

SAMPLE COLUMN: A SURPRISING PAIR OF AUCTIONS

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

<i>RHO</i>	<i>You</i>	<i>LHO</i>	<i>Partner</i>
2♠ (1)	3♣	3♠	Pass
Pass	3NT		

(1) At least 5-5 in spades and a minor, less than opening values

What does this delayed 3NT bid mean? Given that I would immediately bid 3NT with solid clubs, I thought this delayed bid, after an overcall, showed a broken club suit. I haven't seen the bid very often but, remarkably, I held two in successive days during the National Open Teams in Canberra, January 2020.

The first, during the Quarter Finals, was the above auction, and I held this hand:

♠ A 3
♥ A 8
♦ 9 8
♣ A Q 9 8 6 5 3

We got lucky, because RHO either didn't stop to interpret my bid or had a rush of blood to the head. This was the final auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
2♠	3♣	3♠	Pass
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Double
All Pass			

This gained us 500, scoring 9 IMPs against 4♠ (!!) undoubled at the other table:

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

Partner's double provided me with some confidence of her having values in the red suits, so I started with the ♥A, receiving an encouraging signal. I continued with a second heart to partner's King and she led a third heart, high – asking for diamonds. Declarer could discard his club but I scored the ♠3 (swapping the club trick for an extra trump trick). Our ♠A and ♦A led to two off.

I imagine the other table tried the ♣A, followed by a second club, so West managed to discard a heart loser, hence the result of one off.

I don't know whether East could double, but his clubs seemed to indicate that he probably should have done so. As it happened, I would have run to 4♣, which goes one off but, more importantly, it would have prevented their poor result.

Here's the second hand, from the NOT Semi Finals (i.e. the next day).

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			

Both times, the 3NT bid was pushy, but based on relatively weak auctions by the opponents, so it seemed reasonable to hope for a little 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 inside, 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 inside I now 9 tricks and claimed quickly.

Our team-mates bid to 4♠ (again undoubled), failing by two tricks, so this was a gain of 5 IMPs.

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.

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