

17 August

## Not a pre-empt

Rakesh Kumar

You are West, both sides are vulnerable and as dealer you are looking at:

♠ KJ7  
♥ J73  
♦ AT86532  
♣

What will you bid?

When I reviewed the deals from Monday 16 August, I found that a surprisingly large proportion of those sitting West decided to start proceedings with a pre-emptive bid of 3D. This puzzled me greatly, because I can think of at least 3 good reasons why you should not regard your hand as suitable for a pre-emptive bid:

1. Most of your values are not in diamonds
2. You have excellent support for either major suit and if partner does indeed have a 5-card major you may never find your fit
3. If partner does have a strong hand, s/he is unlikely to believe that your hand is this good.

Perhaps for one or more of these reasons, two Wests came to the conclusion that a 3D pre-empt wasn't appropriate, but then decided to open the hand 1D. That puzzled me even more, although there's more to say about it below. This was the full deal:

<b>BD: 4</b>	♠ T952	<b>Dlr: W</b>
	♥ Q852	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦ J	
	♣ 9652	
♠ KJ7		♠ A43
♥ J73		♥ AKT4
♦ AT86532		♦ K9
♣		♣ AQ83
	♠ Q86	
	♥ 96	
	♦ Q74	
	♣ KJT74	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	- - - - -	3
S	- - - - -	9 20
E	2 7 6 5 7	8
W	2 7 6 4 7	

As you can see, partner did have a strong hand, so those who opened 3D typically heard partner bid 3NT, passed out. Partner took lots of tricks (usually 12 or 13) but this was actually a lousy result, because by far the most sensible contract for East-West is a slam in diamonds.

How does one arrive in slam, you ask? Easy: pass in first seat! Partner will open to show a balanced hand with about 20 hcp – say a 2NT opening, or maybe 2C followed by 2NT, depending on your methods. This should be approximately a 5-loser hand. You have a 7-loser hand and  $24 - (7+5) = 12$  so with a guaranteed 9-card fit, there ought to be a play for slam. If you play minorwood, you could ask for keycards, but as you have a void, how is this going to help? Our auction was 2NT-6D-all pass.

This contract has multiple chances: there are finesses in both majors, plus when the ♦J drops under the king, you could consider the possibility of a 3-1 break and finesse in diamonds. In fact as all the finesses are working on this deal, it's very hard to fail in 6D – unless you make sure of not getting there in the first place, by opening 3D.

That said, the folks who opened a grossly under-strength 1D, no doubt intending to bid and rebid until they were blue in the face, were unexpectedly successful this time around. Partner showed strength, they both corrected to 5D, and in both cases partner now decided to bid 6NT. As it happens to be cold as well, they scored a shared top! This game ...



*24 August*

## **On upgrading ...**

Rakesh Kumar

After 2 passes, you open 1S with this hand:

♠A9873  
♥AK72  
♦KT32  
♣

Your LHO overcalls 2C and partner bids 2S. RHO raises to 3C. What will you bid?

You started out with a 14 hcp hand, with some potentially useful distribution. Partner's raise to 2S should promise some 6-9 hcp so one way of looking at your hand is to say that your combined assets are 20-23 hcp, which should be enough to bid 3S, but not more. If you do that, you get to play there.

Another way of evaluating your combined hands is to say that a raise to 2S usually promises a 9-loser hand with 3+ support. You have a 5-loser hand. Loser count

arithmetic therefore says  $24 - (9+5) = 10$  tricks possible. What's more, the opponents have bid and raised clubs, a suit in which you have no losers, and it is therefore quite likely that partner's values are also in the other suits. So you should bid 4S!

