



# JUDGMENT AT BRIDGE

BY MIKE LAWRENCE

2

BE A BETTER  
PLAYER  
& MORE  
DIFFICULT  
OPPONENT

**Judgment**  
**AT**  
**Bridge 2**

**MIKE LAWRENCE**

**Judgment**  
**AT**  
**Bridge 2**

**B**ARON  
♠ARCLAY  
BRIDGE SUPPLY

**Judgment at Bridge 2**  
Copyright © 2017 Mike Lawrence

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the permission of the publisher, Baron Barclay Bridge Supply.

Baron Barclay Bridge Supply  
3600 Chamberlain Lane, Suite 206  
Louisville, KY 40241  
U.S. and Canada: 1-800-274-2221  
Worldwide: 502-426-0410  
Fax: 502-426-2044

[www.baronbarclay.com](http://www.baronbarclay.com)

ISBN: 978-1-944201-07-4

Cover design by Morgan Hatfield  
Text design and composition by John Reinhardt Book Design

Printed in the United States of America

# DEDICATION TO IRA CORN

In 1968, Ira Corn had a dream. He wanted to create a winning bridge team. In doing this, he hired six bridge players and turned them into the team that would become known as the Dallas Aces, a name that still carries respect. I owe my life in the bridge world to Ira. This book is the 25th I have written, all of them stemming from my first book that was motivated by Ira.

*Ira got his dream, a deserved success.*

# Contents

## Introduction

1. Luck
2. A Winning Attitude
3. Introducing Dubious Bridge Rules
4. Preempting
5. Bidding When They Preempt
6. Overcalling at the One or Two Level
7. An Old Favorite – The Takeout Double
8. Responding to a Takeout Double
9. Partner Opens with a One-Bid and RHO Doubles for Takeout
10. Competing — The Value of Being In the Auction
11. High Value Conventions Worth Adding Immediately.
12. High Value Conventions That are Worth Adding Later
13. Conventions You Don't Need
14. Quickies
15. The Best For Last — The Art of the Penalty Double

# Introduction

**I**N 1976, SHORTLY AFTER writing my first book, *How to Locate Your Opponents' High Cards*, I decided to try again. My second book was *Judgment at Bridge*, a book that looked at judgment, a quality that goes beyond mere rules. It's something that you learn in bits and pieces, not in great gobs all at once. In *Judgment at Bridge*, I took my 16 years of experience and put them into the book, hopefully making the introduction to judgment easier than if you had to get it one bid, one card, one disaster, and one success at a time.

It was nice to have Alfred Sheinwold write an introduction to it.

Things change and today, more and better judgment is needed to keep up with changes in bidding and play. Well, not so much in play and defense but there definitely have been changes in bidding.

Judgment at Bridge 2 is more than a sequel. It takes all of *Judgment at Bridge* and adds to it. Bridge is still not a game of rules. It wasn't back in 1976 and it isn't now. It won't be in 2040, either. Bridge is a game of guidelines and ongoing experiences. In Judgment at Bridge 2, I will show you how to approach the game.

What do you need to be a better player?

What do you need to be a more difficult opponent?

There are a lot of things you can do to achieve both.

In addition, I am including a chapter offering opinions on various conventions that you should consider now, conventions you should consider shortly, and conventions and treatments that should be removed from your convention card.



There are many aspects to bridge and each comes with different issues.

## CHAPTER ONE

# Luck

**I**F YOU PLAY POKER, you can't win without some luck. If you get three aces, an opponent may have a straight. If you play bridge, your finesses will win now and then and they will lose now and then. Contrary to popular belief ("My finesses never win."), half of your finesses will win and half will lose. Take this hand.

You are West. You and your partner reach 6♦, a fine contract.

♠ K 4 3	♠ 7 5
♥ K J	♥ A Q 10 9
♦ A J 7 6 4	♦ K 10 9 5 3 2
♣ A Q 3	♣ K

North leads a heart and you see thirteen tricks. That's what you will get most of the time. But not today. South ruffs the heart. He returns a spade and North takes two spade tricks. Really bad luck today.

It gets worse. North leads another heart and South ruffs that too. Down three.

It would be understandable if you wondered why this was happening to you. It isn't any better when your partner notes that you can make 6NT

from your side of the table and will take thirteen tricks if the defense doesn't take the ♠A.

What does this hand mean? Just that luck plays a role. Learn that you can't be right 100% of the time. The best plans can turn sour. Bad luck happens. Live with it. Good luck happens too. Enjoy it.

## CHAPTER TWO

# A Winning Attitude

**O**NE OF THE GREATEST PLAYERS of our time, Robert Hamman, has a rule that really is a rule. Learn it, remember it, and follow it.

## Hamman's Rule

After a good result, stop reveling in it. After a terrible result, stop fretting about it. The only important thing in your life right now is the new hand you just picked up. It's the hand that deserves your attention.

I can't begin to tell you how many bad results have occurred in bridge because someone forgot this rule and spent time thinking about the last hand when he should have been thinking about the new one.

Instead of lamenting your bad luck, take the positive attitude that the next hand will be better. I guarantee you will get a better result if you go into it with positive anticipation than if you go into it dripping with despair.

The Hamman rule is known to many. It's been around for a long time. In spite of its proven success, only a few players have the ability to follow it whenever something bad happens. You have to be aware of the rule and when you get a horrible result, you have to be in tune with your emotions to keep from getting depressed. That's the hard part. Knowing the rule is one thing. Following the rule is another.

There is a side benefit to following the Hamman rule. One thing about having a positive attitude is that your partner will play better and your opponents will sense your mood and perhaps pull back a little. Players may not know they are doing it, but someone who sends out bad vibrations is giving emotional support to their opponents. Don't be that person.

**Homework:** Go online and read *Ecstasy*, by Mike Lawrence.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Introducing Dubious Bridge Rules

**T**HIS CHAPTER is an introduction to ideas that newer players will run into sooner or later. If you look at the books that teach you the basics, you will see lots of ‘rules’ that you should follow. You will be given the impression that what you are reading is how bridge is played by all players. These books give you a good start but you need to know that the advice they include won’t be valid forever. Here are two ‘rules’ that are not good once you begin to gain experience. I’ll show more of these ‘rules’ in later chapters.

## Two bad ‘rules’ regarding opening preempts

1. If you preempt with a weak two-bid you promise two of the top three honors.
2. Your preempts should guarantee that if you are doubled, you will go down less than the value of an opponent’s game.

My intent is to show you why many rules, in this case on bidding, are tainted with marginal advice. Here are my thoughts on them.

**BAD RULE #1: If you preempt with a weak two-bid you promise two of the top three honors.**

As you gain experience, you will see that this rule is too encompassing. The idea behind preempting is to make life hard on the opponents. *The gains from preempting far outweigh the requirement to be safe and sane.* This means that your weak two-bids will eventually deteriorate from the standards you read in your first book on bridge. Waiting for suits headed by the AK or AQ or KQ, or better, will keep you safe (well, sort of) but it means you won’t make many weak two-bids and your opponents won’t have to contend with them very often.

**BAD RULE #2: Your preempts should guarantee that if you are doubled, you won’t go down more than the value of an opponent’s game.**

This advice is seriously tainted too. Here’s your first problem hand in this book. You are the dealer in first seat with no one vulnerable.

♠ 43   ♥ KJ97643   ♦ 3   ♣ K64

Should you open 3♥? I wish I knew. The problem with this hand, and other hands that you might preempt with, is that you have no idea how many tricks you can take.

If this is the layout your partner's 5 high-card points will usually allow you to take eight tricks.

♠ 4 3	♠ 10 8 7 5
♥ K J 9 7 6 4 3	♥ Q 8 2
♦ 3	♦ 10 8 6
♣ K 6 4	♣ Q J 9

If this is the layout your partner's 10 high-card points may be useless.

♠ 4 3	♠ Q J 9
♥ K J 9 7 6 4 3	♥ 2
♦ 3	♦ K Q J 10 9
♣ K 6 4	♣ J 7 5 3

You have two spade losers, two to four heart losers, a diamond loser, and up to three club losers. Seven or eight losers are likely, which adds up to your taking five or six tricks. What this means is that *the success of your preempt depends on the luck of the draw*.

However, if you are insanely lucky, you might get eight winners if South has the ♥Q10 or ♥AQ and if you can get to dummy to lead a heart. This would be a case of luck being on your side.

Why is the 10 points in partner's second hand not a bigger help? The answer is that partner's high-card points aren't useful points, something you won't know about until after you see partner's hand. Partner's ♦KQJ109 might have been useful on some other hand, but they won't help here against sane defenders.

This leads to the following principle:

When you are thinking of making a preempt, you can't tell for sure if it will be a good idea or a bad idea.



So what is one to do? Here are my thoughts, which represent the thoughts of most experienced players. Be an optimistic, not a pessimistic.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Preempting

**F**ACT: YOUR OPPONENTS will bid better and play better if you leave them alone. Preempts, as well as other competitive bids, are necessary for you to become an aggressive opponent, one who is continually sticking thorns in the middle of the opponents' bidding where they will not be appreciated. In other words, be willing to make bids that quiet players won't make.

This is true of preempts, overcalls, and takeout doubles. I will go further on this later. The key here is that winning bridge is not passive bridge. Your attitude towards bidding should be aggressive, not passive. Be seen and be heard. Do not be invisible.

You've heard of the rule of two or three, used when considering a preempt. Forget it. It looks good on paper. But it doesn't work at the table.

There are four vulnerabilities you have to contend with.

### *No one is vulnerable*

In theory, your preempts should promise hands that won't go down more than two tricks. That means you can go down 300 if doubled, which is good if they have a game.

### *Both sides are vulnerable*

In theory, your preempts should promise hands that won't go down more than two tricks. That means you can go down 500 if doubled, which is good if they have a game.

### ***You are vulnerable and they are not vulnerable***

In theory, your preempts should promise hands that won't go down more than one trick. That means you can go down 200 if doubled, which is good if they have a game.

### ***You are not vulnerable and they are vulnerable***

In theory, your preempts should promise hands that won't go down more than three tricks. That means you can go down 500 if doubled, which is good if they have a game.

So, in a perfect world, you should play the rule of one or two or three.

In our imperfect world, when you are considering a preempt, you rarely know for sure how many tricks your hand is worth. This means the rule of one or two or three should be viewed as a guideline that reflects your judgment. I suggest that you keep the rule of one or two or three in the back of your mind, but in cases of uncertainty, you should be aggressive and make a preempt as opposed to not making a preempt.

Here are examples to show what I mean. You will note that many preempts don't follow the rule of one or two or three. If you look at these examples you may think I am touting the rule of two or three or four instead. In a way, I am.

You are South, not vulnerable.

What do you bid if they are not vulnerable?

What do you bid if they are vulnerable?

W   N   E   S  
                  ?

♠ K Q J 10 8 7 4   ♥ 4 3 2   ♦ 3   ♣ 9 5

This hand, unlike some others, can predictably take six tricks on its own. In theory, you should pass if the opponents are not vulnerable. And you should bid 3♠ if they are. It's not a good idea to open 2♠. Your partner will think you have six cards, and that may cause him to make a poor bid or misdefend.

If no one is vulnerable, then going down three for -500 is a bad result because if the opponents can make a game, it will get them less than 500.

If the opponents are vulnerable and you go down three tricks for -500, that isn't such a bad result because if they can make a game, it will get them more than 500 points.

The point here is that you need to consider more than how many tricks you can take when you preempt. You need to consider what the opponents' vulnerability is and you need to realize that you won't often be sure of what your hand is worth.

Having said that, the rule of being aggressive tells you that you should bid 3♠ when not vulnerable regardless of whether the opponents are vulnerable or not. If the opponents are vulnerable, you can safely preempt 3♠ since you should get six tricks. But passing does nothing to bother the opponents, while 3♠ does a lot.

You are South, vulnerable.

What do you bid if they are not vulnerable?

What do you bid if they are vulnerable?

W	N	E	S
			?
			♠ 3
			♥ A Q 9 8 7 4 3
			♦ 9
			♣ 10 9 6 4

Vulnerable versus not vulnerable, it's reasonable to pass with this hand. You have no idea how many tricks you can take. If partner has a singleton heart and a bunch of junk, you might be down four or five tricks. But if he has a modest heart fit and a little help in clubs, you might take nine tricks.

The aggressive player (optimist) expects that his partner has the ♥K and something in clubs. He bids 3♥ and if left there, expects he will make it. The bidder who follows rules to excess will pass. Whatever happens, he will hold his head high and say that he stayed out of trouble.

If vulnerable versus vulnerable, you have a greater cushion and should bid 3♥ with more comfort.

Keep these things in mind. All of them can happen.

1. Your partner may turn up with a trick.
2. Your partner may turn up with enough that he can compete.
3. Your partner may turn up with enough that you can make a game.
4. The opponents could get too high because of your bid.
5. Your opponents may get to the wrong suit.
6. Your partner might turn up with a good hand and can double the opponents.

## Here's a fact that should give you courage when it comes to preempting:

When you preempt, even if it turns out that you are going to go down too many tricks, it doesn't have to be bad if the opponents aren't able to double you. That can happen. Answer this simple question. Have you ever defended a hand where an opponent preempted and went down four or five tricks and you regretted not doubling it?

It has happened to everyone.

Trust me on this one. If you preempt wildly the fact is that you will escape undoubled more often than you might expect.

**EXAMPLE ONE** — A disgusting preempt that worked.

**NORTH-SOUTH VULNERABLE  
EAST DEALS**

♠ 2  
 ♥ 10 7 3  
 ♦ Q 10 8 4 3  
 ♣ K 5 4 3

♠ Q 10 9 6 5	♠ 4 3
♥ 2	♥ K J 9 6 5 4
♦ A K J 6	♦ 9 7 2
♣ A Q 6	♣ J 10

♠ A K J 8 7  
 ♥ A Q 8  
 ♦ 5  
 ♣ 9 8 7 2

W	N	E	S
		2♥	2♠
Dbl	P	P	P

East opens 2♥. Surely this hand doesn't qualify for a 2♥ preempt if you follow the rule of one or two or three. This hand has nine top losers, and there could be a lot more if the heart suit has more than two losers in it.

East opens 2♥ on his stinker. South bids 2♠, a sane bid that many would make. West thinks it's his birthday and doubles. All kinds of things can happen from this point on but 2♠ doubled will be the contract much of the time. A great result for East-West. Is it deserved? You decide.

## Postmortem

What is clear is that if East doesn't open 2♥, the bidding will go differently. All kinds of things can happen but East-West getting 500 or so is not one of them. Among the likely things that can happen, North-South might get to a club contract. That would be good for North-South. Only if East opens with his wretched 2♥ will East-West get a penalty. It may cause South to make a bid that could be punished.

There is always a downside to opening 2♥ with the East hand. It's easy to show a layout where 2♥ is doubled and set 1100. No need to show such a hand.

Here's another possible layout if East opens 2♥. Things are different here.

### EXAMPLE TWO

**NORTH-SOUTH VULNERABLE  
EAST DEALS**



♠ 5 2  
 ♥ 10 7 3  
 ♦ A Q 6 5 4  
 ♣ A 5 4

♠ Q J 10 9 8	♠ 4 3
♥ 2	♥ K J 9 6 5 4
♦ K J 10	♦ 9 7 2
♣ K Q 6 3	♣ J 10

♠ A K 7 6  
 ♥ A Q 8  
 ♦ 8 3  
 ♣ 9 8 7 2

W	N	E	S
		2♥	P
P	P		

East again opens 2♥ on his lousy hand.

South can't bid. He has no suit to bid and his shape is wrong for a takeout double. There's no safe bid for South with his 13-count.

West passes and hopes no one bids. West should worry that North can double 2♥ for takeout and that South will pass, in which case a large penalty is possible.

North has 10 points, which might be enough to bid with if he had better shape or a suit he could bid at the two level, but this hand isn't worth a bid. North passes. No one can double but 2♥ is such a bad contract that East-West are going to get a poor result anyway.

The defense to 2♥ will be messy. South will at some time lead his ♦8. The defense can now take the following tricks:

Two spades  
Two diamonds and a diamond ruff  
Two hearts  
A club

Down three.

Due to vagaries in the play, 2♥ might be down four. Minus 200. Will that be a good result for North-South?

This is probably bad for East-West. If East passes, South will open and North-South will get to some partscore and will make a small plus score.

On this layout, East's 2♥ bid gets a poor result. If anyone can double 2♥, unlikely, East-West will get a horrible result. But who can double? Not South. Not North. This is just another case of a preempt deserving a bad result and in this case, the fates allow it.

But wait! There's more . . .

It could be worse. There is a chance that North-South will wander into 3NT after East's 2♥ bid. If this happens, declarer can take nine tricks due to good luck in the diamond suit.

What does all this mean? It means that when you open a preempt, just about anything can happen. Think back about all the times you heard someone say, "My opponent opened 3♦ on that rag and he got away with it. Grrr."

Finally, there is the extreme case where your preempt isn't doubled and it goes down a lot but the opponents have a cold game that they can't bid. You'll no doubt remember a few cases where their preempt kept you out of your game.

## Postmortem advice

Remember that if you preempt, the only way for the opponents to double you for penalty is for one of them to make a takeout double, and then his partner has to know to pass. It is odds-against that this will happen. Yes, it does happen, but not as often as the fearful authors of books on preempting claim. On the last hand, I discussed the fact that neither South nor North could double. It's a fact that some preempts are undisturbed and allowed to go down two or three or four tricks, undoubled. Sometimes going down a lot undoubled is good. On this hand, going down a lot undoubled was bad.

Let me say that I disagree with East's 2♥ bid. It's just too weak for my taste. But it is good enough for some players.

## The upshot of preempting

Why preempt?

Is it to show partner what you have so your side can bid more efficiently?

Not really.

It can happen that a preempt will help you get to a good contract but the real reason for preempting is to disturb the opponents' bidding. The more times you can bring yourself to preempt, the more likely it is that your bid will cause troubles for your opponents. This is true whether you make an opening preempt or a preemptive jump overcall. It's all about sowing confusion.

In the first example layout above, East's 2♥ bid was rancid but it sufficed to cause South to make a good bid that didn't work out.

Sometimes it will cause an opponent to make a bid he shouldn't make, and he'll pay a price for his bad judgment.

In the second example layout above, East's 2♥ bid could have been punished but it wasn't. Even when you're in trouble, you may escape if your bad (mistimed?) bid is not detected.

## Your partner knows everything.

Remember this. When you preempt, your partner knows you have a preemptive hand. He knows that your hand will fall into your partnership's parameters for opening with a preempt.

## **Your opponents are in the dark.**

Your opponents, on the other hand, have no clue about what their partner has. They have to bid if they want to find out. Sometimes when they bid, their partner has a good enough hand and all is well. In the first example above, South found his partner with a horrible hand. But even if the opponents discover enough points to make something, they still have to decide what that ‘something’ is.

When you preempt, either (or both) of your opponents has to make a guess at an awkward level.

If you open a weak two-bid, the opponents have to start their bidding at the two or three level.

If you open with a weak three-bid, your opponents have to start their bidding at the three or four level.

If you open with a four-bid, your opponents have to start their bidding at the four or five level.

## **Summing up:**

The point of preempting is mostly to hurt your opponents’ bidding. You should start learning early how far you can go to do this. I will show you examples shortly.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Bidding When They Preempt

**H**ERE ARE SOME of the problems you may have to contend with. Note that I'm giving you questions. There are a few answers, but mostly thoughts. The thing for you to do is to note how your frustration level rises as the level of their bid gets higher. When they open with a one-bid, you have a range of problems. When they open with a preempt, your problems become more strained. As their preempts get higher and higher, your difficulties increase accordingly.

NO ONE VULNERABLE  
RIGHT HAND OPPONENT DEALS

♠ 874   ♥ 54   ♦ AKJ64   ♣ AQ6

Nice hand.

