

Gambling 3NT

Consider the following hand ♠Ax ♥xx ♦AKJTxxx ♣xx. You likely have 8 Tricks, you only need 1 Trick from Partner's hand to make a very nice bid of 3NT. Looking at your hand you would need considerably more help from Partner to make a better score than what you would gain from 3NT. In this case you do have enough HCP for an Opening bid but that is not a necessity. Much more important is the 7 Tricks and an outside entry into your hand in case you lose a trick in your long suit trying to drive out the one loser. You need a way to get back to your long suit. Some folks insist that you have a 7-Card suit headed by AKQJ or an 8 card suit if one of the top 3 honors are missing. This certainly makes the run of 7 Tricks more certain. The more important consideration for the Gambling 3NT is making sure you can get 6 to 7 Tricks from the long Minor. You might note that Game in NT yields the same score as a 5-level Game in a Minor. A hand with a long strong Minor suit has a much easier path in NT than it does in a Trump Contract. With the sample hand you are obviously “gambling” that Partner has a stopper in ♥'s and ♣'s. Note that opponents familiar with gambling NoTrump, not sure of which minor is the opener's, are going to avoid leading a minor suit.

There are several treatments available so discussion with partner is absolutely necessary. The method just described, i.e. one that allows an outside A, is a less aggressive approach. The aggressive approach denies having an outside A and perhaps no protected K. This requires Responder to have stoppers in the obvious opening lead suit (i.e. the Majors) and of course a card or two in the minors for entry into declarer's hand. Obviously, for opener not to have a stopper in the outside suits is more of a gamble and absolutely demands that Responder have control of the Majors. In the less aggressive case, the Responder can never be sure which Major the Opener has protected which still requires the Responder to have control of both Majors.

Responses

If, as Responder, you don't think your hand can tolerate the NT contract, i.e. you do not have control of the Majors you can ask Partner to play in his Minor by bidding 4♣. If ♣'s are Partner's suit he Passes, else he bids 4♦.

Problem with less Aggressive Approach

With an outside A the Opener's hand may be too strong for a mere 3NT contract, a Minor suit slam may be missed or with a Responder's strong 6 card Major a game contract in a major could be missed – the long Minor then becoming a source of tricks. This suggests that we might need alternative responses, more than just Pass or 4♣:

1. 4♥ or 4♠: shows a 6+card strong suit. Opener should Pass, however, lacking a fit and having the A in the other Major could pull the contract to 4NT; Responder should then Pass.
2. 4♦: Responder has strong hand with slam interest and is requesting more information. With long Minor Opener may have a singleton or void and should identify it, by bidding it if a Major; 4NT denies singleton or void; 5♣ shows short ♦; 4♦ shows short ♣.
3. 5♣ shows values in the Minors, no interest in Notrump and requests Partner to Pass or correct to 5♦.