

NAMYATS HAS IT BACKWARDS

BY DANNY KLEINMAN

The Gambling Three Notrump, showing a solid minor and little outside, is a bad gamble: It often wrongsides notrump (sometimes because the lead comes through a guarded king, sometimes because the opening leader can cash a trick, see dummy, and find the killing shift). The Acol Three Notrump, showing a solid minor with one to two outside stoppers, is less of a gamble, but a gamble nonetheless: Responder, who cannot tell which suits are stopped, may guess wrongly about choice of game and slam-tries.

How *should* we treat a three-notrump opening? Not the strong balanced hand of yesterday; such a bulky bid impedes the search for the best strain. Many users of Namyats, a Bridge World Standard leaf, where four of a minor shows a “strong” four-of-a-major preempt,

harness three notrump to replace the natural four-club and four-diamond openings usurped by Namyats.

Eddie Kantar had a better idea: three notrump to show a solid-suit four-of-a-major preempt with something (but never an ace) on the side. The Kantar Three Notrump embraces hands that are too strong for a standard four of a major yet too offensively-oriented for a desirable one-bid.

Kantar’s “solid suit” and “no side ace” requirements limit frequency greatly, but he was on the right track: Namyats has it backwards. It is wise to retain four clubs and four diamonds as natural preempts and to use three notrump for the strong major-suit hands.

Except for the ambiguity of suit (which may be annoying for either

side), a weak four-of-a-minor preempt does not benefit from being opened with three notrump. Any benefit of extra bidding steps or rounds accrues to the defenders, who can assign a variety of different meanings to pass-then-double, double-then-pass, double-then-double, and four-of-a-minor overcalls to overcome the effect of the preempt.

In contrast, strong four-of-a-major hands do profit from extra room. Responder can manipulate the contract to either side of the table and can guarantee himself a second chance to bid. Sure, the opponents can use the extra space also, but it won't help them nearly as much or as often when opener has a strong hand with a major as when he has a weak hand with a minor. Direct intervention must come before opener has specified his suit. When a would-be intervenor can deduce opener's suit, his partner often cannot; this restricts methods. In fact, intervening over Reverse Namyats has many of the same problems as intervening over a Wagner Two Diamonds (weak two-bid in either major) but must come at a dangerously higher level. Unlike preempts based on weak hands, a Reverse Namyats three notrump promises defensive strength, so intervention is dangerous.

Reverse Namyats

For those who are convinced that Namyats has it backwards, let's look at some details. Four-club and four-diamond openings are weak and natural—not exactly old-fashioned in view of today's preempting craze, but showing the same hand-type. A three-notrump opening shows a strong preempt in either major, for which the require-

ments are:

(1) A long, strong, but not necessarily solid, major suit.

(2) More than enough playing strength for a standard four-heart or four-spade preempt (eight to nine winners).

(3) More than enough defense for a standard one-heart or one-spade opening (three to four honor-tricks).

(4) Too little defense for a strong, artificial two-club opening.

In response to a Reverse Namyats three notrump:

Four clubs asks opener to transfer to his major (e.g., bid four diamonds with hearts). Responder's follow-up four notrump shows a high honor in opener's major and the ace of the other major.

Four diamonds asks opener to bid his major naturally. Responder's follow-up four notrump is a key-card-ask in that suit.

Four of either minor may be followed by five of opener's suit (showing the ace of the bid minor and a high honor in opener's major), or a control-bid in some other suit (which converts the initial response into a control-bid).

Four of a major is natural and suggests playing there (responder may have a long, strong major in a hand that may be of little use for play in opener's major).

Higher responses will not be defined here; you and your partner may or may not want to assign them meanings.

Competitive Possibilities

If an opponent doubles an artificial bid, a redouble suggests playing there.

If an opponent overcalls, a double suggests penalties.