

District 16 I/N Newsletter

October 2024

VOLUME 10 ISSUE 10 - OCTOBER 2024

FROM THE EDITOR

Bridge In Literature

"You may place considerable confidence in Mr. Holmes, sir," said the police agent loftily.

"Oh, if you say so, Mr. Jones, it is all right," said the stranger with diffidence.

"Still, I confess that I miss my rubber. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber."

"I think you will find," said Sherlock Holmes, "That you will play for a higher stake tonight than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be more exciting. In the meantime, Mr. Merryweather, we must put a screen over that dark lantern."

"And sit in the dark?"

"I am afraid so. I had brought a pack of cards in my pocket, and I thought that, as we were a party carree, you might have your rubber after all. But I see that the enemies' preparations have gone so far that we cannot risk the presence of a light."

Adventure II - The Red Headed League, The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, Duke Classics (2012) at 55-56 and 89-90.

UPCOMING TOURNAMENTS & EVENTS

EVENT: **District 16 Zoom Lecture**

"Defenders Numbers Rules

October 26, 2025 12:00 noon CST

Speaker: Donna Compton

REGIONALS

Galveston (I/N Regional)

Oct. 25-27 [Info](#)

Puerto Vallarta

Nov. 4-10 [Info](#)

Richardson I/N Regional

Nov. 6-9 [Info](#)

SECTIONALS

Galveston	Oct. 25-27	Info
Galveston (Cruise	Oct. 27-Nov. 3	View Tournament Flyer
Denton	Oct. 31-Nov. 2	Info
Austin	Nov. 2-3	Info
STaC U174 (D16)	Nov. 4-10	Info
Richardson [DFW]	Nov. 6-9	Info
Houston Spring	Nov. 14-17	Info
Austin	Nov. 30-Dec. 1	Info

BRIDGE MATH

In this month's newsletter, our featured article is an abridged and edited transcription of a District 16 Zoom Lecture program that Patricia Herrera presented on preemptive bids. In it, she repeatedly emphasizes the importance of focusing on vulnerability in terms of evaluating whether or not to make a preemptive bid. Let's look at the math behind what she's talking about. When you are competing in a game of bridge, there are four alternatives in terms of comparative vulnerability between you and your partner and the pair you are playing against:

- You are vulnerable and they are vulnerable - equal vulnerability.
- You are not vulnerable and they are not vulnerable - equal vulnerability.
- You are vulnerable and they are not vulnerable - the vulnerability is unfavorable to you.
- You are not vulnerable and they are vulnerable - the vulnerability is favorable to you.

When you make a preemptive bid, you are making a bid that has a likelihood of putting you in a contract you cannot make. This is particularly true when your hand is on the weak end of your preemptive bid range and your partner has already passed. Therefore, your analysis should focus on comparing the negative scores that could result for your side from:

- They bid a contract and make it.
- You bid a preemptive contract and do not make it.

The alternative contracts that their side could bid and make are:

- A part score contract.
- A game contract or a slam contract.

Let's look at the numbers that are in play if your assumption is that the other side is likely to bid and make a game contract.

- You are vulnerable and they are vulnerable: if they bid and make a game contract, you will take a negative score of at least -600. If you do not make your preemptive bid contract, you will take a negative score of -100 per undertrick if you are not doubled or -200 for one undertrick, -500 for two undertricks or -800 for three undertricks if you are doubled.

- You are not vulnerable and they are not vulnerable: if they bid and make a game contract, you will take a negative score of at least -400. If you do not make your preemptive bid contract, you will take a negative score of -50 per undertrick if you are not doubled or -100 for one undertrick, -300 for two undertricks or -500 for three undertricks if you are doubled.
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So if you assume that you will be doubled when making a preemptive bid but that they will make a game contract if they bid it, use the following 1-2-3 approach to guide you on whether you should make that bid:

1. If the vulnerability is unfavorable to your side, the preemptive benefits your side if you can hold it to one undertrick.
2. If the vulnerability is equal as between your side and the other side, the preemptive bid benefits your side if you can hold it to two undertricks.
3. If the vulnerability is favorable to your side, the preemptive bid benefits your side if you can hold it to three undertricks.

