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When Partner Preempts at the
Three Level

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Three-Level Preempts

- Three-level preempts are becoming more and more common.
- And they are becoming more and more misused.
- I want to talk about how to respond when partner makes a 3-level opening bid.

Opening at the Three Level

- You and your partner should have an understanding as to what a 3-level opening should look like.
- Vulnerability is important.
- Remember the rule of 2 and 3.

What Is a Three-Level Opening

Hand 1

♠ K 4

♥ 7 3 2

♦ 10

♣ Q J 8 6 4 3 2

Hand 2

♠ A K J 10 9 7 4

♥ 3 2

♦ Q J 10 5

♣

Hand 3

♠ K 10 2

♥ A K J 10 5 3 2

♦ 10 5

♣ 3

- Might open 3♣ when not vulnerable.
- Good 3♠ hand. Some might open 4♠.
- 11 points, probably best to open this hand 1♥.

An Average 3-Level Opening Hand

Hand 4

♠ 9 4

♥ Q 3 2

♦ Q J 10 9 7 5 3

♣ 2

Hand 5

♠ A 10 2

♥ K Q 10 9 5 3 2

♦ 10 5

♣ 3

- Might open 3♦ when not vulnerable.
- Good 3♥, at any vulnerability.

The Type of Hand Dictates your Response

Hand 6

♠ K 4

♥ J 9 5

♦ K Q J 5 (13 points)

♣ Q J 5 3

Partner has:

♠ A Q J 10 6 4 2

And no other high cards.

- This hand is unlikely to make 10 tricks in spades.
- You might want to wait and see if opponents will come in or not.
- Probably best to pass.

The Type of Hand Dictates your Response

Hand 7

♠ K 4

♥ A K 5

♦ 9 7 6 5 (13 points)

♣ K 9 5 3

Partner opens 3♠ and has:

♠ A Q J 10 6 4 2

And no other high cards.

- Same 13 points
- No guarantee, but with a hand like this, you have a play for game.
- Partner needs the club ace in the right spot or to have a bit extra.
- The club or heart queen.

What Do You Do With This Hand?

Hand 8

♠ K 9 4

♥ 5 (15 points)

♦ A K J 7 6 5

♣ A 5 2

Partner opens 3♠

- This is a powerhouse hand opposite of partner's 3♠ opening.
- You might ask for key cards (4nt).
- If partner shows 2 key cards, give some thought to 7♠.
- With only 1 key card, bid 6♠.

When You Have a Solid Fit

- Use the Law...
 - The law is not perfect.
 - Vulnerability is a factor.
 - Be cautious when vulnerable.

Using the Law

Hand 9

♠ K 9 4

♥ 5 (7 points)

♦ J 9 7 6 5

♣ Q J 5 2

Partner opens 3♠
Vulnerability even.

- You have 10 spades between you and you have a singleton.
- This is an ideal hand to bid 4♠.
- You will make this bid whether or not RHO makes a call.

Using the Law

Hand 10

♠ 4

♥ 5 4 3 2 (6 points)

♦ J 9 7 6 5

♣ A J 5

Partner opens 3♥

Favorable vulnerability.

North east south West

3♥ dble 5♥

- You have 11 hearts between you and you have a singleton.
- You know they will bid 4 spades.
- You will make this bid whether or not RHO makes a call.

When You Do Not Have a Fit

- When you have a singleton in partner's suit, it is time to be cautious.
 - Technically, you have an 8-card fit, but the hand is unlikely to play well.
 - If you decide to bid no trump, you need:
 - A very strong hand and
 - A source of tricks in your hand or
 - An expectation that you can run partner's long suit.
- When you don't have a fit, pass is often best.

When You Don't Have a Fit

Hand 11

Partner opens 3♥.

♠ K 8 4

♥ 5 (14 points)

♦ A K 6 5

♣ K J 8 5 2

- If you think you want to try a no trump game with this hand, that is probably a bad choice.

- Give partner:

♠ J 4

♥ K Q J 10 8 4 3

♦ 8 6 5

♣ 2

And 3nt has no chance.

When You Don't Have a Fit

Hand 11 a

Partner opens 3♥.

♠ K 8 4

♥ 5 (14 points)

♦ A K 6 5

♣ K J 8 5 2

- But, give partner:

♠ J 4

♥ K Q J 10 8 4 3

♦ Q 6 5

♣ 2

3 no trump has a reasonably good chance.

After 3, there's no way to find out.

You're left to guess .

When Partner Preempts in a Minor Suit

- 3-level preempts should show a 7-card suit.
- Some players preempt with a really good 6-card club suit. The reason they give is:
 - There is no weak-two club bid.
 - So with a weak hand and six nice clubs, you must pass or open at the three level.
- Personally, I don't think this is a good idea and I would encourage you to avoid it.

A Minor Suit Preempt

Hand 12

Partner opens 3♦.

♠ A 8 4

♥ K Q 7 5 (16 points)

♦ K 6 5

♣ K J 8

- When you have a good hand and you can run partner's suit, 3nt is the bid.
- Unless you have real powerhouse hand, you must be able to run partner's suit.

A Minor Suit Preempt

Hand 12 a

Partner opens 3♦.

♠ A 8 4

♥ K Q 7 5 (16 points)

♦ 6 5

♣ A K 7 8

- With this hand, again, you have 16 points.
- Unless you can establish partner's suit and then reach his hand, you have no chance to make 3 nt.

A Minor Suit Preempt

Hand 13

Partner opens 3♣.

♠ A 8 4

♥ K J 5 (17 points)

♦ A K Q 9 6 5

♣ 8

- You don't have to worry about losing a bunch of club tricks.
- You have all the side suits controlled.
- You have a strong diamond suit.
- 3nt might work.

New-Suit Bids are Forcing

Hand 13

Partner opens 3♣.

♠ A Q J 8 4

♥ A Q 3 (17 points)

♦ A 10 9

♣ 8 3

- New-suit bids are forcing for one round.
- Partner will support your suit or rebid his preempt suit.
- Support = honor x or xxx.
- Bid 3♠ and partner will tell you what to do.

New-Suit Bids are Forcing

Hand 13

Partner opens 3♣.

♠ A 4

♥ A J 10 8 5 3

♦ A K 9 (16 points)

♣ 8 3

- Bid 3♥ and if partner cannot support your hearts, you feel okay at 4♣.
- Note: unless you can stand partner's club bid, you cannot bid your hearts.

Final Thoughts

- Make sure you and your partner know what a preempt looks like.
- Then be disciplined.
- Do remember that you have more options after a 2-level preempt, than following a 3-level preempt.
- Use the Law with common sense.