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Bridge Today University and Bridgetoday.com Present:
Hand Study 204 with Matthew Granovetter - Class One

Welcome to our second semester of Hand Study! Sometimes in the midst of modern conventions, we forget our basics. Conventions are great, but let's not lose sight of our judgment and basics. What I mean by "basics" is those things we do at the bridge table that don't (or shouldn't) require thinking. When a person plays tennis, he automatically runs back to the middle of the court after hitting the ball; golfers have a basic idea of how to swing the club. Basics in bridge include many small details: raising partner's suit, avoiding the lead of an unsupported ace, planning a hand before calling a card from dummy, and so forth.

You are vulnerable in fourth chair:

T765
T4
A98
QJ84

Your LHO opens a strong notrump, partner bids 2C, and RHO passes. Partner's 2C is the famous DONT convention, showing clubs and another suit. What is your call?

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This is a basic situation - you raise to 3C without even flinching. Is this a forward-going bid or a blocking bid? The truth is it's both. Partner could have a good hand (he does sometimes, no?), such as

x
AQxxx
Kx
ATxxx

On this deal you'll make five or six clubs with the HK and CK almost surely onside and the suits likely to break. On the actual deal, the layout was:

	T765	
	T4	
	A98	
	QJ84	
Q32		KJ94
85		AKQ3
QT653		KJ2
T65		93
	A8	
	J9762	
	74	
	AK72	

Partner made a risky 2C bid, and if you raise to 3C, you block East from competing and reward partner for his courage. If you pass 2C, East will double for takeout and the diamond fit will be found. Both 3C and 3D are likely to make. In any case, it does North no good to pass 2C, since East is back in with a double. At the table, I was South, and I was playing 2C as clubs and hearts. My partner passed 2C and RHO doubled for takeout. West now bid 2D and my partner now bid 3C. This went around to West, who bid 3D.

(Why West did not bid 2D over 2C is a small mystery, however, I suspect E-W were still playing transfers after the 2C overcall and therefore West could not bid 2D. In any case, it's not clear to bid 2D with QTxxx and a queen, vulnerable.)

My partner led the H-10, declarer won and played on trumps, eventually discarding a club on the third heart in dummy. We would have had to manage a spade ruff to defeat 3D.

This hand was played at matchpoints, so we received a very poor score. Against 3C, the best lead for the defenders is a trump. This is often the case against a minor-suit partscore. Even so, declarer may prevail by attacking hearts. East wins and plays a second trump. Declarer plays a second heart. Now East will probably shift to a spade. South wins and leads his highest heart, planning to throw a diamond if West does not ruff. Thus 3C makes 110. If West ruffs, declarer ruffs two hearts. If West discards, declarer can discard a second diamond on his established hearts.

Basic Idea: With four trumps and an ace, raise your partner. Thinking is not necessary.

Let's switch to Imps. Here's another "basic" situation.

You hold, vul vs. not, in second seat:

T9
AK8
AT53
K732

RHO opens one club, you pass, LHO passes, and partner balances with 2C, majors. Now RHO bids 3C. What is your call?

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Again, this should be a non-thinker. Your partner has shown at least 5-5 in the majors, so you have support. Don't withhold support! You also have a terrific hand, surely enough for game. Remember, partner bid 2C vulnerable, and is therefore bidding for a game. The correct call is 4H.

In real life, my partner doubled 3C, violating 2 rules:

- 1) Don't withhold support.
- 2) Don't double a partscore at Imps without a trump stack.

The full deal was:

	A8765	
	QT762	
	KQ	
	9	
J42		KQ3
943		J5
J9874		62
Q8		AJT654
	T9	
	AK8	
	AT53	
	K732	

Par was 4H making five, 650. Notice East's good 3C bid over my 2C balance. East was favorable and tried to make things difficult for us. But there should have been no difficulty at all, since the moment I bid 2C, South knew we had an eight-card fit and enough for game. When South doubled 3C, East played it there, down three -500, for a gain of 4 imps.

Basic Idea: We double partscores at imps with trump stacks (including good spot cards).