

Micro Bridge Lesson 27

Here is a sequence:-

West	East	S	W	N	E
♠A97	♠KQ32	1H	P	P	X
♥KJ65	♥32	1NT	P	P	P
♦K87	♦Q32				
♣T54	♣AQJ3				

FAQ: Why didn't West jump?

ANS: The problem is that East, in the passout seat, will sometimes double with less than an opening hand in order to avoid leaving them in 1H. West doesn't want to punish partner for giving a push. So, a fairly reasonable 3NT has been missed. We know where the HCP are and south will be on lead a lot. Probably get 3S+2H+1D+3C.

• This problem can be avoided by insisting that the balancing double is ALWAYS an opening hand, except when a passed hand. Now, West will jump to 2NT and East will probably bid 3NT

But now, what about this one?

West	East	S	W	N	E
♠A97	♠KQ32	1H	P	P	P
♥K765	♥32				
♦K87	♦J32				
♣K54	♣A632				

Although some East will overcall 1S with a four card suit, most east have no viable action. OK, 1H will probably have difficulty. However, as a general policy, we seek to make them play above the 1 level. In *Lesson 6*, we talked about a balancing 1NT. We indicated that it showed 10 – 12 HCP and their suit stopped. The major change that we will now consider is to allow the balancing 1NT! bid to be made WITHOUT A STOPPER! With the above deal, east would bid 1NT and play there.

FAQ: Why would we want to accept such a change?

ANS: We are bidding 1NT on the basis that partner has some HCP but failed to take any action. The most logical reason for this is that partner has their suit! It is therefore reasonable logic that partner has the suit stopped. Of course, the 1NT must be alerted. The opposition can't be expected to know that a stopper is not promised.

FAQ: Is West supposed to pull the 1NT if a stopper is not held?

ANS: No. There's no reason to presume that the 1NT *doesn't* have a stopper. West should make their natural bids. Consistent with these notes, EW will be playing "System Off"

FAQ: Can east ever make a takeout double with less than an opening hand?

ANS: Yes. If east is a passed hand, a double with the right shape is a better plan than bidding 1NT without a stopper. In the above hand, if east is a passed hand, he should *double* and not bid 1NT. West then has the choice – to defend 1HX or to bid 1NT. Choosing the latter will allow for east having a little less than what is held here. As a passed hand, east's bidding reverts to the more standard treatment of *Lesson 6*.

• So, as an unpassed hand, we need a new collection of balancing bids. Don't accept them unless you are sure you and partner can remember them!

Balancing Bids

FAQ: Do we ever pass them out at the 1 level?

ANS: Yes, but not very often! If we have five of their suit, partner is clearly short of their suit but failed to take action. It may be because he has nothing! The hand is likely to be unplayable. Let them have it. Also, be wary when the opponents have just one "big" bid. You may jockey them to a better spot.

• Balancing with NT hands

..1NT promises 10 – 12 HCP, stopper not promised

..X and rebid NT shows 13 – 16 HCP, with stopper

..2NT is natural, shows 17 – 19 HCP with stopper

• Overcalls

All overcalls show less than an opening hand.

• Cue Bid of their suit

This is Michaels.

• Double

Double and bid own suit, no longer shows 16+ HCP. It shows an opening hand and five card suit. Since our balancing double is no longer disciplined, partner must be careful not to take rash action. Of course, the knowledge that partner has an opening hand will help in the decisions.

Try bidding these hands after South has opened 1H

♠A86	♠K95	(1H)	P	(P)	P
♥KQ72	♥654				OK. We've missed
♦K62	♦AT5				an easy 1NT. There
♣J32	♣Q765				have to be limits!

♠A86	♠K95	(1H)	P	(P)	X
♥KQ72	♥43				3NT
♦K62	♦AJ54				
♣J32	♣KQ54				

Knowing east holds an opening hand, 3NT is bid.

♠AQ62	♠K95	(1H)	P	(P)	X
♥K72	♥43	(P)	2H	(P)	3C
♦K62	♦AJ54	(P)	3NT		all pass
♣J32	♣KQ54				

Here, west cue bids their suit in the hope of hearing about spades. No such luck. 3NT is likely to fail.

♠A86	♠K95	(1H)	P	(P)	2C!
♥KQ72	♥3	(P)	P	(2H)	P
♦K62	♦J543				all pass
♣J32	♣KQ654				

Responder didn't have enough to bid 2H. 2H is probably going to fail. Don't punish partner for protecting by doubling or bidding 3C. Sure, there will be times when both actions are right.

♠A943	♠K72	(1H)	P	(P)	2NT
♥32	♥AJ9	(P)	3H	(P)	3NT
♦K643	♦AQ9				
♣543	♣A976				

2NT is 17 – 19. 3H is Stayman. No luck. 3NT will be quite playable since south has almost all the HCP. Just watch for them in the play of the hand.