

Gambling 3NT

Rationale

When learning, it is common for 3NT opening to show 25 – 27 HCP balanced. Unfortunately, you will wait a long time for such a hand! Many pairs prefer to bid such a hand using their artificial game force with a 3NT rebid. There seems to be no downside to this plan.

This leaves an opening 3NT to take on a different meaning. One meaning is Kabel (*a bid which asks for specific aces*). More common is to play it as a Gambling 3NT. Under this convention, opening 3NT shows a seven card minor headed by the AKQ and nothing else. The purists will tell you that the Jack is also required. However, statistically, this requirement is excessive. The bid is rare enough without further restrictions. Opposite a passed hand, some liberty with the side suits is permitted. e.g. Qx

FAQ: Why don't we just pre-empt with the hand?

ANS: With 7 playing tricks, the correct pre-empt may well be 4C or 4D and a cold 3NT could be missed.

FAQ: So, what is partner supposed to do?

ANS: Partner can pass if he believes 3NT is making.

- Usually, responder can tell which minor is held. He can remove to a minor which is always pass or correct. This can be at the 4, 5 or 6 level! The action may also be pre-emptive in style.

- If the 3NT is doubled, responder can take it out in the usual way. Responder should never stand 3NTX if he can see that the contract will be well defeated. Note that it is responder's decision to remove the 3NT, not opener's.

- Not vul, responder should be wary of taking it out when he can see the opponents are cold for game in a major. You may be inviting them into the auction. 3NT making zero could be a good score!

Gambling 3NT as an Overcall

(1B) – 3NT! does not have any agreed meaning. 1NT overcall would be natural and 2NT overcall would be the lower two of the remaining three suits (Michaels). 3NT can be used to show a gambling 3NT with a stopper. To leave it in, partner must have the other two suits stopped.

Jump cue bid of their suit

(1B) – 3B does not have an agreed meaning. 2B would be Michaels. 3B would show a gambling 3NT without a stopper. Here, responder would be expected to stop all three side suits.

FAQ: What does this leave for a pre-empt of 3C, 3D, 4C, 4D, 5C or 5D?

ANS: The unmistakable conclusion is that partner's pre-empt is NOT a rock solid suit. This means that over a 3C or 3D pre-empt, partner cannot assume that the suit will run opposite a singleton. A doubleton may be enough but there are no guarantees!

FAQ: What about an *eight* card suit headed by AK?

ANS: The test is whether it can be expected to run opposite a singleton. A 2-2 break is only a 40% chance but responder might hold two!

FAQ: Should responder take it out with a void?

ANS: YES. Otherwise, how will he get to hand to run his great suit?

Try bidding each of these hands, In each case, West is dealer and EW are not vulnerable.

♠43	♠K62	3NT!	5C
♥65	♥K72	5D	P

♦AKQ6543	♦T872
♣43	♣T652

Responder can't tell which minor is held. However, he can be quite sure that they can make 4M and south has a great hand!

♠43	♠QT6	3NT!	Pass
♥65	♥AT73		

♦AKQ6543	♦87
♣43	♣A952

Can they unravel their spade tricks. Maybe not. Will also stick it if they double! I wouldn't be at all surprised if we make 3NT and 4S is commonly made for NS.

♠43	♠T874	3NT!	Pass
♥65	♥Q84		

♦AKQ6543	♦87
♣43	♣JT97

When I played a hand like this, I'm sure the whole table could see smoke coming from my nostrils. How could partner leave me in such a filthy contract? It was halfway through the hand before the penny dropped. They can make 4H with ease. 3NT six off was a good score!

This time South opens 1H in front of west.

♠6	♠K94	(1H)	3NT!	(P)	?
♥K74	♥T632				

♦AKQ6543	♦872
♣43	♣Q87

Responder needs quick tricks for 3NT to make. Mind you, one off is likely to be a good score when they can make 4S. We're not doubled yet. Let's stick it. 4D may go off one more. Will we remove 3NTX? I think so. If north, with a singleton heart, puts SQ on the table as the opening lead, the score will not be pretty.

Again, South opens 1H, VUL, in front of west.

♠62	♠AK873	(1H)	3H	(4H)	P
♥43	♥J82				

♦AKQ6543	♦T87
♣43	♣87

This time, it has backfired. We have a good sacrifice in 5D available. However, east can't tell that west has diamonds and not clubs. If it is clubs, 5CX will be too expensive. West must respect the bridge maxim:-
"The pre-empt only bids once"

For all he knows, 4H may be in trouble.

♠43	♠KQ87	3D	3NT
♥T6	♥AQ3		

♦KQT5432	♦876
♣93	♣AJT

Surely, this holding should be enough!