

Claim with Colchamiro



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Bogey and Bacall — part 2

When your partner opens the bidding and an opponent preempts at the four level, what does a bid of 4NT mean?

Partner	Opponent	You
1 any	4 any	4NT

There are three possible meanings:

1. Natural — to play
2. Blackwood
3. Takeout

I don't know many experts who bid 4NT to play. That's much too narrow a target. Besides, with a hand you might want to contract for 10 tricks in notrump, you could make a value-showing double, as discussed last month. So let's discount No. 1.

Between Nos. 2 and 3, I'll just tell you what I do in my regular partnerships:

If my partner has opened a major, then 4NT is Roman Keycard in opener's suit. But if partner has opened a minor, then 4NT is takeout for (usually) the two lowest suits. Again, you can't have it all, but at least your partnership will have a firm agreement.

Now let's consider a slightly different situation. An opponent opens the bidding at the four level. What's the best way to deal with this? If they open 4♣ or 4♦, experts play that double is for takeout. So should you.

But what happens when they open 4♥ or 4♠?

The best strategy is to play that double is still takeout, even over a 4♠ opening, showing (in principle) the ability to support all three unbid suits. But double here also could be showing a notrump-type hand with at

least 1NT opening strength. The one thing you shouldn't do is double just because you have strength in their suit. For example,

Suppose they open 4♠ and you have either of these two hands:

1. ♠KJ94 ♥76 ♦A3 ♣K8743 or
2. ♠42 ♥AJ63 ♦KQ5 ♣AQ76.

You'd like to double with hand No. 1, but you can't. It's takeout and partner isn't likely to pass. You definitely want to double, however, with hand No. 2. The latter occurs much more frequently, so that's what you should cater your methods to. So, you should pass with hand No. 1 and double with hand No. 2. You can't have it all (double with both).

Despite the fact that a double of a 4♥ or 4♠ opening bid is for takeout, responder shouldn't bid at the five level unless she has expectations of making that contract.

Here are some examples. An opponent opens 4♥, partner doubles, and you hold:

1. ♠864 ♥74 ♦KJ87 ♣Q876,
2. ♠763 ♥3 ♦AQ7653 ♣K76,
3. ♠AJ765 ♥87 ♦Q76 ♣763.

With No.1, just pass and hope that you can defeat them. You don't have expectations of making 5♣ or 5♦. With No. 2, bid 5♦. You have quite reasonable expectations of making it. With No. 3, bid 4♠. Even though you might not make it, you should take out partner's takeout double, if you can do it at the four level.

When they open 4♥, 4NT shows

the minors. Over a 4♠ opening, however, a 4NT overcall shows any two-suited hand — at least 5-5. It also shows values (or extra distribution) that are consistent with the vulnerability. In other words, you should bid 4NT either because you think they will make their bid, and your hand will lead to a cheap sacrifice, or you have a good hand and you think your side can make a five-level contract (or higher). Over a 4♠ opening bid, you might bid 4NT with either of these hands:

1. ♠3 ♥K4 ♦AK874 ♣AK765,
2. ♠6 ♥7 ♦QJ10763 ♣KQ876.

The advancer (the partner of the 4NT bidder) should bid her cheapest three-card or longer suit. If the advancer bids 5♣ and the 4NT bidder has diamond and hearts, she corrects 5♣ to 5♦. Now advancer knows that she has the red suits. □

My first book, How You Can Play Like An Expert (Without Having To Be One), has great winning tips, Zia, Catherine Zeta-Jones and much more! It's available at my web site: www.melbridge.com (lots of free stuff, too) or e-mail me at mcolch@optonline.net.