

When Opponents  
Open at the 3 Level or  
Higher

# A Modern Phenomenon

- In past days when we shuffled and dealt hands, 7-card suits were a rarity.
- Since we have gone to computer generated hands, 7-card, and even longer, suits have become more common.
- Recently at a club game, in a set of 28 boards, there were 4 hands with 7 card suits.
- Three of them were north-south and one east-west.
- None of them happened to have opening hand count.
- So, they were all opened at the 3 level.

# In the Pass-Out Seat

- We'll take a look at what to do in the direct seat later.
- First let's look at what to do in the pass out seat.
- Of course, you can pass and defend.
- Let's look at the kind of hand with which you might get into the bidding.
- Whatever you do is taking a chance.
- The person who opened at the 3-level took a chance and you will have to take a risk if you get into the action.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	??

Your hand

♠ K 10 9 7 4

♥ K 2

♦ A 6 4

♣ Q J 3

- You have 13 points.
- You would have opened the hand, if you had been in position to do so.
- If 1♥ was passed to you or even 2♥...
- You should overcall spades.
- But at the 3-level best pass.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	??

Your hand

♠ A K 10 9 7 4

♥ 2

♦ J 10 4

♣ Q 10 3

- You have only 10 points.
- But with this hand, you might overcall 3♠.
- The most important features of this hand are:
  - You have a good suit
  - You have a singleton in the opponent's suit.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	??

Your hand

What to do with this hand?

♠ 7 4

♥ A J 2

♦ K Q J 10 5 4

♣ A 3

Partner's hand ???

♠ Q J 9 6 4

♥ 5 3

♦ A 7 2

♣ Q J 5

- You cannot make a takeout double.
- You might bid 4 diamonds, but that's only a part score.
- If you can find one trick in partner's hand you can make 3nt.
- It is chancy, but 3nt is not a bad bid.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	??

Your hand

Here's another 3 no trump example.

♠ A K Q 5

♥ Q J 7

♦ A K 5 4

♣ K J

- A really strong hand.
- You would have opened 2♣, if you had the chance.
- If you double, partner is likely to bid clubs or maybe diamonds.
- If partner has anything at all, you can make 3 nt.

# When You Have a 2-Suited Hand

- A convention you might want to learn is called Leaping Michaels.
- It is a sequel to the Michaels Cue convention.
- Originally, it was designed to use with a strong two suiter over a weak two opening.
- Leaping Michaels works in the direct seat or the balancing seat.



North	East	South	West
2♦	pass	pass	4♦

Your hand

Leaping Michaels

Example

♠ A K 9 8 5 2

♥ A J 10 9 3

♦ 4

♣ 2

- First used over a weak two, with a strong two suiter like this.
- But you can easily adapt it to a 3-level preempt.

North	East	South	West
3♠	pass	pass	4♦

Your hand

Leaping Michaels

Example

♠ 2

♥ A K J 9 7 5

♦ K Q 10 8 4

♣ 2

- When they open a major suit.
- A 4-level minor suit bid shows that minor and the unbid major.
- You don't have to have a 6-5 hand but you need a strong two suiter.

North	East	South	West
3♠	pass	pass	5♦

Your hand

♠ 2

♥ 5 3

♦ K Q 10 9 8 4 2

♣ K J 5

- This means, of course, you cannot bid 4 of a minor to play.
- You must either bid at the 5 level or pass.

North	East	South	West
3♠	pass	pass	4♠

Your hand

Another leaping Michaels  
example

♠

♥ 3

♦ K Q 10 9 8 4

♣ K Q J 9 7 5

- A 4-level cue bid of a major suit shows really strong minor two suiter.

North	East	South	West
3♠	pass	pass	4♥

Your hand

♠ 2

♥ A K J 10 5 3

♦ K Q 9

♣ K J 5

- When you bid an unbid major it is to play.

North	East	South	West
3♠	pass	pass	4nt

Your hand

Another leaping Michaels  
example

♠ 4

♥ 3

♦ A 10 9 8 4

♣ K J 10 9 7 5

- 4 no trump over a 3-level preempt shows a weaker minor two suiter.
- This is an optional addition to the leaping Michaels convention.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	dble

Your hand

Here's another 3 no trump example.

♠ Q J 7 5

♥ 7

♦ A J 5 4

♣ K 9 6 4

- Using a takeout double.
- This hand has the advantage of perfect distribution.
- Not strong enough for a direct-seat takeout, even over 2♥.
- But in the balancing seat you should do it.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	dble

Your hand

♠ A J 10

♥ 7 5

♦ A J 5 4

♣ K J 6 4

- A little stronger hand, but less perfect distribution.
- Only 3 spades is a weakness, but you should make the double.
- Most of the missing high-card points will be with your RHO.
- So most of partner's finesses will work.



North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	double or 3nt

Your hand

Here's another 3 no trump example.

♠ A Q 9 8

♥ K 9 5

♦ A Q 4

♣ K Q 4

- This is a difficult hand.
- If partner bids a minor suit, what will you do?
- If partner has a minor suit you want to play 3nt.
- The only way to get to three no trump is to bid it yourself.

North	East	South	West
3♥	pass	pass	dble

Your hand

♠ K J 9 8

♥ 9 5

♦ A Q 4

♣ K Q J 4

- Double is an easy bid here.
- If partner bids 4 of a minor, you should pass.
- If partner bids 3♠, you can raise to game.
- If you doubled with this hand in the direct seat, you would pass partner's 3♠.

# Final Thoughts

- We have looked mostly at the balancing seat, in this lesson.
- Some of the bids I have suggested would be different in the direct seat.
- Don't forget Leaping Michaels.
- It is a good convention to have these days.
- Opening 3-level bids are becoming more and more common.