*What do you bid if your RHO passes?*

You open 1♦. No problem.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 1♠?*

You bid 2♦. Good suit. Good hand. But you'll have to find partner with a little something to be safe.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 2♠?*

Getting difficult. You can bid 3♦, but it's scary. If your partner doesn't like your diamonds, there could be trouble.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 3♠?*

Pass. No way can you bid at this level.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 4♠?*

Pass. The dangers of bidding over 3♠ are magnified by the fact that you are a level higher.

♠ 87   ♥ 5   ♦ QJ874   ♣ AKQ106

This is a modest hand that may be useful if you find partner with a fit and some good values.

*What do you bid if your RHO passes?*

Open 1♦ and bid clubs next if the auction permits it. Nothing to worry about yet.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 1♥?*

Bid 2NT, showing the minors. Don't be thrilled, though. 2NT is a good bid that you hope will mess up the opponents' bidding.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 2♥?*

Pass. One thing you will learn is that 2NT over a weak two-bid does not show the minors. It shows a good notrump hand of about 15-18 points.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 3♥?*

Pass. Don't be tempted. You have a relatively weak hand.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 4♥?*

Pass. No way that your hand is worth bidding with at the five level.

♠ AKJ3   ♥ J62   ♦ QJ   ♣ KQ84



This is a 17-point hand that has some good cards. That doesn't mean it's an invincible hand, though.

*What do you bid if your RHO passes?*

As is the case about 95% of the time, it is easier to bid when your opponents pass. Make your normal opening bid, either 1NT or 1♣.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 1♦?*

Make a takeout double. The hand is still relatively easy to bid.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 2♦?*

Getting harder. A takeout double is sane but if your partner's only four-card suit is hearts, it could be that passing is best.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 3♦?*

Only really aggressive players will double. It could work. But not always. If your partner has a weak hand, there is very little future here. Note that your diamond honors are probably worthless.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 4♦?*

Pass. Bidding with what is really a 14-point hand with only fair distribution is dangerous.

♠ Q7 ♥ AQ ♦ KQJ4 ♣ KQJ83

Finally, a big hand. Is it immune to a preempt?

*What do you bid if your RHO passes?*

You might open 2NT. You might open 1♣. Two perfectly sane choices.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 1♠?*

Not so easy. You don't have heart support. Double is nervous. You can double and then bid clubs, but that gets you to the three level. I expect most would double but it isn't right to fall in love with this hand. You really hope partner can show some interest over there.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 2♠?*

Even tougher. I'm guessing 3♣ is the right bid. But it's a guess.

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 3♠?*

Call for a doctor. This is the kind of situation your opponent is hoping for when he preempts. He is hoping you will have a difficult problem. Here, that's what just happened. If you double and your partner bids 4♥, you may be way too high. In fact, 4♥ might go down three or four tricks. If you double and your partner bids 4♥ and it gets doubled, you now know for sure that 4♥ is going down three or four or five tricks. All your high-card points are not going to help if your LHO has ♥KJ985 along with a couple of aces.

How will you feel if you bid 3NT and the opponents run off the first seven spades and then cash the ♦A?

How will you feel if you bid 4♣ and LHO doubles? How will you feel when your partner puts down a 3-point hand with a singleton club? Yikes!

The nightmare doesn't end. If you don't like hearing RHO open 3♠, how do you like the next situation?

*What do you bid if your RHO opens 4♠?*

This hand has 20 high-card points, more than any of the previous hands. Yet the frustration level rises dramatically. It's not an easy hand to bid if you get to open. Putting up with RHO's spade bids doesn't make your job any easier. Here's a sobering thought. Do you think you can set 4♠? It's possible that RHO will take seven or eight spade tricks. He might get a heart trick if the king is on your left. And, their side might have both of the minor-suit aces.

***Here is a short quiz:***

**YOU ARE VULNERABLE**

W	N	E	S
		3♠	?

♠ 87   ♥ 103   ♦ AKJ9864   ♣ 43

Pass. If RHO had passed, you would have opened 3♦. When RHO opens 3♠, your entire world changes. You can't preempt. They did that first. You can't bid 4♦ vulnerable. You need partner to have an opening bid to make 4♦ a safe bet. And if he has an opening bid he may raise you to 5♦, which would rate to go down.

W	N	E	S
		2♥	?
♠ A763	♥ KQ75	♦ 32	♣ AJ8

Your plan to open the bidding is shot after East's preempt. You shouldn't double. And you don't have enough to bid notrump. There are some quite good hands that don't qualify for a bid after RHO's preempt.

W	N	E	S
	1♣	3♦	?
♠ QJ3	♥ QJ8763	♦ Q7	♣ J8

If RHO had passed, you would have bid 1♥. Here, RHO did something rude. He bid 3♦. It's a weak bid, much like an opening 3♦ bid would be. You can't always tell what they have for a preempt because different players have different ideas about preempts. The one thing that is clear is that you have to pass. If you bid 3♥, it's a new suit and it is a forcing bid. If partner has a normal minimum hand without a heart fit, your side may be in trouble. Accept that East has done something annoying, pass, and take whatever happens. Bidding because an opponent has shown weakness is not a good plan.

One of the habits that you will unlearn soon is that you must not be coerced into making bad bids. Accept your bad luck when this happens. You must wait for a proper hand to bid with because your partner will be expecting you to have a proper hand. The hand here meets no standards for

a 3♥ bid. You need something like a nice 11 points. The hand you have is a poor 9 points. Keep in mind that just because East is weak it doesn't mean West is weak. It's possible that West has the best hand at the table.

On a good day, your partner will bid again. Perhaps you can bid something then.

W	N	E	S
		2♦	?
♠ 2	♥ KQ10984	♦ 8763	♣ K2

Some might bid 2♥. It's risky, though, to bid with this weak a hand. One bid you should not make nor even consider is 3♥. A jump bid over a preempt shows a good hand, not a weak hand. I include this hand here to remind you of this fact.

**RULE – A jump overcall after a preempt shows a strong hand, not a weak hand.**

♠ 84	♥ AQJ876	♦ 3	♣ AKJ4
------	----------	-----	--------

3♥ is invitational, not weak. You show a good six-card suit and around 17–18 support points. If your partner has a couple of hearts and 8 useful-looking points, he should raise to game. This is a good understanding to have in your partnership.

## Postmortem

The clear lesson from these hands is that bidding against preempts is a poor way to make a living. If you take this fact to heart, you will join the ranks of players who preempt aggressively. Make the opponents' lives more difficult in the same way they made your life more difficult on the hands in the previous pages.

### **IMPORTANT: How pushy can you be when you preempt?**

*I can't tell you what's right for your partnership* but I can give you a series of hands and tell you what's right for me.

You should realize that I am only a moderately aggressive preemptor. There are some players who make a living out of preempting on hands that would not occur to me.

Here are example hands of possible preempts, along with some comments. Unless a different vulnerability is noted, no one is vulnerable for these hands.

IN FIRST SEAT, NO ONE VULNERABLE, SOUTH DEALS

W	N	E	S
			?

♠ 84   ♥ KJ9763   ♦ A4   ♣ 854

This is a normal 2♥ bid. Only diehards will pass with this one. If vulnerable, I would open 2♥ if I had the ♥KJ10763 instead. The ten-spot is a useful addition.

♠ K3   ♥ 43   ♦ KQJ874   ♣ 982

Virtually everyone who plays 2♦ is weak would open 2♦ with this. Curiously, not much good comes of this bid. The reason is that everyone who plays weak two-bids will open 2♦. If you bid 2♦ and you get a good result, it is likely that the same result will occur elsewhere. You still want to bid 2♦, though, because if you don't, your opponents will have an easier time than when you do open 2♦.

*Further*, if you don't bid diamonds and your partner ends up on opening lead he may not lead a diamond, which you would like. Also, introducing an important point, if you pass and later bid diamonds, your partner may expect you have just five of them.

The times when your preempt gains big is when you preempt on a hand that others pass. Your opponents have to deal with a problem that not many will face and if they do poorly, you will get a fine result.

**IMPORTANT: If you preempt on a hand that isn't a universal preempt, the result will not be universal. You will win some, and you will lose some. If you get more good results than bad results, you will come out ahead. This means that you need to accept that all preempts are not successful and you will have some really bad results. Well, the stock market is like that. Pick 50 stocks and hope that more of them come out ahead. If you pick with wisdom and not emotion you will do well.**

W   N   E   S  
                    ?

♠ 7   ♥ Q 10 9 8 6 5 3   ♦ K 4 3   ♣ 8 3

*Don't make a weak two-bid with a seven-card suit.* Bid 3♥ if it is your agreed style. If you open 2♥, your partner will 'know' you have six cards and he will bid and defend with that in mind. There is one situation where you might break this guideline. If you have 7-2-2-2 shape and are vulnerable and are unwilling to open with a three-bid, you can consider opening a weak two. This shape is referred to as *the ugly swan*.

♠ QJ8763   ♥ 43   ♦ 4   ♣ Q875

I would bid 2♠ with this. The urgency to get in the opponents' way would make me do it. My suit is not classic but my shape is good. If I pass, it will be difficult to bid later.

♠ K2   ♥ AK10653   ♦ 763   ♣ 92

2♥. A near maximum. Here's an important consideration for you.

**REMINDER: What will partner think if you pass and later compete with 2♥?**

If you pass and then decide to bid 2♥ later (if possible), your partner will think you have only a good five-card suit. He would think that with six, you would likely have preempted.

If you ever pass when you could have opened with a preempt, you allow the opponents a hassle-free auction.

♠ 4   ♥ J109854   ♦ KJ4   ♣ 432

2♥ isn't for me. However, there are those who do bid 2♥ with this hand. These players play a high-risk game that isn't for everyone.

♠ 43   ♥ KQJ105   ♦ 5432   ♣ 76

I would pass. Some would open 2♥ even though they have only five hearts. They would say that the good suit is enough. Suit yourself. I don't recommend this strategy for now. If you open a weak two with five cards in first or second seat, your partner will think you have six and that will give him a false premise. I'm willing to fudge a little with suit quality but not suit length. I admit I would be tempted to bid 2♥. But I would resist it.

IN SECOND SEAT  
NO ONE VULNERABLE

## EAST DEALS

W	N	E	S
		P	?

Just a small note. In first seat you can be reasonably pushy. Some say that in second seat it is wise to be sounder. The idea is that with your RHO passing, you have a good chance of finding partner with a good hand. Why preempt if your partner is the one who ends up guessing what to do? I suggest that in second seat you abandon the extreme weak two-bids, but continue with mildly aggressive weak two-bids as well as the traditional weak two-bids.

## IN THIRD SEAT NO ONE VULNERABLE NORTH DEALS

W	N	E	S
	P	P	?

In third seat, you can cast off any and all reservations. When you have a weak hand you know the hand belongs to the opponents. Take this 6-point hand:

♠ QJ954    ♥ 54    ♦ QJ54    ♣ 65

You expect the opponents have a game or close to it. They might have a slam.

Open 2♠ and feel that it is an automatic bid. You are sure that West has a good hand. Let him start his bidding over your 2♠ bid. If you pass, West will have all of his science available to him. If you open 2♠, he will have lost most of his tools. Don't miss opportunities like this one.

Here's a fact. In third seat, if no one is vulnerable, perhaps 40% of your weak two-bids will be on five-card suits.



**RULE – When your partner opens a weak two-bid in third seat, don't raise him without something useful. Four trumps with some shape is the best kind of raise. If you have three excellent trumps, raising is OK but not mandatory. If he has a third-seat dog, he won't appreciate your competing with a boring hand.**

♠ 874   ♥ K109653   ♦ J104   ♣ 3

Another third-seat opportunity. Bid 2♥. A few would bid 3♥. Don't do that. But be aware that some of your opponents might.

♠ 84   ♥ 53   ♦ AKJ985   ♣ Q84

This is a perfect weak two-bid in first or second seat. In third seat, you might choose to bid 3♦. The point of this hand is that if you correctly adopt extremely pushy weak twos in third seat, your partner won't expect you to have a good hand when you open a weak two-bid.

♠ KQJ107   ♥ 65432   ♦ 82   ♣ 8

Bid 2♠. The five-card suit is fine for a third-seat bid. Don't worry about having five hearts. The only thing that interests you is taking away bidding space from your LHO.

You can see that you won't like being raised to 3♠ with some ordinary hand that has three trumps.

#### IN THIRD SEAT, NOT VULNERABLE VERSUS VULNERABLE NORTH DEALS

W	N	E	S
	P	P	?

Third-seat preempts are often obnoxious. When you are in third seat and find that they are vulnerable and you are not, you are in what is known as the *green zone*, where proper bridge is suspended for a moment. In third seat, not vulnerable vs. vulnerable, if you have a bad hand you suspect they can make a game, and that means you have room to go down three tricks if doubled. That's the best situation in the world. The following is a true story.

♠ 97653   ♥ 54   ♦ 64   ♣ 10743

Does this look like a weak two-bid to you? I don't think so. But it did to a well-known expert. He opened 2♠, which would have gone down eight tricks if he played the hand. This would have cost 2000 if doubled.

But that didn't happen. The opponents bid to 6NT and they took twelve tricks. They had a grand slam if they played in the right suit. What was their 'right' suit? Spades! The weak two-bid made a mess of the opponents' bidding. In case you are wondering, his opponents were two world champions.

♠ 7   ♥ QJ7654   ♦ 54   ♣ 6542

Some would open 3♥ in third seat if the opponents are vulnerable and you are not. If this is too rich, then try 2♥. You have no expectations of making anything. Instead, all of your hopes are focused on causing the opponents to miss their best result.

You will see that in third seat, you are entitled to bid more aggressively than in any other seat, the idea being that with partner having passed, you are all the more sure they can make something. Here are three hands:

1. ♠ KQJ10874   ♥ 432   ♦ 3   ♣ 95

This is the classic hand. I showed it to you earlier.

In first seat, bid 3♠ if not vulnerable.

This is an acceptable but minimum vulnerable 3♠ bid.

Same for second seat.

Same for third seat.

If you have this hand in fourth seat, pass quickly. The opponents have missed their chance to do something.

2. ♠ 74 ♥ 43 ♦ KQ10975 ♣ J75

In first seat, bid 2♦ if not vulnerable.

Pass if vulnerable.

Same for second seat.

In third seat:

Consider bidding 2♦ if both sides are vulnerable.

Consider opening 3♦ if you are not vulnerable.

In fourth seat, pass it out.

3. ♠ 84 ♥ K54 ♦ Q ♣ AK98732

In first or second seat, open 1♣ no matter what the vulnerability. Don't preempt in first or second seat when you have an opening bid.

In third seat, it is reasonable to open 3♣ no matter what the vulnerability. This is a case of preempting with a decent hand when you are fairly sure the opponents own the hand.

In fourth seat, it's best to pass the hand out. The opponents didn't open but that doesn't mean they don't have a major-suit fit that can outbid you and your clubs.

### ***One sidebar on how you present yourself:***

This is an appropriate place to put in a note about how you present yourself.

When you are making a bid and aren't certain of what to do, do you show your uncertainty? Do you poke around the bidding box before putting a bid on the table? Or, if you aren't using bidding boxes, do you quaver just a little when you make your bid?

Then, if you are on opening lead, do you futz around with your cards, fondling one and then another before putting out your lead while shaking your head?

If you are playing the hand and discover bad news, do you lament out loud that you are tired of trumps dividing 4-1 all day? If you do that, you are telling the opponents you are in trouble and are making life a bit easier for them. Wait until the hand is over to do your complaining.

*The point of all of these mannerisms* is that if your opponents see you aren't sure of what you are doing, they will play better against you than if you show confidence at all times. You can confirm this by reflecting on the kind of opponent that bothers you. One of their qualities is that they act like they know they are doing the right thing, and that can cause you to come to some bad conclusions.

I put this observation here because it is just after the discussion on preempts. I have suggested you preempt more than you currently do, and I am hoping you will do it brimming with confidence, so that your opponents won't infer you are doing something a little odd. Let them find out after the bidding, not during the bidding.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Overcalling at the One or Two Level

**T**HERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS to get into the bidding when the opponents open. Takeout doubles and overcalls are the two main ones. You have other bids but these two are the most common. The one I will discuss here is the overcall. Most players know their way around overcalls but there are a few things that should be added.

## What is needed for a one-level overcall?

The first thing you need to decide is what your minimum hand is. I offer these thoughts:

You need standards. If you are not vulnerable and have a fair five-card suit to offer, I suggest you should have 9 points. Whatever your agreements are, you should stick to them. If you agree that you need 9 points to overcall and you do it with 7, your partner, expecting more, may get you too high.

Here are a few minimum one-level overcalls when not vulnerable:

W	N	E	S
		1♦	?
♠ A Q 9 8 5	♥ 5 4	♦ 5 4 3	♣ K 8 4

This should be as weak as your one-level overcalls can go. Note that you have all working cards. Your suit has some spots, too. If your spades were ♠AQ543, your hand wouldn't be as good. Don't ignore spot cards. They are often the difference between success and failure.

♠ A K J 10 5	♥ 5 4	♦ 6 4 3	♣ 8 7 3
--------------	-------	---------	---------

If you can't stand passing, this is an acceptable stretch. Note that a 1♠ bid hinders the opponents more than a 1♥ bid. 1♠ gets in the way of a heart bid by your LHO.

♠ 4 3	♥ A K J 10 4	♦ 5 4 3	♣ 5 4 3
-------	--------------	---------	---------

You could bid 1♥ here but be aware that 1♥ doesn't get in LHO's way. He can bid 1♠ if he wishes. Also be aware that with this distribution, you

have *lots* of potential losers in the other suits.

♠ 7 6 4    ♥ K J 7 6 4    ♦ Q J 4    ♣ Q 5

You have 9 high-card points but your suit isn't very good, your diamond values are boring, and your ♣Q may be useless. There's no need to start an argument with this kind of hand. Imagine that your partner raises you to 2♥ with 7 points. Say this is the layout:

♠ 7 6 4	♠ J 9 8 3
♥ K J 7 6 4	♥ A Q 8
♦ Q J 4	♦ 9 8 7
♣ Q 5	♣ 10 6 3

Even though your partner has excellent heart support, you have seven top losers. You have three likely spade losers, two diamond losers for sure and perhaps three if they can ruff the third round, and you have two easy club losers. This could add up to down three on a bad day. It might be doubled, which would turn a poor result into a bad result. Better to give up on hands like this. If you overcall on marginal hands too often, your partner will get nervous about raising you.

## Overcalls at the two level are worlds apart from overcalls at the one level.

Here are the reasons:

*Overcalls at the two level are less frequent than at the one level.*

Because you are bidding at the two level, you require different values from a one-level overcall. The first and most obvious reason is that you are at a level higher and thus are in more danger of going down too many.

Here's a fact that most players never learn until they have played a lot of bridge:

*The biggest penalties come at the two and three levels.* When I ask people where the biggest penalties come from, the most common answer is that doubling someone at a higher level will get you the best return. They dream of having five trumps to the KJ1098 and two aces, with the opponents at the five level.

Totally wrong.

Here's why.

If your opponents bid to the four level or higher, it is usually the case that they have talked it over and have learned that they have sufficient values and trumps to justify being at that level. You aren't going to have five trumps to the KJ1098 and two aces when your opponents have an intelligent auction to the five level. About the only time you get rich by doubling someone at a high level is when they didn't have time to discuss it. For example, if you open 4♥ and the next player bids 4♠, the player who bid 4♠ had to take some chances. If he bids 4♠ and gets an unlucky dummy, he may be down a lot.

Look at the following auction by the opponents:

1♠	3♠
4♠	

They have had a conversation and as a result, opener learned how many points the partnership has and how many trumps they have. When opener



bids 4♠, he expects to make it. 4♠ may not make but it's usually a good contract.

Similarly, if they have an auction to five of a minor or to a slam, they usually will either make their contract or at worst will be down one as a result of poor luck.

Now think about this auction:

**NO ONE VULNERABLE**

W	N	E	S
		1♠	?

Here's one example hand out of millions that South might have:

♠ A 6   ♥ K 5   ♦ K J 10 8 7 4   ♣ J 10 4

Would you bid 2♦?

