

Mixed Raise -- Problem

Board 11
South Deals
None Vul



♠ A 9 5 4
♥ A 6
♦ 9 5 3
♣ J 7 6 2

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♣	1 ♠	Dbl ¹	3 ♣ ²
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	?

1. Negative (four hearts).
2. Constructive 4-card raise (mixed).

Join me as South on this deal at a club game. Playing expert standard, a jump to 3 ♠ would be weak with at least four spade, and a 2 ♣ cue bid would show a limit raise of spades, or better. The jump cue bid of opener's suit is a *mixed raise*, four card support and values between the weak and limit raise. The opponents brush this aside, and land in 4 ♥. What now?

OK, here is a hint, in the form of another question. What does North's pass of 3 ♥ mean?

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Mixed Raise -- Solution

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

EW 4♥; EW 3♦; EW 3♣; EW 1N; NS 1♠; Par -420: EW 4♥=

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			Pass
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3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	?

1. Negative (four hearts).
2. Constructive 4-card raise (mixed).

It's standard for North to pass with nothing to say. In that case, the best we can do is to pass and see if we might set it. We already told our story. This treatment of the pass is tantamount to saying, we made a mistake - we have already bid too high - thanks opponents, for letting us off the hook! That may be best for intermediate players and aggressive overcallers - such as my partner!

Expert standard, as I understand it to be, is just the opposite. The 3 ♣ bid committed us to play 3 ♠. Therefore, bidding 3 ♠ is the weakest possible action by North, over 3 ♥. Even though this action only takes one step away from the opponents, it's an important one: it deprives the opponents of the cue bid of 3 ♠. That does not matter on this deal, but it might on some other.

Partner had two stronger actions than passing: a *maximal* double would be a game try, and 4 ♠ would be stronger game try - bid game and try to make it! Logically, North's pass suggests we have a play to make 3 ♠.

With this maximum hand including two aces, we double, hoping to protect our +140 partscore with +300. OOPS, partner was playing standard. Knowing we cannot beat 4 ♥, he removed to 4 ♠, which was doubled. This was down three, for the same zero as letting them play 4 ♥ doubled.

Superficially, it looks like the standard treatment would have been best for this deal, because a forced 3 ♠ bid gives the opponents a fielder's choice: they found their fit, and can now double if they decide against game. However, their double produces only -300 for us, compared to -420 for 4 ♥ undoubled. The law of total tricks says we should be safe at the 3-level with our 9-card fit, and it was true.

The bottom line: either agreement, known and understood, would have been better than my making an aggressive assumption regarding partner's pass. This is a good topic to discuss with any partner.