

TRAVIS-T(ip) 10b

by Barbara Travis

AT PAIRS BRIDGE, THINK ABOUT 3NT AS A CONTRACT INSTEAD OF 5-MINOR

Whilst on last month's the Topic #17 of thinking about bidding 3NT, at Pairs you should just about always look for 3NT ahead of 5-minor simply because of the scoring. Playing Acol you hold:

K 4
K J 7
A 8 6 5
K Q J 10

You open 1C (weak 1NT opening bid) and partner responds 3C (10-12 HCP). You have all the other suits held and the values for game, so simply bid 3NT. Our opponent bid 3D and her partner should have bid 3NT but chose to respond 4C. Now it's too late to reach 3NT. On two basically balanced hands, you are playing the (Pairs) inferior 5C contract, dummy being:

A 7
Q 3 2
J 10 7
A 8 6 5 2

3NT has 10 tricks (2 spades, 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 5 clubs), which is already worth 630, so the play in 5C is largely irrelevant given that most people will be in be playing 3NT. However, 5C had 1 loser in hearts and eventually 2 losers in diamonds, so went down 1.

Those times when you belong in 5-minor rather than 3NT involve one of the following situations:

- Distribution, typically a singleton or void in one hand OR
- No control of a suit that the opponents have bid (or an identified weakness in one suit)

Here's an example from a recent session at SABA:

K J 2	A 9
10 8 3 2	A 7
A K J	10 9 8 5 4 2
K 6 2	Q J 4

Imagine Wests opens 1NT, then East has a clear-cut 3NT response – 11 HCP, a long minor, no shortages. The long diamond suit will provide winners to declarer. Furthermore, there could be 3 losers in 5D! As it happened we got a top for playing in 3NT and making overtricks. Most of the field played in some diamond part-score.