

This deal comes from news-sheet No. 200 and is an example of direct ambiguous splinters.

Board 21 from Monday 28th Oct 2006

4 out of seven tables landed in an inferior 3NT on this deal (6♦ makes and 3NT should go one down):

Dealer: ♠ K75
 North ♥ KJ
 N-S vul ♦ AK1094
 ♣ 942

Table A

West	North	East	South
-	1NT (1)	pass	2♣ (2)
pass	2♦	pass	3NT (3)
all pass			

♠ 1062	N	♠ J83
♥ 965	W E	♥ 10742
♦ 75	S	♦ Q6
♣ AJ853		♣ KQ76
	♠ AQ94	
	♥ AQ83	
	♦ J832	
	♣ 10	

Expert Table

West	North	East	South
-	1NT (1)	pass	3♣ (2)
pass	3♦ (4)	pass	3♠ (5)
pass	4♦ (6)	pass	4♥ (7)
pass	5♦ (8)	pass	6♦
all pass			

- Table A: (1) What would you open with this North hand? With this great ♦ suit I think that an upgrade to a strong 1NT is best.
 (2) Without the mechanism to splinter over 1NT (see expert table) South reasonably tried Stayman.
 (3) And with no major suit fit he really has no choice but to punt 3NT.
- 'Expert' (3) Our experts have read 'The definitive guide to (strong) **No Trump openings, Stayman and Transfers**' – referred to as 'the NoTrump bidding book' on the web site, and know all about ambiguous splinters over 1NT. 3♣ here is an ambiguous splinter (either ♣, ♦, or ♠ shortage).
 Table (4) Which shortage?
 (5) ♣ shortage.
 (6) ♦'s are trumps, slam interest. Although just 14 'points' this hand has become enormous opposite ♦ support and ♣ shortage.
 (7) Roman Key card Blackwood for ♦'s. Our experts play Kickback.
 (8) 2 keycards plus the ♦Q. With extra ♦ length North says that he has the ♦Q. This is the magic of playing Kickback – even the highest response (2 keycards + key queen) does not go above 5 of the agreed suit.

And what happened? One pair did reach 6♦ making but 4 pairs found themselves in 3NT.

The bottom lines: -

- Check out ambiguous splinters over partner's 1NT opening.
- Play something other than 4NT as (RKC)Blackwood when a minor suit is agreed. My personal preference is Kickback (the suit above trumps); it is described on the web site and in the No Trump bidding book. Another option is to play 4-of-the-minor as Blackwood but obviously that would not work here as North does not know if South has slam interest or not.