Without going into the details about what South needs to bid 2♦ (more on this shortly), I can say that this is a fine 2♦ overcall. It has a good six-card suit. And it has two likely tricks on the side.

How is this going to fare? The fact is that you can't tell.

You don't know if your partner has 2 points or 10 points or 14 points or more. Would be nice to know.

You don't know if your partner has zero diamonds, one diamond, two diamonds, or more diamonds. Would be nice to know.

Here are three possible layouts:

**LAYOUT ONE**

♠ J 10 7 5  
♥ A 10 9 7  
♦ A Q  
♣ Q 8 6

♠ Q 3  
♥ 6 4 3 2  
♦ 9 2  
♣ 9 7 5 3 2

♠ K 9 8 4 2  
♥ Q J 8  
♦ 6 5 3  
♣ A K

♠ A 6  
♥ K 5  
♦ K J 10 8 7 4  
♣ J 10 4

In layout one, South bids 2♦, a fine bid by my lights, and North bids 3NT. North has all suits stopped, opening bid values, and two nice diamond honors. North will usually take ten tricks. He will always take nine. What happens is that South gets some luck and finds partner with enough to make a game.

#### LAYOUT TWO

♠ J752  
♥ Q974  
♦ Q52  
♣ 98

♠ 103  
♥ J632  
♦ A9  
♣ A7653

♠ KQ984  
♥ A108  
♦ 63  
♣ KQ2

♠ A6  
♥ K5  
♦ KJ10874  
♣ J104

In layout two, South bids 2♦ and finds North with a poor hand. Only 5 points. But among them is something nice in diamonds. North has three to the queen and he also has a doubleton club. South can make 2♦ if he is allowed to play it there.

### LAYOUT THREE

♠ J 7 5 2  
 ♥ 10 9 7 4  
 ♦ 5  
 ♣ 9 8 6 3

♠ 10 3  
 ♥ A 6 3 2  
 ♦ A Q 9 6  
 ♣ K 7 5

♠ K Q 9 8 4  
 ♥ Q J 8  
 ♦ 3 2  
 ♣ A Q 2

♠ A 6  
 ♥ K 5  
 ♦ K J 10 8 7 4  
 ♣ J 10 4

In layout three, South makes his 2♦ overcall and learns that this was a bad time to bid. If East-West double 2♦, the result will be that South will lose a ton of tricks.

He has to lose a spade.

He has to lose two hearts.

He has to lose three diamonds.

And he has to lose three clubs.

That adds up to nine losers which is down four. Minus 800.

“I only bid 2♦,” said South. “I had my bid.”

Indeed he did. What South didn’t have was good luck.

## Luck counts.

What happened was that South made a good bid and he was unlucky.

The point of this discussion is that the big penalties often come at a low level, and players today have learned to look for them.

Since bidding at the two level comes with more worries than bidding at the one level, it is logical that you need a better hand for a two-level overcall than a one-level overcall.

## What do you need to overcall at the two level?

I'm talking about bidding when your RHO opens with a one-bid. I am not talking about overcalling when RHO opens with 1NT. Nor am I talking about an auction where RHO opens with a weak 2♥ bid and you are thinking of bidding 2♠.

Here are the requirements:

1. You need an opening bid.
2. You need a good suit. Five cards is absolutely required, and six is nice.
3. You should avoid bidding at the two level if you have a balanced hand.
4. You can use your judgment *when you have some distribution or when you have a nice six-card suit.*

Here are some examples. In all of these examples, the opening bid will be 1♠. Assume no one vulnerable. I will make observations about vulnerability when appropriate.

*Don't skim over these examples. They are meaningful.*

I'll start with a horrible example.

W	N	E	S
		1♠	?
♠ 9 6	♥ QJ5	♦ A Q 8 6 4	♣ K 6 5

Pass. Anyone who bids 2♦ with this hand is inviting the end of the world. If your partner puts down two or fewer diamonds and 6 or fewer points, the expected result will be around -800 points. Could be bad for another reason. The opponents might bid 3NT, which may make if your partner leads your suit rather than his own suit. Let's face it. You don't really want a diamond lead. There's almost no way to get a good result

except when partner has an opening bid and can bid a game. Remember this hand.

**RULE – Overcalling at the two level with a broken five-card suit and a balanced hand, especially one with boring high cards, is dangerous. The fact that you have an opening bid isn't going to save you.**

Opening bids don't automatically take tricks.

Tricks are won by a good trump suit and quality points.

♠ 8763   ♥ 3   ♦ KQJ107   ♣ AQ2

Bid 2♦ with this. You have an excellent five-card suit and you have quality high-card points one the side. Don't worry too much about having four cards in spades. If you are lucky enough to find partner with some diamonds, you may be able to ruff a spade or two in dummy. No promises. Just pointing out that there is hope. Your potential is good enough that you might bid 2♦ vulnerable.

♠ KJ84   ♥ A2   ♦ QJ10974   ♣ 8

Go ahead and bid 2♦ even if vulnerable. This is a case of appreciating the value of a six-card suit. This hand has only 11 high-card points but everything it has is positive. Would you believe that in my classes, almost as many people want to bid 2♦ with the first hand (♠ 9 6, ♥ Q J 5, ♦ A Q 8 6 4, ♣ K 6 5) as on this hand?

♠ 3   ♥ J874   ♦ AKJ94   ♣ A98

When RHO opens 1♠, you should double. Don't bid 2♦. You should double on any vulnerability. *If East had opened 1♥*, you would bid 2♦ since a takeout double is no longer an option.

♠ 654 ♥ K2 ♦ AKQ85 ♣ 963

Congratulations if you passed. You have a good suit but you have a lot of minuses.

You have only five diamonds.

You have three little spades.

You have a balanced hand.

In practice, most players ignore the warnings and bid 2♦, and they escape some of the time. On hands where partner has something good, the 2♦ bid works out. But when partner has a poor hand, you might take only three tricks. Note that if partner has the ♠K and the ♥K, they may be useless. Scary.

If vulnerable, please pass. Even if you are undoubled, down two is -200.

**Vulnerable, bad results come much quicker than when not vulnerable.**

♠ 2 ♥ AQ10876 ♦ 43 ♣ KJ87

This 10-point hand is worth a 2♥ overcall. You have a good six-card suit and you have a good side suit that may help you take tricks. This is the kind of hand where a two-level bid doesn't need opening-bid values. The extra heart is a huge additional value and your shape is a big plus because you have fewer obvious losers. This hand is a clear 2♥ bid vulnerable, too.

♠ 3 ♥ 43 ♦ AJ10975 ♣ A1082

How low can you go? I suggest 2♦ on this hand. You have an excellent suit, you have good shape, you have two aces, and you have good spot cards. Bid 2♦ on any vulnerability. This is about as weak a hand as I would have for a 2♦ bid.

**Keep in mind that some overcalls will bother the opponents' bidding more than others.**



On the hand above, I asked what you would bid over a 1♠ opening bid.

Would it make any difference to you if the opening bid was 1♥ instead?

It does. If you bid 2♦ over 1♥, you make it harder for your LHO to bid spades. He may have wished to respond 1♠. He can't do that when you bid 2♦. Your bid is obstructive. For a lot more on this idea, I suggest you get my book *The Complete Book on Overcalls*, where I was able to devote more than a few pages to this topic.

♠ QJ5   ♥ J9   ♦ AKJ95   ♣ AJ3

Bid 1NT. If you were the dealer, you would open 1NT. No reason not to make that bid instead of 2♦. Importantly, you have a spade stopper. 1NT promises a stopper in opener's suit. It does not promise a stopper in the other suits.

One reason for bidding 1NT instead of 2♦ is that *1NT shows that you have a good hand*, which 2♦ does not do. And 1NT is very easy for your partner to respond to. He knows what you have and he knows if his hand is useful.

## Postmortem to one- or two-level overcalls after a one-level opening bid

### ***Overcalls at the one level***

As long as you don't push too hard, your one-level overcalls can and should be fairly aggressive. My suggested minimum is a nice five-card suit with about 9 good points when not vulnerable, 10 high-card points when vulnerable. Always consider if your bid makes it hard for your LHO to bid at the one level.

### ***Overcalls at the two level***

Two-level overcalls should be more respectful of the dangers of being at the two level. *Those dangers are real.*

Two-level overcalls should be avoided on balanced hands with nervous high-card values. A decent six-card suit is best but a very good five-card suit is OK as long as the rest of the hand has something useful.

My suggestion for a non-vulnerable two-level overcall is around 12 nice high-card points, but 10 is acceptable if your suit is a good-or-better six-card suit and your side values are good too. Spot cards in your suit and useful shape are always pluses.

My suggested range for a vulnerable two-level overcall is about one point more. If you are vulnerable, you should be aware of that fact and you should consider it when making your bid.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# An Old Favorite - The Takeout Double

**D**ID YOU REALIZE that a ‘takeout double’ is actually a convention? Until someone convinces me otherwise, I believe it’s the oldest convention in existence. One would think that after a hundred years, players would have a good handle on it.

Not so.

I wrote a huge book on the takeout double (*The Complete Book on Takeout Doubles*). The discussion here in Judgment at Bridge 2 will be limited to the specific situation where your RHO opens with one or two of a suit and you make a takeout double. This is the most common takeout double situation. Familiarity doesn’t seem to guarantee that it is understood, though, so I will give a number of examples of the initial takeout double.

In the ensuing chapter I will discuss some hands where you are responding to a takeout double. I will discuss weak hands, modestly invitational hands, and will glance at stronger hands.

## Examples of takeout doubles

Assume no one vulnerable. Some comments may be added to cover situations where the vulnerability is different.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	?

♠ 8754   ♥ AQ54   ♦ KQJ5   ♣ 8

Double no matter who is vulnerable. This is the classic takeout double of a one-bid. You will find it on page one of every chapter on takeout doubles.

Opening bid, support for all suits, good shape. Perfect.

♠ J54   ♥ KQ87   ♦ A763   ♣ K3

Another good double. This one has one small flaw that is often quoted as being terrible. It has only three cards in spades. Some players use as a rule that a double promises four-card support for all of the unbid majors. Life isn't perfect and neither are takeout doubles. This hand has proper values, decent shape, and it comes with this caveat. You either double now or lose your chance to bid. Only if partner bids spades and gets a horrible result will you be unhappy. You are happy if he bids a red suit and if he bids notrump, that's fine too.

♠ AJ5   ♥ KQ8   ♦ K984   ♣ 873

It's reasonable to double with this hand, too. You have good points. Your shape is poor, but you do have OK holdings in each of the unbid suits.

Importantly, partner can bid any suit at the one level. Don't double with a balanced hand with less than this.

♠ 874 ♥ AKJ ♦ Q1043 ♣ K43

Your shape isn't good and you are weak in one of the majors. A few too many things to worry about. Pass this hand. Be sure to compare it with the previous hand, which had the same shape and was worth a double.

♠ K42 ♥ AJ875 ♦ KJ4 ♣ 53

Bid 1♥. When you have a five-card major it's usually best to bid it if you are going to bid. If you double and partner bids 1♠, there's a good chance that you are in the wrong suit.

♠ AQ75 ♥ 84 ♦ K1032 ♣ K97

Pass. Do not double. If you have just normal values for a take-out double you should never double without support for an unbid major. Your partner might bid 1♥, or 2♥ or even 3♥, and you will be unhappy no matter which it is.

Say he bids 1♥.

You can pass and leave partner in 1♥, which he won't enjoy.

You can bid 1NT, telling partner you have a much bigger hand. He may raise you to 2NT or 3NT and that, I can promise you, won't be much fun.

*It's OK to pass with opening bids* when you don't have a sane choice of bids to make.

Note that the opening bid has been changed to 1♥.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	?

♠ KJ4 ♥ 43 ♦ KJ43 ♣ A1094

Double for sure. You have only three spades, which won't appeal to purists, but consider that this is your only chance to show an opening bid with support for all suits. The small flaw of having three spades isn't worth worrying about. Remember. You won't get higher than 1♠ unless partner has something good. If he bids 2♠, he won't be broke.

♠ QJ3   ♥ 4   ♦ KJ862   ♣ AQ65

Double. *Do not bid 2♦*. If you double, your partner will expect you to have the unbid suits. You do. Your shape isn't perfect, but it's closer to the truth than if you bid 2♦. If you bid 2♦, your partner will think your hand is more about diamonds than anything else. This is an important hand. If you bid 2♦ and your partner has five spades or five clubs and one diamond, he will have no idea that either of the other suits will be a better trump suit than diamonds.

♠ AQJ98   ♥ K4   ♦ KQ84   ♣ A3

Double, intending to show your spades next. When you double and bid a suit, you show a hand that is so big that you are worried that you will miss a game. This can happen if your partner has a few points but not enough to respond to a simple 1♠ overcall.

♠ KQ985   ♥ A5   ♦ KJ5   ♣ KJ2

Just bid 1♠. Don't double. Your partner will need about 8 points with spade support if you are to make 4♠. If he has them, he will raise 1♠ to 2♠. Note that the opening bid has been changed to 1♠.

W	N	E	S
		1♠	?

♠ 7   ♥ QJ84   ♦ AK75   ♣ J1082

Double.

**Two important things to know here:**

1. They opened 1♠. It pushes you higher than any other onebid. Give spades their due and be mildly cautious when bidding against 1♠.
2. You have perfect shape. When you have perfect shape, you are allowed to be more aggressive because you will always find a fit except in the one case where partner does not have a four-card suit. It's worth doubling with this hand because the odds are so high that partner will have a four-card suit. Remember. If you pass now, you rarely get a second chance.

♠ 87   ♥ Q43   ♦ KJ74   ♣ AQ53

Pass. When the opening bid is 1♠, you do need to have four cards in hearts or better than a minimum takeout double. As noted above, dealing with the spade suit is unfair. Sort of like dealing with that bull in a china shop.

♠ 643   ♥ AQ8   ♦ KJ43   ♣ AJ7

Double. You have a good enough hand to double 1♠. Be aware that this double doesn't always shine. You are hoping your partner has a few points and has a suit he can bid. If he has any five-card suit, you will be safe enough. Or, if he bids diamonds, you will be safe enough. It's all about weighing the possible good versus the possible bad. Sit up straight and look happy when you double. Don't infect the atmosphere with uncertainties.

♠ KQ   ♥ 763   ♦ QJ3   ♣ KQJ63

A 14-point hand that isn't worth a bid. Don't double 1♠. Don't bid 2♣. This hand has points but they are flawed. Your ♠KQ would be worth two tricks if you added a small one. Here, they are only worth one trick. The only nice feature is your club suit and the hand has too many warning signs. It's balanced, always a scary factor. It has a spade holding with 2 of its points wasted. It has only a five-card suit. There's just nothing 'good' about this 14 points. Here's a possible layout that doesn't prove much other than to point out that bad things can happen. It's a reminder that balanced hands with five-card suits should be wary about overcalling at the two level.

♠ J8743

♥ K84

♦ K85

♣ 42

♠ 9

♥ QJ5

♦ A10642

♣ 10875

♠ A10652

♥ A1092

♦ 97

♣ A9

♠ KQ

♥ 763

♦ QJ3

♣ KQJ63

If you play in 2♣, West will lead a spade. The defense will be sad for you.

East takes his ♠A and gives West a spade ruff.

West leads the ♥Q. The defense takes three rounds of hearts.



East leads another spade. No matter what South does, the defenders will get a diamond trick, the A, and another club trick. Down three. Perhaps doubled. Perhaps not. In any case, it's a bad result. The big thing is that even with a decent dummy, South's contract was ruined.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Responding to a Takeout Double

**T**HIS IS ONE of the most special moments in bridge. You know immediately if you have a good hand or a so-so hand or a bad hand. When your partner overcalls in a suit, you often don't know what your hand is worth. Here's proof.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	P	?

You have:

♠ 3   ♥ A Q 8 7 5   ♦ 9 8 3   ♣ 8 7 3 2

You have only 6 high-card points but you have five super hearts and you have some distribution. This is as good as a 6 high-card point hand gets. Bid 1♥ and be pleased to do so.

If your partner had overcalled 1♠, you would have nothing to be happy about other than the fact that you have the ♥A. You'd have no clue if partner likes hearts so you would pass 1♠.

The hand may not be over. The bidding might continue this way:

W	N	E	S
1♦	1♠	P	P
Dbl	P	P	?

East says he wants to defend 1♠ doubled and you don't like it. But what can you do? If you bid hearts you may find your partner with a singleton heart, in which case hearts might be worse than spades.

*When your partner doubles* you have to look at your hand in a whole new light, and if that light is shining in the right way for you, your hand may blossom. When it does, you must be prepared to show it. Some of the bids you make will seem aggressive, but in fact, are wise.

Here's a guideline you will learn to love. I'll introduce it here and will repeat it a few times later in this chapter.

**When your partner overcalls and you bid a new suit, you are 'bidding' that suit.**

**When your partner doubles and you respond in a suit, you are 'raising' that suit.**

Knowing your partner has support for your four- or five-card suit is crucial to how you respond to a takeout double. Here's the hand I showed you a moment ago:

♠ 3   ♥ AQ875   ♦ 983   ♣ 8732

When partner overcalls 1♠, there is nothing much to like about this hand. It may have some potential but at this point you can't expect much.

When partner doubles, *you see immediately that this hand has a future* and you know you will do some bidding to see how bright that future is.

I'll continue with a number of common auctions where partner doubles and your RHO either passes or bids something.

**Always be optimistic. Look for something good. Look for a reason to bid.**

Don't be shy if you see you have a fit. It won't take much of a hand for you to get into the bidding when you like one of the suits your partner is showing.

## Responding to a Takeout Double When RHO Passes

When partner doubles a one-bid and RHO passes, you have fairly easy decisions. This chapter includes quite a few example hands. The focus will be on weak hands and modestly good hands. These are the meat and potatoes of competitive bridge. There are a couple of examples showing moments where you have a really good hand.

In the hands in this chapter, I will discuss your bid and also discuss what you might be thinking about later in the auction.

In later chapters, I will discuss hands where your RHO bids something over your partner's double.

As usual, no one is vulnerable unless otherwise noted. For the first few hands, the opening bid is 1♣.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	P	?

♠ J 10 6 5 3    ♥ 8 7 4    ♦ Q 7    ♣ Q 6 3

Bid 1♠. This isn't a big deal. Not yet. But it might be. Do you think this hand is useful? Do you like it a little? A lot? Or did you just notice you have only 5 high-card points and didn't think much about it?

Well, this is a 1♠ bid but here are some thoughts to add to that fact:

1. You have a five-card suit to bid. You even have the jack and ten in the suit. Consider that you might have had to bid 1♠ on ♠7543 instead of ♠J10653.
2. You have two queens. A big deal?

Yep. One of them is a big deal.

Your ♦Q is in one of the suits your partner is showing. The ♦Q rates to be a useful card.

Your ♣Q is in opener's suit. Partner's double didn't say he has a club honor. Your queen may be worthless.

This brings up an important rule.

**Honor cards in the suits your partner is showing go up in value.**

**Honor cards in opener's suit go down in value.**

Here is a layout to show you this principle. Your hand is on the left. Your partner's hand is on the right.

♠ J 10 6 5 3	♠ Q 8 7 4
♥ 8 7 4	♥ A K 5 3
♦ Q 7	♦ K J 2
♣ Q 6 3	♣ 9 8

Your ♠J and ten are useful and most importantly, your fifth spade is something special. Five-card suits are always good to have when partner makes a takeout double. Especially a five-card major.

Your ♦Q is useful, just as you would hope. You will be able to set up two diamond tricks and can get rid of your heart loser.

Note that your ♣Q is worthless. It might have had some value, but not today. Honor cards in opener's suit are seldom worth full value. *Even an ace in their suit may turn out to be worth less than one of the other aces.*

Add everything together here and you will see that you should be able to make eight tricks. Not bad considering that your side has less than half of the high cards.

Now, the final question from above. I asked you if your hand was useful. How useful do you feel it is now?

Believe it or not, your hand is useful enough that if you bid 1♠ and they bid 2♣, you should compete to 2♠!

