

Mad helmsman!

PROBLEM If there's one thing that my partner loves, it's pre-empting! It gives him the impression of being modern, young, aggressive in a good way. The annoying part is that there is no limit to his creativity in this area. He is nicknamed the mad helmsman (because he rowed a lot in his youth).

Here are eight hands with which he indulged in pre-empts with the South hand. Would you have done like him?

HAND	SOUTH	THE SEQUENCE								
1.	♠ AQJ1063 ♥ 84 ♦ K65 ♣ 96	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>SOUTH</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>2♠</td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	SOUTH				2♠
W	N	E	SOUTH							
			2♠							
2.	♠ 6 ♥ KQJ965 ♦ J106 ♣ 542	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>NORTH</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>Pass</td><td>Pass</td><td>2♥</td></tr> </table>	W	NORTH	E	S		Pass	Pass	2♥
W	NORTH	E	S							
	Pass	Pass	2♥							
3.	♠ 5 ♥ 9764 ♦ KQJ1076 ♣ 72	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>EAST</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1♣</td><td>3♦</td></tr> </table>	W	N	EAST	S			1♣	3♦
W	N	EAST	S							
		1♣	3♦							
4.	♠ KJ87542 ♥ 6 ♦ AQ4 ♣ K4	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>EAST</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1♦</td><td>4♠</td></tr> </table>	W	N	EAST	S			1♦	4♠
W	N	EAST	S							
		1♦	4♠							
5.	♠ Q10863 ♥ 763 ♦ K3 ♣ 964	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>NORTH</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1♠</td><td>passe</td><td>4♠</td></tr> </table>	W	NORTH	E	S		1♠	passe	4♠
W	NORTH	E	S							
	1♠	passe	4♠							
6.	♠ 862 ♥ Q ♦ QJ864 ♣ 9763	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>NORTH</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1♦</td><td>1♠</td><td>3♦</td></tr> </table>	W	NORTH	E	S		1♦	1♠	3♦
W	NORTH	E	S							
	1♦	1♠	3♦							
7.	♠ 6432 ♥ 10963 ♦ J752 ♣ 9	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>NORTH</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1♦</td><td>Dble</td><td>3♦</td></tr> </table>	W	NORTH	E	S		1♦	Dble	3♦
W	NORTH	E	S							
	1♦	Dble	3♦							
8.	♠ 8 ♥ QJ103 ♦ A1084 ♣ 763	<table border="1"> <tr><td>WEST</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>1♣</td><td>1♥</td><td>1♠</td><td>3♥</td></tr> </table>	WEST	N	E	S	1♣	1♥	1♠	3♥
WEST	N	E	S							
1♣	1♥	1♠	3♥							

The solutions

1. South is **right**. Vulnerable against not, this weak-two opening is perfect, even though it is a maximum. Note however that with a singleton in Hearts or Clubs it would be wiser to open 1♠.

2. South is **wrong**. Third in hand and additionally non vulnerable against vulnerable, this weak two is very timid. If you want to disturb your opponent, you should rise one level higher: open with 3♥.

3. South is **right**. In theory, there are two contraindications to this pre-empt of 3♦: you have only six cards and a four-card major on the side. But in practice, it would be unwise not to enter the bidding at this stage and to achieve three things with one bid: disturb your opponents, give partner a lead and suggest a defense. Let's also note that the Diamond holding is perfect for a pre-empt and that the Hearts are particularly meager.

4. South is **wrong**. This jump to 4♠ could turn out very well and put terrible pressure on the opponents. But several elements are in favor of a more subtle intervention (1♠ in this case):

- The Spades look as if they had been in a hurricane and if the opponents' cards are badly placed, a Double could well lead to the Spades digging our grave.
- We have a lot of defensive tricks that are not planned in the program. Partner, who is not warned, could bid higher in a competitive situation, paving the way for a big swing.

- You have an unpassed partner. If he has some useful cards, even slam could loom on the horizon if you go slowly.

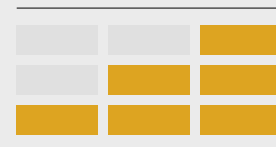
5. South is **wrong**. It is wrong to believe that with such a collection you are secure at the four-level because of the distribution. True, you need five trumps to jump to $4\spadesuit$, but you also need some distribution outside the trump suit. A 5-3-3-2 distribution is the worst possible in this context. Just raise to $2\spadesuit$ (or $3\spadesuit$ if you play the jump raise as pre-emptive).

6. South is **wrong**. Contrary to a wide-spread idea this jump raise is not pre-emptive, at least not in the French standard system. It is a constructive bid, which shows 11-12 points. Remember that a cue-bid of $2\spadesuit$ would be game forcing. A simple raise to $2\diamond$ perfectly does the trick here.

If East had doubled, this jump to $3\diamond$ would have been a pre-empt because you could have shown a limit raise with 2NT, Truscott.

7. South is **right**. Non vulnerable, four trumps and a singleton allow you to pre-empt at $3\heartsuit$. Is there any need for reminders? In competitive auctions, the distribution takes precedence over high card points.

8. South is **wrong**. It is true that, vulnerable, this pre-emptive raise to $3\heartsuit$ undoubtedly requires some strength. But here you have too many values to sit back. A jump to $3\clubsuit$, showing a constructive raise in the Bergen style with four cards, is much better judgement.



ALL LEVELS

EVERYBODY HAS HIS OWN FADS

