

A Futile Preempt

by [Larry Cohen](#)

I returned from the national championships in Reno, where our team made it all the way to the finals of the prestigious Vanderbilt Knockout Teams. Alas, we lost in the finals. The final match was very close, and the illustrated deal (which was featured in the *New York Times*) was one of our team's big losses:

Board 7 South Deals Both Vul		♠ J 9 7 5 ♥ Q 10 8 6 4 2 ♦ — ♣ K 9 8	♠ A 8 4 ♥ K J 9 5 ♦ — ♣ Q 10 7 6 5 2
♠ K Q 10 3 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ K Q 9 2 ♣ J 3	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>		
		♠ 6 ♥ 7 ♦ A J 10 8 7 6 5 4 3 ♣ A 4	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Dbl	5 ♦ All pass

At our table, my partner David Berkowitz opened the South hand with 5♦. West wisely passed (if he doubled it would have been for takeout, and East would have pulled). 5♦ was passed around to East and he made an excellent decision to make a takeout double of his own. He was very light on high cards, but perhaps he sensed his partner would be leaving it in for penalties. Indeed, West was delighted to defend 5♦ doubled and the defense took the obvious five trick (three trumps and two aces) for down three and 800.

At the other table, Paul Soloway, the holder of almost 50,000 masterpoints, chose reasonably enough to open the South hand with a bid of only 1♦. After all, if you use the Rule of 20, you have 9 points + 11 cards in your longest two suits! He ended up getting doubled in 3♦, but that was only a one-trick defeat and his team gained a swing of 12 IMPs and went on to win the Vanderbilt.