Say opener bids 2♣ over your 1♠ bid. Here's a thought that I will develop in the next few pages.

If opener bids 2♣, *your partner should pass* with his minimum double and *you should bid 2♠* yourself. You are the one with undis-closed extra values.

If you had bid 1♠ with ♠ 9 6 5 3, ♥ J 6 2, ♦ 8 6 4, ♣ J 6 2, a possible hand, it would be bad for partner to bid 2♠ with his hand. One of the most common errors in bidding is to double and then to raise partner when you have four-card support and a minimum double. It's up to responder to keep bidding when he has a good hand for his 1♠ bid.

Note that the opening bid is now 1♦.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	P	?

♠ 8 7 5 3   ♥ J 3   ♦ K J 10 6   ♣ J 4 3

Bid 1♠. Do not bid 1NT when you have a four-card major to show. Your partner will often have four spades and a singleton diamond. Playing in a 4-4 spade fit is almost always the ideal spot and you have every reason to hope that it exists.

♠ 6 2   ♥ 9 3   ♦ Q J 5 4   ♣ 10 8 7 6 3

Bid 2♣. You do have five of them and you have a crummy hand. Clubs rate to be your best home. 1NT would be an error. It's hard to define what 1NT shows but it is more than this. I'll discuss it more later.

♠ 7 6   ♥ J 7 6 4   ♦ Q J 8 7 4   ♣ Q 7

Bid 1♥. Don't pass 1♦ doubled. You have a heart fit. Show it. The hands where you pass 1♦ doubled are hands where you expect to set them. Here's such a hand: ♠ 8 7, ♥ K 4 3, ♦ K J 10 9 8, ♣ Q 8 7.

You could pass with this. The ♦ K J 10 9 8 is the key.

♠ 7 6 4   ♥ J 9 8   ♦ J 8 7 4   ♣ 10 4 2

This is as bad a hand as you will ever have. You have no suit, you have no points, you have no shape. Don't pass, though. They will make overtricks, which add up. Best is to bid 1♥ and try not to look unhappy. At the least, don't make a comment about your bad day. Just looking miserable isn't the answer either. No one expects you to look pleased. But definitely don't look distressed.

♠ Q983   ♥ Q874   ♦ 873   ♣ Q8

Bid 1♠. Your hand is good enough that you will bid 2♥ later if possible. If you bid 1♥ and they bid 2♦, for instance, if you want to bid spades you have to bid 2♠, and that risks your partner going back to 3♥ if he prefers hearts.

**Note that bidding up the line is not used in responding to a takeout double.**

If partner had opened 1♦, you would bid 1♥, allowing partner room to bid 1♠ if he had four of them.

Note also that when you bid a suit in response to a takeout double, your partner is not forced to bid again. Often, if he has a minimum hand, he will pass your bid.

♠ A73   ♥ Q9842   ♦ 763   ♣ Q8

Bid 1♥. This is the best hand you can have for a 1♥ bid. If you had any more than this, you would at the least jump to 2♥.

♠ QJ84   ♥ K3   ♦ 763   ♣ AJ87

When your hand is worth more than 8 points, consider making a strong bid. Here, a 1♠ bid would suggest a maximum of 8 points. Since your partner is promising support for the majors, you should let him in on the good news that you have a nice hand. Bid 2♠, an invitational bid showing 8+ to about 11 support points. It's fine to do this with a four-card suit.

If you had a stronger hand, you would have to find a stronger bid, which is often a cuebid.



Here are two examples of using a cuebid. You can use a cuebid to show one of two hands.

***Example One: When you have a game-forcing hand***

♠ KQ875   ♥ AJ7   ♦ 1097   ♣ K8

Bid 2♦. This is a cuebid. Your intent is to tell partner you have a good hand, and your next bid will tell him that you have a spade suit. Bidding this way promises a game hand, which means your partner will not stop bidding until you reach a game.

♠ KQ87   ♥ 543   ♦ AQ72   ♣ K8

Make the same cuebid as on the previous hand. Then bid spades. The important thing is that you might do this with only a four-card suit.

***Example Two: When you have an invitational-or-better hand with two suits***

Usually this happens when you have two four-card majors with invitational or better values and want to find out which one partner likes best.

Partner doubles 1♦ and RHO passes. You have either of these two hands:

**HAND 1**

♠ K543   ♥ QJ105   ♦ 32   ♣ A104

Here, you want to find your best major-suit fit. Bid 2♦, a cuebid. Your partner will bid a major almost all of the time and you will raise to the three level. Partner will pass or go to game knowing you have around 11 support points for that major. He will also know you have the other major. If you had 11 support points but had only one major, you would jump to two of that major.

## HAND 2

♠ KJ43   ♥ QJ104   ♦ 43   ♣ AJ9

This hand has enough for game. Make a 2♦ cuebid, asking partner to bid a major. You will raise to game. Don't make a jump bid to 2♥ or 2♠ because these bids aren't forcing, and they may get you to the wrong suit if partner has three cards in the major you bid and four in the other.

Again, I refer you to my book on takeout doubles, which spends much more time on these situations than I can in this book, which is covering judgment more than system.

## The 1NT Response to a Takeout Double

This is a bid that needs discussion. There's something that you need to be aware of.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	P	1NT

Here, you have lots of room to bid a suit. When you have room to bid suits but choose to bid 1NT, it is because you *want* to bid 1NT.

If you have a terrible hand such as the following, you should not bid 1NT.

♠ 432   ♥ 874   ♦ Q97   ♣ Q1096

Don't bid 1NT. You won't make it unless partner has a big double, and if he has a big double he will raise 1NT to 2NT or 3NT, and you won't make these contracts either.

Bid 1♦. It's only a three-card suit but it is less likely to get partner excited.

This leads to these ranges:

After a double of 1♣ and a pass on your right, 1NT shows around 8-10 points.

After a double of 1♦ and a pass on your right, 1NT shows around 7-10 points.

After a double of 1♥ and a pass on your right, 1NT shows around 6-10 points.

After a double of 1♠ and a pass on your right, 1NT shows around 5-10 points.

You should be aware that it is more difficult to bid against 1♠ than the other suits. And, it is more difficult to bid against 1♥ than it is to bid against

one of a minor.

There are many good ideas that I can't present here but which are in my book on takeout doubles. Recommended if you decide to get serious about bridge.

## Responding to a Takeout Double When RHO Raises

Welcome to the most rewarding moment in bridge. If you have read this book from the start and worked your way through it, you will recall that I praised anyone who has an aggressive approach to preempting. I noted that preempts can be one of your most effective tools in bridge.

But I also noted that while aggressive preempting will earn you a lot of good results, there are dangers too. Sometimes things go wrong and your plan fails. But at least your intentions were good.

The topic I am discussing here is less volatile than the world of preempts, but it is an area of bridge where you can do a lot of good for yourself.

When your partner doubles a suit and RHO raises, you are in a unique position. You know pretty much what your partner has and you know exactly what you have. You can tell quite accurately how well your hand fits with partner's and you know if you have enough values to get into the bidding.

If you have a hand that fits in with your partner's double, you are in a position to take advantage of the situation. *You must be prepared to do that.*

Here are example hands showing how important this situation is.

Assume no one is vulnerable. I will add comments to cater to differences in vulnerability when appropriate.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Dbl	2♥	?

♠ Q975   ♥ 654   ♦ K3   ♣ J1043

The question is simple. Should you pass or should you bid 2♠?

Before answering that question, let me ask you a different question.

If they are allowed to play in 2♥, do you think you will set it? Answer: Very unlikely.

What kind of score will you get if they make 2♥?

Answer: A stinky score. If they make it, most likely, they will get 110. That, if you think about it, is probably the best score they can get.

I suggest you bid 2♠. Actually, I insist you bid 2♠.

Here's why.

If your partner has four spades, which is more than likely, you will put yourself in contention to make a plus score yourself. If you can make a plus score in spades you will do very well. If you can push them to 3♥ and set them a trick, you do less well but you do better than letting them play in 2♥.

If you're uncertain, think of it this way. If your partner could put out a sign that says *I have four spades*, you can think of your 2♠ bid as 'raising' spades, not 'bidding' spades.

I will show you a complete hand layout in a moment but would like you to first consider what your hand is worth in support of a spade contract.

In spades, you have four to the queen. The queen is a good queen so it goes up in value a little. Consider it a warm fuzzy. If you had five spades, life would be even better.

In hearts you have three small cards. This is not a bad sign. Your partner made a takeout double and RHO raised. Their side has eight or nine hearts. Your partner has one or two. You know that you can ruff at least one of your hearts later.

You have the ♦K3. This is a fine holding. Your king is in a suit your partner has shown and you have a doubleton. This is better than a warm fuzzy. It's worth at least one additional point, perhaps two.

Your ♣J1043 are useful cards since they will help you set up club tricks. This holding is much better than ♣7643 would be.

Here are a couple of possible layouts:

#### LAYOUT ONE

YOU	PARTNER
♠ Q 9 7 5	♠ K J 10 2
♥ 6 5 4	♥ J 3
♦ K 3	♦ Q J 4
♣ J 10 4 3	♣ A 9 5 2

In layout one, your dummy has four trumps and the play is easy.  
Making normal assumptions, you will lose:

One spade. Two hearts. One diamond. One club.

Note that your ♣J10 can help you avoid losing two club tricks. If you had ♣8763, you would always lose two tricks.

How do they do in a heart contract? At the least, they should be able to take the following tricks:

One spade. Five hearts. One diamond. One club.

For sure they will take eight tricks and it's possible they will take nine tricks.

#### LAYOUT TWO

YOU	PARTNER
♠ Q 9 7 5	♠ K 10 3
♥ 6 5 4	♥ 3
♦ K 3	♦ A 9 7 6 2
♣ J 10 4 3	♣ A Q 5 2

Here, it's not too good, but the odds are still in your favor.

If you pass, your partner should also pass, and you would defend against 2♥. They will usually make it and when that happens, you get another bad board.

How would you do in 2♠?

Having only seven trumps is sad but still, it isn't the end of the world. Your 2♠ bid would have been terrific if partner had four spades and as it is, you still have a chance. One thing that might happen when you bid 2♠ is that their side will bid to 3♥ and you won't have to play the hand.

In 2♠, you rate to take eight tricks if the club finesse wins as expected. The play is unpredictable but eight tricks are possible and even down one should be a good result since they rate to make their 2♥ contract.

**Very important note:**

When you bid 2♠, your partner should not take you seriously. He should expect you to have four fair spades and about 6 or 7 points. He should not get excited. *One thing he must never do is raise spades without four of them.*

Here are some additional hands. Remember that no one is vulnerable. I will add comments to cater to differences in vulnerability when appropriate.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Dbl	2♥	?

♠ A J 8 7 3  
 ♥ ?  
 ♦ ?  
 ♣ ?

Here, you have five spades to the ace-jack. No matter what else you have, you should bid spades. If the rest of your hand is crummy, it won't be crummy enough for you to pass.

♠ Q 8 7   ♥ 6 5 4   ♦ 4 3   ♣ K Q 9 8 6

Bid 3♣. Bidding at the three level is slightly dangerous so you rate to have a decent 7 or more points and likely a five-card suit.

*Remember the guideline.* If you pass and let them play in 2♥, they will usually make it and you will usually get a lousy result.

Keep in the back of your mind that if your partner has a good takeout double, he may be able to push them higher. He might even be able to bid a game in clubs. If you don't bid, your partner won't know you have something.

♠ Q J 8 7 4   ♥ 6 5 4   ♦ A J 4   ♣ J 4



Bid 3♠. Don't bid 2♠ and feel like you have done your all. You have seen some suggested 2♠ bids that were way weaker than this hand.

Changing the opening bid to 1♣:

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	2♣	?

♠ K 6 4    ♥ 7 6 3    ♦ Q J 9 8    ♣ 7 6 2

Bid 2♦. If your partner has four-card support, you'll be fine. Perhaps they will bid 3♣ and you won't have to play the hand.

♠ J 7 4    ♥ K 10 8 5    ♦ Q 8 6 3    ♣ 8 3

Bid 2♥. Passing always comes with the danger that they will play in 2♣ and make it.

♠ J 8 7 5    ♥ A Q 4 3    ♦ 6 5    ♣ 7 6 2

By now you should know that you have enough to bid. Should you bid 2♥? Should you bid 2♠? Is there a better bid?

Here's a thought from later in the book. Play that a double here asks your partner to pick a major suit. It's called a *responsive double*. I won't discuss it here. But the topic is important enough to give you something to think about until later. It will be discussed in the chapter on high value conventions that are worth adding immediately.

♠ 7 3    ♥ Q J 8 7 5    ♦ Q 8 5    ♣ 8 7 4

Bid 2♥. Five-card suits that can bid at the two level almost never pass. This hand is actually a little bit better than it has to be. Change the hearts to ♥Q8764 and 2♥ would still get a lot of votes.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	3♣	?

Be aware that when your partner doubles and RHO raises to the three level, it is usually played today as a preemptive bid. If you aren't sure, you are entitled to ask. Ask LHO, "What does 3♣ show?" Usually he will say it's weak.

♠ 7 6   ♥ K 4 3   ♦ K J 8 7 3   ♣ 5 4 3

Bid 3♦. Good five-card suit, and a useful ♥K on the side. Bid 3♦ for sure. Given how little players today need to raise to 3♣, you might have a game if partner has a good double.

The key with these hands where I am suggesting you bid is that you feel the urgency to do so.

Winning bridge is to contest these auctions where partner doubles and RHO raises. Adopt the guideline "*I will try to bid*" as opposed to "*I'm afraid to bid*."

Here are some examples where someone didn't bid and paid a price for it. In all of the example hands, the player holding this hand passed over 2♦. It was expensive.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	2♦	?

♠ Q 7   ♥ J 9 8 7 4   ♦ 6 5 4 3   ♣ Q 2

South failed to bid 2♥. The opponents got to play and make 2♦.

♠ Q 9 7 6 5 3   ♥ J 8 4   ♦ 3   ♣ 4 3 2

West bid and made 3NT. Had South bid 2♠, North would have bid 4♠ and that would have been down one trick.

♠ 7 5    ♥ 8 7 4    ♦ 9 8 3    ♣ A Q J 8 7

South failed to bid 3♣. The opponents made an overtrick in 2♦. Had he bid 3♣, the opponents would have bid 3♦, but with a club lead from North it would have gone down one.

## Responding to a Takeout Double When RHO Bids a New Suit

The previous situation, where partner doubles and RHO raises, was almost like seeing a red flag waving in front of your face urging you to bid.

When partner doubles and RHO bids a new suit, it's still an auction you want to bid against. But note that they don't yet have a fit, which hints that you should be a tiny bit more circumspect. *Still, your attitude should still be that you would like to say something.* Here are examples. No one is vulnerable unless noted otherwise.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	1♥	?

♠ A J 7 6   ♥ 5 4   ♦ 9 3 2   ♣ 10 8 4 3

Bid 1♠. Your partner will seldom double without a good holding in the majors so 1♠ rates to be safe. Bidding at the one level is safer than bidding at the two level, so you have the best of all worlds. Say you pass and opener bids 2♦, rebidding his suit. If it comes pass back to you, are you going to bid 2♠? Much better to bid 1♠ right away. You won't end up in 2♠ unless your partner thinks enough of his hand to bid 2♠ himself.

♠ 8 6 5   ♥ 7 3   ♦ J 8 7 6   ♣ A J 9 8

Tempting to bid 2♣, but perhaps it's best to pass. You would be bidding at the two level, which requires a tad more. You would prefer to be bidding a major, a suit you know partner is prepared for. Partner will occasionally have less than normal support for an unbid minor.

♠ 873   ♥ 98   ♦ 873   ♣ AQ1087

Bid 2♣. You have a good five-card suit. A five-card suit cures a lot of concerns.

♠ J43   ♥ 1084   ♦ Q7   ♣ Q7653

Too thin to bid. The five clubs to the queen is an excellent start, but the rest of your hand is bad.

Your ♠J could be a small benefit. But the three little hearts are a sore spot. East says he has some heart values so you could be faced with two or three heart losers.

And, the ♦Q is a bad queen. LHO opened 1♦ so you can't expect it to be worth much.

All in all, if you wanted to bid 2♣, I admire that attitude. Wanting to bid 2♣ is admirable. Bidding 2♣ is not.

♠ 106   ♥ J73   ♦ KJ108   ♣ KJ43

You have enough to bid. What should that bid be?

Your choices seem to be 1NT and 2♣. Here are my thoughts on these bids.

1NT: One thing about 1NT is that you don't have to bid here. You should have at least a fine 8-count and you could have up to 10. This is a nice 9-count so 1NT is OK. Note that you don't need a stopper in responder's heart suit. Your partner is promising something in hearts so hopefully, hearts aren't a huge problem. Your ♥J73 should be helpful. You do, however, need a stopper in opener's suit, diamonds.

2♣ is also OK in that you have a good four-card suit. But if partner has just three clubs, you may find that it isn't as safe as being in notrump. One additional concern is that they may be able crossruff the hand.

I'd prefer 1NT by a fair margin.

*Remember, you don't have to bid if your RHO bids a suit.* You can pass if you have a weak hand. Partner's double doesn't promise a big hand. He is

more than welcome to make a proper takeout double with as few as 11 high-card points. He's hoping you can bid a suit, which you should be happy to do if possible. But if you don't have one and if you have 9 or 10 points, bid 1NT if you have proper stoppers.

By now you should be aware that bidding aggressively when your partner makes a takeout double is important. This is true but in one case, you need to take a small step back.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	2♦	?

On this auction, you learned that your RHO has a weak hand and he has a fit for diamonds. He could have from *4 to 6 or 7* high-card points. That raise to 2♦ isn't threatening you at all. There's nothing to it to scare you.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	1NT	?

On this auction you have some honest reasons to pull in a little. East usually has *8 to 10* points for his bid. Some 10-point hands aren't worth a redouble so the only bid left might be 1NT.

This means that their 1NT bid has some teeth to it.

So my advice here is to be aggressive in your approach, but to use just a bit of caution. Here are a few hands to consider.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	1NT	?

♠ Q 10 8 3    ♥ K 4 3    ♦ J 4 3    ♣ J 8 3

It would be sane to bid 2♠ if RHO had raised to 2♣. But . . . RHO bid 1NT, which shows a better hand. It would be OK to pass here. One thing

that you can conclude is that partner will tend to have a weaker takeout double when RHO bids 1NT.

♠ Q9854   ♥ K4   ♦ 874   ♣ 987

Bid 2♠. Yes, RHO will have 8 or more points, but you have a secret weapon. You have a fifth spade. This is a big deal and it makes the 5-point hand here good enough to bid 2♠, whereas the previous hand with 7 high-card points wasn't worth 2♠.

Repeating a guideline mentioned before:

**Five-card suits, especially major suits, are extra valuable after a takeout double from your partner.**

♠ AKJ8   ♥ 874   ♦ Q653   ♣ 73

You will wait a long time for a hand this good. You hope partner has four spades and if so, you will make 2♠ easily. Don't pass and don't double. But don't wait for this good a hand, either. You won't see it soon. One thing you know is that your partner's double is minimum.

Here's a rule that will work well for you:

**If your partner makes a takeout double and your RHO bids 1NT, don't bother doubling it for penalty.**

If you have a good hand, your partner's hand will be minimum. Try to bid a suit if you can. You will get much better mileage out of your hand by declaring in a good contract than by doubling them and then having to find the best defense.

**Professional hint: Play a double here is takeout, not penalty.**

If your partner hasn't seen this hint, there's no way he will understand.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Dbl	1NT	?

♠ J 10 7 5 4   ♥ 8 7   ♦ Q 8 7 6 4   ♣ 3

You could have a hand this weak. The weakness says to pass, but the shape says to bid. Bid 2♠. With two five-card suits and partner's takeout double, you have enough to bid again. You really do have a good hand under these circumstances. If they bid to 3♥, you could bid 3♠. If they bid to 3♣, you could bid 3♦. Way too much potential here to sit back and watch.



