

Responses To Pre-emptive Openers

by Dave Riseborough

When partner opens a pre-emptive bid, look first at the vulnerability to see how many tricks partner promises **if their suit is trumps!**

Partner has at least seven cards of the suit so you will probably not have many!

So if your partner has opened 3H and your hand looks like this:

S QJ863
H K
D AK7
C K643

don't panic and bid 3NT: your hand is worth tricks to partner whereas partner's hand may be worth nothing to you.

If you are vulnerable, partner promises seven tricks (two tricks short) so you bid 4H – you should have three tricks. If not vulnerable it may be wise to pass.

Remember partner has given you an accurate description of their hand so any bid you make is likely to be followed by a pass from partner!

Defence Systems

One reason that players, upon seeing a seven-plus-card suit, automatically pre-empt without thinking of the Rule of 2 & 3* is that they are not being punished for it. It is therefore essential that you have a good defence system.

If you use double as take-out over a normal opening bid, it is rarely left in by partner for penalty. But over a 3- or 4-level pre-empt you may wish to double for penalty, so you need another bid for take-out.

There are many different system variations: here are two fairly simple methods you can use.

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| 1) | After the pre-empt opening: | a) Double = Penalty b) No-trump = Take-out c) A suit is to play. |
| 2) | After the pre-empt opening: | a) Double = Penalty b) No-trump = To play c) A bid of the suit above the opened suit = Take-out d) Any other suit = To play. |

(This is called Fishbein, after its inventor.)

Pre-emptive bids are meant to make it difficult for the opposition to bid and/or find their optimum contract, so if you are on the receiving end of one and you get a bad score, it proves that they do work!

Rule of 2 & 3*

See Dave's previous article, **Pre-emptive Openers**.