



Play & Learn

BY PAT HARRINGTON ✉ mrsbridge@embarqmail.com

A PJO in action

Let's look at a full deal to conclude our series on preempts. Before reading about each player's bid, think about what you would bid based only on the auction and the one hand under discussion.

Dlr: North ♠ 2
 Vul: N-S ♥ J 10 5 2
 ♦ K 9 7
 ♣ A K Q 8 5

♠ 8 6 5 3 ♠ A Q 10 9 7 4
 ♥ Q 9 8 ♥ 4
 ♦ A J 10 6 ♦ 8 4 3
 ♣ 10 4 ♣ 9 3 2

♠ K J
 ♥ A K 7 6 3
 ♦ Q 5 2
 ♣ J 7 6

West	North	East	South
	1♣	2♠	3♥
4♠	5♥	All Pass	

North's 1♣ opening merits no discussion, so let's move on to East, who makes a preemptive jump overcall (PJO) of 2♠. A PJO – an overcall that skips one or more levels of bidding – shows a hand that looks much like an opening preempt at the same level. Because East skips over 1♠ to overcall 2♠, he shows a hand similar to a weak 2♠ opening.

Students sometimes have difficulty identifying PJOs on the two level. Over 1♣, a 2♠ overcall is a PJO because it bypasses a 1♠ bid. Over a 1♠ opening, however, a 2♥ overcall is merely a simple (non-jump) overcall, showing a

hand worth opening (our next series).

South intended to respond 1♥ and has the values and the five hearts needed to bid 3♥ over 2♠. South's new suit response forces North to bid again if West passes, so South should have an opening hand (or close to it – preempts sometimes make us push a bit).

West knows that his side does not have game. But at favorable vulnerability with four-card support for partner's six-card suit, he furthers the preempt to 4♠, bidding for as many tricks as East-West has trumps. West's overbid is based on the law of total tricks.

With good heart support, a singleton spade and a nice source of tricks in clubs, North is likely to bid 5♥. Unfortunately, this reasonable choice results in a minus score for North-South. The defenders should be able to win the ♠A, the ♦A and the ♥Q. After the likely spade opening lead, West has to realize he is looking at the setting trick. The threatening club suit in dummy warns West to grab the ♦A at his first opportunity. North-South would have been happier if West had passed or bid only 3♠, allowing North to raise to 4♥.

Over 5♥, East should not be tempted to bid 5♠. *When preempting, bid the full extent of your hand immediately and leave further decisions to partner.*

What if North had passed 4♠? Did you know that pass sometimes can be forcing? North opened and South bid 3♥. New suit bids on the three level, whether by opener or responder, are pretty much game forcing. Both North and South know that they have the

majority of strength and own this deal. When it's clear to both members of a partnership that they have enough strength to consider game, they cannot pass the hand out. If North chose to pass 4♠, that pass would be forcing. Any time it's your side's deal, you must play or penalize the opponents.

If North passed 4♠, South would probably make a penalty double to give the pair plus 300, the best result possible on this deal because the opponents didn't allow them to score plus 620 by playing in 4♥.

We began this series of preempts months ago to point out that *winning bridge is about getting the biggest plus score and giving up the smallest minus score when a plus score is impossible. This sometimes means making a bid that you know will go down.*

West's 4♠ bid was a sacrifice, an intentional overbid. He expected that the vulnerable opponents could score higher if he passed and left bidding room for them to explore their options. Well-judged sacrifices are often based on the law of total tricks. *Well-judged* is the key phrase here. Sacrificing should cause no hard feelings. Do not make crazy bids simply to foul up your opponents' auction. Bid when your hand justifies a bid and pass when it doesn't. Your goal is achieving the best possible score for your side while putting maximum pressure on your opponents. Good bidding will help you reach that goal. ■