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4♣ SI

This Topic provides you with hands where the opponents preempt on the 3-level. This includes hands where they open with a preempt as well as hands where we open with one in a major and they overcall with a preempt.

The main benefit of preempting is applying pressure and taking space away from the opponents.

This advantage for them and therefore disadvantage for you manifests itself most clearly when you hold a hand with slam interest and a fit for partners suit.

Without opponents bothering you, you would set trumps, find out more about partners hand and cuebid on your way to a possible slam. Because of the preempt, you don't have that luxury anymore. To use the limited space in the most efficient way, lots of experts have resorted to giving the 4♣ bid a conventional meaning. For them it shows a hand with fit in partners suit and slam interest.

If the opponents overcalled a different suit than clubs, it means that you switch the meaning of the 4♣ bid and the cuebid. If the opponents overcalled in clubs, nothing changes.

This conventional treatment originated from the Dutch pair Brink-Drijver and has since spread to a lot of other top pairs.

Prerequisites
- Partner bids a major
- The opponents bid on the three-level
- It's your first turn to act

Convention
- 4♣ shows a hand with fit and slam interest
- The cuebid takes over the original meaning of the 4♣ bid

Let's start with case where partner opens with 1♥ or 1♠

Partner	They	You	Partner
1♥	3♠	4♣	slam interest with ♥ fit
			4♦ interested in slam (last train)
		4♦	natural
		4♥	to play
		4♠	clubs

The obvious advantage here is that you have some room available over 4♣. Partner can bid 4♦ if he is also interested in slam or 4♥ if he is minimum.

Over 4♦ you can sign-off in 4♥ if your slam interest was mild and continue over 4♥ if you had serious slam interest. The disadvantage is that, with a natural 4♣ bid, you now have to bid 4♠. There are two reasons why this disadvantage is small. First of all, you still have at least some room to explore slam over 4♠. Second of all, with most hands with long clubs we would bid 3NT if we hold a ♠ stopper or double, hoping partner will bid 3NT. All in all, the slam interest hand with fit is a lot more frequent one and worth catering to.

For completeness sake the whole schedule below where the opponents overcall in a suit, other than clubs.

Partner	They	You	
1♥	3♦	4♣	SI with ♥ fit
		4♦	clubs
1♥	3♠	4♣	SI with ♥ fit
		4♦	natural
		4♠	clubs
1♠	3♦	4♣	SI with ♠ fit
		4♦	clubs
1♠	3♥	4♣	SI with ♠ fit
		4♦	natural
		4♥	clubs

Apart from this situation, we will also discuss the situation where the opponents open with a preemptive bid on the 3-level. Partner overcalls in a major and now it's your turn.

Again, here we use 4♣ to show a hand with slam interest and fit for partners suit.

They	Partner	You	
3♦	3♥	3♠	natural
		4♣	SI, ♥ fit
		4♦	clubs
3♦	3♠	4♣	SI, ♠ fit
		4♦	clubs
		4♥	natural
3♥	3♠	4♣	SI, ♠ fit
		4♦	natural
		4♥	clubs

Although these situations are not identical, we use the same conventional tool. Since you don't have the option of doubling like we did in the first type of auction, the hands where you are stuck and have to use the cuebid occur more often.

In the first type of auction you would typically only show clubs via a cuebid with a very unbalanced or strong hand. In the second type of auction a cuebid can also be done with a five-card club without a stopper in the preempted suit.

Alternatives

- Some pairs even give up on showing clubs via a cuebid. After 1♠-(3♥) for instance, they would use 4♣ as general SI and 4♥ as a splinter in ♥ with slam interest.

- The 4♦ bid is kept as natural as much as possible. Some alternative options are using 4♦ as choice-of-games. This applies to the auction: (3♦)-3♠-4♦. When you play choice-of-games, 4♦ here would show five hearts and two spades.