This was the deal, from Monday 23 August:

<b>BD: 12</b>	<b>♠QT5</b>	<b>Dlr: W</b>	
	<b>♥Q63</b>	<b>Vul: N-S</b>	
	<b>♦86</b>		
	<b>♣QJT74</b>		
<b>♠K42</b>		<b>♠A9873</b>	
<b>♥JT8</b>		<b>♥AK72</b>	
<b>♦J975</b>		<b>♦KT32</b>	
<b>♣862</b>		<b>♣</b>	
	<b>♠J6</b>		
	<b>♥954</b>		
	<b>♦AQ4</b>		
	<b>♣AK953</b>		
	<b>♣ ♦ ♥ ♠</b>	<b>N</b>	
		<b>T</b>	
N	2 - - -	1	7
S	2 - - -	1	5 14
E	- 4 2 4 -		14
W	- 4 2 4 -		

In fact East had been quite optimistic in raising to 2S with a fairly awful 11-loser hand, justified only because it was a competitive auction. Despite this, 4S makes without a great deal of difficulty – you ruff the opening lead, play ♠A and ♥A, then a low spade to the king followed by ♥J. When this holds, you continue hearts. North covers dummy's third heart, but when they break 3-3 you cash the thirteenth card in the suit, discarding a club from dummy. North can ruff but you will only lose a spade and two diamond tricks.

Re-evaluating and upgrading when you have a fit plus a shortage in the opponents' suit is the way to reach thin game contracts. Almost everyone who played in a spade contract on this board made 10 tricks, but only 3 of 7 were in game.

Note also that 3 Wests did not raise, so at those tables North-South played in 3C. That should go down, but it never did, because West did not find the switch to ♥J in time. The defence should start with a low spade to East's ace and a low spade back to West's king. When declarer plays the jack, it's obvious that s/he will shortly be able to discard something on dummy's ♠Q, so the ♥J really should be the next card played ...



30 August

## Interference over 1NT

Rakesh Kumar

When your right-hand opponent opens 1NT, if you have a distributional hand with some values you really should make an effort to interfere and try to steal the contract (or at least mess up the other side's auction) except perhaps at unfavourable vulnerability.

What's your approach to bidding over 1NT? Do you just make a natural overcall, perhaps promising a 6-card suit? If so, there will be many hands on which you can't get in your opponents' way. Better is some method that allows you to show both one-suited and two-suited (5/4+) hands – the three most popular are DONT, Cappelletti (also known as Hamilton) and my personal favourite, known as multi-Landy. You can find out more about them via Google.

One way in which the latter two methods can create problems for third hand is via the 2C overcall in Cappelletti, which simply shows a long suit, or the 2D overcall in multi-Landy, which shows an unspecified long major suit. Say you hold the hand below and partner has opened 1NT (15-17 hcp). You want to be in game somewhere, but you want to be in the *right* game and that's not always going to be easy to determine after the opponents interfere. For example, what will you bid after your right-hand opponent overcalls 2D, showing either 6+ hearts or 6+ spades?

♠  
♥Q764  
♦AQ92  
♣J9875

If RHO had overcalled 2S, you could double for takeout if that was your agreement (i.e. double was not for penalties) or you could bid 3S as a game-forcing Stayman-like bid, promising 4 hearts and giving opener the option of playing in 3NT or 4H. But you can't do that after the ambiguous 2D bid (nor can you do so after a Cappelletti 2C bid) because it isn't clear which suit is being doubled for takeout and you can't make a forcing cue bid.

Oddly enough, the best thing you can do is pass! The partner of the ambiguous overcaller must make a "pass-or-correct" bid in fourth seat and when this comes back to you, *now* you can act and clarify your intentions.

So if the auction was 1NT (Partner) -2D (RHO, showing a 6+ major) -Pass (you) -2H (LHO, pass or correct) -Pass (Partner) -2S (RHO, showing a spade suit as expected) you can now double or bid 3S as above, as if there had been a 2S overcall!

Not everyone made it to 4H on the board in question, which turned up on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> August (see over):

<b>BD: 13</b>	♠852	<b>Dlr: N</b>
	♥J53	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦J86	
	♣K643	
♠		♠K94
♥Q764		♥AK82
♦AQ92		♦KT4
♣J9875		♣QT2
	♠AQJT763	
	♥T9	
	♦753	
	♣A	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	- - - 1 -	5
S	- - - 1 -	9 15
E	5 5 5 - 3	11
W	5 4 5 - 2	

In fact 4H is cold for 11 tricks (3NT also makes but is only worth +600 vs. +650) while a 4S save by North-South should be doubled and go for -800. However, spade contracts were sometimes allowed to make 8 tricks and were not always doubled. That's letting the interfering bidders get off altogether too lightly!



