

**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

Serious 3 NT in Action

♠ A 9 4 ♥ Q J 7 ♦ Q J 3 2 ♣ A K 3		♠ K 7 6 ♥ 10 4 3 ♦ 6 4 ♣ 10 9 8 6 5	♠ Q 5 ♥ A K 9 8 6 2 ♦ A K 10 7 ♣ 7
♠ J 10 8 3 2 ♥ 5 ♦ 9 8 5 ♣ Q J 4 2			

West	North	East	South
<i>Schwartz</i>		<i>Matthews Jr</i>	
		1 ♥	Pass
2 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3 ♦ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
3 ♥ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	3 NT <sup>4</sup>	Pass
4 NT <sup>5</sup>	Pass	5 ♣ <sup>6</sup>	Pass
5 NT <sup>7</sup>	Pass	7 ♦ <sup>8</sup>	Pass
7 NT <sup>9</sup>	All pass		

1. GF, unless suit rebid.
2. Extra values, GF.
3. Sets hearts as trump, superseding diamonds.
4. Serious slam interest, without 1st or 2nd round ♠ control.
5. RKB ♥.
6. 0 or 3 key cards.
7. We have them all; specific kings?
8. We have 13 tricks here.
9. We have 13 tricks here.

7 NT by East  
 Made 7 — EW +1520

This auction had several highlights, starting with 3 NT. Was my hand good enough to go serious? Maybe, maybe not. But serious without a spade control? Definitely.

Gary could tell that I had strong holdings in the red suits, so with both black suits under control, he took charge. In spite of queen-high holdings in the reds, he was required to bid 5 NT to tell me we had all 5+1 key cards, even though he would probably not bid a grand slam himself. (It's best to bid grand slams that you expect to make at least 75% of the time - too much risk opponents won't even find the small slam.)

From my side, I could tell that Gary must have the red queens to be taking charge. I counted six hearts, four diamonds, two black aces, and one ruff (13 tricks), so I bid 7 ♦. Gary could tell my jump was based on a sixth heart or fifth diamond and the undisclosed ♦ K. With ten red tricks plus three black tricks, he converted to 7 NT, for a matchpoint top.

**Board 4**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

Short Suit Game Try

<p>♠ Q 9 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ J 8 3 2 ♣ 8 6 4 2</p>		<p>♠ J 7 6 5 4 ♥ 6 ♦ A 7 ♣ A J 10 9 3</p>	<p>♠ A K 2 ♥ A J 9 8 2 ♦ 10 9 6 5 4 ♣ —</p>
<p>♠ 10 8 3 ♥ Q 10 7 3 ♦ K Q ♣ K Q 7 5</p>			

N 3♠; EW 3♥; EW 4♦; S 2♠; NS 3♣; NS 1N; Par -130

West	North	East	South
<i>Schwartz</i>	<i>Maselli</i>	<i>Matthews Jr</i>	<i>Malley</i>
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	3♣ <sup>2</sup>	Pass
4♥	All pass		

1. Promises 2-3 winners (no more, no less).
  2. Short-suit game try (singleton or void).
- 4♥ by East

Gary and I play 3-way game tries. The next step (2♠ here) would be a nondescript game try: responder decides the issue immediately with scattered values - clearly a rejection on this West hand - or bids a secondary value such as Kxx or Qxx. A new suit (2NT for spades) shows a singleton or void in the bid suit. We tend to use this only when holding six trumps, to avoid tipping a forcing defense (see below). The re-raise asks for trumps and aces.

When trying for game, we first decide whether the hand is indeed worth a game try. This time for East, not so much; but the hand has only six losers, and we were vulnerable at IMPs. The SSGT is by far the most accurate, so I used it, even though I knew it would tip the defense. (With 5 losers, I would have jumped to game.)

Gary promised me two to three winners, and he clearly has only two (♥K and ♠Q). However, he figured out almost exactly what I had, and decided to take a shot at game - basically counting ♦J832 as a winner. The standard rule is to strain to invite, and accept normally, when vulnerable at IMPs, so the normal action would be to sign off in 3♥.

John Malley, one of the top players in New England, was thrilled to be told how to defend. I ruffed the ♣K and led a diamond. I ruffed the next club, and led another diamond, splitting the suit. After ruffing the third club, I cashed the ♥A, and led my last trump to the ♥K. I tried to claim ten tricks on a heart split. Not so fast! As John puts it, I was two in the glue.

If all that were required were a 2-2 diamond split, game would be 40%, a worthy target when vulnerable at IMPs. However, the need for a trump split reduces that chance to less than 30%. (In 3♥, nine tricks can be made by ruffing out the fourth club.)