

CAUTIOUS BIDDER [109]

Here is another hand from the Gloucester/Hereford Green Point event, this time from the Swiss Pairs.

One convention that I find particularly useful is the 3NT response to partner's suit opening, promising moderate game values (say, 11 to a maximum 15 hcp), at least 4 card support for partner's suit, and no 'shortage' (singleton or void). Commonly referred to as a 'pudding raise', the jump to 3NT is the equivalent in terms of playing strength of the splinter bid, but unlike the splinter it denies shortage. Critically, there is no loss of a bid that would be useful if employed 'naturally' – anyone who jumps to 3NT simply with a view to playing there truly is a Hideous Hog.

The 'moderate' part of the description is also important, as indeed it is in respect of splinters. Both the pudding raise and the splinter response should only be employed on hands with no immediate slam aspirations. With more powerful hands and a fit for partner you can wheel out the Jacoby 2NT, signalling immediate slam interest.

Unlike some partnerships, we employ the 3NT response opposite both major and minor suit openings, promising a fit in both instances. In response to a minor, 3NT should be played as non-forcing, as it will often be the best spot; but opposite a major suit opening 3NT is 100% forcing, at least to a rebid of partner's major.

Why is it useful? Well, when we first learn the game, sequences such as 1H-4H, or 1S-4S are used to indicate that responder has both a fit and opening values, but that is very inefficient. These jumps to game in opener's suit should be reserved for hands with at least a nine card fit, but little in the way of outside values. They are pre-emptive. Use the splinter response, or the pudding raise, to signal 4 card support, or more, and moderate (but genuine) game values.

Usually the pudding raise will attract a minimum re-bid from opener, and you will play just at the game level, but if opener has extra values she is expected to cue bid, in which case slam enters the picture. Such was the case on this hand.

Dealer South; N/S vul

	♠32	
	♥Q2	
	♦94	
	♣AJ108762	
♠AJ8		♠K109
♥A8643		♥KJ75
♦AQ752		♦KJ63
♣ -		♣K9
	♠Q7654	
	♥109	
	♦108	
	♣Q543	

Sue and I bid as follows:

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
P	1H	P	3N
P	4C	X	4D
P	4H	P	4N
P	5C	P	6H

Hm. That started off well enough, but the correct response to the Roman Key Card 4N bid was actually 6C, showing three 'Aces' and a club void. Still, given the missing Queen of trumps we were high enough, and Sue had done well to judge that she had sufficient 'extras' to cue bid 4C rather than make what would have been a rather wooden sign-off in 4H. I was close to maximum for my 3N response so it was then easy for me to go on.

North's double of Sue's 4C cue bid warned us that we would be unwise to make that the final contract. It also told her what to lead (the Ace of clubs), following which Sue had thirteen tricks on top once the trump suit was safely negotiated.

It wasn't an especially difficult slam to bid, but I thought the means of getting there was instructive.

GD