## 2 September

### Getting out of the way

Rakesh Kumar

Defence can be difficult. Here's a problem for you to consider. You hold:

♠A4
♥Q
♦T96542
♣8652

With both sides vulnerable, you pass as dealer and LHO opens 1S. Partner doubles, RHO bids 1NT and you bid 2D. Now LHO rebids 3S and RHO goes on to 4S.

Partner leads the ♥A and this is the dummy that you see:

♠85  
 ♥JT953  
 ♦J  
 ♣AT973

Of course have to play the queen under partner's ace. Partner now continues with ♥7 which you ruff with ♠4, declarer following to the first 2 tricks with ♥2 and ♥6. What will you do at this point? Decide before looking below ...

This was the full deal:

<b>BD: 7</b>	♠K7	<b>Dlr: S</b>
	♥AK874	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦KQ87	
	♣J4	
♠QJT9632		♠85
♥62		♥JT953
♦A3		♦J
♣KQ		♣AT973
	♠A4	
	♥Q	
	♦T96542	
	♣8652	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N
		T
N	1 4 1 - 1	16
S	1 4 1 - 1	12 6
E	- - - 3 -	6
W	- - - 3 -	

At trick 3, the only sensible thing for South to do is to play ♠A. This is in part because declarer may need to ruff diamond losers in dummy, so you can cut down on that. But there is a more important reason ...

At the table, I didn't do the right thing. On my return of a diamond, declarer won the ace, ruffed a diamond, played a club to her king and pushed out ♠Q. Of course partner rose with the king and so our two top trump tricks were compressed into one! As a result, 4S made, for an absolute zero for us.

This deal turned up in the evening on Wednesday 1 September. The auction at our table wasn't exactly as described, but the misdefence by me was just as it happened, and just as hideous as it appears.

Interestingly, although North doubled at most tables, this wasn't necessarily the best action over 1S. A 2H overcall inhibits East from bidding and when West backs in with 2S, North can now rebid 3D. North-South should now be able to buy the contract. Even if they end up in 5D, it won't be doubled, with the resultant -100 yielding a much better matchpoint score than any making spade part-score by East-West.



## 14 September

### Pre-empt or not?

Rakesh Kumar

Monday 13 September was the second round of our GNOT qualifying event, so once again the scoring was IMPs rather than matchpoints. This deal was fascinating in so many ways:

<b>BD: 4</b>	♠KT53	<b>Dlr: W</b>
	♥AK98	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦KQ83	
	♣4	
♠J972		♠A64
♥		♥QT743
♦7		♦T96
♣KT986532		♣QJ
	♠Q8	
	♥J652	
	♦AJ542	
	♣A7	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	- 5 4 3 4	15
S	- 5 4 3 4	4 9
E	3 - - - -	12
W	3 - - - -	

The first question is: should West pre-empt as dealer? Traditional teaching is not to pre-empt in a minor suit when holding an outside 4-card major. However, when looking at this weak hand, it makes more sense to remember the aphorism "What's an 8-card suit? Trumps!!!"

If West passes, the auction is likely to commence 1D (by North)-1H (by East)-3D (limit raise) by South. What should North do? With a good 15 hcp, when playing for IMPs, bidding game should be automatic. As 9 tricks are usually easier than 11, bidding 3NT is reasonable, hoping for partner to have values in clubs. In fact this contract will make 10 easy tricks on the likely lead of a low heart. However, if the singleton is too much of a worry, 5D is a safe and sensible alternative.

What about if West does start with 3C? Now North has an easy takeout double, but what should South bid? With a 4-card heart suit and 12 hcp, on the assumption that North has the majors, a direct 4H is the technically correct bid. If instead South responds 3D, this gives North a headache, because this is potentially a very weak bid. If s/he does find the courage to raise to 4D, though, South should semi-automatically continue to game.

And what if South does end up in 4H, with trumps breaking 5-0? Rob Ward did a fine job of demonstrating how to handle this. He won the club lead, ruffed a club and cashed a top heart honour, getting the bad news. Now ♥9 towards hand, winning when East played low. To keep control, he did not play a third round of hearts but instead started on the diamonds. East ruffed the fourth round, but was endplayed. In practice she cashed the ♠A in disgust ... contract made, losing just 2 hearts and the ace of spades.



