partner bids 4♥, you bid 4♠ and she will know you have a two-suiter with spades plus a minor (4NT asks which minor).

-- A 4NT overcall shows hearts plus a minor; i.e., it is unusual notrump for the "lower two unbid suits." Lacking four or more hearts, partner bids 5♥ when not holding more cards in a minor; 5♣ with longer clubs than hearts (If overcaller then bids 5♦ over 5♣, he has hearts and diamonds); 5♦ if she prefers hearts to clubs and has more diamonds than hearts. A bid of 5♠ in response to 4NT is a signoff, showing a long spade suit that can play opposite a singleton.

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| 3NT | 4NT | Pass | 5♥ - prefers hearts |
| | | | 5♣ - prefers clubs |
| | | | 5♦ - prefers diamonds |
| | | | 5♠ - natural |
| | | | 5NT - your minor? |

If the opening could be based on a major suit, then 4NT is for the minors. Partner prefers clubs wtih equal length.

### The Opening Lead

When leading against a gambling 3NT bid, the standard advice is to forget fourth best leads and lay down high cards in the hope of finding partner with solidifying cards in some long suit, or enough top cards in multiple suits to defeat the contract.

When not leading a winner, the opening lead should express attitude, not count. This is also true of continuations and switches. Lead low from strength, high from weakness.