## Responding to a Takeout Double When RHO Redoubles

Some situations are scary. If your RHO redoubles, you know he has at least 10 points and your side rates to be outgunned. You won't have much to say. But on rare occasions, you will be able to do something good. Here are some hands.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
1♥	Dbl	Rdbl	?

♠ 5 4 3 2    ♥ 9 7 6 4    ♦ 4 3    ♣ 9 8 3

Bid 1♠. *This is a very important bid.*

You are not telling partner you have a wonderful spade suit.

You are not making a 'free bid.' You could have zero points.

You are telling him that you have four spades. That's all.

Here's what happens if you pass. Opener will pass and your partner will rescue himself. If he bids 1♠, you survive. But if he bids 2♦, the odds are that someone will double and that will be the end of you. Best by far is to bid spades, a suit you can bid at the one level, and hope that it suffices to help you escape.

If your partner thinks you have something and he bids because of it, you could get into trouble. Your partner should think that you are showing a suit, not points. If he bids, he better have a good hand.

♠ 8 7 5    ♥ 10 6 5 2    ♦ 5 4 3    ♣ 8 7 3

Pass. "Partner, you got us into this mess. Please get us out." Your partner will bid a suit. He will tend to bid 1♠ if he has four. If he doesn't,

he'll bid his best minor.

♠ 5   ♥ J 8 7 6 4   ♦ 4 3   ♣ J 10 7 5 3

Bid 2♣. If you don't, your partner might bid 2♦. You know clubs is your only hope.

♠ 10 8 7 6 3   ♥ 8 7 6 4   ♦ 3   ♣ Q 9 6

It looks right to bid 1♠. *But there is a better bid.* Not many players know this one and you really do want to be one of them.

Bid 2♠!

You saw a moment ago that you might bid 1♠ with a hopeless hand. This hand is hopeless in high cards but it is wonderful in distribution. Your 2♠ bid says that you have five or more spades and your distribution is good too. You happen to have the ♣Q, which is a bonus card. The idea is that your 2♠ bid will make life hard for their side. It often does.

Perhaps your partner can bid again knowing you have this kind of hand. Here's a possible layout to show you how good your hand really is.

YOU	PARTNER
♠ 10 8 7 6 3	♠ A J 5 4
♥ 8 7 6 4	♥ 10
♦ 3	♦ Q J 8 2
♣ Q 9 6	♣ A J 10 2

I gave partner a shapely double and 13 points. All possible. You are close to making ten tricks. If spades divide and if the ♣K is onside, you might take four spades, two heart ruffs in dummy, and four clubs after taking the club finesse. That's a lot of tricks given how weak your hand is.

## CHAPTER NINE

# Partner Opens with a One-Bid and RHO Doubles for Takeout

**I**T COULD BE SAID that this topic is more about system than judgment but it's so important that I'm going to include some advice and examples. If your partner opens and they double, it would be a shame if you missed out on a good contract because you and partner weren't in agreement about what your bids mean.

## What Does It Mean If You Pass Over the Double?

W	N	E	S
1♣		Dbl	Pass

A pass says you don't have anything to say. It's not good bridge to pass and then enter the bidding later. If your hand is good enough to bid later, it's usually best to bid right away.

♠ Q764   ♥ J93   ♦ J54   ♣ Q104

I probably would bid 1♠ if RHO passed. It's such a poor hand that if RHO doubles, it would be best to pass. This is a hand with no future if partner can't bid on his next turn.

## What Does It Mean if You Bid a New Suit at the One Level?

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	1♠

A new suit at the one level is a forcing bid. You can have from 6 fair points up to a monster.

If you have a good 6 points and would have bid if RHO had passed, you generally can make the same bid when RHO doubles.

♠ QJ874   ♥ 43   ♦ K43   ♣ 543

You would have bid 1♠ if RHO had passed. You can bid 1♠ over the double, too. This is a minimum hand for 1♠.

♠ KJ98   ♥ 43   ♦ 543   ♣ QJ64

Best to bid 1♠, the same bid you would make if East passed. Your bid is forcing since you could have a very good hand that doesn't want to be passed out in 1♠.

♠ AKJ87   ♥ AQ   ♦ 8764   ♣ 43

Bid 1♠. You do not want to redouble when you have a clear message to give. If you redouble, the opponents will bid hearts or clubs and you will then bid spades. But you will lose a round of bidding for no reason.

♠ 7   ♥ AQJ84   ♦ AJ54   ♣ KJ8

Bid 1♥. It would be very bad to redouble first. You want to tell partner about your hearts. You want to tell partner about your diamond support. If you redouble, the opponents may be able to get the bidding up to 2♠ or 3♠ before you have shown any of your suits.

**RULE – If you are concerned that the opponents have a fit and can get into your auction, do not redouble.**

This is especially true if that suit is spades.

## What Does It Mean if You Bid a New Suit at the Two Level?

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl		2♣

When you bid a new suit at the two level (not a jump such as 1♦ - Dbl - 2♠), you are, oddly, making a natural non-forcing bid. The logic is that if partner has an opening bid and RHO has an opening bid, you won't have very many really good hands. Here are some typical 2♣ bids after RHO's double.

♠ 763   ♥ 43   ♦ J3   ♣ AQ9875

You are willing to play in 2♣ if everyone passes. And if your LHO bids, you would like a club lead. Six cards is usual but five is possible. In all cases you rate to have 6-8 high-card points.

♠ 43   ♥ 53   ♦ 8653   ♣ KQJ108

You might bid 2♣ with this hand too. It's not as good as the previous hand but your suit is good, you want a club lead, and you are forcing your LHO to the two level. You have diamond support but 2♣ is likely to be the more effective bid.

## What if You Jump To the Two Level in a New Suit?

W	N	E	S
	1♣	Dbl	2♠

If you play weak jump shifts (discussed in the chapter on useful conventions) you can bid two of a new suit on some fairly weak hands. The key is that your suit is reasonable.

♠ QJ9874   ♥ 43   ♦ 32   ♣ J103

Try bidding 2♠. You know in your heart that you want to bid spades but 1♠ would show more. So, bid 2♠. Your partner has an opening bid and if he can produce a spade honor or perhaps two spades, your bid will be effective.

♠ AKJ873   ♥ 74   ♦ 43   ♣ J97

Bid 1♠. 2♠ is limited to about 5 points. Your hand is too good for that.



## What Does it Mean if You Bid 1NT?

W	N	E	S
1♥		Dbl	1NT

First of all, if you are playing a Two Over One system where 1NT is forcing, it is no longer forcing after a takeout double.

You promise around 8-10 points. You need enough to be safe. Consider that your partner may have 11 high-card points with a little shape, so bidding 1NT with a 6-count is asking for trouble. Some examples:

♠ Q76   ♥ 105   ♦ QJ43   ♣ KJ98

This is a fairly routine 1NT bid. Your hand isn't good enough to redouble and passing gives up the opportunity to tell your partner what you have.

♠ 873   ♥ 43   ♦ QJ54   ♣ K984

Pass. This is the kind of hand that would bid 1NT if RHO passed. But he didn't. There's no need to start a war when you have hands like this one.

## What Does it Mean When You Raise Your Partner to the Two Level?

W	N	E	S
	1♣	Dbl	2♣

This raise isn't much but if you have enough to raise and nothing else to do, then raise. *You* may have a modest hand, but your partner may have enough to do something if you raise.

♠ 5 4    ♥ 8 7 4    ♦ 9 8 7 4    ♣ K J 8 5

Some would say that raising to 2♣ with four cards risks playing in a 4-3 fit. Yes, it's true. But this is a danger you should be willing to live with. You could have another queen, too. The important thing is not to overlook this raise.

♠ J 10 4    ♥ 10 9    ♦ J 9 8    ♣ Q J 8 7 2

Bid 2♣. Not much of a hand, but you do have five of them. Again, raising is better than passing with the intent, perhaps, of backing in later.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	2♥

If you can find any excuse to raise, do so. This is your last chance to bid anything, most likely, so grab the opportunity while it's here.

♠ 874   ♥ K107   ♦ 87653   ♣ 43

You can bid 2♥ with this. Your bid will help your partner compete. It may help him on defense. It definitely will help nudge the opponents. If your partner can push a little as a result of your raise, so much the better. Your partner needs to recognize you may have this little.

♠ K876   ♥ QJ5   ♦ 87   ♣ 10963

Bid 2♥. You could have a little more.

**Useful optional bid:**

*If you would like to try some science*, you can use a 2♣ bid over a takeout double to say you have a decent raise of partner's major. If you had one more point, your hand would qualify for a 2♣ bid. This means, however, that you can't bid 2♣ naturally. All conventions have a price. You have to decide if you like the price. Be sure to discuss this one.

## What Does It Mean When You Raise Your Partner to the Three Level?

Raising partner to the three level is a dynamic bid that cuts two ways. You are taking up an extra round of bidding, which sometimes is a bother to the opponents. And, going to the three level confirms that you have a hand with four or more trumps and slim but guaranteed values.

Above all, your bid is *preemptive*, not limit. Many players today play that a jump to the three level is a limit raise. This is not necessary. In the chapter on conventions later in this book, I will show you a treatment that lets you have preemptive raises *and* limit *and* game-forcing raises too. I'm introducing these bids here since they will be used in this chapter.

## Criss-Cross Raise of a Minor Suit after a Takeout Double

When partner opens one of a minor and RHO doubles for takeout, you can use a bid that many are not familiar with. It is the criss-cross raise. It works this way.

1♣ Dbl 2♦      and      1♦ Dbl 3♣

In both of these sequences, responder is saying that he has a *limit or stronger raise for opener's minor*. The idea is that these bids are seldom used for something else so they can be used after a takeout double to show an important type of hand that you want to get off your chest right away. An example:

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

Your partner learns immediately that you have good club support. He will assume you have a limit raise unless you bid something on the next round that shows a game-forcing raise. Without this convention you would have to start with a redouble, and that means your partner won't know of your club support until later in the bidding.

*Criss-cross raises will be covered more in the conventions chapter.*

## Jordan Raises of a Major Suit after a Takeout Double

When partner opens one of a major and RHO doubles for takeout, you can use a bid called the Jordan 2NT raise. This bid says that you have four or more cards in partner's suit and *limit raise values or game raise values*.

The advantages of criss-cross and Jordan are huge. You get to tell partner what you have before the opponents get together. If you start with a redouble, you may lose out if you can't fully describe your hand to partner. When you use one of these bids, whatever partner has, he will have a good idea what to do next.

*Jordan raises will be covered more in the conventions chapter.*

***When you raise your partner's minor to the three level over a takeout double***

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	3♦

♠ 3    ♥ 52    ♦ KQ98    ♣ 1087632

This is a fine preemptive raise to 3♦. You have four good trumps and lots of shape. You would like another diamond but other than that, this is an excellent hand for 3♦.

♠ 932    ♥ 3    ♦ A10874    ♣ J432

This is a classic 3♦ raise. There are many good things that can come out of this.

1. Your partner may be able to keep bidding based on your bid.
2. Sometimes your partner can double an opponent.

3. Sometimes your opponents get to the wrong suit.
4. Sometimes your opponents get too high.
5. Sometimes your opponents don't get high enough.
6. Sometimes your bid helps your partner on defense.

Now and then, you will get a bad result. It happens. But the number of good results make it all worthwhile.

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	?
♠ 43	♥ 8	♦ K 10 8 7 6 4	♣ KQ87

This is way too good to bid 3♦. It's so good that you are better off treating it as a limit-or-better raise. Bid 3♣, the criss-cross convention, with this hand. *Be sure to alert it.*

***When you raise your partner's major to the three level after a takeout double***

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	3♥

The raise to 3♥ is also preemptive. It promises four or five hearts, a little bit of shape, and not many high-card points. *I suggest you do not make this bid with hopeless hands.*

♠ K76	♥ J9763	♦ 542	♣ 83
-------	---------	-------	------

Bid 3♥. This is not invitational at all. When you have limit or invitational values, you will need to use the Jordan raise (discussed in the

convention chapter). Right now, concentrate on the weak hands that qualify for a jump raise.

Some players would vote for 4♥ on these cards, thinking they have five-card support. Hands with five-card support may indeed raise to game but the hand needs more than five trumps and a few points and balanced shape.

♠ 432 ♥ KQJ10 ♦ 43 ♣ 8763

This is an acceptable preemptive 3♥ raise. Good trumps and a little shape. Yes, you may be too high, but only if you play the hand. If the opponents bid, you're off the hook.

♠ 74 ♥ J8763 ♦ 763 ♣ J76

Pass. 3♥, or 2♥, is silly. These bids promise something that you don't have. All you're doing is encouraging your partner to do something wrong. If he has a 16-point hand, he will bid something and he won't make it. Might be doubled, too. 3♥ doesn't show a lot but it does show something. The range for me is about 4-6 high-card points.

♠ AJ4 ♥ K876 ♦ Q876 ♣ 94

This is *not* a 3♥ bid. This is an old-fashioned limit raise. You're better off starting with the Jordan 2NT raise.



## Raising Partner to the Four Level or Higher after a Takeout Double

### *When our suit is a minor*

Most players know what a raise to four of a major means over a takeout double. Fewer know what a raise to four of a minor shows. Or, for that matter, five of a minor. Here are some hands and thoughts.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	?

♠ 4    ♥ 43    ♦ QJ873    ♣ K10874

You would expect the opponents can make a game. Bidding 3♦ or 4♦ are reasonable choices. My vote is for 4♦. It's possible that you are too high, but the opponents have so many major-suit cards they are likely to bid rather than double you.

♠ 42    ♥ –    ♦ KJ108732    ♣ J876

5♦ is clear. If you bid 3♦ or 4♦ in error, the opponents will bid a game and you will consider bidding 5♦. With this hand, you know you will be faced with that decision. Best is to bid 5♦ now. Let the opponents sort it out.

Importantly, if you bid 5♦ and the next player bids 5♥ and your partner doubles, you should pass. You announced a weak hand with gobs of diamonds, which is what you have. Your partner's double says he can beat 5♥ and asks you to be quiet. Accept his judgment. He knows what he has in hearts. You don't.

## *When our suit is a major*

In the real world, you will, once in a rare while, raise to five of a minor over a takeout double. You will never raise to five of a major over a takeout double of a one-bid. But you will often raise to four of a major.

This raise is weak. If partner opens 1♥ and RHO passes and you jump to 4♥, it would be weak. You will have a similarly weak hand when RHO doubles 1♥ and you raise to game. The reason I'm showing these raises to four is twofold. It's important to know what a jump to four of a major looks like. And, many players overlook the opportunity. Here are some examples.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	?

♠ 3   ♥ KJ873   ♦ 87653   ♣ J3

Bid 4♥. You have five good trumps and you also have a stiff, plus you have a weak hand. This is the perfect hand for a jump to game after a double.

♠ 103   ♥ KJ873   ♦ 94   ♣ 10653

Some would bid 4♥ here. It's a reasonable bid given you have some shape.

♠ 76   ♥ KJ983   ♦ 432   ♣ 983

Bid just 3♥. You have too many losers to bid 4♥. *Ignore that rumor* that says you should always raise to the four level when you have five trumps.

♠ 873   ♥ KJ107   ♦ -   ♣ Q108753

4♥ for sure. Partner might make it. You have just four hearts but you can see where tricks can come from. And you can see that the opponents may be able to get into the bidding if you leave them room.

♠ A J 7 6 3    ♥ K 7 6 5 3    ♦ 4    ♣ 5 3

This hand is too good to bid 4♥. Possible bids include some science. You can choose from:

2NT. The Jordan raise. You will ultimately bid game for sure.

4♦. A splinter bid.

Your hand is so good that facing a magic 11-count, your partner might take twelve tricks. ♠9, ♥A10942, ♦10863, ♣AK9 will fetch a slam if nothing bad happens.

Remember that Jordan and criss-cross will be covered in the chapter on conventions.

## What Does It Show if You Redouble After Rho's Takeout Double?

A redouble starts with the premise that you have around 11 high-card points, or something like that. Some books say that you should redouble with 10. That leaves just enough room for the opponents to get into the bidding in an irritating way. Here are some example hands. I'll discuss how you might handle them.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	?

♠ QJ4   ♥ J4   ♦ QJ82   ♣ QJ32

This is a revolting 10-point hand. Don't redouble with hands like this. Very good tens probably qualify, but hands like this one don't.

I recommend 1NT. If you redouble and then bid 1NT, it will sound like a bit more than this.

♠ KJ32   ♥ Q87   ♦ A654   ♣ 104

Redouble. Your intention is to raise hearts later. Redoubling and then raising a major says you have 10-11 support points and *exactly three-card support*. Never do this with four. With four or more, you will probably bid 2NT, the Jordan raise.

If you have 12-13 points:

♠ AJ83   ♥ Q104   ♦ AQ64   ♣ 54

Redouble and be sure to jump to 4♥ on your next bid. Don't redouble and then bid just 3♥. That shows invitational values.

♠ K 10 8 5   ♥ 5   ♦ QJ 8 6   ♣ KJ 8 6

This hand is OK for a redouble. You intend to double whatever they bid.

W	N	E	S
	1♣	Dbl	?

♠ 7   ♥ K 9 5 4 3   ♦ A J 4   ♣ QJ 9 5

This is an important hand.

**RULE – If your RHO doubles and you have a good hand, think twice before you redouble.**

*If you have a singleton in an unbid suit, you should worry that their side may find a fit.* That could make it difficult for you to show your hand. With this hand, if you redouble and they are able to get the bidding up to 2♠ or 3♠ before you bid again, you won't be able to tell partner that you have hearts and also clubs. The answer is simple. Bid 1♥. Follow up with normal bidding. You can bid 1♥ now and raise clubs later if that seems best. This way you tell partner about the two most important features of you hand. This approach lets you bid your good hands with minimum interruptions.

♠ QJ 9   ♥ K 3   ♦ A J 8 6   ♣ Q 10 7 3

Redouble. Balanced hands are usually safe redoubles. It's not likely the opponents will be able to embarrass you.

## CHAPTER TEN

# Competing – The Value of Being in the Auction

SOME PLAYERS have learned the lesson that having the opponents in your auctions is not fun. You can no doubt think of many hands where you and your partner got a bad result because an opponent did something that gave you a problem you could not or did not solve. Here are a few examples. You are South.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
			1♥
2♦	3♣	3♦	?

♠ 74   ♥ AJ875   ♦ K4   ♣ AQ75

What should you bid?

Your choices seem to be:

3NT: If your side is going to get to 3NT, you'd better grab it now. Of course if West leads a spade and it turns out that this is your weak spot, you may be in 3NT, going down, when you should have been in five or 6♣. Or you may end in 3NT, making, when you should have been in 6♣.

4♣: You have a very good hand for clubs. Yes, you are worried about your ♦K, but you have great club support and hiding it might cause you to miss 5♣, or even a cold 6♣.

Passing is also an option. It might be best.

What's the answer? The best answer is to get quieter opponents. If West had passed, your partner would have bid 2♣ and you would have bid 3♣. Your partner, knowing you like clubs, can do all kinds of things because he has room to do them.

That 2♦ bid created a bidding sequence that you could have done without.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
1♠	2♣	3♠*	?

\*preemptive, promising four or more spades

♠ 53   ♥ KJ8653   ♦ AQ6   ♣ K3

Give this to a panel of experts and the general consensus will be that they could have done without these opponents. South can rebid hearts but it won't work if partner is short in hearts. Passing isn't terrible but it doesn't solve the problem. It just shuffles it over to North, who likely won't be happy either.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
2♦	3♣	P	?

♠ KQ7   ♥ Q8743   ♦ KJ754   ♣ –

On this hand South opened light, hoping to find a fit. Against silent opponents, it might have been OK. But these opponents overcalled 2♦. I played this hand some time ago. I hated it then and I hate it now. If West had passed, North likely would have bid 2♣ and you could bid 2♦.

But West bid 2♦ first. North's 3♣ bid is forcing, so he has a good hand. But that fact may not help the hand you have.

What's the right bid? I don't have one to offer.

