

A flat hand is good for nothing.

This comment is attributable to expert, Paul Lavings. A flat hand is 4-3-3-3 shape. The problem is, you have bit of everything. There is no long suit which will be good for trumps or long winners in no trumps. So poor is the hand that many hand evaluation systems add one demerit point for this shape hand. In a suit contract, you have probably got a deep loser or two somewhere in the hand.

Some bidding systems allow for quantitative no trump bids with such hands to allow partner a choice of contracts :_

1H – 3NT

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The partnership might have a specific agreement on the meaning of the 3NT bid. It occupies a lot of space and opener needs to have a tight description. One popular agreement is that it shows 12 – 14 HCP and a 4-3-3-3 shape with a 4 card minor. Opener can then make a choice of 3NT or 4H. If opener also has a balanced hand, 9 tricks (3NT) may be easier than 10 tricks (4H). This reasoning can be applied at pairs or teams. With all other opening hands, responder makes a different bid, say 2C.

It is similar reasoning that, in responding to 1NT with a 4-3-3-3 hand, Stayman is not used. Searching for a 4-4 fit with this hand is probably not worthwhile

♠AK32 ♠QJ54

♥K65 ♥A32

♦K75 ♦A32

♣QJ5 ♣432

4S is unlikely to succeed. However, 3NT has real chances.