

TALES OF AKARANA



PRE-EMPTING PAIN and PLEASURES

One can experience and inflict both types of feelings when pre-empts are around. ... and there were a few.



What, for instance, would you do when your partner, bless him, gets the ball rolling with 3NT, a solid minor with no outside ace or king guaranteed in a first seat opener.

You hold: ♠ AKJ863 ♥ T52 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ9

It's all vulnerable, if that makes you feel better and your right-hand opponent passed.

There might be a great deal of pleasure to come from the following sequence, again started by your partner and again with everyone vulnerable:

West	North	East	South
			3♦
3♥	?		

With you North holding: ♠ K432 ♥ AKQ74 ♦ KQ94 ♣ -

And what bid would you make after one of the opposition pre-empts your auction which develops like this:

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	3♠	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♣	Pass	?

You are South and opened with: ♠ KJT5 ♥ A84 ♦ A8432 ♣ 2

In the first two questions, there would seem to be a choice of three options. After the Gambling 3NT, you seem to have a choice of 4♠, 5♦ (since diamonds is obviously partner's suit) or Pass. Both knowledge of the hand and the uncertainty of how many heart losers there might be would tend to put me off trying 5♦ but if partner had three spades and less than three hearts, 4♠ seems a better bet than 3NT. Not, though, with the actual hand:

Board 20
 West Deals
 Both Vul

♠ — ♥ 9 8 7 4 ♦ A K Q 9 8 7 3 ♣ 6 4	♠ Q 10 9 7 5 ♥ J 6 3 ♦ 10 4 ♣ 10 7 5	♠ A K J 8 6 3 ♥ 10 5 2 ♦ 2 ♣ A Q 9
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N
W E
S

♠ 4 2
♥ A K Q
♦ J 6 5
♣ K J 8 3 2

South was not hard-pressed to find the opening lead and retained the lead for the first three rounds. After that, North found much joy in the trump suit. Meanwhile, there are 10 top tricks in no-trumps.

Opinions seem divided with three West players and one East enjoying the experience in 3NT, five East players having a torrid time in 4♠ while two Wests played and made their diamond partial. "Gambling" is just that though on average West will have two hearts and two little spades. It does seem that 3NT will either be the easier game or absolutely impossible!

Problem 2

You might think that the second problem might have come from the same hand... but no...and your partner did not have one of those random six card minor pre-empts either. Remember the sequence and your hand?

West	North	East	South
3♥	?		3♦

With you North holding: ♠ K432 ♥ AKQ74 ♦ KQ94 ♣-

It's no longer a sexist world (as the Harvey Weinstein case demonstrates...or not!) and therefore, I could not possibly use a phrase like "the real man's bid" but could you bid any less than 6♦...and when the 3♥ caller doubles, reach for your rarely used the "blue" redouble card. Bet you wished you had:

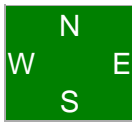
Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

♠ K 4 3 2
 ♥ A K Q 7 4
 ♦ K Q 9 4
 ♣ —

♠ A Q 10
 ♥ J 10 8 5 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A K 9 5

♠ 7 6 5
 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ 2
 ♣ Q 10 8 7 6 4 2

♠ J 9 8
 ♥ 2
 ♦ A J 10 8 7 6 5
 ♣ J 3



So, as West you might have doubled rather than bid 3♥? Same problem for North and same problem for West when North bids to the 6 level.

If West heard 6♦ from North, there should not, at this vulnerability, be the feeling that their opponents are sacrificing. North must mean their bid...and West should be happy to take the contract down, if they can....which they cannot!

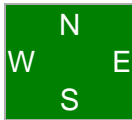
It seems the West players were a little trigger-happy but those blue redouble cards stayed firmly in the box. 4 pairs reached the diamond slam, with three of them doubled...but not one redouble! The same happened to the diamond game, doubled 3 times out of 4....but no redouble. Two other pairs got an insufficient penalty from 3♥. It does seem the North players could have got a great deal more pleasure from their partner's pre-empt this time.

I am not sure what to make from the third sequence:

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	3♠	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♣	Pass	?

You are South and opened with: ♠ KJT5 ♥ A84 ♦ A8432 ♣ 2

It seemed to me that Gerber was in use but not as far as the case with the South player who had this problem. South passed 5♣ which seemingly meant that he and his partner were firmly on the same wave-length:

Board 27	♠ —	
South Deals	♥ K J 10 3 2	
None Vul	♦ 10	
	♣ A Q 10 9 8 7 5	
♠ 4 3		♠ A Q 9 8 7 6 2
♥ Q 9 5		♥ 7 6
♦ K J 9 6		♦ Q 7 5
♣ K J 4 3		♣ 6
	♠ K J 10 5	
	♥ A 8 4	
	♦ A 8 4 3 2	
	♣ 2	

As West, I envisaged two club tricks (correctly) and at least one trick more but North played hearts the right way and then tabled his hand to two disappointed opponents.

No-one bid the heart slam with most other pairs playing safely in hearts, making 11 tricks. An interesting deduction by our South that their partner was showing very long clubs with what might have been a four card heart suit. It seemed they might have even got more pleasure from their opponent's pre-empt by reaching 6♥.

So, have you seen enough pre-empts for one night? In two cases, the pre-empt came from one's own partner. It seems more players could have gained more pleasure than occurred at the table!

Richard Solomon