3NT looks and feels like a bad idea. It would be especially bad if partner keeps bidding clubs.

3♥ is possible and it might survive. But this suit is poor and the hand is still full of horrible news.

A bid that would occur to some, but which would have to violate system, is to pass the forcing bid of 3♣.

W	N	E	S
2♠	Dbl	3♠	?

♠ 32   ♥ K2   ♦ 432   ♣ AKJ876

A simple question first:

If your side has a game, what game is it likely to be?

5♣ is obviously a possibility, but so is 3NT if your partner can stop spades.

I would bet that 3NT is the winning contract whenever partner has a spade stopper.

Harder question:

How do you get there?



**Professional hint: When your partner doubles a weak 2♥ or 2♠ bid and RHO raises to 3♥ or 3♠, play a double asks partner to bid 3NT if he has their suit stopped. If your partner hasn't seen this hint, though, there's no way he will understand.**

This hand has no answer if you don't have this professional hint to work with.

**The point of these hands is to demonstrate that bridge is easier when you and your partner are the only ones allowed to bid.**

But the opponents can bid and they do bid, and that often creates problems.

You're allowed to get lucky some of the time.

You may have an agreement to help some of the time.

You may have no clue some of the time.

## Postmortem to this Chapter

An aggressive bidder will give the opponents more problems than one who passes most of the time.

I have given you some hints on how to be aggressive without being ridiculous about it. Give them a try. Controlled aggression is the key.

While I'm in this topic, here's another suggestion that you need to follow.

### ***Playing against experts***

*The better your opponents are, the more aggressive you need to be.* Experts will win out most of the time. They have years of experience and they know how to play and defend. If you let them bid by themselves, they will get to good contracts and they will play them well. Getting into their auctions is absolutely necessary. You won't win by being a silent observer. What will happen is that you'll still get some bad results from the experts but if you bid aggressively as I have shown in this book, they will find that their bidding skills aren't always perfect. They will make some mistakes and you will get more good results than otherwise. They will still win out much of the time but it won't be all of the time. You will have some clear benefits from being aggressive.

## Introduction to Conventions (Chapters Eleven, Twelve & Thirteen)

Everyone loves conventions. I don't know which conventions you are using right now but I can make some strong recommendations. Here are three categories of conventions:

Conventions you should add now if you don't already play them.  
Conventions to consider that will help define the rest of your agreements.

Conventions you don't need to bother with. Oddly, this list is the longest.

The first list is made up of conventions that you should be using right now. If you play in ACBL tournaments, you probably are playing some of them.

I am as likely to see opponents using unrecommended conventions as I am conventions that I do recommend. Players tend to be wedded to their conventions. I may have a hard time showing why a convention isn't good. Usually, if someone uses a convention, they have had a few good moments and aren't likely to change.

What makes a convention good or bad? Let's see.

### ***Important Note***

In chapters eleven and twelve I am going to discuss conventions that I think you should be playing now or adding to your card as soon as you can.

If you do not already play one of these conventions, I want to give you a good, solid introduction to it. This means that I will devote quite a few pages to each of the conventions. You will get introductory thoughts and then a lot of examples with comments.

Even if you already play these conventions, I suggest reading this material for a good reason. You will have something to refer to if you and your partner are not yet in complete agreement. Maybe something in these notes will help clear up a misunderstanding before it happens.

In chapter thirteen, I will offer my opinion on a variety of conventions that you should stop using. There are many reasons why this might be so.

It might be a lousy convention. It's possible that there is a better use for a certain bid. Or it might be that the convention is fine *if it ever comes up*. You don't want to play a convention that comes up once a year. It would be a pity if it came up and you realized that your partnership hadn't discussed it.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# High Value Conventions Worth Adding Immediately

## Negative Doubles

**N**EGATIVE DOUBLES are one of those conventions that you encounter daily. I had thought that they were close to universal. However, my lecturing experience suggests that a fair number of players who have played mostly in friendly games do not know of them. When they move up to tournament bridge, the idea of a negative double is alien to them.

This brief discussion of negative doubles is for them.

### *The reason for using negative doubles*

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♠	?

Your partner opens 1♣ and the next player bids 1♠. Here's your hand:

♠ 8763 ♥ Q976 ♦ KJ8 ♣ Q10

You would have bid 1♥ if RHO had passed. But he didn't. He bid 1♠. If you wish to show your hearts, you have to bid 2♥.

That 1♠ bid got in your way, which is typical of 1♠ overcalls. They are harder to bid against than any other one-level overcall.

If you think your hand is worth a bid, I would ask you, what is that bid going to be?

You can't bid 1NT. You don't have a spade stopper.

You can't bid 2♥. No matter what system you play, a 2♥ bid here promises 10 or more points. And if that's not bad enough, it shows a five-card suit. You can bid a four-card heart suit if you can bid it at the one level, but not at the two level.

If you bid 2♥ with a four-card suit, your partnership will have trouble avoiding a 4-3 fit. Your partner needs to know you have five cards so that he can raise with three.

Can you raise clubs? Not with the ♣Q10 doubleton.

Basically, in standard methods this hand does not offer a good bid. In fact you have only 8 points, but since your partner can have a pretty good hand it is important that you bid if you can.

That bid would be the negative double. If you double 1♠, your partner will learn that you have some points and he will learn that you have four hearts with any range of points, or five hearts without enough strength to bid them over 1♠.

Here are some example hands showing the negative double at work, along with some comments. You will note that your thinking is different according to which suits your partner and your RHO are bidding.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♦	?

♠ 10874 ♥ J876 ♦ 43 ♣ AJ3

Double. Your double says you have four cards in hearts and four cards in spades. The focus of a negative double is that you have four cards in any unbid major. Here, there are two unbid majors and you have four cards in each of them. You have a minimum double. Since your partner has room to bid a major at the one level, your double promises 6 points or more. It's not a strong bid.

♠ AKJ   ♥ K874   ♦ 7652   ♣ 97

Bid 1♥. *You can't double because your partner will expect you to have four spades as well as four hearts.* When they overcall 1♦, you can bid a four-card major at the one level when you aren't able to make a negative double.

♠ KQ109   ♥ AK107   ♦ 43   ♣ QJ8

Double. You promise four cards in each unbid major. Importantly, you can have as little as 6 points and might have 20. *There is no upper limit for this bid.*

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♥	?

♠ 10763   ♥ K43   ♦ Q4   ♣ QJ87

Double. You show exactly four spades. If you had five of them you would bid 1♠. This is a point worth discussing with your partner.

**Important reminder: A negative double emphasizes any unbid major suit. It *does not* promise a good holding in an unbid minor suit. If your partner bids diamonds, you just go back to clubs.**

**This can be a modestly embarrassing moment for the negative double.**

♠ A7643    ♥ 75    ♦ 874    ♣ KJ4

Bid 1♠. When they overcall 1♥, bidding 1♠ promises five. That's convenient since partner learns immediately that you have a five-card suit.

W	N	E	S
	1♦	1♥	?

♠ K10874    ♥ A43    ♦ K43    ♣ J10

Bid 1♠. When RHO overcalls 1♥, you can always show how many spades you have. Double with four. Bid them with five.

Things are less easy when they bid 1♠. Of all the overcalls at the one level, a 1♠ overcall is the worst one to bid against. I'm including more examples of bidding over 1♠ than any of the other one-level overcalls.

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♠	?

♠ 763    ♥ QJ63    ♦ KJ32    ♣ 72

Double. This hand has minimum points but it has support for hearts. Coincidentally, it has support for diamonds as well.

♠ 743    ♥ KJ87    ♦ 542    ♣ A87

Double. A minimum hand for this sequence. The main point of this hand is that when you double 1♠, the bidding often gets your side to the two



level. Don't make a really cheesy double of 1♠. This hand is a minimum double. You need a better hand to double 1♠ than 1♥. It's just another of those annoying little issues that arise when you are competing against spades.

♠ 743 ♥ AKJ4 ♦ KQ73 ♣ 43

Double. There is no limit to the upper range for a negative double. You could have a lot more than this and still have a proper negative double.

♠ 76 ♥ QJ763 ♦ KJ83 ♣ 43

Double. You don't have enough to bid 2♥. The only bid you can make is a negative double, along with the hope that it works out.

♠ 762 ♥ AQJ94 ♦ KJ2 ♣ 87

Finally, a hand with five hearts that is good enough to bid 2♥.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	1♠	?

♠ 54 ♥ Q9 ♦ K873 ♣ Q8632

Double. On this one auction, there isn't an unbid major. Hence, your double implies both minors.

♠ 83 ♥ J74 ♦ AJ43 ♣ K1094

Bid 2♥. Don't make a negative double when you can raise partner's heart suit.

♠ 742 ♥ 62 ♦ AK6543 ♣ 76

This is a trick hand. You can't bid diamonds for the usual reason. The hand isn't good enough for that. It's not a classic negative double but you might risk it anyway.

*This is the kind of hand that might fake a negative double. Importantly, you have a later bid you can make if things don't go well.*

If partner rebids his hearts, he should have six of them. 2♥ will be OK.

If partner bids 1NT, you can pass and expect it is a good contract.

If partner bids 2♣, you can bid your diamonds now and that will be understood to show a weakish hand with good diamonds.

♠ 6542 ♥ 6 ♦ 875 ♣ AKJ74

Pass. Some modest hands don't come with a proper bid. This is one of them. You can't bid notrump. No spade stopper. You can't bid 2♣. Not strong enough. Can't make a negative double. You aren't prepared to hear 2♦. Pass hands like this, which may get you an occasional poor result. But it will keep your partner happy when you always have what you are supposed to have.

### ***When they overcall at the two level***

You can use negative doubles after a two-level overcall as well. In fact, some players use them against any overcall up to 4♥. For some players, even that isn't the limit.

I will look at a few negative double situations where an opponent has overcalled at the two level.

Doubles that come at the one level can be made on some 6-counts.

Doubles that force the partnership to the two level (this includes a 1♠ overcall) require a tiny bit more.

**NO ONE VULNERABLE**

W	N	E	S
	1♦	2♣	?

♠ Q983    ♥ K653    ♦ 54    ♣ J43

Pass. You do not want to be at the two level or higher facing a minimum opener. One danger that isn't obvious is that if you double, your partner may bid to the three level or the four level thinking you have more. Best is not to get active without proper values.

*Note* that the 2♣ overcall stopped you from showing a major at the one level.

**What this suggests is that if you are thinking of overcalling 1♦ with 2♣, it is one of the best bids for making life hard on the opponents.**

♠ 54    ♥ QJ753    ♦ KJ7    ♣ J64

Pass. A terrible problem hand. You have a fair suit and 8 high-card points, and you have nothing to bid.

2♥ is a huge overbid. It's forcing, for starters, and promises at least 10 decent points.

2♦ is a possible solution but it's flawed in that it forever gives up on hearts.

A negative double will work if partner bids hearts or rebids diamonds or notrump, but his most likely bid is 2♠, and that is the end of the world for you. You can't pass 2♠, and there's nowhere to go.

You have to pass.

♠ QJ753    ♥ 54    ♦ KJ7    ♣ J64

This hand is the same as the previous hand except that the hearts and spades have been switched. Now you have five spades. This hand has a

good bid over 2♣. You can make a negative double now because if your partner bids 2♥, expected much of the time, you can bid 2♠. *This is not a strong auction.* If you had a good hand, you would have bid 2♠ over 2♣.

♠ A Q 8 4   ♥ 10 8 7 4   ♦ 6 4 3   ♣ K 3

A perfect negative double of 2♣. You have both majors. You have a tad more than you need. There is nothing your partner can do to bother you. If your partner bids two of a major, you will pass. If he bids three of a major, you have just enough to go to game.

### ***Some closing thoughts on negative doubles:***

A thorough discussion of negative doubles would require a long chapter to introduce them and more chapters to define them.

One issue would be how high to play them. Do you use negative doubles if they overcall at the three level? How about the four level?

Take from this section that negative doubles are necessary to good bidding. I can't imagine not having them on my convention card.

I have one last comment. If you have proper values for a negative double, make it. Here's the first hand I showed in this chapter:

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♦	?

♠ 10 8 7 4   ♥ J 8 7 6   ♦ 4 3   ♣ A J 3

*Failure to double will cost you a lot of partscores.* You want your partner to bid a four-card major if he has one and he won't do that if you forget to double. Once in a while, failure to double will cost you a game.

## Jump Shifts

Do you play strong jump shifts?

Do you play weak jump shifts all the time?

Do you play weak jump shifts only after an overcall?

Or do you play something else?

This is a chapter that many will appreciate reading. The reason is that none of these bids receive much mention in print or in books. Take this auction:

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	2♠

### *If you play strong jump shifts*

Strong jump shifts are something of an anachronism. But having said that, they have their place in bidding.

Note that I am only discussing strong jump shifts to the two level.

Note also that I am *not* discussing auctions where an opponent bids over the opening bidder.

Here's how they work:

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	2♥

This is a typical auction for a strong jump shift. North opens with one of a suit and South jumps to two of a suit.

There are all kinds of hands responder can have. In order to get the most out of strong jump shifts, you need to follow these rules:

1. You are jumping in a good suit. It's always five cards or longer.
2. You know where you are going.

Here are a few examples of proper jump shifts and some improper jump shifts.

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	?

♠ AJ4   ♥ KJ83   ♦ KQ7   ♣ AJ4

You have 19 points, enough for a jump shift, but you have the wrong hand for it. You don't know where this hand is going. Best to bid 1♥ and see what partner does.

This hand is a reminder. You have to know where you are going when you make a strong jump shift. Points do not automatically make a hand worth a jump shift.

♠ 83   ♥ AKJ43   ♦ 87   ♣ AQJ6

2♥ is the proper bid here if it is a strong jump shift. Your intention is to show club support next. This shows a good heart suit and prime club support. You don't have classic jump-shift values, but look what this hand has.

Your partner will learn you have good club support. Your partner, envisioning the kind of hand that you might have for a jump shift, will know slam is a consideration as soon as you show your club fit on the second round.

6♣ is almost cold if your partner has this 11-point hand:

♠ A95   ♥ 52   ♦ A4   ♣ K107543

You might be surprised how helpful the information is to your partner once he gets it.

You might get to slam if responder bids just 1♥. The trouble is that responder will have to make a lot of bids to show what kind of hand he has. The jump to 2♥, followed by showing his fit, is easy, straightforward, and effective.

♠ 3 2   ♥ AKJ 10 9 7   ♦ AK 3   ♣ 8 3

South might jump shift with this hand, too. A near-solid suit with good controls.

♠ 7   ♥ AKQJ 8 7 5   ♦ K 4   ♣ QJ 4

Another example of a 2♥ bid. If you bid 1♥ and your partner bids 1♠, do you really know what to do? Some players would bid 4♥ at this juncture, and that could cause you to miss a slam.

♠ K 3   ♥ KQJ 9 3   ♦ K 4 3   ♣ A Q 7

You can jump shift with this hand, too. The idea is that you are first showing a good hand with a good heart suit. On your next bid you will bid 2NT or 3NT, telling your partner that you have around 18 points with a good five-card heart suit. In other words, you are telling your partner where the hand is going.

♠ 4 3   ♥ AKQ 7 5   ♦ A Q 8 7   ♣ 6 4

Bid 1♥. You aren't sure where the hand will go. You might end up in notrump. You might end up in hearts. It's possible that you will end up in diamonds.

Knowing where the hand is going is important in making a jump shift. Usually you expect to play in your suit or partner's suit. Sometimes neither is best and you end up in notrump.

The hand here can't tell where it's going so it goes slow with a 1♥ response.

***Why aren't strong jump shifts used by more players today?***

They just don't come up very often. And, with the advent of improved bidding systems, you don't need them as much as before. Still, I use them with some partners and when they come up, we are almost guaranteed of getting to the best contract.

It's the lack of frequency that keeps them from being more widely used.



## Do You Play Weak Jump Shifts all the Time?

I'm not sure how many play weak jump shifts today. I suspect that some players don't play any jump shifts at all. That's a waste of a good bid. If you don't play strong jump shifts, then weak jump shifts may suit you better. Here's what they look like.

YOU ARE NOT VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
	1♣	P	2♥

♠ 43   ♥ QJ9854   ♦ J62   ♣ 76

Perfect. Not vulnerable, you show from 2-5 points and a six-card suit. If you don't like doing it with 2, then use 3 points as your minimum. This hand is ideal. It has the good suit and it has 4 points. When you consider that 5 points is your maximum, you will realize that this hand is better than average for a 2♥ bid.

♠ 8   ♥ J98653   ♦ 9763   ♣ Q7

Bid 2♥. You have six of them, which is the norm. Don't do this with five and don't do this with seven. Your partner will expect six *and he will bid on that assumption*.

♠ 43   ♥ J109764   ♦ 3   ♣ J987

Enter the world of bidding on air! This example is for those who don't object to a 2-point hand. This isn't a bad hand, as 2-point hands go. It has a *good suit* and *good shape*. If you hate this bid, then pass. But be aware that

if you do, you will never get to show your nice distributional values. Such as they are.

♠ Q7   ♥ 1076532   ♦ Q62   ♣ J4

This hand has maximum values for a weak jump shift, but I don't like it much. It has the worst possible trump suit and it has no value that you can point to with pride. No one will tell you that they are thrilled with this hand. All bids, 1♥, 2♥, and pass, are unhappy choices. If you prefer to pass, that's not a bad choice.

## Do You Play Weak Jump Shifts After An Overcall?

If you use weak jump shifts, you probably also use them in competition. This auction qualifies:

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♥	2♠

Partner opened, RHO bid at the one level, and you jumped to the two level with your 2♠ bid. (A jump to 3♦ would not be considered a weak jump response.)

Your 2♠ bid is pretty much the same when RHO bids something at the one level as when RHO passes.

However, because RHO came into the bidding, I suggest you make a tiny adjustment and play that a jump to 2♠ promises 3 points, not 2.

*Note that when RHO passes and you make your jump shift, your LHO knows nothing about the hand other than the cards he has.*

*When RHO bids something and you make your jump shift, your LHO knows a lot. He knows that his partner has a suit. He knows that his partner has some points. He knows that he can count on his partner for something.*

**What this means is that a weak jump shift in competition isn't as effective as a weak jump shift when RHO passes.**

Be sure to discuss this auction:

W	N	E	S
	1♣	Dbl	2♥

There's nothing worse than making a bid like 2♥, hearing an opponent ask what it means, and having partner shake his head and say he doesn't know. Regardless of whether or not you play weak jump shifts, discuss this

auction with your partner. Note that it isn't as safe to make a jump bid after a takeout double because the player on your right is announcing that he has support for all suits. You may, if you bid, be bidding a suit your RHO likes a lot!

## How Does Opener Bid After Partner's Weak Jump Shift?

This is the most important question that exists if you have agreed to play weak jump shifts.

Here's a pop quiz. You are South.

W	N	E	S
	1♦	P	2♠
P	?		

♠ Q 10 9 7 6 3    ♥ 4 3 2    ♦ 5    ♣ Q 4 3

You bid 2♠, comfortable that you have what you are supposed to have.  
Your partner now makes one of these bids:

2NT

3♣

3♦

3♥

3♠

Seriously, do you know what these bids might mean?

Most players kind of shrug and say they aren't sure.

*Is that good bridge?*

Here's a simple set of rules that will clarify most situations.

***Rules for opener's second bid after partner's weak jump shift:***

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	2♥	P	?

If opener bids:

2♠: A new suit shows a big hand and is forcing. This won't happen often.

2NT: An important bid. It asks responder what kind of weak hand he has.

Responder answers this way:

3♣ says he has a weak hand and a weak suit.

3♦ says he has a weak hand and a good suit.

3♥ says he has a good hand with a weak suit.

3♠ says he has a good hand with a good suit.

When you consider that 5 points is the most partner can have, these bids pretty well cover partner's possible hands. I will show examples of these bids in a moment.

3♣: A new suit shows a big hand and is forcing. This won't happen often.

3♦: If opener rebids his suit, it is a signoff bid saying that opener knows he wants to play it there. Partner should always pass when opener rebids his suit.

