

NVBA I/N Teaching

October 22, 2015

Opening Pre-empts (3 Level and Higher), Responses

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Opening Pre-empts

One of the great Bridge teaching resources on the Internet is Larry Cohen's site, <https://www.larryco.com/>. About his Web site, Larry says "*I do wish all the thousands of hours of work I put into the site would get more use – it is all there for teachers to use and students to read. For free.*" On to the teaching:

There is a box on the Convention card that addresses opening preempts. You can mark LIGHT, NORMAL, or SOUND. You might choose to base this on vulnerability (some players mark "SOUND--vulnerable").

Whatever your style, the most important things are:

- 1) Make sure partner knows your style and you know his.
- 2) Stick to that style. Don't zig and zag.

One popular preempting guideline is the rule of 2,3,4 which means:

If you are Vulnerable against not, you are within 2 tricks of your preempt (for example, you can open 3 ♥ with ♥ KQJ10987 and maybe a side king). At equal vulnerability you are within 3 tricks of your bid and at favorable, within four.

In general, 2-level preempts are made with 6-card suits, 3-level preempts with 7-card suits, and 4-level preempts with 8-card suits. Note, the words "in general"--there is no rule that you have to abide by. Position is very important. When you are in 2nd seat, your preempting shouldn't be too reckless (because one of your opponents has already passed, there is a good chance the contract belongs to your side). In third seat, when your partner has already passed, you can loosen up and preempt more often.

When you respond to a preempt, you have to take many things into account. For example, say partner opens 2 ♥ and you have:

♠ K Q 2 ♥ K 2 ♦ A J 8 7 3 ♣ J 10 2

If partner is a sound preemptor, and you are vulnerable (especially at team scoring or opposite a 2nd-seat preempt), you might just bid 4 ♥. If partner is a "medium " preemptor, you might bid 2 NT to find out if he is minimum or maximum. If he is an aggressive preemptor, you probably should pass. It is so important to know partner's style!

4th seat: In fourth seat, can you open with a preempt (after 3 passes)? Sure. For a 4th seat weak-two, you should have a decent six-card suit and about 10-13 HCP (with less, you would pass the hand out). A 3-level preempt in 4th seat would contain a 7-card suit. After 3 passes, I would open 3 ♥ with something like:
♠ 2 ♥ K Q J 10 8 7 3 ♦ Q J 9 2 ♣ 2 . (This hand would be too good to open 3 ♥ in any other position.)

4N opening: Is it Blackwood? Is it a good five-of-a-minor bid (something like: ♠ 2 ♥-- ♦ A K Q 10 9 8 7 3 2 ♣ K 10 2 (better than a 5 ♦ opening)? A big minor 2-suiter (something like: ♠-- ♥ 3 ♦ K Q J 10 9 2 ♣ A J 10 9 7 5)? Unless you've discussed it with partner, it is probably wise not to use this bid. If you do discuss it with your partner, don't hold your breath waiting for this bid to come up.

5 ♥ or 5 ♠ Opening: Am I kidding? Go to <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-store/detail/my-favorite-52-book> and click "FREE EXCERPT" to read Chapter 1 of My Favorite 52 to learn more. (And definitely, don't expect to ever make this bid).

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Responses to Opening Pre-empts

For this half of the teaching, we go to Bill Root's classic "*Commonsense Bidding*."

pp 79-82:

Root says your response to Partner's pre-emptive opening bid is based on tricks, not high-card points. Only Aces, Kings, A Q, or K Q count for anything in a non-Trump suit. Any Trump honor will be useful. Providing you (Responder) have trump support, count tricks for singletons and voids in side suits.

Responder should be reluctant to make any bid other than raising opener's suit.

Partner opens 3 ♠. You hold: ♠ 7 4 ♥ K Q 7 3 ♦ Q J 9 ♣ K Q J 2 Your call? _____

Partner opens 3 ♠. You hold: ♠ 7 ♥ A K 8 4 ♦ A T 8 2 ♣ 5 4 3 2 Your call? _____

Partner opens 3 ♥. You hold: ♠ A K 9 7 2 ♥ K 9 4 ♦ 3 ♣ T 8 7 5 Your call? _____

Partner opens 3 ♦. You hold: ♠ 2 ♥ A K Q 5 3 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ A K 9 7 Your call? _____

Bid 3 NT over Partner's opening 3 ♣ or 3 ♦ bid IF you have Trump support (at least x x x or K x), and the equivalent of an opening bid with stoppers in the other three suits.

Partner opens 3 ♣. You hold: ♠ J T 7 6 ♥ A Q 2 ♦ A T 9 4 ♣ K 9 Your call? _____

Partner opens 3 ♦. You hold: ♠ A K 9 2 ♥ A K 5 ♦ 7 3 ♣ A 6 5 4 Your call? _____

The one time responding 3 NT to Partner's Major pre-empt may be right is when you can win 9 tricks without running Partner's suit.

Partner opens 3 ♠. You hold: ♠ 7 ♥ K 2 ♦ A J 4 ♣ A K Q J 9 6 3 Your call? _____

Bidding your own suit below game is forcing if you have not passed, absent an explicit agreement otherwise. Partner should raise with a doubleton honor or three small.

Partner opens 3 ♦. You hold: ♠ A K J 7 5 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ A ♣ A 9 8 3 Your call? _____

Partner opens 3 ♦. You hold: ♠ A K J T 9 8 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ 2 ♣ 9 8 3 Your call? _____

If you bid game in your suit, Partner should ("must") pass.

pp 182-183:

When your Partner has pre-empted and you have trump support, it usually pays to bid. Bid to make, to jam the opponents, or to sacrifice.

Partner opens 3 ♠, RHO passes. You hold: ♠ K 8 7 5 ♥ 6 ♦ J T 9 7 3 ♣ 6 5 2 Your call? _____
Unless Partner can take a trick, Opponents have a grand slam.

Partner opens 3 ♠, RHO passes. You hold: ♠ J 8 5 ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ A K 9 4 ♣ T 9 6 Your call? _____
It is very possible opponents can make a game, but their HCP may be evenly divided.

Partner opens 3 ♠, RHO 4 ♥. You hold: ♠ A 7 5 ♥ 9 6 2 ♦ K 9 5 ♣ A 8 6 3 Your call? _____
Count on Partner for at most one defensive trick. You have 2 or 3 defensive tricks, so you cannot count on defeating 4 ♥. "Take out insurance."

Partner opens 3 ♥, RHO 3 ♠. You hold: ♠ 6 4 2 ♥ K T 8 ♦ A 9 6 5 3 ♣ 7 2 Your call? _____
If Partner can take one trick, Opponents will make 5 ♠. (How many ♥ cards are in their hands?)