*25 September*

## **Interference over 1NT, take 2**

Rakesh Kumar

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the merits of trying to get into the auction over 1NT with any reasonable excuse. I also mentioned the range of alternative approaches that various partnerships use for this purpose, notably DONT, Cappelletti/Hamilton and multi-Landy.

There's much to be said for bidding over 1NT with any distributional hand, especially if you have tenace holdings i.e. those into which the opponents' lead will give you a free finesse. That's true even when the vulnerability isn't favourable, as demonstrated by this deal from Wednesday 22 September:

<b>BD: 3</b>	♠	<b>Dlr: S</b>	
	♥QT6432	<b>Vul: E-W</b>	
	♦T98764		
	♣J		
♠A9832		♠KJT64	
♥9		♥J8	
♦AQ2		♦J3	
♣AQ63		♣T854	
	♠Q75		
	♥AK75		
	♦K5		
	♣K972		
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N	
		T	
N	- 4 4 - -		3
S	- 4 4 - -	16	6
E	3 - - 5 1		15
W	3 - - 5 1		

At every table, South opened 1NT. With two ace-queens, the West hand is an excellent example of the sort of holdings that make an overcall a very good idea. So even though the spade suit is fairly anaemic, if playing multi-Landy, West has an easy 2S overcall showing 5 spades and an unspecified 4+ minor suit.

In fact at 3 of the 5 tables, West did make a 2S overcall, even though it was not alerted and was presumably interpreted as a natural one-suited bid. It was rather surprising, then, to see that at 4 tables North-South bought the contract in 4H.

What were East-West doing? Or more specifically, what was East doing during the auction? If West can find a 2S overcall, vulnerable against not, isn't 5-card support worth a raise? That only happened at one table.

Taking the idea further, if North-South voluntarily bid to 4H, they presumably expected to make it. Doesn't that indicate there's a lot of distribution around? That increases the likelihood that a save in 4S will be relatively cheap. It turns out that East-West can actually make 11 tricks in spades! If North leads a heart, West ruffs the second round of the suit, crosses to ♠K and takes the spade finesse. After trumps are drawn, declarer plays ace and a small club from hand, conceding a trick to South who is now endplayed in 3 suits ...

Even if that line isn't found, 4S is a good bid after partner's overcall, merely on the basis of the certain 10-card fit. However, except for the robots, the East-West pairs didn't seem to be keen on pushing to game on this deal. Why not? It's matchpoint pairs and the worst that can happen is that one board goes down the gurgler!



## 28 September

### Light takeout doubles

Rakesh Kumar

On what sort of hand do you make a takeout double? I've heard some folks suggest that you should do so on any opening hand without a long suit suitable for an overcall. That's an idea with which I strongly disagree.

There are traditionally said to be basically 3 types of hands that are suitable for a takeout double: (i) a hand with opening strength and shortage in the bid suit, with tolerance for all the unbid suits (ii) a balanced hand too strong to make a 1NT overcall (iii) a very strong hand with a good suit. The latter two types of hand first double and then show shape/suit as appropriate.

Shortage in the suit opened is an essential requirement for a "normal strength" takeout double. However, you don't need to have full opening strength in terms of high card points if you have good shape e.g. my agreement with most partners is that a takeout double over a 1-of-a-minor bid is fine with a good 9-10 hcp and at least 4-4 in the majors. Similarly, about 10 hcp is enough to double 1-of-a-major with 4-card support for the unbid major and shortage in the bid major.

Being able to double with a weaker shapely hand proved to be important on this deal from Monday 27 September:

<b>BD: 23</b>	♠Q	<b>Dir: S</b>
	♥AT8532	<b>Vul: All</b>
	♦KT6	
	♣Q8	
♠AT93		♠J8654
♥		♥6
♦AJ9532		♦7
♣J92		♣AK7543
	♠K72	
	♥KQJ974	
	♦Q8	
	♣T6	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	- - 2 - -	11
S	- - 2 - -	10 8
E	6 3 - 6 1	11
W	6 3 - 6 1	

At most tables, the auction was 1H-2D-4H-all pass or similar. On sharp defence, this went 2 down because not only were East-West able to cash 4 top tricks, East was able to ruff a diamond with the one outstanding trump!

