

Countering Enemy Preempts

♠ 6 2
 ♥ 5 2
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ A K J 10 8 4 2
 ♠ 10 8 7 ♠ A Q J 9
 ♥ K Q 9 3 ♥ J 8 7 6
 ♦ Q 9 8 ♦ A J 5 2
 ♣ Q 6 5 ♣ 7
 ♠ K 5 4 3
 ♥ A 10 4
 ♦ K 10 6 3
 ♣ 9 3

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	North	East	South
	3♣	X	Pass

3♥ All pass

East has a classic shape for his takeout double which follows closely the SOS criteria – shortage in the opponents' suit; opening value; and support for all the unbid suits. East's bidding is just the same as if North had opened 1♣. West has a working 7 count (the ♣Q, in the opponents' suit, is wastepaper) and does not have sufficient to bid to game. He contents himself with 3♥ and East, who has nothing to spare, will pass.

The contract will usually make with West losing a trick in each suit. The defence does, however, have a chance. North cashes a top club on which South plays a high ♣9. North takes this to be a suit preference signal, asking for the return of the higher side suit. North switches to ♠6. This will allow South, at some stage, to play two rounds of spades. South has to be alert and win the first round of trumps. Now a third round of spades allows North to ruff for the setting trick. If South lazily plays low on the first trump play, the ruff is lost as a second trump exhausts North of hearts.

♠ K 9 7 6 5
 ♥ A 4 2
 ♦ 7 6
 ♣ A 9 3
 ♠ J 10 8 3 ♠ 4 2
 ♥ 9 7 6 ♥ J 10 8
 ♦ A 2 ♦ K Q J 10 9 4 3
 ♣ J 10 5 4 ♣ 2
 ♠ A Q
 ♥ K Q 5 3
 ♦ 8 5
 ♣ K Q 8 7 6

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	4♣	3♦	X
		All pass	

South does not have quite the right hand shape for the double but that call is the best option South will be able to muster. His spade holding (two of the top honours) is some compensation for the lack of a third spade. If North were sitting there with a common-or-garden 7 count it would be right to pass but when the hand is a good king+ better than this, it's right to bid game. After a three level pre-empt there is no room to make an invitational response to the double. Blasting the game is not only probably right (the values for game are there or thereabouts), it also takes the pressure off partner.

East leads ♦K, overtaken by West, who plays back a second round. East wins and switches to his singleton club. Declarer wins and unblocks two top trumps. He returns to hand with the top heart and plays two more rounds of trumps. West has made that fourth round of spades but North's hand is now high.

The takeout double worked well. North's 5card spade holding gave the contract some safety.

♠ 9 8 3 2
 ♥ A 4
 ♦ A 10 9 5
 ♣ 8 6 3
 ♠ A Q 6 ♠ K J 10 7 5
 ♥ 8 6 ♥ 9 7 5
 ♦ K J 8 6 ♦ Q 7
 ♣ A 9 5 4 ♣ K Q 7
 ♠ 4
 ♥ K Q J 10 3 2
 ♦ 4 3 2
 ♣ J 10 2

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
X	Pass	3♠	2♥ ⁽¹⁾
4♣	All pass		Pass
1 5-9, 6hearts ("weak two")			

West is a bit flat for the double but he has a little extra, has all the points outside the opened suit and has support for all three unbid suits. Some Easts may blast 4♣ immediately (after all, all of East's points are outside the opened suit too). If he does go the invitational route, as above, West will raise to game (secretly hoping partner has that fifth spade).

South leads ♥K. North unravels the suit and South plays a third round. Declarer carefully ruffs with ♠Q. He can draw trumps and knock out ♦A to claim the contract. If East wrongly ruffs the third heart low he will regret that choice as the contract now fails when North overruffs.

