

The Buttinski Rule

Board 4
East Deals
Both Vul



♠ K J 9 8 7 5
♥ J 10 8 5
♦ 10 9 4
♣ —

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1 NT	Pass	2 ♠	?

East's 2 ♠ is a relay to 3 ♣, for signoff in a minor suit.

Playing matchpoints, would you double the artificial 2 ♠ bid, or pass?

The Buttinski Rule -- Solution

Board 4
 East Deals
 Both Vul

♠ A Q 10 ♥ K Q 9 7 2 ♦ K Q J ♣ 7 3	N W E S	♠ 4 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 8 7 5 3 ♣ A K 6 4 2	♠ 6 3 ♥ 6 4 ♦ A 6 2 ♣ Q J 10 9 8 5
♠ K J 9 8 7 5 ♥ J 10 8 5 ♦ 10 9 4 ♣ —			

EW 3N; EW 4♣; EW 2♥; E 2♦; E 1♠; W 1♦; Par -600; EW 3N=

West	North	East	South
	<i>CHO</i>		<i>Buttinski</i>
		Pass	Pass
1 NT	Pass	2 ♠	Dbl
3 ♣	Dbl	All pass	

3 ♣× by West
 Lead: ♠ 4
 Made 3 — EW +670

North cannot be blamed for doubling 3 ♣, which appears likely to get the magic +200 score. North takes four tricks, when declarer mistakenly shortens dummy's trumps, but we take no tricks at all.

We can see this coming, as partner's double implies a poor spade fit. We have no place to hide, since we are vulnerable and should go down doubled, costing at least 800 points, if we bid.

My new Buttinski rule:

When only the opponents have bid, a non-jump action promises 8 HCP – and usually more, when vulnerable.

The Buttinski rule applies in these common cases:

- An overcall.
- A two-suited bid.
- A reopening double or overcall.
- A lead-directing double.

The Buttinski rule does not apply to a preemptive jump overcall.

Violating this rule turns partner into center-hand opponent! They may get us into big trouble, through something as simple as competing sensibly in our suit.