

## WHAT DOES THIS BID MEAN?

The auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♥
4♠	?		

You are North and hold:

♠ 8  
 ♥ A Q 8 4  
 ♦ Q 8 5  
 ♣ K Q 10 6 4

What bid would you make?

At the table, I chose to bid 4NT. What should the 4NT bid mean?

I think the best meaning for the bid is NOT an Ace ask. The 4♠ overcall has removed all your bidding space.

Therefore, the 4NT bid should show one of two hand types:

1. At least 5-5 in the minors, asking partner to bid a minor at the 5-level (if possible)  
OR
2. A good raise to 5♥. On such hands, you plan to correct partner's bid of 5-minor to 5♥, showing slam interest.

Our auction continued thus:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♥
4♠	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

Problem solved! Once I corrected to 5♥, partner was able to continue to slam.

	♠ 8	
	♥ A Q 8 4	
	♦ Q 8 5	
	♣ K Q 10 6 4	
♠ K Q J 10 9 6 5 4 2		♠ 3
♥ 10 6		♥ 9 3
♦ J		♦ K 7 6 3 2
♣ 2		♣ J 9 8 7 5
	♠ A 7	
	♥ K J 7 5 2	
	♦ A 10 9 4	
	♣ A 3	

Basically, when you lack the bidding space to show a good raise, you need to find a substitute, so the 4NT bid comes into its own. It isn't needed after a weak jump overcall of 2♠; after a pre-emptive overcall of 3♠, you may bid 4♠ to show this hand (obviously forcing to at least the 5-level); however, after a 4♠ overcall, you will need some 'tool'.

Partner and I have now determined that the 4NT bid is used for this purpose in two auctions only:

1♥ (4♠) 4NT

and

1♠ (4♥) 4NT

The next hand / auction has been circulated to some of you before – in a column I sent out as a ‘difficult’ example before this column started.

What would this auction mean to you (all vulnerable)?

EW Vul	♠ J 3		
	♥ 10 6		
	♦ J 10 8 3		
	♣ K 7 6 4 2		
♠ A 9 8 2		♠ Q 10 7 5 4	
♥ 9 7 3		♥ K 8	
♦ Q 9		♦ A K 5 4	
♣ Q 9 8 3		♣ 10 5	
	♠ K 6		
	♥ A Q J 5 4 2		
	♦ 7 6 2		
	♣ A J		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♠	2♥
3♠ (weak)	Pass	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

The 3NT bid was pushy, but was based on the relatively weak auction by the opponents, so it seemed reasonable to hope for something from partner.

On this hand, 3NT fails on a passive lead. However, on the spade lead, my King won. It seemed that the ♠A was on my left, improving my prospects of the heart finesse working.

Usually I would try to allow for a 4-1 heart break with a singleton King onside, however I had no re-entry if East held ♥K-x-x, so I crossed to dummy’s ♣K to lead the ♥10. With the King onside I now 9 tricks and claimed quickly.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

However, remember this sort of auction, where you overcall then voluntarily rebid 3NT, even after partner has passed. If you had a solid 7-card suit and a stopper in their suit, you would often overcall 3NT immediately. Therefore, bidding your suit, then rebidding 3NT implies that your suit is not solid. Partner should consider that, as should the opposition.

Remember, unusual auctions usually have a ‘meaning’ – they just have to be solved.

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