

Boehm on Bridge



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Simple defenses to common conventions — part 4

Last month we focused on defenses to Bergen raises, utilizing two ways to employ takeout bids, one for distributional hands, the other for power (SS-DD — Shape Speaks, Double Delays). This general scheme can be extended to defending against other conventions. Take Namyats, an artificial, Alertable opening of 4♣ or 4♦; 4♣ indicates a good 4♥ preempt, 4♦ shows a good 4♠ opening. Namyats typically delivers a very good suit and extra distributional strength. A non-vulnerable 4♣ opening might resemble:

♠7 ♥AKJ10643 ♦QJ102 ♣6.

Versus Namyats, double is probably best reserved for a strong, balanced hand, setting the stage for a subsequent penalty double or allowing partner to compete with a long suit and values. Second hand's options also include a 4NT overcall to show both minors (extra values), the cuebid of opener's major, or pass-and-double, because the Namyats opening is forcing.

A. West North East South (You)
4♣ 4♥

B. West North East South (You)
4♥ Pass Pass Dbl

Sequence A, a virtual cuebid of a suit that the opponent has shown artificially, commits your partnership to offense, so play it as a light, but highly distributional, takeout of hearts, their real suit (Shape Speaks). In effect, this sequence becomes Michaels, five or more spades and a long minor, extra values because of

the level; North can respond 4NT to discover the minor.

Sequence B, where your side may either declare or defend, shows a strong takeout of hearts with defensive tricks, ideally aces (Double Delays), perhaps:

♠AJ64 ♥7 ♦AQ763 ♣AJ4.

North will be cautious in converting this double, but it is valuable to provide alternative ways to compete.

The multi-2♦ opening, a convention restricted to high-level events, usually depicts a weak two-bid in an unspecified major or, occasionally, a very strong hand. If you've not yet encountered multi, play one of the written defenses that the multi users must provide. These defensive schemes, both the simple option and the complex version, have been validated by an expert committee. A good general rule against multi is to overcall in second seat on borderline hands, making the likely assumption that opener was dealt a weak-two.

The weakness of multi is that the responder to 2♦ can't always identify which major opener holds. If second seat passes over 2♦, the mystery is soon resolved, but if second seat intervenes, the multi partnership will sometimes miss their major-suit fit, perhaps with serious consequences.

For example, imagine that you are responding to multi and hold:

♠Q964 ♥83 ♦K107542 ♣A.

Partner opens 2♦, and RHO intervenes with 4♣. If partner holds a weak two-bid in spades, 4♠ is your spot, but if partner's weak-two is in hearts, you belong on defense. If

there had been no overcall, the multi responder could have bid 2♥, pass or correct. At the four-level, responder is left guessing.

The same principle can apply to defending against the standard 2♣ opening (artificial and strong). Most players are reluctant to bid when they hear that opener has 22+ points, but with shape and favorable vulnerability, don't be afraid to intervene. If intervener's partner has a fit and raises, the auction may return to the 2♣ opener at an uncomfortably high level.

Suppose that you, vulnerable against non-vulnerable, open 2♣ holding:

♠AKJ73 ♥8 ♦AKQ52 ♣AJ

The auction takes a nasty turn:

West	North	East	South (You)
			2♣
3♥	Pass	4♥	?

If you bid 4♠, you may go down, cold for a minor-suit game or slam. If you double, partner may innocently bid 5♣ with:

♠865 ♥J7 ♦J8 ♣976432,

going set when you can make 4♠. At this point in the auction, you find yourself guessing at the four level, not a great basis for selecting the winning contract. If you are West and South opens 2♣, don't automatically shrink quietly into the night. □