And, of course, there are the possibilities that your preemptive bid does not get doubled or that you make it.

In a recent District 16 Zoom Lecture, Patricia Herrera discussed the pros and cons of preemptive bids. Here is an edited and abridged version of her lecture:

TO PREEMPT OR NOT TO PREEMPT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

BY PATRICIA HERRERA
OCTOBER 8, 2022
IN MEMORY OF GAYLOR KALSE

In a recent District 16 Zoom Lecture, Patricia Herrera discussed the pros and cons of preemptive bids. Here is an edited and abridged version of her lecture:

When I started playing bridge I didn't know many conventions and preempts were an important part of my game. I like to start with the definition of "preempt," not just in the bridge world but in the ordinary world:

1. Take action in order to prevent (an anticipated event) from happening.
2. Act in advance of someone in order to prevent them from doing something.
3. Acquire or appropriate (something) in advance.

So these are what preempts are, and sometimes we forget that the point of the preempt is to prevent the other side from acting, as opposed to trying to make a great bid ourselves. For instance, we really don't want the other side to make a game or even a slam if we can prevent that from happening by bidding ourselves. A preemptive bid can be a two level bid normally indicating a six card suit, a three level bid indicating a seven card suit or even higher bids indicating eight and nine card suits.

Normal Preempt Point Ranges: 0-5; 3-9 (non vul); 6-9 (vul); 5-9; 5-11

Point range is a very interesting subject when it comes to preempts. If you go online, you will find that the opinions and views of experts are heavily divided when it comes to the issue of point ranges for preempts. For this reason, it's very important to understand your agreements with your partner regarding your preemptive bid point range, and it's equally important that you ask your opponents regarding their point range when they make a preemptive bid. When discussing preemptive point range issues either with your partner or with an opponent, you need to be clear that the point range references only high card points.

Some people play as low as a 0-5 point range for a preemptive bid. In this case, the bid is game denying. Much more common is the 3-9/6-9 point range agreement, with the lower range being applicable in a non-vulnerable situation and the higher range being applicable in a vulnerable situation. Some players do agree that preemptive bid point ranges can go as high as 9-11 points but that is much less common.

Note that the highest point for the point range of a preemptive bid is 11. You do not want to make a preemptive bid with a full opening hand of 12 or more points. Example:

♠xxx ♥xx ♦Q10xxxx ♣xx

With this extremely weak hand, the player opened 2♦ and this is what his left hand opponent held:

♠AKQJx ♥x ♦AJ ♣AKJxx

In this case, the very weak 2♦ preemptive bid left that opponent with very bad alternatives in terms of getting into the bidding with the result that the opponent and his partner failed to bid a slam. At different tables, the absence of interfering 2♦ preemptive bids enabled their counterparts.

to find slams. So again, the purpose of the preemptive bid is not to find your own slam or game, but to interfere with the other side finding its slam or game.

The Rules

There are certain "rules" when it comes to preemptive bids regarding:

- Preempting with a void. Some experts are of the view that you should not preempt with a void, my own view is that it is acceptable.
- Preempting with a side four card major. Some people will tell you that you cannot preempt in one suit if you also have a four card holding in a major. Again, my view is that it is acceptable.
- Preempting with a bad suit. In terms of whether you should make a preemptive bid with a bad suit, my recommendation is to let this issue be decided by vulnerability such that in a favorable vulnerability situation, a weak suit preemptive bid is acceptable.
- Preempting over an opponent's preempt.

There is no such thing as a preemptive bid over a preemptive bid. If the person on your right makes a preemptive bid and you make an overcall, your partner should assume that you have a good opening hand or better. In other words, you can't preemptively bid to make your opponents' bidding situation difficult because they have already preemptively bid to make your bidding situation difficult. However, it is common to make a preemptive bid over an opening bid. Because there were so much discussion and there are so many differing recommendations regarding these rules, it is important that you discuss them with your partner to understand what your agreement is in terms of which, if any, of them are applicable.

When To Break The Rules

You and your partner need to have understandings about when one or the other of you might break your general agreement rules regarding preemptive bids, and you need to be consistent in your approach. When

trying to decide whether to make a preemptive bid at all or to make a preemptive bid in a way that breaks the rules, be guided by your best estimate of how many tricks you think you can take.

