

GAMBLING 3NT

How often do you get a balanced hand with enough high card points to open 3NT? My answer is....” I can’t remember the last time I got one”. Therefore many players use an opening bid of 3NT to show a long solid Minor Suit with few if any outside stoppers. Generally it is used to show suit of at least seven cards with honors from the Ace to the Jack; it is meant to be descriptive but not necessarily constructive and is used as an obstruction bid since it takes up the bidding space of the opponents. This treatment is a convention called the Gambling 3NT and it is truly gambling!

The presence of any outside stoppers seems to be a matter of partnership agreement but most play that there’s no more than a Queen outside. However, if partner has already passed the hand could be considerably better. In any case there should probably not be an outside Ace.

The following hand is an illustration of the modern version of the Gambling 3NT:

♠Q73
♥7
♦75
♣AKQJ654

When partner opens with a gambling 3NT, responder has the following options:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Pass | To play. Shows some probable stoppers in the other suits. |
| 4♣ | Indicates a desire to play in opener’s suit. Shows weakness so opener should pass or correct. |
| 4♦ | Asks for shortness, totally artificial
1. If opener bids a major, it shows shortness in that major
2. If opener bid 4NT, it shows <u>no</u> shortness (2227 or 2272)
3. If opener bids 5C or 5D it shows shortness in one minor (responder should be able to work out which minor) |
| 4♥ or 4♠ | Natural showing self-sufficient suit and asking opener to pass |
| 5♣ | Indicates a desire to play game in opener’s suit. Opener should pass or correct. |

- 5♦ To play. Responder knows opener's suit.
- 5NT Grand slam force of sorts. Asks opener to bid the grand with extra length or any good side card
- 6♣ Indicates a desire to play slam in opener's minor suit. Opener should correct if his suit is diamonds.
- 6♦ To play. Responder knows opener's suit.

The one real drawback to Gambling 3NT's is that the contract is often played from the wrong side thus missing the advantage of the opening lead.

In general any defense mechanism must be decided by the partnership. One suggestion is to use your normal defense to an opening 1NT only two levels higher. Another possible defense method is presented below: (these bids generally apply to the immediate seat after a Gambling 3NT but may also apply in the balancing position)

Double: Penalty

4♣ = Takeout Double (Shows diamonds, hearts and spades)

4♦ = Takeout Double (Shows clubs, hearts and spades)

Major Suit Bids: Natural and Strong

The minor suit bid as a takeout double assumes that the overcaller knows the suit of the 3NT bidder. This bid would then actually show shortness in the suit bid with both majors and at least a fragment in the other minor suit. The emphasis here is meant to be on the major suits. As an alternative method, a bid of 4♦ in this defense mechanism may be employed by the partnership as wished leaving 4♣ as the only takeout bid. As the defense must bid at the four level this defense is generally a concept of simplicity. This applies to all other bids which are deemed natural and are non-forcing in nature.

If you do elect to defend and are on lead it's often wise to lead an Ace if you have one. This allows you to get a look at dummy before continuing.

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