

BIDDING 13 – PRE-EMPTS AND NEGATIVE DOUBLES

Dealer: E
Vul: EW

	♠ A107	
	♥ K83	
	♦ KJ763	
	♣ K5	
♠ KJ532		♠ 6
♥ A1092		♥ J754
♦ A82		♦ 10
♣ 4		♣ AQ108762
	♠ Q984	
	♥ Q6	
	♦ Q954	
	♣ J94	

E	S	W	N
P	P	1S	2D
3C	3D	3NT	P
P	P		

On a diamond lead, 4 diamond losers plus the SA are immediately exposed. And West is likely to lose more tricks and go several off. What went wrong? Let's analyse the bidding:

1. I agree with East's decision not to pre-empt 3C on their opening bid for 2 reasons:
 - (a) At unfavourable vulnerability (vul vs non-vul) I like to be within 2 tricks of my pre-emptive bid. East's hand is worth about 6 tricks in clubs – a potential pre-empt at any other vulnerability but I'd be wary at this one. I like to pre-empt on the following scale:

Vul vs Non-vul:	Within 2 tricks
Equal (Vul vs Vul/Non-vul vs Non-vul):	Within 3 tricks
Non-vul vs Vul:	Within 4 tricks

- (b) Partner hasn't spoken and the 4 card major could go missing (as it does).
2. East's 3C bid is definitely a problem. It shows 10+ points and virtually forces EW to 3NT or beyond. You can argue that in addition to the 7 HCPs you can add 3 points for the long club suit. However, your hand is short in partner's bid suit and there is no entry to your hand outside of clubs. Neither bode well. I would have made a NEGATIVE double instead.
3. A negative double is a double by RESPONDER. Partner has opened, the next opponent has overcalled and now you double eg:
1S (2D) X

A negative double classically showed the other 2 suits ("negatively" denying the first 2 suits bid). However, nowadays it mainly focusses in on the missing major or major suits – with one exception 1H (1S) X shows both minors.

4. The point range you are generally looking at for a negative double depends how high you are:

At the 1 level = 6+ points

At the 2 level = 8+ points

At the 3 level = 10+ points

So, in the above example, bidding should go 1S (2D) X showing 4 or more hearts and EW find their heart fit easily. It's a little bit of an overbid but better than the forcing 3C.

If EW bid aggressively to 4H, what is the best line for the contract?

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Assuming a diamond lead, the best chance is probably set up the club suit in dummy before you draw trumps and hope to lose only SA and 2 trumps eg

Finesse the CQ, play CA and ruff a club with H10. If North overruffs with HK and leads another diamond, you can ruff, play HA and another heart drawing all trumps. You still have a trump in dummy to allow you to get to the club winners. Losing just the SA and HKQ.