

“SOURCE OF TRICKS” NO TRUMP BIDS by Maritha Pottenger

When you have a **“source of tricks”**—a suit which is ready to roll, or missing only one honor—you should **try very hard to get to 3NT**. Here are some of the most common auctions.

When an opponent opens a Weak Two bid and you have a running minor suit with 6 or 7 cards and stoppers or semi-stoppers in two suits, but nothing in the Weak Two suit, many people play that a **bid of 3 of the Weak Two suit asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in that suit**. (Otherwise partner bids 4C and you pass or correct to 4D, depending on your minor.) A typical hand would be RHO opens 2S and you hold: xx Ax Ax AKQxxxx. (Some call this the Western Cue Bid.)

This also applies when an opponent opens a suit and the one level and partner jumps to 3 of that suit. Two of the opponent's suit would be a Michaels cue bid (or Top and Another or Top & Bottom, whatever version of 2-suited bids your partnership plays). Three of the opponent's suit shows the running minor with stoppers or semi-stoppers in the other 2 suits, asking you to bid 3NT if you have a stopper in the suit that the opponent opened.

When you have a running minor and you open the suit, and partner bids a major, and you **jump to 3NT**, you show a **“source of tricks.”** This is NOT showing 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand. THAT hand would jump to only 2NT. Typical hand for the jump to 3NT (after partner bids one heart would be: A x Kxx AKQxxxx—you have 8 tricks in your own hand, and are just hoping partner has a heart stopper and can scramble a heart or diamond trick.

Some people play that opening 3NT is “Gambling” (which is red on convention card and MUST be alerted). A “Gambling 3NT can be defined as showing a SOLID or as a broken minor suit. The definition may deny ANY outside Aces or Kings, or might allow for (possibly) one outside card. That is up to partnership agreement. If you are playing that Gambling 3NT shows a solid 7 or 8 card suit with nothing outside, as Responder you pass when you have stoppers or semi-stoppers in the other 3 suits and hope partner can run 9 tricks before the opponents take 5 tricks. If you have too little in your hand, you bid 4C (and partner passes or corrects to 4D). A typical hand that would pass a Gambling 3NT opening bid would be KJxx Q10xx AJxx x. A typical hand that would retreat to 4C would be: Qxxx xxxx Kxxx x.

When partner opens 1NT (15-17) and you have a **six-card minor headed by the AK** and nothing else, just **bid 3NT**. Partner is highly likely to get 5 tricks (sometimes 6) from your hand. Bid the game. Many people play that a jump to 3 of a minor over 1NT opening show a 6-card minor with two of the top 3 honors and fewer than 10 HCP. Partner can pass, or bid 3NT with missing honor or with maximum no trump values and 4 cards in your suit.

If you play that 2NT asks for a feature when partner opens a Weak Two bid, then **3NT response should show a SOLID (AKQJxx) suit**—guaranteeing partner six tricks in NT even if s/he has only a singleton—another “source of tricks” bid.

If partner opens 1C and you respond 1D, and **partner rebids 1NT, with a 6-card running suit, just bid 3NT (source of tricks)**. Example hand would be xx Jxx AKQxxx xx. A 3D bid, while technically “correct” is not as likely to get you to the no trump game. Similarly, you may elect to gamble on 3NT with a 6-card heart or spade suit to the AKQ and nothing else—figuring the 9 trick game will be easier than the 10-trick game.

Remember **Bob Hamman's Rule: “If one of the bids you are considering is 3NT, bid 3NT.”**