However, at our table partner doubled the opening bid and with plenty of shape, it was easy for me to bid 4S. When ♠A felled a top spade honour and clubs broke 2-2, the result was an effortless 12 tricks. The deal was certainly a testament to the value of a light takeout double.

Incidentally, this was one of 3 deals in the course of the afternoon in which one side had a 6-6 trump fit. And on each occasion, it was the other side that could make at least 12 tricks! How extraordinary!!



### *3 October*

## **From the GNOT Regional Final**

Rakesh Kumar

The Tablelands-Illawarra Regional Final for the Grand National Open Teams was played on RealBridge on Sunday 3 October. There were 3 teams from the Illawarra Bridge Association and 3 from SHBC participating in the event, which was run as a 5 × 12 board round-robin and scored as IMPs converted to victory points (VPs), with the winner determined on the aggregate score. The competition was ably directed by Jeff Carberry, who not only eased concerns about the not-so-infrequent technical glitches but also substituted when necessary!

To no one's surprise, the event was convincingly won by the HURLEY team (Liz and Steve Hurley, Phil Barker and Steve Szatmary) from IBA, who will represent the region in the national finals to be held on line in late November.

There were, of course, lots of exciting boards and some big swings through the day. I'm going to focus on just two deals from the final match, which emphasise an idea that I've written about more than once in the past – namely that a long minor suit can be an excellent source of tricks in a notrump contract. Here's the first deal of interest:

**Board 51**  
**Dealer S**  
**EW Vul**

♠ AQJ53  
 ♥ A106  
 ♦ 2  
 ♣ 10975

♠ K10982  
 ♥ J75  
 ♦ J8  
 ♣ A42

♠ 764  
 ♥ Q8432  
 ♦ Q93  
 ♣ KJ

♠ -  
 ♥ K9  
 ♦ AK107654  
 ♣ Q863

	NT	♠	♥	♦	♣
N	9	5	5	10	8
S	9	5	5	10	8
E	3	8	8	3	4
W	3	8	8	3	4

Par +400 3NT= NS

At our table, this was the auction:

W	N	E	S
			1♦
1♠	1NT	2♠	3♦
P	3NT	P	P
P			

East led a spade and West played ♠Q to force the king. Declarer ran ♦J, expecting that the finesse would lose but maintaining communication with dummy to ensure 6 tricks even on a 3-1 break off side. However, it held!

Now declarer could run the diamonds, forcing West to make 6 increasingly uncomfortable discards. As West threw 4 clubs including the 9 and 10, declarer pitched all 3 of his hearts, as well as a spade and a club. Now on a club to the ace, West showed out. Having already taken nine tricks, declarer was thus able to throw West in with a spade. Regardless of what she had retained in the major suits, she was forced to yield a tenth trick either to declarer's ♠10 or dummy's ♥K.

If the opposition does bid 3NT against you on the basis of a long, potentially running minor suit, you had better be on your toes defensively. My partner certainly was on this deal:

**Board 56**  
**Dealer W**  
**None Vul**

<p>♠ 62  ♥ AKQJ8  ♦ 87  ♣ K1086</p>	<p>♠ AQ5  ♥ 105432  ♦ 52  ♣ 743</p>	<p>♠ J984  ♥ 6  ♦ AK109643  ♣ J</p>
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Par -130 1♦+3 EW

	NT	♠	♥	♦	♣
N	2	5	5	2	6
S	2	5	5	2	6
E	8	7	8	10	7
W	8	7	8	10	7

This was the auction:

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	1♠	2♣
P	P	3♦	P
3NT	P	P	P

As North, I duly led partner's suit, starting with a top-of-nothing ♣7. Partner took her ace and gave the matter some thought. Because it was self-evident that declarer held both ♣K and ♣10, there was no point attempting to develop tricks in that suit. So she returned a low spade – which promptly yielded another 4 tricks and the only positive score for North-South on the board!

Special thanks to Steve Brabyn for all the organisation ...

