

Getting to 3NT

by Steve Moese Tues Eve Nov 18

Board 10 ♠ Q9643
East Deals ♥ AK103
Both Vul ♦ 8
♣ QJ9

♠ 102 ♠ AJ87
♥ J97 ♥ Q5
♦ AQ6532 ♦ KJ
♣ K6 ♣ A10873

EW 4N; 4♦;
2♠; 3♣; 1♥

♠ K5
♥ 8642
♦ 10974
♣ 542

One area where modern bidding has an edge over past practice is handling the 15-17 HCP semi-balanced hands. East's 16 HCP 4=2=2=5 pattern would be opened 1♣ by many. Having done that, it's hard to get the strength communicated and search for a ♥ stopper. It's popular to open 1NT on semi-balanced hands when

short suits have honors. With two small doubletons and ♠AKJx ♥xx ♦xx ♣AKJxx it's better to open 1♣ and rebid ♠s. The NT opening bid communicates pattern, strength and texture at once. In the old days, people feared playing 1NT. Now with science and simulations experts know that the first side to 1NT often wins the points. Marty Bergen made famous a bidding style over a 1NT opening expressly designed to get opponents out of NT.

Compare two possible auctions:

E	S	W	N
1♣	P	1♦	1♠
2♣	P	3♦	Dbl
3♣	P	??	

E	S	W	N
1N	P	3N	P
P	P		

After opening 1♣, if North chooses to intervene 1♠, East faces a dilemma. Pass, 1N and 2♣ are all possible. 1N understates the strength of the hand and gives up on penalizing 1♠. Pass allows for a double by partner but might make subsequent bidding difficult. 2♣ is fine on strength but not on suit quality (though rebidding on 5 is expected when you hold a higher ranking 4-card suit without values to reverse). West faces a difficult question - ♥Jxx needs help if it is to be a stopper, and we are out of bidding room. West must make a leap of faith that partner's extras include a ♥ honor. Now notice the 1N-3N auction – much less information given to the opponents. South will has a blind lead. On this auction, there is a growing tendency to lead a major, hoping to catch partner with a 5-card suit. Partner rates to hold 11 HCP, so partner should have a side entry. What experts know is opening 15-17 HCP hands in range with semi-balanced shape is a winner in the long run. Some even open 4-4-4-1 hands 1NT when in range. This is not illegal per se. What is illegal is to have responses that allow opener to show specific shortness later in the auction. With a good 6-card suit and 9 HCP, 3N by West is automatic when

11/18 – Future Master Leaders

1st OA: Terri Mackey & Charlie Kobida (60.3%)
2nd OA: Evelyn McCarthy & Joan Diers (56.4%)



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partner opens 1NT.

The Play – Declarer counts 9 tricks on any lead. The trick to a good MP score is to get overtricks. A ♥ lead gives an overtrick immediately. A ♠ lead is poor and not likely. In the blind auction (1N-3N) South will often choose between a ♦ or ♣. Declarer will unblock ♦ and go the board with the ♣K (Yes, if a ♣ is led, declarer must win the ♣A preserving the ♣K entry to dummy's ♦s). Run the ♦'s and watch the discards. If you still have the ♣6 in dummy, a ♣ to the A and a 3rd ♣ seems right, allowing opponents to break either major suit to your advantage.

Bd 10	NS	Scores		MPs	
		EW	NS	EW	NS
2♦ W		130	3	0	
3NT E		600	2	1	
3NT E		630	0.5	2.5	
3NT E		630	0.5	2.5	
2♦ W		130	2.5	0.5	
3♦ W		130	2.5	0.5	
1NT W		180	1	2	
1NT E		210	0	3	

Post Mortem – This is a game we want to bid in Match Points or Teams. Opening 1NT with a non-classical shape often works out well because it simplifies our sides decisions and can lead to an auction with no information shared with opponents. When defending 3N, add your HCP to 26 and subtract from 40 to estimate partner's strength. Find partner's length when you are weak.

Newcomer News – by Mike “Keeping Fun On My Convention Card” Purcell 513 702 4007

Volunteers for this Saturday’s 10am game are Bob Fisk , Lorna Davis, Nancy Luetge and Pat Hoffman. This week’s hand presents some difficult choices to make a thin game.

(Tuesday 11/18)

Board 17 ♠ J4

North ♥ 10852

Deals ♦ KQ92

None Vul ♣ K86

♠ A962

♥ K9

♦ A86

♣ Q1042



♠ Q10753

♥ AQJ7

♦ J3

♣ 93

EW 4♠; 2♥;
1N; 1♠;
NS 1♦

♠ K8

♥ 643

♦ 10754

♣ AJ75

to set the contract. What do you do? Win your ♦A and play ♠A right away and see what happens. Maybe you will get lucky and South will have the singleton king. Then you can safely draw trumps finessing the jack. This is not to be on this deal as both opponents play low spades. Time to play switch to hearts and hope they break 3-4 with the short hand also starting with a spade singleton or forced to ruff with the ♠K. This play works resulting in South ruffing the fourth heart as the last diamond goes away in dummy. On this play you only lose the spade ruff and two clubs to make game for +420.

Post Mortem – Many times you will find yourself in a thin contract. Planning your play to give yourself every chance to make can be the difference between a top and bottom result.

Bidding – West with 13 HCP opens 1♣ (12-21 HCP, 3+ clubs) in fourth seat. East with 10 HCP and 5 spades responds 1♠ (6-11 HCP, 4+ spades). West raises to 2♠ on a 4 card suit and a true opener. East can now count support point to get to 12 (9 HCP not counting the questionable doubleton ♦J, 2 for the doubletons, 1 more for extra trump). Most will push on to 4♠ hoping their solid good heart suit will allow you to make the hand. Others may invite game at 3♠. In they invite, West should pass short of game with minimum values.

Play of the Hand – On a ♦10 lead (top of nothing) declarer (East) has 4 losers (1♠, 1♦, 2♣). You can pitch diamonds from dummy on good hearts if opponents do not trump in. Unfortunately you cannot draw trumps without letting the opponents back in to cash their diamond

		Scores		MPs	
Bd 17	NS	EW	NS	EW	
4 ♠ E	50		3	0	
2 ♠ E		140	2	1	
3 ♠ E		170	1	2	
4 ♠ E		420	0	3	
4 ♠ E	50		2.5	0.5	
4 ♠ E	50		2.5	0.5	
1 ♠ E		140	1	2	
4 ♠ E		420	0	3	