



Play & Learn

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Competitive tactics in action

These two deals illustrate material from recent articles.

Dlr: East ♠ 8 6
 Vul: E-W ♥ 9 8 3
 ♦ 7 6 5 2
 ♣ K Q J 2

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

West	North	East	South
2♠ ⁽¹⁾	3♥ ⁽²⁾	1♠	2♥
		All Pass	

(1) Support with support. Raising partner's major with a fit is the best thing you can do in a competitive auction. West's raise shows 6 to 10 points.

(2) We hate letting our opponents play in their fit at the two level. North's 3♥ is a competitive raise showing 6 to a bad 11 points. Because South lacks enough for game and neither East nor West has the distribution needed to bid higher at this vulnerability, the auction ends at 3♥. If North had been afraid to bid with so few points, it would be harder for South to compete further.

In 3♥, East-West should win a spade, three diamonds and a club before declarer is able to set up clubs for a discard. Down one not vulnerable gives North-South minus 50. Do you think

North made a bad bid? East-West can make 2♠ but not 3♠. If North had not bid 3♥, North-South would have scored minus 110, so 3♥ achieved a better result.

Let's say West, with a poorer hand, passed instead of bidding 2♠. Does the meaning of North's raise to 3♥ change? Yes. Because North would have a 2♠ cuebid to show a good hand with support, a free raise to 3♥ shows about 8 to 10 points and caters to the possibility that overcaller is near maximum and you have a game. On this deal, North would pass if West had passed.

Don't confuse this advice with making a raise to the two level. Whether or not responder passes, a raise to two shows 6 to 10 points and is used as a competitive blocking bid. A raise to three is *competitive* when passing would let the opponents have the contract; it's *constructive* when passing leaves partner with the contract.

Dlr: East ♠ J 10 7 3
 Vul: None ♥ J 5
 ♦ A 9 7 6 4
 ♣ 10 7

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

West	North	East	South
3♥ ⁽¹⁾	?	1♥	1♠

(1) East-West use preemptive jump raises in competition. Opposite an opening hand, a nonvulnerable preemptive jump raise generally shows no more than a bad 6 points. West followed the law of total tricks and bid for nine tricks based on the pair's nine-card heart fit.

North would like to bid 3♠ to compete for nine tricks. But how would South react to a 3♠ bid? We just suggested that a raise to the three level should show about 6 to a bad 11 points, but that was after partner's two-level overcall. Here, South bid 1♠ with substantially more than a minimum one-level overcall. Consider the partnership agreement that advancer's non-jump raise on the three level shows a little more strength after a one-level overcall. With that agreement, North would pass holding these cards.

Both sides can make three of their major. North-South, however, might not be able to stop in three if North freely bids 3♠. Although North-South deserve a plus score, West's preemptive jump raise might do its job, demonstrating again that the more bidding room you take up, the harder it is for your opponents to reach their best contract. ■