Vulnerability Is Everything.

- You are not vulnerable versus they are vulnerable. If they are vulnerable and you are not, I think you should feel free to be aggressive and break the rules.
- You are vulnerable versus they are not vulnerable. In contrast, be careful with preemptive bids when you are vulnerable and your opponents are not. You can get hurt badly breaking the rules in this situation.

In summary: I think preemptive bids are fantastic. Most of the time if you make a preemptive bid having a well thought out and understood agreement with your partner, you will score well. Of course, there will be the times that you get a bad result with a preemptive bid, but you should not let that discourage you from making them regularly as a part of your overall bidding structure.

Responding To Preemptive Bids

Most of the time when your partner makes a preemptive bid (whether as opener or as an overcaller), you are going to pass. But every once in a while, you should get in the bidding because your own hand is strong enough that a game might be possible and you want to check it out.

Most partnerships treat a 2NT bid by the partner of a preemptive weak two bidder as an “asking” bid that requests the preemptive bidder to further describe his or her hand.

Some partnerships agree that the bid of a new suit by the preemptive weak two bidder’s partner is forcing. This is a good agreement to have, for instance, if your agreement is that your partnership can make a preemptive bid in one suit while holding four cards in a major. You might increase the preempt by raising your partner’s bid or even (with the right hand) jumping to 4NT Blackwood to further jam up the opponents’ bidding.

Preempter’s Responses Over A 2nt Asking Bid

Ogust responses to 2NT is a convention that enables the preemptive bidder to respond to it as an asking bid with graduating bids that describe his or her hand, each showing a combination of strength or weakness of suit and strength or weakness of hand. One problem with Ogust for many people is that they forget exactly the order of the bids with resulting misunderstandings. For this reason, some partnerships play an alternative structure called ABC in response to the asking 2NT bid. With this agreement, the preemptive bidder simply evaluates his or her hand in terms of overall considerations and uses clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades as the bids to show his or her view on the hand’s overall valuation with a bid of 3♣ showing the weakest hand in terms of overall valuation and a bid of 3♠ showing the strongest hand in terms of overall evaluation.

Rather than use a hand evaluation approach, some partnerships agree to respond to a 2NT asking bid by showing an outside “feature,” or denying the holding of a feature. Generally, the agreement is that a feature is an outside ace or protected king (i.e., an asset that will theoretically provide an entry for the partner of the preemptive bidder to access the preemptive hand and run the long suit).

Again, I recommend that partnerships use preemptive bids. When incorporating them, it’s important that the partnership has clear agreements as to the preemptive bid and responsive bidding structure, and to be consistent in making these bids and responses in accordance with that structure.

EDDIE KANTAR'S PREEMPTIVE BID TIPS

- Do not open with a beneath game preempt holding two aces, or one ace and two kings. You are too strong defensively.

You hold: ♠QJ4 ♥3 ♦42 ♣AJ108743

- After opening 3♣ and hearing partner respond 3♦, show a major suit stopper if you have one. Bid 3♠ here to show a spade stopper. The 3♣ response does not show a real suit.
- Although most three bids show 7-card suits, if you have 7-4 distribution, with a long major, think about opening four.

You hold: ♠AQJ10543 ♥4 ♦Q1086 ♣3

- This hand is a clear 4♠ opening bid. The fourth card in the four card side suit is usually worth an extra trick.
- If partner responds 3NT to your three level preempt, that ends the auction. It's not on your head to take it out. Partner may have a solid suit perhaps with a singleton or void in your suit. Do not cross partner's intentions!
- Preempt as often as possible consistent with the vulnerability. It drives the opponents mad.
- After you preempt, partner is in charge and takes all sacrifices. Reread this one.
- When partner, a preemptive bidder, doubles an eventual contract (usually a slam contract), it is almost always an alert of a side suit void. Try to find it on opening lead. Do not lead partner's suit! Do not lead a trump!

