



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(136) 1M - 3NT* as a Good 1M - 4M Bid

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Level: 5

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General

In general, we use jumps in competitive auctions as weak bids (0-5 points) applying the Law of Total Tricks (LOTT) -- (though sometimes the modern approach can be to use mixed bids, 6-9 points). The key is that we jump to our Law level, eating up bidding space, to quickly and narrowly define our hand.

Example

1M X 3M

This strikes a balance between exerting pressure on the opponents (in case it is their hand) and effectively describing our hand to partner - in case partner has a fabulous hand and is interested in game!

When we have 5-card trump support, we will want to apply to the LOTT and jump to 4-Major (game). But if we make this same bid with 0 HCP or with 8-9 HCP, partner will not know if there is a possibility of slam or not if partner has the great hand. Let's look at how we can solve this problem of better describing our hand to partner while still preempting the auction.

3NT* Conventional Raise

The idea is to use 1M - 3NT* as a 5-card raise with some values while still using 1M - 4M as a weak raise. We call this 3NT* bid "A Good 1-4 Bid!" This allows us to differentiate the following hands:

♠ K9753

♥ 8

♦ 76543

♣ 64

Compared with

♠ K9753

♥ 8

♦ AJ765

♣ 64

With the first hand we have no slam interest (no matter how good partner's hand is) and we just want the bidding to stop in in 4♠. With the second hand we want to preempt and show our shape, but let partner know we have something useful for a slam or further competition if the opponents bid over us.

Auctions Where We Can Use this Conventional 3NT*

The classic example of where we can employ the 3NT* as a Good 1-4 is over 1M (X) ... In this auction, we do not generally need a natural 3NT because with a balanced hand with 12+ HCP we can just start with a redouble and bid 3NT later. In this auction, when we have a big fit we also expect the opponents to compete so it is useful to be able to preempt the auction yet differentiate between a weak and a constructive hand.

Examples

1M X 3NT* good 1-4 bid

1M X 4M weak raise to 4M (often no outside Ace or King!)

No Interference

If there is no competition we can still have this agreement that 1M – 3NT* shows a good 1-4 bid, but this means that on some balanced hands, like 2/3-4-4 we will have to go slow and bid 2♣ (making a 2/1 GF bid) instead of just jumping to 3NT. This gives up very little and can still be used as an effective bidding tool.

Vs. Overcalls

When we open a Major and the opponents overcall, it will usually be at the 2-level. In this case, we will need to have a way to show a good hand with a stopper in the opponents' suit and thus we will need to maintain a natural 3NT response. Thus, our jump to 4M in these auctions will remain more wide ranging (0-8+ HCP with 5+card support). Lacking these two different raises to 4M in this situation does not harm our bidding much since we are unlikely to be bidding a slam when the opponent makes a 2-level overcall, showing an opening hand.

Conclusion

We like to have many ways to raise partner's Major, especially in competition. When we have 5-card support we will need to apply maximum pressure to the opponents by jumping to the 4-level (using the LOTT) as fast as possible. But it is also useful in these auctions to differentiate the horrible hand from a decent hand. Make use of this conventional 3NT gadget to help partner in these auctions!

