

THIRD SEAT MENTALITY

Your partner is dealer in 25% of the deals. A third of the time, both your partner and your RHO will pass and you will be able to open in 3rd seat. If you have a nice hand you will open and continue to your best contract. However, many times you will not have a nice hand. What do you do? Pass?

Think about how the points are distributed. Use the Rule of 24. Assume both your partner and RHO have about 8 HCP apiece. That accounts for 16 of the 40 HCP in the deck. There are 24 left and if you subtract your HCP from 24, you can get an approximation of LHO's HCP. For example, if you have 10 HCP, your LHO has about 14 and will open at the 1-level if you pass. It's important for you to get an opening bid in and make him overcall or double.

There are several reasons why this is important. Firstly, an overcall doesn't establish a lower limit to his strength, the way an opening bid does. His partner, your RHO, doesn't know if he is strong or weak and this puts them at a disadvantage. Secondly, you might have a part score and can outbid your opponents to the correct level. Thirdly, it's more fun to bid than not.

A striking example is where you hold: ♠ J1098743 ♥ 832 ♦ 32 ♣ 2. They are vulnerable and you are not. You are in third seat after two passes. You use the Rule of 24 and estimate that your LHO has about 23 points. You know that he plans to open 2♣ and will certainly find a game contract; maybe even a slam. If you pass, you give up. If you open 3♠, you do severe damage to their auction. They might find their game anyway, but they will have a difficult time getting there.

Is there a danger of going down in 3♠ doubled? NO! The only way that can happen is if LHO doubles and his partner leaves it in. And if he does, and your partner doesn't have even one trick, you will go down 5 tricks for -1100. But your opponents should be in a slam worth 1430 points. You still come out ahead. It might seem counter-intuitive, but the weaker you are the more important it is to make a bid here; and the safer it is. If you had a few more points, it would be more dangerous. Now the opponents wouldn't be such a sure thing for a slam. Even their bidding and making a game is more uncertain.