ACBL PUZZLE HAND

Discarding Losers

♠K8

♥QJ10

♦Q10643

♣986

♠Q10754

♥A63

♦8

♣KJ43

♠J962

♥9542

♦AK7

♣AQ

♠A3

♥K87

♦J952

♣10752

East is the Dealer and the bidding is as follows:

1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Auction Analysis: East's raise to 2♠ shows a minimum opener's hand. West is almost at game, so checks back with partner by bidding 3♠. When Responder asks Opener to consider going to game, what they're really asking is, "Partner, I know you limited your hand to a minimum opener's hand. But that minimum hand has a range ... are you at the bottom of the range or the top of the range? If you're more toward the top of your minimum range, we should try for game." East's hand is toward the top of minimum, holding 14 HCP, and the doubleton will be useful. East goes to game.

Opening Lead: ♠Q (top of sequence). Planning the Play:

Counting losers, there are two top spade losers (about which we can do nothing!), and now that the opening lead was a heart, there are also two heart losers. These are all "fast" losers, which means as soon as the opponents gain the lead they're going to take four tricks! All good Declarers pull trumps, but all good Declarers must also examine the order in which things are done to avoid going down 1 right away. We must eliminate a loser before giving up the lead. Lopsided suits are the key. Look at the diamond suit: there are two top winners opposite a singleton. We can discard a losing heart on the second diamond honor. We cannot wait – we must do that right away. If we start drawing trump they will win and take their four tricks!

Trick 1 - win the ♥A.

Trick 2 - play small diamond to the ♦A or ♦K.

Trick 3 - play the other high diamond and pitch a losing heart.

Trick 4 - Breathe ... start pulling trumps now. They can only win ♠AK and just one heart. The contract will not fail now.

ACBL Zoom Lesson Game Hand Analysis, September 17, 2024.

IT'S THE LAW

The Law Regarding Alerts

The bridge game auction is about information. The bids are about you and your partner sharing information about your respective hands using your bidding agreements. The alerts and announcements are about you and your partner sharing information about your bids and bidding agreements (and therefore your hands) with your opponents. The concept behind both alerts and announcements is that it would be unfair to your opponents for you or your partner to make a bid that misleads them and, therefore, adversely affects their bidding or play of the hand. In face-to-face bridge play:

- Announcements and alerts are made about a given bid by the partner of the person who made that bid.
- Alerts are made by pulling the red alert card from the bidding box and tapping it on the table and orally stating, "Alert."
- Announcements are made by making a short descriptive statement.

Depending on the nature of the bid, alerts are made before the auction on a given hand begins, immediately after the bid has been made, or immediately after an auction has ended, as follows:

- Pre-alerts are given before the start of the bidding on a set of boards if you and your partner have certain types of unusual bidding, play or signaling agreements. Examples of these include: Precision Bidding Systems and extremely light opening or overcall agreements.
- Immediate alerts are given at the time a bid is made and before the alerting partner's RHO has bid. Examples of these include: the vast majority of standard conventional bids played by most new and intermediate players such as Jacoby Two Notrump, Reverse Drury, Inverted Minors, most bids included in "Defense vs Notrump" bids, and New Minor Forcing.
- Delayed alerts are given after a bidding auction has ended but before the defenders have led and are generally applicable with respect to certain bids which would have been alerted during the auction except that by the time they were made the bidding level had passed 3NT. Examples of these would be control bids, and ace or key card asking sequence bids.

An announcement regarding a bid is made at the time the bid is made and before the announcing partner's RHO has bid. They are short descriptive oral statements about the bid.

Examples of these are:

- An opening minor bid that is unnaturally short must be announced, "Maybe as short as two." The range of an opening notrump bid (but not a notrump overcall) must be announced, "15 to 17," or whatever the agreed range.
- If the partnership is playing a 2-over-1 structure with a forcing or semi-forcing 1NT, the 1NT bid must be announced as, "Forcing" or, "Semi-forcing," as applicable.
- Transfer agreement bids must be announced as, "Transfer" or, in the case of notrump transfer bids, by announcing the suit to which the transfer is being effected.

The foregoing is a very brief look at a complicated subject. The current ACBL Alert Procedure is over 13 pages in length; you can access it by [clicking here](#). A final common sense suggestion: when you go over a convention card with a partner before the beginning of a bridge match spend a little time focusing on the issue of which of the bids that are part of your agreement with that partner will need to be alerted or announced.