

Not giving gifts...

Celebrating Christmas by giving away negative numbers at the table is not a good idea.

by RAKESH KUMAR



Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiastic non-expert who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

This column will appear in December, which is the season for ... insert whatever you fancy. So why is it that at Christmas, I'm writing about *not* giving gifts? Well, at least at the bridge table, you shouldn't. Unfortunately, I do – all too often – and neither partner nor teammates are amused!

However, there's nothing so bad that it can't be used as an example of what not to do. Here are a few such examples, which offer some lessons about avoiding 4-digit negative numbers.

Do not redouble just because you can – even at the 1-level

Redoubling is often dangerous. We just won't talk about the rescue redoubles that are misunderstood and get left in. However, even when think you might have a legitimate redouble, you should probably reconsider before doing so. To illustrate the point, have a look at this hand from the recent Parramatta Congress:

Board 19

Dealer S | Vul E-W

<p>♠ 98 ♥ JT9863 ♦ T ♣ 9876</p>	<p>♠ K ♥ AQ52 ♦ AQ8542 ♣ 32</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W — E</td></tr> <tr><td>♠</td></tr> </table>	N	W — E	♠	<p>♠ Q76543 ♥ K7 ♦ KQ7 ♣ K5</p>
N						
W — E						
♠						
<p>♠ AJT2 ♥ 4 ♦ J63 ♣ AQJT4</p>						

	W	N	E	S
				1C
P		1D	1S	P
P		X	XX	

13		13
1		

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	5	2	3	5
S	5	5	2	3	5
E	—	—	—	—	—
W	—	—	—	—	—

South opened 1C and North responded 1D. East (yes, that was me) overcalled 1S. After 2 passes, North doubled, ostensibly showing hearts. With 13 hcp and a 6-card suit, you can show partner you had something better than a minimum overcall, can't you? So I redoubled. South passed. Not a whole lot later, I wrote down -1000! This score was all out on its lonesome in the field of 41 teams, although there were 5 pairs with similar scores in 2S doubled.

When I tried to suggest that I might have had a plausible redouble, my teammate Steven Bock said "That's what youngsters do to remind themselves that they're still at the table ..." and he might have a point.

Have you been playing Santa at bridge table?



Do not ignore that 6-card suit in front of your face

Aggressive bidding by the opponents is intended to create problems, and it does. At the Trumps Spring Teams, also in November, this turned up:

Board 23

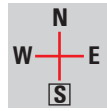
Dealer S | Vul All

♠ K9632
♥ K965
♦ J84
♣ T

♠ A84
♥ T
♦ AK3
♣ AKJ652

♠ QT
♥ AQ872
♦ QT5
♣ Q94

♠ J75
♥ J43
♦ 9762
♣ 873



W	N	E	S
			1H
P	4H	X	P
5D	X		

7
2 19
12

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	–	–	3	3	–
S	–	–	3	3	–
E	2	–	–	–	–
W	2	–	–	–	–

South opened 1H, partner passed and North jumped to 4H. East (yes, me again) was on the spot. I considered passing, but vulnerable against not that seemed wimpy. I also considered 5C, but thought it seemed altogether too unilateral – after all partner might have 5 spades. So I doubled.

I shouldn't have, because partner bid 5D, the opponents now doubled this, and a while later I wrote down –1700!! Had I simply bid 5C, this would not have been doubled, but would still have cost –300. As it was, I managed to bring back yet another unique score and teammates were uniquely unimpressed.

The hand does, however, raise another interesting point. Sometimes, when partner makes a takeout double and you have absolutely nothing, passing yields a less gruesome outcome than bidding. That was again well illustrated on this hand from the Qualifying stage of the Spring Nationals Open Teams:

Board 9

Dealer N | Vul E-W

♠ T63
♥ QT
♦ KQT8765
♣ 7

♠ 9872
♥ 9752
♦ J9
♣ 842

♠ A4
♥ KJ84
♦ A43
♣ AQ53

♠ KQJ5
♥ A63
♦ 2
♣ KJT96



W	N	E	S
	3D	P	3NT
X	P	4S	X

7
14 1
18

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	5	3	1	4
S	1	5	3	1	4
E	–	–	–	–	–
W	–	–	–	–	–

North opened 3D and South bid 3NT. Now there are lots of people I know who will bid 3NT with a diamond fit, an outside ace and half a stopper elsewhere, hoping for a possible fortunate 9 tricks and willing to run quickly to 4D if doubled. Was this a “comic” 3NT bid or was it for real? Sitting West on this occasion, but as usual having no idea what might be best, I doubled for takeout on the grounds of having adequate strength and pretty good shape. Partner bid 4S, South doubled, and the result was not pretty. The only good thing that can be said is that this time it was our opposite numbers in the match who went for the 4-digit number: our –800 actually gained 7 IMPs relative to their –1100. However, once again leaving in 3NT doubled, which would have cost at most –650, would have been a cheaper outcome! Eight East-West pairs out of 54 went for a large number in a doubled contract.



Don't interfere just because you have some shape

Hands with long suits and few high-card points have lots of pre-emptive potential, but it doesn't hurt to consider the profit/loss ratio and to keep the vulnerability in mind. On this hand from round 2 of the North Shore Mixed Teams, North-South are cold for 3NT, but they didn't always play there:

Board 19

Dealer S | Vul E-W

♠ KQ
♥ T975
♦ A74
♣ KQT4

♠ J9843
♥
♦ KJT93
♣ J93

	N	
W	—	E
	S	

♠ 72
♥ KQJ8432
♦ 8
♣ 872

♠ AT65
♥ A6
♦ Q652
♣ A65

14
6 6
14

W	N	E	S
	1C/1NT	?	X

The temptation to interfere led to 8 of 22 Ew pairs going down in doubled contracts ranging from 2H - 4H

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	3	2	3	4
S	4	4	2	3	4
E	—	—	—	—	—
W	—	—	—	—	—

After a 1C or 1NT opening by North, there's a strong temptation for East to interfere. However, the hand is at best worth only 6 tricks. At worst, with partner unable to contribute anything, even 2H could go for -500 and any higher contract could have a much worse outcome, so bidding 3H doesn't make a lot of sense. However, 8 of 22 East-West pairs went for something between -800 and -1400 in doubled contracts ranging from 2H-4H. We were happy to accept a gift! 🎁