

MIT Intermediate Bridge Lesson Series

Various No-Trump Ranges: Competitive Thought Process

Brian Duran

Goals

Determine when and why one should compete over different NT range. A different thought process and approach is required for each range.

- Why do people use different ranges
- What different piece of information do we know based on the range
- How does this affect our thought process to compete and defend

NT Ranges At MIT

At MIT games I've played against the following ranges and systems

NT Range	System
10-12	Precision or 2/1 with coded minors
10-13	Precision or 2/1
11-13	Only one pair, they though 10-13 was just too aggressive
12-14	2/1 or Kaplan-Sheinwold (KS)
12-15	Precision or other strong club
14-16	Precision
15-17	Standard American, 2/1, Polish Club
16-18	Old-timers and 4 seat openers when they open aggressively

Why So Many Ranges

Partnership play different No-trump ranges for a variety of reason, here are the four most common:

- Dictated by System
- Feel is Superior
- Experience
- Fun

Pros and Con

WEAK

STRONG



Preemptive

Miss more 4-4 major suit fits

Less room for the opponents
when you have a weak hand

Frequency HCP 12-14 20.6%

People are less comfortable
defending against it

Constructive

Finds more 4-4 major suit
fits

More room for the
opponents when you
have a weak hand

HCP 15-17 10.1%

Controls

CONTROLS HCP	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10		5	24	44	27				
11		2	14	40	33	11			
12		1	8	30	42	17	2		
13			3	20	39	34	4		
14			1	11	33	38	17		
15				5	24	42	23	6	
16				2	14	36	37	10	1
17				1	8	27	39	24	1
18					3	18	39	30	19

A=2 Controls, K=1 Control
Values in %

Information

WEAK

STRONG



Equality or less than
likely to have the
majority of HCP

Likely missed 4-4
major fit

Usually have the
majority of HCP

Could have missed
4-4 major fit

Thought Process

Here are the items I consider when bidding against a NT opening

- HCP
- Balanced or Suited
- Point in the suits
- Length of Suits
- Direct or balancing seat
- IMPs vs MP scoring
- Colors

HCP

When 2 suited think more about points in the suits and controls. When balanced HCP give a decent assessment of strength, but also consider control of suits. If you double the opponents might have a six card running suit.

Value As and Ks more than Qs and Js

Balanced or Suited

Very different thought process. When balanced one focus more on Controls of suits and trick taking potential. When 2 suited one focus on the quality of those suits and devalues the other cards.

**Balanced hands should have
sounder actions**

2 suited hands can be aggressive

Points in the Suits

Counting HCP does not give an accurate description of one trick taking potential.

Card in your long suit care more trick taking value then card outside of your suits.

Compare:

♠JT986

♥AJ5

♦JT764

♣A

♠AJT98

♥J65

♦AJT76

♣4

**High Card is suit good, devalue
HCP outside of your suits**

Length of Suits

Often one is competing based on having two longish suits and hoping to find a fit with partner.

Single suit hands – 6 cards

Two suited – 5-5 or 5-4 (maybe 4-4 majors over weak NT)

Direct or Balancing

Balancing seat can be far more aggressive than the direct seat. When the auction goes (1NT)-p-(p)-? you can be fairly sure the HCP are roughly balanced between partnership regardless of how many you have. In this seat I would bid with any one or two suiter hands regardless of points. In-fact, having Ks is bad. Be less aggressive in the direct seat.

Aggressively balanced, have you bids in the Direct seat

IMP vs. MP Scoring

The type of scoring is very important in your decision process to compete. At IMP you get the same score for allowing them to make 1NT (90 points) as going down one vul (100) or two not vul (100). Thus, not worth the the risk of being doubled down 2 or 3.

IMPs – Sound

MP – Aggressive

COLORS

Vulnerability should go into any bridge decision. I tend to think about my partnerships vulnerability a little less and more about the opponents color. When the opponents are white, setting them two often not enough for a good score, as you can usually make something.

Setting 1NT not-vul down 2 is usually a bad score

NT Overcall System

There are over 70 convention people play over 1NT. Play what you will remember, that is more important then any conventions.

Conventional agreements should include the ability to show single suited and two suited hands. Over a weak NT, they should also include a penalty double.

Judgment matters more then system

Various NT Overcall System

Advance partnership play two or three systems over NT openings. Usually one for weak and strong and sometime one in the balancing seat. This makes sense to me, as each situation has different logic. However, there are several systems which work fine in all cases. If you split the range, my recommendation is if the lowest HCP is 14 its strong. Some people play if it contain a 15 its strong. Just come to an agreement.

Rules and Guidelines

People LOVE rules. They should all be used as guidelines where judgment overrides. We need different rules vs weak NT and Strong NT. I'm providing some guidelines, but feel free to use you own, judgment is more important.

Don't be a slave to the rules.

Strong NT Guideline

Rule of 8 by Mel.

When: Direct seat only, over strong NT

Rule: Add the length of your two longest suits, and subtract the losing trick count.

If 2 or great, make a call.

Don't be a slave to the rules.

Strong NT Rule Examples

Example 1

♠K75

♥AQ865

♦K43

♣76

Example 2

♠K7532

♥K8654

♦43

♣7

Example 1: 8 cards in two longest suits, 7 loser hand, don't overcall

Example 2: 10 cards in two longest suits, 7 loser hand, overcall

Don't be a slave to the rules.

Strong NT Guideline

When: Balancing seat only, over strong NT
(1NT)-p-(p)-

Rule: I don't know a rule, but here are some
thoughts

Double is for take-out – 10 ish HCP balanced
hand and can be left in, but expect partner to
bid

Any two suiter, which your system allows, you
should show, be aggressive

Be aggressive, but consider colors

Strong NT Balancing Examples

Example 3

♠JT9875

♥65

♦T743

♣7

Example 4

♠KJ32

♥Q54

♦KJ432

♣A

Example 3: Clear 2S call, you partner has a great hand, balanced, so bid

Example 4: I would pass. Your honors are poorly placed in regards to the NT bidder, and even if partner has a max, you might not make you contract. Some would bid, but I pass.

Weak NT Guideline

When: over weak NT, similar in direct and balancing

- 5-5 or better bid with almost all 12 HCP
- With 5-4 shape, bid with all 13 HCP
- With 14 point balanced hands double (maybe 15 points if over 12-14)
- Often right with 4-4 in the majors and good cards in the those suits to show the majors if system allows
- When you partner doubles in direct, usually pass, in balancing more likely to bid

Partner Doubles a Weak NT

I think most players bid too much when their partner has doubled a weak NT. If you have a single suited hands or a blanced hand with as little as a A, it is usually right to pass. If you have a A and Q, never pull. Your partner suggest playing 1NT doubled, you should listen unless you have clear reason not to.

Examples

Example 5

♠AKJ73

♥Q82

♦Q7

♣K65

Example 5: from the 2000 Bermuda Bowl,
Paul Soloway held and heard 1NT on his right,
what did he do?

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He asked the range and was told 15-17. Now what?

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Passed

Examples

Example 6

♠AT9863

♥Q854

♦6

♣73

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Examples

Example 6

♠AT9863

♥Q854

♦6

♣73

Example 6: 2011 Silodor Pairs, Gavin held and heard 1NT on his right, what did he do?

He asked the range and was told 10-12. Now what?

Examples

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♥Q854

♦6

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