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Our Readers Ask

Dear Eric,

My partner and I were North-South on this deal:

Dlr: North ♠ K Q 10 8 7 4
 Vul: N-S ♥ K 10 8 6
 ♦ 4
 ♣ K 6

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

opponent's suit.

At the three level, opener needs a better hand to bid, but responder's hand types are pretty much the same as at the two level, again, with cooperative takeout being the prototypical hand, not a singleton in opener's suit. I would recommend "cooperative takeout" here, too.

On the actual deal, North expected 3♦ to fail much of the time, and in your methods, could afford to double for business. It's the optional part that creates problems, because a light, shapely opener will feel he should remove it, as here. Thus, you might do better passing out 3♦ if you think it likely your partner will have the sort of hand that he believes better suited for offense than defense. In fact, your agreement is "cooperative penalty" and your diamond holding is appropriate for such a double.

Given that South is correct to take out (it's not clear whether 3♥ or 3♠ is best in your style), you should convert 3♥ to 3♠, not because you love doing so, but because you can't expect to make 3NT opposite a light, shapely hand. Partner will expect two trumps and roughly this strength. You would survive on this layout, as 3♠ would end the auction. □

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Dear Eric,

I have a question about "Kokish" relay. After:

2♣ 2♦ (0-1 control)
 2♥ 2♠
 2NT (25-26 HCP)

or

3NT (27-28 HCP)

How do we follow up over 3NT?

Bernard Marcoux
Montreal QC

Actually, that conventional treatment has a more appropriate name, which is "Birthright," as in "recapturing your birthright," something that is your due. Your question is hypothetical for me because we *always* rebid 2NT, not 3NT when balanced. 3NT in your auction for us shows a nine- or 10-winner quasi-balanced hand with long, solid hearts and not enough controls for slam, *i.e.*, the "hearts" type, not the balanced type.

Thus, you could use whatever structure makes you happy as these arrangements are not part of this treatment as we know it. Perhaps 4♣ = Baron, 4♦/4♥ = transfers, 4♠ = minors. As you can appreciate, you run out of room quickly, which is why we don't go past 2NT when balanced.

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	1NT
3♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

We play 2/1 (1NT was forcing), and the opponent's 3♦ was preemptive.

West led the ♦K and shifted to the ♥9 at trick two. After the smoke cleared, we got only the ♦A and the ♣AKQ for down four (minus 500). Even 3♦ doubled, making, for minus 470, is better.

Where can we improve? How do you play double over 3♦? Over a 2♦ overcall, double by either player would be takeout. Based on our current agreements, a double of 3♦ is penalty/optional. Is there a better method?

Jian-Jian Wang
Clarksville MD

Your two-level agreements are excellent, although responder's protective double is not quite takeout. Typically, he has a semi-balanced hand with some length in the unbid suits and a doubleton in opener's. His message is: "cooperative takeout." Indeed, he may have three of the