3♥: Another important bid. The raise is always *preemptive*. Responder is supposed to pass.

4♥: No one knows for sure what this is. Opener may have a good preemptive hand and he may have a 20-point hand. In both cases, he bids game directly without giving the opponents information.

Here are some example hands. All of them will use the following auction.

**NO ONE VULNERABLE**

W	N	E	S
			1♣
P	2♥	P	?

♠ KQ2   ♥ 3   ♦ AJ43   ♣ KQJ98

Pass. Not even close to bidding. Your partner's hand rates to be something like six hearts to the queen-jack with little else. He will be lucky to make 2♥.

♠ A2   ♥ J85   ♦ 987   ♣ AKJ87

Raise to 3♥. Partner must pass. You are just hoping to block the opponents' bidding. If you pass 2♥, they might be able to balance. If you bid 3♥, it makes it harder for them to do so.

♠ AKJ4   ♥ 85   ♦ KQ8   ♣ AJ76

Pass. You have 18 high-card points. Your partner has a maximum of five. Game is unlikely. If you pass, you won't mind if the opponents balance. If everyone passes, you should be in your best contract.

***How does opener invite when partner makes a weak jump shift?***

♠ AJ7   ♥ 862   ♦ A7   ♣ AKQ95

You might well be wondering what it would take for opener to look for a game after 2♥ from partner. This hand is just good enough. An easy way to think of it is to mentally place your partner with a maximum hand and then decide if game is possible. This might be the layout:

♠ Q 3	♠ A J 7
♥ Q 10 9 7 4 3	♥ 8 6 2
♦ 8 6 4	♦ A 7
♣ 6 4	♣ A K Q 9 5

Game has some chances. But you would rather be in 2♥ or 3♥.

*If opener wants to try for game in partner's suit, the way to do it is to bid 2NT. Partner will use the bids shown earlier.*

3♣ says he has a weak hand and a weak suit.

3♦ says he has a weak hand and a good suit.

3♥ says he has a good hand with a weak suit.

3♠ says he has a good hand with a good suit.

♠ 6 5   ♥ J 10 9 7 4 3   ♦ Q 4 3   ♣ 8 3

Partner will bid 3♣ with this hand, showing a weak hand and a weak suit. This hand qualifies. His suit could actually be a little bit weaker. Further, if you are an aggressive partnership, he might have only 2 points consisting of the ♥Q98752.

♠ 4 3   ♥ K 10 7 5 4 3   ♦ 9 6 4   ♣ 8 6

This hand would respond to 2NT with 3♦. This hand would be treated as a weak hand with a good suit. Add the ♦J and you would still rate it as a minimum hand.

♠ Q 5   ♥ Q 9 7 5 4 3   ♦ J 10 2   ♣ 3 2

This hand is maximum but the suit is less than good so it would bid 3♥, showing a good hand with a poor suit. Judgment is needed to help with



these definitions. If the hearts were ♥Q109875, you could treat the suit as good.

♠ 10 6 3   ♥ QJ7543   ♦ 2   ♣ J108

This hand requires some judgment. The suit is good and the ♣J108 is nice. I would treat this hand as a 3♠ bid, showing a good suit and a good hand. Don't forget that 5 points is the best you can have. This 4-point hand is good all around. It has a singleton and it has the ♠10, a card that often turns out to have value.

♠ 5 4   ♥ KQ10974   ♦ 43   ♣ 432

Treat this as a 3♠ bid. If your hearts are ♥AJ9543, treat it as a 3♠ bid. It doesn't take much to treat a hand or a suit as 'good.'

***When your hand has a maximum-quality suit, it is maximum by definition.***

Continuing with this auction:

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
			1♣
P	2♥	P	?

♠ 43   ♥ K874   ♦ Q7   ♣ AKQ43

Bid 4♥. It's remarkable that the opponents haven't bid yet. You should bid 4♥, expecting it will go down.

♠ AK3   ♥ J10   ♦ A103   ♣ AK763

Bid 4♥ with this hand, too. This time you have a very good hand and fully expect to make 4♥. The fact that this hand and the previous hand are 4♥ bids will keep the opponents guessing.

♠ KJ54 ♥ - ♦ 874 ♣ AQJ1087

Bid 3♣. Your partner will not bid again. He can never have a suit good enough to overrule your 3♣ bid.

♠ A74 ♥ - ♦ A63 ♣ AKQ9874

This is an exceptional hand. Bid 3NT with it. If the clubs run, you are home.

♠ AQJ87 ♥ 3 ♦ 4 ♣ AKQJ86

Bid 2♠. *Anytime you bid a new suit, you show a big hand.* The auction won't always be easy, but at least knowing that 2♠ is forcing is a good start. If partner has three-card spade support, 4♠ will be playable. So might 5♣. It's also possible that you should bid 3♣ to end the auction. You won't know until you see the dummy.

Two last hands using this new sequence:

NO ONE VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	2♠	P	?

♠ 3 ♥ 2 ♦ AKJ1087 ♣ AKQ43

Bid 3♣. You have a great hand and with a future even facing the kind of hand partner would bid 2♠ with. 3♣ is forcing. (See next hand.)

♠ 2    ♥ Q    ♦ KJ8653    ♣ AQ874

This is a weak hand. Your partner has a weak hand. Your side is in trouble. Best is to pass 2♠. If you bid 3♣ now, it is forcing and the bidding can't stop here. The opponents may wake up and double you. If you pass 2♠ and it gets doubled, you may opt to bid 3♣, which would not be forcing.

**If you use weak jump shifts in competition, they work the same way as when you make a weak jump shift before the opponents compete.**

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♥	2♠

This is a weak jump shift if you have chosen to play it that way. My only suggestion is that your hand have a saner suit than normal. Because the opponents have gotten into the bidding, it's possible that they own the hand.

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♥	3♦

I won't go into what a 3♦ bid should mean because there are too many possibilities. Three-level jumps are different from two-level jumps. It could be weak and natural; it could be some kind of raise for partner's suit; it could be an invitational natural bid. Best is not to worry about these bids for the time being.

## Or Should You Play Something Else?

Your jump shifts should be weak or strong. But there are always other meanings to lure you. If you find an opponent using one of these jump shifts as something other than discussed here, don't play it. For starters, if that treatment is so rare that you have never heard of it, then you won't have a partner to play it with. Keep your methods along normal lines. Your game will be much better as a result.

## The Jacoby 2NT Response to a Major-Suit Opening Bid

Your partner opens 1♥ or 1♠. You have four- or five-card support and game points for partner's major. How do you handle it?

A convention that has gained overwhelming popularity is the Jacoby 2NT response. Your partner opens, for example, 1♥ and the next player passes. What do you bid with the following hands?

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	?

♠ Q7643   ♥ KQ83   ♦ AJ   ♣ 73

Using 2NT as a game-forcing raise, you would bid 2NT with this hand. It has four hearts and game points. If you haven't learned this truth yet, be aware that when you have such a hand, bidding 2NT and letting partner know the nature of your hand as fast as possible is important. Once partner knows what you have, he can cooperate with you in the bidding. Slam decisions will be easier when the partnership knows right away what's going on.

Note that it would be wrong for responder to bid 1♠. Who cares about spades when you have a perfect heart fit?

♠ J9   ♥ AKJ98   ♦ KQ7   ♣ 1086

Bid 2NT. Get the game-forcing heart support off your chest as soon as possible.

♠ A 8 7   ♥ K Q 9   ♦ Q J 8 5   ♣ Q 9 5

Whatever you do, *do not* bid 2NT. A Jacoby raise promises four-card support. If you produce only three, it means that the hand will not play as well as when you have four. Your partner will misjudge now and then because he expected you to have four-card support. This is an important fact. Don't disappoint your partner.

What you should do with this hand is a different story. You might start with 2♦, for instance. Sometimes the hand won't be easy to bid but bidding 2NT with only three trumps will cause problems too.

♠ A K 4   ♥ Q J 8 7   ♦ A K 3 2   ♣ 8 7

You have way more than a game hand but the first bid is the same. Bid 2NT. Your partner's next bid will tell you artificially if he has a minimum, a good hand, or an excellent hand, and you will continue accordingly. If on this hand you bid 2NT and your partner says he has a minimum, you would know that game is probably best. (More on this later.)

♠ K J 3   ♥ K J 8 3   ♦ K Q J 10 6   ♣ 2

**Note:** This hand offers an alternative to bidding 2NT. Do you play splinter bids? If so, you can bid 4♣ to show a game-forcing heart raise with a singleton club. This is a recommended convention which I will discuss in the ensuing chapter on conventions you should consider using.

If you don't play splinter bids, you can bid 2NT.

## How Does Opener Bid After Partner's Jacoby 2NT Response?

This part is easy. Opener has a nice schedule of bids.

***If opener has a singleton:***

He bids it.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	2NT	P	3♦

3♦ shows a singleton diamond. Opener can have a minimum hand or a good hand or a great hand. His first duty is to show a singleton. It may be the key to a slam and if opener doesn't show it now, it may get lost in the ensuing auction.

***If opener has a void:***

Personally, I like jumping in a suit to show a void as long as I'm not jumping higher than four of our major. That means I may have to pretend it's a singleton.

On the auction above, I can't bid 4♠ with a spade void since it gets us past our game of 4♥, so I would bid 3♠ and hope the auction lets me make an intelligent decision later.

## Could A Jump In a New Suit Be Natural Instead?

Some players don't show voids. They always treat it as a singleton. When they jump in a new suit, it shows a good five-card suit.

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	2NT	P	?
♠ QJ874	♥ 3	♦ AQ	♣ KQJ62

If you play 4♣ shows a club suit, that is your bid. One rule is that your suit should be good. I suggest KJxxx or better.

♠ AQJ54	♥ KJ	♦ J7653	♣ 3
---------	------	---------	-----

Just bid 3♣, showing a singleton. This diamond suit isn't worth showing.

**Note:** My feeling is that the singleton is more important, but it isn't a unanimous opinion. Play whatever pleases your partner.

*If opener has a balanced hand:*

W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	2NT	P	?

If opener has a balanced hand, he has three bids available.



3♥: Rebidding the major shows a good balanced hand with 17 high-card points or more. This is a slam suggestion. Responder should start making cuebids unless he has a minimum 2NT bid.

♠ 8 3   ♥ A K J 8 7   ♦ A J   ♣ A Q 10

Bid 3♥, promising a very good balanced hand. This is close to a maximum. Seventeen points is the minimum you can have.

3NT: A 3NT rebid says opener has a good hand of around 15-16 high-card points. Fourteen is OK if opener has a wonderful-quality 14 points. Judgment counts.

♠ K Q 10 4   ♥ A Q 10 9 3   ♦ K 3   ♣ 8 2

This is a minimum 3NT bid. The good shape and good spot cards make this worth more than your average 14-point hand.

♠ A Q J   ♥ A K 10 7 6   ♦ Q 8   ♣ 5 4 3

This is a 3NT rebid. Since the range is 15-16 points, your partner may wonder why you didn't open 1NT. If it is your style to open this hand with 1♥, then you should bid 3NT with it now. If you would open 1NT with it, then your partner will know you can't have this hand. But you might have the following hand.

♠ 8 3   ♥ A Q J 8 6   ♦ A K J 4   ♣ 4 3

Having 15 points does not mean a hand is automatically a 1NT opening bid. This hand feels like a 1♥ opener. It rebids 3NT if partner responds with a Jacoby 2NT raise. Other 15-16 point hands that opener can have include a hand with a six-card major that surely would not open 1NT.

♠ K 3    ♥ K J 10 8 7 6    ♦ A K J    ♣ 4 3

This hand would open 1♥ and after 2NT would rebid 3NT to show 15-16 balanced points.

4♥: Four of the major is the weakest bid opener can make. Since opener is showing around 11-14 balanced points, responder will pass unless he has a truly good hand.

Opener's rebid is the easy part of this convention. The subsequent bidding requires good judgment to guide the rest of the auction.

Here are a few hands showing complete auctions:

WEST		EAST	
♠	A J 8 7 3	♠	Q 9 4 2
♥	3 2	♥	A K J 7
♦	Q J 3	♦	K 2
♣	A J 2	♣	K 8 4

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2NT	P
4♠	P	P	P

West opens his minimum hand with 1♠.

East bids 2NT, showing a balanced game-forcing spade raise with at least four trumps.

West rebids 4♠, showing a minimum balanced hand. He could have a nice 11 points up to a fair 14 points.

East passes. East has 16 high-card points but knows the partnership has a maximum of 30 points with no singletons to help in the play.

***Here's a helpful guideline:***

When you have two balanced hands, you tend to need the same 32 or 33 points to make six of a suit that you need to make 6NT. This is an excellent

guideline to remember.

WEST	EAST
♠ K Q J 6 3 2	♠ A 10 5 4
♥ A Q 3	♥ K J 10 9
♦ K 2	♦ A Q J
♣ 9 6	♦ Q 7

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2NT	P
3NT	P	4♦	P
4♥	P	4♠	P
P	P		

West's 3NT bid shows 15-16 points.

East is entitled to cuebid 4♦.

West shows his ♥A.

East, with nothing in clubs, gives up.

WEST	EAST
♠ Q J 6	♠ A K 9 3
♥ A K Q 6 2	♥ J 10 7 4 3
♦ 2	♦ 10 9
♣ K J 10 8	♣ A 2

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	2NT	P
3♦	P	3♠	P
?			

This hand shows an important aspect of bidding after the Jacoby 2NT bid.

West bids 3♦, showing a singleton diamond. This is good news for East in two ways. It means there aren't two diamond losers. It's also good news for East because he doesn't have any wasted high cards in diamonds.

East bids 3♠, showing the ♠A. East rather likes his hand at this point.

What should West bid? West likes his hand too, but not so much that he can do anything good. So West uses a bidding trick.

***Here is a really good trick if used wisely:***

When you are in the middle of a Jacoby 2NT auction, you are committed to get to four of the major. You never, ever find an excuse to play in 3NT. You just don't do that. So, if someone does bid 3NT, *it is not an offer to play in 3NT*. It says you want to continue a cuebidding sequence but you don't have a cuebid you want to make now.

Now the cuebidding sequence can continue. Here's the complete auction:

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	2NT	P
3♦	P	3♠	P
3NT	P	4♣	P
4NT	P	5♠*	P
6♥	P	P	P

\*When you know your side has ten trumps, you can 'show' the queen of trumps even when you don't have it.

East has room to show his ♣A. Opener's 3NT bid left room for just this kind of bidding.

Complex? Somewhat. Wise? Pretty much.

Importantly, the tools and rationale for these auctions are good to be familiar with.

***As good as Jacoby 2NT bids are, they have a drawback that you should know about.***

No one will ever tell you what the flaw is. Unless you read it here. The Jacoby 2NT bid gets in the way of the old-fashioned 1♥ - Pass - 2NT bid used to show a balanced 13-14 point notrump hand. Giving up the natural 2NT bid in order to play Jacoby 2NT is a costly trade. Some say it's worth it. You decide.

## Does Jacoby 2NT Work if the Next Player Bids Something?

No. Emphatically no. *If your partner opens one of a major and your RHO overcalls or doubles, a 2NT bid by you is no longer a Jacoby 2NT raise.* You now have a new assortment of weapons to use, which include using a cuebid to show support for partner.

## Something Special

This may be the best part of this topic.

When your opponents bid 1♥ - Pass - 2NT or 1♠ - Pass - 2NT, you have opportunities you might not recognize. You know you are up against two strong hands. But they have a good fit and they know it, and they also know that they are cold for a game. Perhaps a slam.

Their minds are focused on bidding to their best contract.

Why not do something over 2NT to see if you can mess up their bidding a little?

Here are some hands to show you what's possible. You need to note the vulnerability, of course, but if you are not vulnerable or better yet, if you are not vulnerable and they are vulnerable, your moment may be at hand.

## You Are Not Vulnerable and They Are

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2NT	?

♠ 873   ♥ KQJ1084   ♦ 43   ♣ 43

Bid 3♥. If you feel brave enough, bid 4♥. Maybe you can ruff a spade or two in your dummy. The idea is that by bidding something, you have many ways to gain. Here are two important possible benefits from bidding 3♥:

1. Opener can't make his normal rebid. This might interrupt their bidding.
2. You help your partner with his opening lead.

Getting partner off to a good lead is often important. Your partner will be happy to know you like hearts.

♠ 3   ♥ 43   ♦ QJ1075   ♣ KJ1084

Double. This can be treated as showing an unusual notrump hand. It can also be used as a takeout double. I slightly prefer using double as showing the minors.

♠ 4   ♥ 10742   ♦ 8   ♣ KQJ8763

Bid 5♣. If this doesn't appeal, bid at least 4♣. Remember. The opponents are thinking of how high to bid. They won't have penalty doubles in the front of the line of choices. And even if you get doubled, the other player may find a reason to take it out.

Following this rule will be a big help:



**RULE – When an opponent responds 2NT, you should view it as a dare. Always consider if the vulnerability and your hand combine to give you a reason to bid something.**

I have seen many successful results from bidding on this auction, and very few bad results from bidding.

One thing. Your side can't have good hands. The points belong to the opponents. Your partner should never take a bid by you seriously.

Enjoy the moment.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# High Value Conventions That are Worth Adding Later

**T**HERE ARE SOME CONVENTIONS that deserve to be on your convention card but for some reason aren't considered to be mandatory. This chapter includes five of these conventions.

## Drury

The first is Drury.

Most likely you are familiar with Drury. But many players who know of it choose not to use it. Some players go further than not playing it. They state that they will not play it because they hate it.

I've never understood this. If you are using a five-card major system such as the Two Over One system, Drury is a perfect fit.

Here's how it works. You are South.

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♠	P	?
♠ Q 8 4   ♥ K 8 7   ♦ A 5 3   ♣ Q 5 4 3			

What do you bid?

You can choose from this list:

2♠: An underbid.

3♠: Right on values, but still a wretched bid because you have only three trumps.

1NT: An underbid if natural, and flawed because you have spade support.

2NT: An overbid if natural, and flawed because you have spade support.

2♣: Drury. A Drury bid says you have 10-11 support points for partner's major, with three or four trumps.

Which of these bids comes closest to describing your hand in one bid?

Which of these bids best informs your partner of your values right away before the opponents get into the auction?

Which of these bids lets you show partner what you have without forcing the auction to the three level?

No points for guessing the right answer. It's Drury.

There are many versions of Drury.

The best is Lawrence Drury, but it is not well known so unless you have a book that covers it, you probably don't know of it. (See *The Complete Guide to Passed Hand Bidding*, by Mike Lawrence.)

The version of Drury that the world gravitates to is reverse Drury.

Not bad, but not much used anymore, is original Drury, invented by Doug Drury of Canada when playing in a partnership with Eric Murray. In this version, opener rebids 2♦ to show a minimum hand.

The worst version is two-way Drury. It's too horrible for words. In two-way Drury a 2♣ bid says you have three trumps with 10-11 support points and 2♦ says you have four trumps with 10-11 support points. Skip this one.

### ***I will focus on reverse Drury.***

Your partner opens 1♥ or 1♠ in third *or* fourth seat and you have a hand that is too good for a simple raise. The solution is to bid 2♣, reverse Drury, showing approximately a limit raise. Opener shows a good hand by bidding 2♦ or by bidding something higher than two of the trump suit.

But first, a word from Drury fans.

### ***Why is Drury so effective?***

I'm going to show you lots of example hands using Drury, but first I'm going to show you the secret reason Drury is so revered by the players using it.

It helps you bid constructively, of course, but it also helps you bid competitively. This benefit is largely ignored when someone talks about Drury.

Here's the most important example in the Drury section. The bidding sequence shows an auction that *does not use Drury*.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

♠ Q 8 2  
 ♥ K Q 10 4  
 ♦ A 6 3  
 ♣ J 8 5

♠ A 9 4  
 ♥ A 8 2  
 ♦ 10 9 5 2  
 ♣ Q 7 3

W	N	E	S
		P	P
1♥	P	2♥	P
P	2♠	3♥	P
P	P		

West opens 1♥ in third seat with a four-card suit, a popular third-seat tactic. East raises to 2♥. East has a good hand but bidding 3♥ with only three trumps isn't a good habit, so East takes a conservative view.

