

TRAVIS-T(ip) 10a

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WHEN PARTNER PRE-EMPTS THINK ABOUT 3NT AS A CONTRACT

When your partner pre-empts and you have a good hand, suited to game, firstly think about 3NT as a contract especially if the pre-empt has been in a minor.

Your partner opens 3D (nil vulnerable) and you hold:

K 9 2
A J 4
A J 9 8
A 10 5

You have every suit stopped, particularly if the lead comes 'around' to you and no shortages. Assuming partner has 7 diamonds probably to the DK given the quality of your diamonds, then you probably have 9+ tricks (10 on a spade lead), but there is no guarantee that there will be 11 tricks if partner's main values are DKQ. So just bid 3NT.

Partner's hand:

Q J 8
9
Q 10 6 5 4 3 2
K 8

Surprisingly, given the heart suit, you will receive a club lead in 3NT. If they lead the CQ (top of a sequence) win the CK and start on diamonds, finding that your LHO has the DK7 over your Ace. Win the DA and lead another diamond to establish the suit. If LHO continues clubs you get an extra club trick AND have time to set up spade winners (11 tricks). If LHO starts on hearts (with Q6) you will have a double-stopper there, and time to set up spade tricks (10 tricks).

Whilst you will always make 5D with these combined hands, 5D only makes 11 tricks, which means you score poorly against those making overtrick/s in 3NT. Furthermore, if your pre-empting partner had better diamonds (DKQxxxxx) and therefore worse outside cards you simply cannot make 11 tricks in 5D but 3NT is still easy.

Here's another example from a recent game, with a major suit pre-empt in action. Your partner opens a vulnerable 3S and you hold:

K 4
K J 7
A 8 6 5
Q 9 5 2

The person holding this hand thought that 10 tricks in spades was reasonably unlikely and she was correct. However, the bid I would have made with her hand is 3NT! I would have expected partner to hold AQxxxxx for his vulnerable 3S, and if he instead held QJ10xxxx he must have an outside entry. Therefore I would be considering 9 tricks as a very respectable alternative, especially with the stoppers in the outside suits.

On the likely club lead you would even make 10 tricks which also beats all those in 4S!

You should certainly think about 3NT if partner opens 3-minor and you hold a doubleton honour in their suit, and this is essentially the same situation.

The other thing to think about when considering 3NT opposite partner's pre-empts is the vulnerability. **Vulnerable pre-empts should have good suit quality which means that a doubleton honour opposite you should be able to envisage 7 quick tricks.** But when the vulnerability is favourable (not vulnerable against

vulnerable) you are allowed to be very flighty with your pre-emptive opening bids, so partner should be more wary!