

104. The perils of pre-empts

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			3♠
Dble ⁽¹⁾	?		
(1) For takeout			

What would you do as North with:

♠ KJ8
♥ J8
♦ 10652
♣ Q973

Today's deals are from the semi-finals of Alt-Invitational IV, organized by bid72, bridge 24 and netbridgeonline, together with BBO (Bridge Base Online). At the end of the 7-match round-robin, the leaders were:

1. STREET	Paul Street, Kamel Fergani, Nicolas L'Ecuyer, Ron Pachtman, Fred Pollack, Piotr Zatorski,	81.71
2. ZHAO	Zhao Chen, Liu Jing, Bauke Muller, Ricco van Prooijen, Louk Verhees, Simon de Wijs	79.77
3. DE BOTTON	Janet de Botton, Thomas Charlsen, Jason Hackett, Thor Erik Hoftaniska, Alexander Hydes Artur Malinowski	76.86
4. BLASS	Josef Blass, Sjoert Brink, Bas Drijver, Jacek Kalita, Michael Nowosadski, Jacek Pszczola (Pepsi)	75.31

For the semi-finals, **STREET** chose **DE BOTTON** and won by 66.1-37. In the other semi-final, **BLASS** defeated **ZHAO** by 73-50.1.

Board 3: Dealer South : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ KJ8	
	♥ J8	
	♦ 10652	
	♣ Q973	
West		East
♠ --		♠ A954
♥ A932		♥ KQ4
♦ KQJ93		♦ A4
♣ AJ102		♣ 8654
	South	
	♠ Q107632	
	♥ 10765	
	♦ 87	
	♣ K	

ZHAO North-South:

West	North	East	South
			3♠
Dble ⁽¹⁾	4♠?	Dble ⁽²⁾	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♦	All Pass

(1) For takeout

(2) Do what's right, partner

Unless you can defeat a slam that the opponents might reach, there seems little benefit in raising a pre-empt with a modest balanced hand. It simply helps the opponents judge their fit.

	North	
	♠ KJ8	
	♥ J8	
	♦ 10652	
	♣ Q973	
West		East
♠ --		♠ A954
♥ A932		♥ KQ4
♦ KQJ93		♦ A4
♣ AJ102		♣ 8654
	South	
	♠ Q107632	
	♥ 10765	
	♦ 87	
	♣ K	

North led the ♠8: nine – ten – ♦3. West played ♦A, ♦K and drew North's trumps. South threw ♠2, ♠3. After ♥2 to the ♥K, West played the ♣4, king, ace, and the ♣J, taken by the queen. North exited with the ♥J, taken by the ♥Q. Declarer continued with the ♠A: seven – ♣2 – ♠J.

Now West had an almost certain count on the hand. With ♠J-8 only, North would probably not have raised spades and would have led the ♠J. Therefore, North began with four clubs (proven), four diamonds (proven), three spades almost certainly and thus only two hearts. West finessed the ♥9 for 12 tricks, +1370.

What would have happened if the bidding had started 3♣ : Double : Pass? East would have bid 3NT and West would very likely pass that.

BLASS North-South:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Fourth-suit forcing

South led the ♥7, taken by the ♥K. After ♣4, king, ace, and the ♣J, taken by the ♣Q, East claimed 11 tricks when South showed out, East-West +600 but –13 Imps. Note South's pass. Not everyone pre-empts with a poor 6-card suit and a 4-card major on the side, even at favourable vulnerability.

In the other semi-final:

DE BOTTON North-South:

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Dble	Pass	3NT	All Pass

South led the ♠6. East made ten tricks, +630.

STREET North-South:

West	North	East	South
			2♦ ⁽¹⁾
Dble	3♥ ⁽²⁾	3NT	All Pass

(1) Multi 2♦, weak two in hearts or in spades

(2) Pass or correct

South led the ♦8. East made 12 tricks, +690 and 2 Imps to DE BOTTON.

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
	?		

What would you do as North with:

♠ 63
♥ AK98
♦ K3
♣ 106432

Board 3: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 63	
	♥ AK98	
	♦ K3	
	♣ 106432	
West		East
♠ AJ104		♠ KQ98
♥ 632		♥ 10
♦ AJ5		♦ 1087642
♣ J75		♣ A9
	South	
	♠ 752	
	♥ QJ754	
	♦ Q9	
	♣ KQ8	

ZHAO North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	4♥?	Dble ⁽¹⁾	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) For takeout

Most play 1♥ : 4♥ as a pre-emptive raise. Even though North-South are playing a strong 1♣ auction, North does better by showing a limit-raise type hand. For a start, that does not punish partner for opening light third-in-hand. Secondly, it has a better chance of keeping the opponents quiet if you advertise strength.

Here the pre-emptive raise persuaded East to double for takeout. That was not safe, but it worked out well. West might have passed for penalties. That would have collected 100 for 4♥ doubled one off. West judged that East would be short in hearts and, with nothing wasted in hearts, West bid 4♠, all pass.

North led the ♥K and switched to the ♣2. West took the ♣A and played ♦A and ♦J. West lost only a heart, a diamond and a club, East-West +620 with just a combined 20 count.

BLASS North-South:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	3♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁴⁾
Pass			

(1) Maximum pass with support for hearts

(2) This is high enough for me.

(3) Are you sure?

(4) Yes.

South lost two spades, a diamond and a club, nine tricks, +140 and 13 Imps to BLASS.

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 63	
	♥ AK98	
	♦ K3	
	♣ 106432	
West		East
♠ AJ104		♠ KQ98
♥ 632		♥ 10
♦ AJ5		♦ 1087642
♣ J75		♣ A9
	South	
	♠ 752	
	♥ QJ754	
	♦ Q9	
	♣ KQ8	

In the other semi-final:

STREET North-South:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♥ ⁽²⁾
Pass	4♥ ⁽³⁾	All Pass	

(1) Maximum pass, 4+ heart support

(2) This is as far as I want to go.

(3) Respecting partner's sign-off is so passé.

West led the ♥6. South made 9 tricks, one off, -50.

DE BOTTON North-South:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	2♦	2♥
3♦	3♥	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Maximum pass, 4+ hearts

South led the ♥Q. East made ten tricks, +620, 11 Imps to **STREET**.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. Dealer East : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ KQ842
♥ Q85
♦ 9
♣ KQ109

2. Dealer South : Both vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ K10762
♥ A4
♦ AK75
♣ 83

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

I feel that I should clean the house, so I am heading out to the garden until that feeling passes.