

Interesting hand 8 : Board 11 Wednesday 31st March (Margaret Major Day)

The Gambling 3 No Trump comes up only rarely but this board is a good example.

S is dealer and will probably pass with his flat 11HCPs. W has a similar hand and will also pass. N has 7 clubs and the suit is solid but he has no outside honours. Most pairs will play that this is the perfect hand for a Gambling 3 NT opening bid but there are variations and, once the bid is alerted, you should ask the meaning if you intend to bid.

Dlr: South Vul: None	♠ 10 9 6 4 ♥ 3 ♦ 9 ♣ A K Q J 7 5 2	Optimum NS +100									
♠ K 7 5 ♥ K 5 ♦ K Q 8 4 ♣ 10 9 8 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px; font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">11</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">SOUTH</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td> </tr> </table>	W	NORTH	E	E	11	W	S	SOUTH	N	♠ A 8 ♥ 9 8 7 6 4 2 ♦ A 10 6 2 ♣ 3
W	NORTH	E									
E	11	W									
S	SOUTH	N									

The logic of the bid is both pre-emptive and aggressive. Here N has 7 certain tricks and needs partner to provide only two for 3NT to make. On the pre-emptive aspect, after two passes it seems very likely that E will have a good hand and your 3NT puts him very high to open. It is much more effective than 3C which leaves E with all options at the 3 level and, of course, a double. As it happens on this board E has the weakest hand of all but N cannot know this or even guess it.

In a situation where you held N's cards and you were dealer, you may pause before making the bid because you have 4 spades as well as your clubs and a couple of singletons. It is usually unwise to pre-empt with an outside 4 card major and, as it happens the best contract here would be 3S! With a Rule of 20 opening you may well choose to open 1C.

Going back to the actual situation at the table N seems likely to open 3NT. The fact that his partner has passed is outweighed by the belief that he may well prevent a major suit game from E/W and, you never know, partner may have a couple of aces!

S knows that the long suit is clubs and, after E passes, he has to decide whether to leave the bid in or to bid on through 4C. 5C is hopeless as partner has 5 or 6 losers outside his club suit and you can block only one of these with any certainty. Here there is no reason to take out. You have stoppers in the other suits and, crucially, a club to reach partner's hand.

What lead should E make? This is an occasion where the defence need to take tricks quickly and it would be wrong to lead a heart. You need to get a look at dummy. You should lead one of your aces. Once the defence have seen dummy

they know exactly what tricks they can take. This is the big disadvantage of the gamble! E/W know that declarer has nothing outside clubs and, with careful play, should secure the first 6 tricks before leading a heart at trick seven. 2 off.

Is this a good result? On the day it would not have been. Should N have held back? Absolutely not!