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Bridge Today University and Bridgetoday.com present:

Refine Your Bidding BTU 262, with the Granovetters

Class 1

The purpose of bidding in a nutshell

The main purpose of bidding is to obtain bonus scores: games, slams, and doubled sets. The most frequent of these is the contract of 3NT.

Have you ever considered your goals in bidding? When you first learned bridge, they were defined by the scoring. After years of playing, you can get so involved in the aesthetics of the game that you forget your primary objective: to score bonus points. This is one area where money bridge helps train players. No one in his right mind puts the same effort into making \$140 as he does in earning \$600. Yet bridge players can be seen fighting for that plus 140 with equal intensity as their plus 600. Granted, at duplicate, the partscore or overtrick has more meaning, but if you score 600 on a hand in three notrump making three, while others score 180 in two notrump making four, you've still done a lot better - yet you made one less trick.

We learned early in rubber bridge the importance of the bonus score. And since 3NT is the most frequent game contract, it should become your primary goal in bidding. This is why we hear so many times, "When in doubt, bid 3NT."

For example, your RHO opens the bidding three hearts. You hold:

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J
A Q
A K J 7 6 5 2
J 10 9
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There isn't a good bridge player alive who would not overcall 3NT, despite a singleton spade and the lack of a club stopper (and no guarantee to score seven diamond tricks, as well!). The gamble is worth it - because of the BONUS SCORE. And why 3NT and not five diamonds? Because nine tricks are usually easier to score than 11.

Sometimes nine tricks are easier than 10. Even when you have established an eight-card major-suit fit, you may want to play three notrump. How do you know when to do this? Here are two indicators: (1) You have a source of tricks outside the trump suit. (2) Your trump suit is terrible.

On this deal, star player and writer Martin Hoffman confessed that he failed to make the winning bid of three notrump:

```
North
A
9 6 4 3
A K Q 7 6 5
10 4

South (Hoffman)
Q 9 5 3
K 10 7 5
10 3
A J 9
```

```
North    Hoffman
1D       1H
3H       ?
```

Hoffman's partner opened the bidding one diamond and over Hoffman's one-heart response, jumped to three hearts. Now Hoffman could have bid three notrump, suggesting an alternative contract and his partner would have been pleased to pass with weak trumps and an outside source of tricks. The hearts broke 4-1, and Hoffman went one down in four hearts, while nine tricks in notrump were there.

North
 A
 9 6 4 3
 A K Q 7 6 5
 10 4

South (Hoffman)
 Q 9 5 3
 K 10 7 5
 10 3
 A J 9

North	Hoffman
1D	1H
3H	?

By the way, we disagree with the jump to three hearts; we would rebid two hearts on the North hand and then South can bid 2NT and North raise to 3NT. But 3H isn't the worst bid in the world, so South has to take the blame for getting to the wrong spot.)

Some top-level players use 3NT as a conventional forcing call when a trump suit has been established. This is a dangerous use for 3NT, because it can interfere with reaching the most likely game contract on the market. Always keep 3NT in mind as the possible final contract.

Here's a bidding problem for you to try:

A 4
 J 10 4
 Q J 6
 A J 9 4 3

Your partner opens one spade and you respond two clubs. He raises to three clubs. What is your next call?