<p> ♠ 6 5 4 2 ♥ Q 10 9 ♦ K J 6 2 ♣ A 5 </p> <p> ♠ K 9 3 ♠ 10 ♥ 6 ♥ AK85432 ♦ 9 4 3 ♦ 10 8 ♣ Q109876 ♣ J 4 2 </p> <p> ♠ A Q J 8 7 ♥ J 7 ♦ A Q 7 5 ♣ K 3 </p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <table> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♥</td> <td>3♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> <td>All pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>South has extra values so is more than pleased when North raises to game. That decision wasn't obvious in that the queen of hearts is of dubious value but North does have good minor suit cards and 4card trump support (so much more effective than 3cards).</p> <p>West leads ♥6 and East plays three rounds of the suit. On the third round South ruffs with ♠J ... and West overruffs with the king. NO! West discards and now, with East holding ♠10, that thoughtful play has given the defence a second trump winner (♠9 has been promoted). Notice that it doesn't cost West to discard a minor suit card on the third round of hearts. He will always make the king of spades and it may, as here, be the play that sees the contract's failure.</p>	West	North	East	South	Pass	Pass	3♥	3♠	Pass	4♠	All pass	
West	North	East	South										
Pass	Pass	3♥	3♠										
Pass	4♠	All pass											
<p> ♠ J72 ♥ AK76543 ♦ 83 ♣ 2 </p> <p> ♠ AKQ9543 ♠ 86 ♥ 108 ♥ Q92 ♦ 42 ♦ AK976 ♣ A10 ♣ 985 </p> <p> ♠ 10 ♥ J ♦ QJ105 ♣ KQJ7643 </p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <table> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>3♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4♠</td> <td>All pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>West is looking at eight clear tricks so should be a little worried about overcalling just 3♠. That bid would be unlikely to see partner raising to game. Better to play partner for a couple of good cards and bid the game.</p> <p>North leads two rounds of hearts and plays a third round because he knows partner can ruff out that card (which would have been a winner later in the play). That has a second effect when partner ruffs with ♠10. West needs to be careful. He knows he has a club loser so overruffing will be wrong if he is unable to draw the knave of spades. It's better if West throws the club loser. This <u>loser-on-loser</u> play allows declarer to keep control of the hand. He can now draw trumps in three rounds and will make the game – seven spades, two diamonds and a top club.</p>	West	North	East	South		3♥	Pass	Pass	4♠	All pass		
West	North	East	South										
	3♥	Pass	Pass										
4♠	All pass												

<p>♠ 97 ♥ Q874 ♦ K9862 ♣ A7</p> <p>♠ K2 ♠ QJ10543 ♥ 9632 ♥ A ♦ 7 ♦ J103 ♣ Q109432 ♣ J85</p> <p>♠ A86 ♥ KJ105 ♦ AQ54 ♣ K6</p>	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td>2♠</td><td>2N⁽¹⁾</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>3♣⁽²⁾</td><td>Pass</td><td>3♥</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>4♥</td><td>All pass</td><td></td></tr></table> <p>1 15-18, with at least one spade stop 2 Stayman</p> <p>South might like a little more in the spade suit but 2N gets over the range and general nature of the hand. North could raise this to the no trump game but that would be lazy and wouldn't work well – after a spade lead declarer would only have eight tricks. Instead North uses Stayman and is pleased to find a 4-4 fit.</p> <p>Declarer will make ten or eleven tricks. Holding declarer to ten tricks could happen if West leads his singleton diamond. Now he can receive a ruff to go with the defence's ace of trumps and a spade (the defence always takes a spade irrespective of whether the suit is attacked)</p>	West	North	East	South			2♠	2N ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥	All pass	
West	North	East	South														
		2♠	2N ⁽¹⁾														
Pass	3♣ ⁽²⁾	Pass	3♥														
Pass	4♥	All pass															
<p>♠ A 7 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ A K 7 ♣ K Q J 10 6</p> <p>♠ 9 8 5 ♠ K J 3 2 ♥ A 7 ♥ 10 4 3 2 ♦ Q J 10 9 6 5 4 ♦ 3 2 ♣ 2 ♣ 9 7 4</p> <p>♠ Q 10 6 4 ♥ K J 9 6 ♦ 8 ♣ A 8 5 3</p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <table><tr><th>West</th><th>North</th><th>East</th><th>South</th></tr><tr><td>3♦</td><td>3N</td><td>All pass</td><td>Pass</td></tr></table> <p>North has no interest in the majors and he has two very good stops in the opponents' suit. He also has 19 hcps and 3N is the correct bid with this balanced hand. There is no guarantee that partner has sufficient fire power to allow game to make but that's the practical shot.</p> <p>South does produce a suitable dummy and declarer will always make ten tricks. He can knock out the ace of hearts and will have one spade, two hearts, two diamonds and five clubs. He will know West has ♦ QJ and ♥ A so would be entitled to play a small spade towards ♠Q for an eleventh trick (West can't really hold that king as it would give him too many points for the preempt).</p>	West	North	East	South	3♦	3N	All pass	Pass								
West	North	East	South														
3♦	3N	All pass	Pass														

♠ A 10 8 6
 ♥ 6
 ♦ Q 4 3
 ♣ K J 8 4 2
 ♠ K 9 5 3 2 ♠ Q 7
 ♥ - VOID - ♥ A J 10 5 4 3 2
 ♦ J 10 9 8 5 2 ♦ 7 6
 ♣ Q 3 ♣ 9 6
 ♠ J 4
 ♥ K Q 9 8 7
 ♦ A K
 ♣ A 10 7 5

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
Pass	X	All pass	

After seven boards of the preemptor putting pressure on the other side it's fitting to have a hand where the biter is bitten. It does, however, need North to be alert and to enter the auction with a light takeout double. If he does that, it works a treat as South is able to pass for penalties. The defence will take one spade, three+ trumps, two diamonds and two clubs - i.e. at least eight tricks. That means declarer is booked for a minus score of at least 800. That more than compensates North South for a non-vulnerable game (yes, 6♣ can make but it wouldn't be easy to reach, even given a free run).