

## THIRD SEAT OPENINGS

There are four reasons for opening light in third position:

- 1) To direct an opening lead
- 2) To crowd the opponents, interfering with their bidding
- 3) To put your side in a good position to compete for the hand
- 4) To prevent the hand from being passed out

A safety factor is that you usually don't have to rebid with a weak hand. Except for a 1♦ response to 1♣, you may pass any non-jump response, and may even pass a jump raise or jump to 2NT. This factor can affect your choice of suit even when the opening is full strength but minimum. With ♠AK83 ♥763 ♦KJ ♣Q842 you can open 1♠ instead of 1♣, because you can pass any two-level response. First or second seat you would open 1♣, of course, to provide a convenient rebid. The 1♠ bid in third (or fourth) seat is lead directing, preemptive, and safe.

A third seat opening in a weak four-card suit is to be avoided, even with a full opening bid. Bid 1♥ in first or second seat with ♠AJ ♥Q1065 ♦AQ108 ♣732, but 1♦ in third seat.

You can thus open some hands light, some hands differently, because partner's takeout can be passed. You do not open all 10-12 HCP hands, however. You need a reason to open, and an "out." With ♠AJ432 ♥6 ♦KJ3 ♣8754 you should pass in third seat. You have a reason to open, but no "out" if partner responds 2♥ or doubles a 2♥ overcall for business. If you must open, make it a weak two bid.

Similarly, with ♠42 ♥J8432 ♦KQ8 ♣KQJ you should pass in third seat. You will not be embarrassed by any response, but there is little reason to bid. You do not want a heart lead, and the hand has little merit. If you are straining for points, open 1♣ as a lead-directing tactic.

Examples of reasonable third seat openings:

- 1) ♦AKJ10 ♥832 ♦754 ♣Q65
- 2) ♠86532 ♥432 ♦J8 ♣AKQ
- 3) ♠A864 ♥KQ1076 ♦43 ♣J7
- 4) ♠AJ108 ♥95 ♦AJ106 ♣J83

Open hand 1) with 1♠, 2) with 1♣, 3) with 1♥, and 4) with 1♠. With 4) you choose spades over diamonds for preemptive reasons.

A passed hand may have to make a single or double raise of a major suit opening with less than normal trump support, which is another reason (other than lead direction) for not opening a weak four-card major in third position.

See section 4-12, Stoplight, which is a method of stopping at the three level when partner inelegantly responds 2NT to your weak distributional third-seat opening.