

SANDWICH NO TRUMP

Experts tell us that 80% of duplicate bridge is effective bidding. Going 1 step further, 80% of effective bidding is competitive bidding in part score auctions. If it were not for competitive bidding, we would all be sleeping at the bridge table.

Letting opponents play in the “Death Zone” (+90 or worse +110) is keeping you from scoring over 50% game. You have to acknowledge that what you are doing today is not working. You are not forcing your opponents out of their comfort zone. Some of the ways to do this are: pre-emptive bidding, balancing in the pass out seat, balancing in the direct seat, Sandwich No Trump, Unusual No Trump, Michaels and following the Law of Total Tricks.

Sandwich No Trump is made in the 4th seat when the opponents have opened, partner has passed, and opponents have made bids in difference suits at the one level. Such as: 1C, P, 1H, 1NT. The no trump bidder does not have a 15 to 18 HCP overcall (we are giving that bid up). This shows 5 – 5 in the other 2 suits, which is Ds and Ss—but if, the vulnerability is equal or favorable, do not hesitate to do it with 5-4-3-1 or even 5-4-2-2. The objective here is to turn what appears to be the start of a constructive auction (leaving opponents bid unmolested) into a competitive auction. It is also pre-emptive. Opener probably wants to rebid 1NT to show a balanced minimum, but you just stole his bid. By bidding 1NT you have made it difficult for opener up to the 2 level and they will often pass in frustration.

The hope is to find partner with 3, and preferably 4 card support for one of my suits. Then you can add $5 + 4 = 9$ and bid to the 3 level immediately and potentially suggests a “save” if opponents recover and drive to game.

On a good day, a Sandwich No Trump hand may look like KJxxx, x, QJxxx, xx. Suppose partner has Axxx, xx, Kxxx, xxx. We have 14 points combined, so opponents with 26 HCP are favorites to make 4 H. Neither of my suits are suitable for an overcall and the hand is not strong enough for a traditional take out double, so without Sandwich 1NT overcall, opponents will surely rack up a game if we let them alone. In the case, if they bid 4H over 3S by partner, I am going to take a save at 4S as my 5-5 hand may not take any tricks at 4 hearts. In this case, we catch moonbeams in a jar, as our 4S contract only goes down 1 or 2 at most.

When partner makes a Sandwich NT bid, and opener passes it is your duty to bid one of his two suits unless you lack 3 card support in either suit. Be guided by the Law of Total Tricks and bid to the max. If you don't have 3 card support, just pass and don't worry partner is not going to play 1NT doubled, opponents will bail you out.