This is passed to North, who balances with 2♠. Should East bid 3♥? Should East pass? What should East do? East can't really tell. If he bids 3♥, a common choice, it won't make if opener has a typical third-seat dog of a hand. If East passes and West has a reasonable opening bid, he won't know if East has a good 10-point hand or a boring 6- or 7-point hand.

Drury makes life easy for both players.

If East had bid 2♣, Drury, his side would get to 2♥, which would be just fine. If North sticks his 2♠ bid in, East will pass because he has shown a good raise. He can afford to pass and let West make the final decision. On this hand, West would pass 2♠.

*The idea behind Drury is more than bidding accurately.* When responder bids Drury, opener knows the potential for the hand and he will be in a position to know what to do if the bidding becomes competitive.

Here are some examples of bidding using reverse Drury:

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♥	P	?

♠ J 8 7 6 3    ♥ Q J 5    ♦ K Q 7    ♣ Q 7

Bid 2♣, Drury. You promise three- or four-card trump support. Bidding 1♠ is a waste of time. If you bid 1♠, you may not get an opportunity to show you have a good hand for hearts.

♠ A 6    ♥ A 10 3    ♦ 3 2    ♣ 10 9 8 6 4 3

Bid 2♣. You have two aces, three nice hearts, and two doubletons. This hand has almost 10 support points for hearts.

♠ 7 6 4    ♥ Q 8 7 4    ♦ K J 3    ♣ K J 3

Bid 2♣. This hand has 10 high-card points and four trumps, but it has a serious flaw. It has 4-3-3-3 shape. Even hands with four-card support suffer from this. The hand here, 10 points and all, is really only worth 9 points.

Some players like to bid 3♥ with this hand, thinking they are making a limit raise. All good if you make it. Bad if 3♥ goes down. If you consider that your partner may open 1♥ with some scroungy 12-points hands, and might even open 11- or 10-point hands too, you may find that 3♥ has no play.

Here's a layout that shows the value of using Drury on this hand. Opener is on the left. He opens 1♥ with his 11-count, as would most of the world in third seat. If East bids 3♥ with the hand on the right, declarer will be looking at a lot of potential losers.

♠ K Q 8  
 ♥ A 10 6 3 2  
 ♦ Q 10 4  
 ♣ 8 6

♠ 7 6 4  
 ♥ Q 8 7 4  
 ♦ K J 3  
 ♣ K J 3

On an unlucky day:

West could lose two spades.

West could lose two hearts.

West will lose one diamond.

West could lose two clubs.

That's seven possible losers. Some of them may be avoided, but going down in 3♥ is a lively possibility.

If East responds 2♣, Drury, West will bid 2♥ and that will end the bidding.

***What should a passed-hand jump to three of a major show, if not a maximum hand with at least four-card support?***

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♠	P	3♠

♠ QJ74   ♥ 3   ♦ K8763   ♣ 653

This isn't a classic limit raise. It's a hand that likes spades a lot but doesn't have a lot of high cards. If you respond 2♠ with this hand and an opponent bids something, you might well continue to 3♠ on the basis of your good trumps and your shape. If you agree that this is possible, then bidding 3♠ immediately may shut out the opponents and at the same time give partner enough information to bid game with his good hands. This bid is called a *preemptive limit raise*. It's a weakish hand with excellent shape.

♠ A K J 3   ♥ J 4 3   ♦ J 4 3   ♣ J 9 4

Bid 2♣, Drury. Don't jump to 3♠. That bid shows a totally different kind of hand.

♠ Q 10 8 7 4   ♥ 3   ♦ 2   ♣ K 8 7 6 3 2

You can bid 4♠ with this hand. Partner will play you for extreme shape but a weak hand.

♠ K Q 8 5 4   ♥ 5   ♦ K J 10 7 4   ♣ 8 3

This hand is too good to bid 4♠. 2♣ is a sane start, but there are other scientific bids you can use that might do the trick. One of them is a jump to 4♥, our splinter friend that I am going to discuss later.

### *How does the auction continue when partner uses Drury?*

This section shows you various bids opener can make in response to Drury. This section also discusses what your partner can do next after you make your second bid. No one is vulnerable unless otherwise noted.

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	?

2♦: This bid says that opener thinks a game is possible, but he wants more input from partner. His normal minimum is about 14 points.

♠ Q J 8 7 4   ♥ 8 4   ♦ A Q 9   ♣ K Q 10

A nice 14 points. Typical 2♦ rebid.



***Partner's choices when you bid 2♦, showing game interest or more:***

2♠: If partner returns to your suit, he is saying he has a minimum Drury hand. You can pass this bid.

You can also make normal game tries according to your methods.

It's possible you have interest in slam, but that's rare.

2NT: Game forcing. He is offering you a choice of games. Almost surely he has three trumps.

3♣: Probably some values in clubs, along with his trump support. Partner has more than a minimum Drury bid.

3♦: Probably some values in diamonds, along with his trump support. Partner has more than a minimum Drury bid.

3♥: Probably some values in hearts along with his trump support. Partner has more than a minimum Drury bid.

4♠: Showing a maximum Drury hand.

2♥: Opener's 2♥ rebid shows a weak hand. It's natural and shows four or five hearts. Responder either passes or returns to 2♠. With a good hand, opener bids 2♦ and then bids his hearts.

2♠: When opener rebids his suit, he shows a poor hand. Responder passes this about 95% of the time. He is allowed to raise to 3♠ *if and only if he has five excellent trumps and a useful maximum hand.*

♠ KJ874   ♥ AJ8   ♦ 43   ♣ J108

This would just make the grade.

2NT: If opener rebids 2NT, it shows a balanced game-forcing hand with 15 or more points. 3NT is a possible contract.

♠ AKQJ5   ♥ Q103   ♦ K2   ♣ KJ3

Bid 2NT. Game forcing. Partner will raise or go back to spades. This hand has 19 points. A good 15 is enough.

3♣: If opener bids a new suit *at the three level* it shows a good hand with a good five-card suit and at least modest slam interest.

♠ A K 10 7 4   ♥ 4   ♦ Q 2   ♣ A K 10 7 6

3♦: The same as 3♣.

3♥: The same as 3♣.

3♠: A slam try, asking partner to cuebid if he likes his hand.

♠ A Q J 8 7 6 4   ♥ K 3   ♦ K Q 2   ♣ 9

You are interested in slam. But, what if partner has something like this?

♠ K 5 3   ♥ Q J   ♦ J 7 4 3   ♣ K J 8 2

You want to stop in 4♠.

The solution is to bid 3♠. Your partner will tell you if he has a good hand by cuebidding and you can then follow up with 4NT, knowing partner has a good Drury hand, not a crummy Drury hand.

3NT: Why would you bid 3NT when you can bid 2NT instead? That's a good question. Perhaps a philosophical question. Here's a fun thought that you and your partner will instantly forget.

**Optional thought: *Play 3NT is keycard Blackwood. This way you can stop in four of the major if partner has too few keycards for slam. The previous hand would be appropriate for 3NT if it asked for keycards.***

4♠: Four of the agreed major is a signoff. This is an important bid. When you jump to game after partner's Drury bid, you are saying you want to be in game. Partner has no further say in this. Partner always passes.

Here are some examples of opener's jumps to game after opening 1♥ and hearing a Drury response.

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	4♥

♠ K 8   ♥ A J 8 7 6 3   ♦ K J 10 6   ♣ 2

Bid 4♥. This 12-point hand has improved dramatically. When partner bids Drury, you can count this hand as being worth about 16 points.

*Note that when you jump to game, neither opponent has a clue about what you have.*

♠ K Q J 4   ♥ K Q J 7 4   ♦ A Q   ♣ J 10

Bid 4♥ again. You have 19 points and can expect game to be cold. Slam might make but it will require a finesse most of the time. You would hate to get to 5♥ going down.

By bidding 4♥, you keep your opponents in the dark. You bid this hand with 19 points and the previous hand with 12 high-card points the same way. Defenders like to listen when you make bids. No need to make extra bids when you know where you are going.

♠ 3 2   ♥ K J 10 8 7   ♦ A K J 10 8   ♣ 8

Once again, bid 4♥. If you bid diamonds, you will never get a diamond lead. Why tell the opponents you have diamonds when you would like them to lead a diamond?

4♥ may not make, but since the opponents don't know what you have, there are various errors they might make. They might lead a trump inopportunely. They might lead an ace to their detriment. They might misguess in the play not knowing you have this strong diamond suit on the side.

## What If Your RHO Bids Over Your Partner's Opening Bid?

### *Does Drury still work?*

It does work some of the time.

Two rules:

1. If your partner bids a major in third or fourth seat, and RHO bids at the one level, 2♣ is still a Drury bid.
2. If your partner bids a major in third or fourth seat, and RHO makes a takeout double, 2♣ is still a Drury bid.

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♥	1♠	2♣

Still Drury.

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♥	Dbl	2♣

Still Drury.

Now comes the hard part.

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♥	2♣	?

If your RHO bids 2♣ or higher, Drury no longer exists. You have to fall back on other methods. This is a loss for sure. You may think of doubling

2♣ as Drury, but that is not as useful to you as making a negative double.  
I suggest you do the following:

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♥	2♦	?

If you have a limit raise with four trumps, jump to 3♥.

If you have a limit raise with three trumps, cuebid 3♦.

This is not perfect. As I have shown you throughout this book, opponents who bid are troublesome, and this sequence just proves the point.  
Some examples:

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♠	2♦	?

Bid 2♠. You have 11 of the worst high-card points imaginable. Three queens and two jacks are not a good start. Having 4-3-3-3 shape with only three trumps isn't good either. This is an excellent exercise in judgment.

♠ K543   ♥ 43   ♦ 874   ♣ AQ108

Bid 3♠. This is a limit raise. You have nice values, you have four good trumps, and you have a little shape. This is too good a hand to bid 2♠.

♠ KJ4   ♥ A97   ♦ 43   ♣ Q10842

This is a nice hand but it has only three-card support. Bid 3♦, showing a three-card limit raise. One nice thing about this cuebid raise is that your partner knows you have just three spades. This is not a small thing for him to be aware of.

♠ Q974   ♥ AK5   ♦ 432   ♣ 1094

I'm tempted to bid just 2♠. This is a pretty good hand with four-card support. Still, it has balanced shape, usually a minus sign. I would compromise with a 3♦ cuebid showing a limit raise with three trumps.

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♠	2♣	?

♠ 73   ♥ QJ83   ♦ AQ107   ♣ 863

Double. This is a negative double. It is not a Drury bid. In the long run, you will get more mileage out of using a double of 2♣ as negative. Some players, against my advice, play this double is Drury. It's not the best treatment since it takes away your valuable negative double.

## What If RHO Doubles Your Partner's Drury Bid?

W	N	E	S
	P	P	1♥
P	2♣	Dbl	?

No matter what the double means, your bids are easy and logical. But having an agreement is a good idea.

Pass: Opener has the worst kind of hand. He could have a really lousy hand with five hearts and he might have a so-so hand with four hearts if your partnership uses this ploy. *If opener passes, he is stating clearly that he wants to stop in 2♥.*

2♦: If opener bids 2♦, everything goes on as before. Opener is showing at least invitational values and may have a good hand.

2♥: If opener bids two of the major, he is showing a weak opener but he also promises a reason to bid. He has a weak hand that has some flavor. After a 2♥ rebid, the partnership may compete to 3♥.

♠ 74   ♥ KJ1085   ♦ AJ87   ♣ Q7

This is a minimum hand but it has character. Opener isn't interested in game but if responder wishes to compete to 3♥, he is welcome to do so.

## Responsive Doubles

You saw the discussion of negative doubles in the previous section. They are a weapon that helps the side that opens the bidding. If you have played them for a while, you will reflect that they are very useful. Their frequency makes them a mandatory part of everyone's system.

Responsive doubles are a cousin to the negative double. The big difference is that responsive doubles are used by the side that comes into the bidding after someone else opens.

The opportunities to use responsive doubles are fewer than for negative doubles, but their value is enormous. I can't imagine playing bridge without these two doubles.



## How Do Responsive Doubles Work?

It's easier to explain by example so I'll start with the first of many.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	2♦	?

♠ KJ32   ♥ K3   ♦ 874   ♣ 10983

In the discussion on responding to a takeout double, you saw that bidding 2♠ with this hand was a winning choice. It told partner you had something and it laid the groundwork for more bidding if your partner has something extra.

That was easy.

But what if this is the situation instead?

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	2♦	?

♠ KJ32   ♥ 10983   ♦ 874   ♣ K3

There's a difference between this hand and the previous hand. On the previous hand, you had one major to bid.

On this hand you have both majors.

Should you bid 2♠, as on the previous hand?

If you do, you run a risk that your partner has three spades and four hearts, in which case you will be in the wrong trump suit.

Double is the winner. This is the responsive double at work.

***Here is your first set of rules:***

If your LHO opens a minor suit and your partner doubles and your RHO raises the minor to the two level, a double by you says you have both majors and enough points to be bidding at the two level.

Here are a few hands to consider:

♠ Q875   ♥ AJ83   ♦ 83   ♣ 873

Double. You have four spades and four hearts and you don't know which is best. If your partner has 4-4 in the majors, any bid will work. But if he has 4-3 in the majors your double will get him to bid his longer major, and that will make a big difference to the result.

♠ Q875   ♥ 54   ♦ 87   ♣ KJ964

Bid 2♠. A double would show both majors. When you have biddable values you always bid your major if you have one.

♠ AQ75   ♥ K875   ♦ 87   ♣ Q65

Double, showing the majors. When partner bids 2♥ or 2♠ you will raise him, which shows invitational values. Perfect. Imagine how you would bid this hand without the responsive double.

***Here is your second set of rules:***

If your LHO opens a major suit and your partner doubles and your RHO raises the major to the two level, a double by you says you have both minors and enough points to be bidding at the three level.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Dbl	2♥	?

♠ Q74   ♥ 93   ♦ AJ73   ♣ Q983

You have a partner that wants you to bid and you have 9 nice high-card points in the suits partner is looking for. This is a good hand. Should you bid 3♣ or 3♦, or do you hate the idea of bidding a four-card minor at the three level with these values?

The answer is that you don't have to bid one. Let partner bid one.

If you double, that is responsive and asks your partner to bid a minor suit. On this hand, you should double and your partner will bid his better minor suit. Almost surely he has a four-card minor and that will be your best fit.

Remember I talked about the price of silence? If you pass over 2♥, it will usually end the bidding and you will get a wretched result. The opponents will be in their best fit at the two level, and that's a losing proposition for you. This is an important moment. Fortunately, you have the responsive double to help you get it right.

Here are a few more examples. No one is vulnerable unless mentioned otherwise.

W	N	E	S
1♥	Dbl	2♥	?

♠ J1087   ♥ 83   ♦ K873   ♣ Q98

Bid 2♠. The major suits always take precedence.

♠ K3   ♥ 873   ♦ J87   ♣ AJ862

Bid 3♣. You need both minor suits to double.

♠ K74   ♥ 43   ♦ AK87   ♣ AJ94

This is an amazingly good hand. If you trust your partner to have a takeout double, the only conclusion is that opener psyched his 1♥ bid. The big deal here is that your correct bid over 2♥ is double. When your partner bids a minor, you have another problem. Bidding five of that minor is sane. You might also bid 3♥, asking partner if he has a heart stopper.

No one said bidding is easy all of the time. On this hand the responsive double gave you a tool that helped. But even with that tool, there were problems.

## How High Should You Play Responsive Doubles?

I could write a book about responsive doubles. I'm going to give you a list of situations where a responsive double is a good idea and will leave it to you to decide which of these options you like.

Decide how high your doubles should go.

1♣ Dbl 2♣ Dbl  
1♥ Dbl 2♥ Dbl

If they raise opener to the two level, I recommend using responsive doubles.

But how about if they raise to the three level?

1♥ Dbl 3♥ ?

Or even the four level?

1♣ Dbl 4♣ ?

I suggest you start with responsive doubles when they open and jump to the three level after your partner's takeout double. You can add to these agreements later if you wish.

How about these?

2♦	Dbl	3♦	Dbl	Is this responsive for the majors?
2♥	Dbl	3♥	Dbl	Is this responsive for the minors?

2♦	Dbl	4♦	Dbl	Is this responsive for the majors?
2♥	Dbl	4♥	Dbl	Is this responsive for the minors?

And these?

3♣	Dbl	4♣	Dbl	Is this responsive for the majors?
3♦	Dbl	4♦	Dbl	Is this responsive for the majors?
3♥	Dbl	4♥	Dbl	Is this responsive for the minors?

In time, I suggest that you agree to play these doubles are responsive *when the last bid on your right is 4♦ or lower.*

I suggest that if you double 4♥, it is not takeout. It is not penalty, either. It just says you have a useful hand of about 10 or more points. Your partner will know you have something and he will try to make a good bid. One of the things he often does is pass unless he has a very clear bid.

Using the auction above, South has ♠K43, ♥43, ♦K9832, ♣KJ8. This is too good a hand to pass and in fact, you don't really know what to do. At least you invite your partner to do something.

## Splinter Bids

A splinter bid is one where someone makes an unusual jump that can't be a normal jump shift.

A splinter bid shows a singleton (a void is possible) in the suit you are jumping in. You are telling partner that you have enough points for game plus support for partner's last bid suit. Usually you have four-card support, but three is OK when your partner has rebid the suit or has opened with a strong 2♣ bid and then shown his suit. This bid often leads to slam auctions.

Here are the examples:

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	4♦	

**EAST**  
♠ A 8 7  
♥ Q J 8 3  
♦ 8  
♣ K Q 9 7 3

This is usually considered to be a splinter bid. (Some players have other agreements.) East has four-card support with game-forcing points. The hope is that partner will be able to judge the best contract as a result of the splinter bid.

Here is how a splinter bid can help.

**LAYOUT ONE**

♠ A K 10	♠ J 7 3 2
♥ K 9 7 6 5 3	♥ A Q 8 4
♦ 10 7 6	♦ 8
♣ K	♣ A J 10 5

In layout one, West opens 1♥ and East makes a splinter bid of 4♦. West now knows that East has a singleton diamond, and therefore East has all of his high cards in the other suits. East also promises at least four hearts. Essentially, West has 13 useful points. It's not hard for West to ask for aces and to bid slam when East shows two.

#### LAYOUT TWO

♠ A Q	♠ K J 8
♥ K 9 7 6 5 3	♥ A Q J 4
♦ K J 8	♦ 7
♣ 10 6	♣ Q 9 7 5 2

In layout two, West opens 1♥ and East makes a splinter bid of 4♦. On this hand West has the ♦KJ8, which he knows is not going to be useful. And, West has worries in spades and worries in clubs. Essentially, West has 9 useful points. West is content to bid game. At least 4♥ will make.

W	N	E	S
1♣	P	1♠	P
3♥			

**WEST**

♠ Q J 8 7  
 ♥ 2  
 ♦ K Q 8  
 ♣ A K J 9 6



3♥ can be a splinter bid. It's one of the splinter bids that players do not use at first. The reason 3♥ is a splinter bid is that 2♥ would be a reverse and would be forcing. If 2♥ is forcing, 3♥ isn't needed as a forcing bid. It can be a splinter. Note that opener has a big hand. East is promising only 6 points so West needs a hand that is worth around 19 points. Counting distribution, West just meets that requirement.

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♣	4♣	

WEST

♠ K Q J 8 6  
 ♥ K Q 7 5  
 ♦ Q 8  
 ♣ K 9 5

East's 4♣ bid is a splinter raise promising a singleton club, four or more spades, and game points. East's bid warns West that his ♣K won't help, and that means the West hand isn't worth what he originally thought it was worth. West bids 4♠ and hopes to make it.

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	2♥	P
4♣			

WEST

♠ K Q  
 ♥ A K J 8 7 5 2  
 ♦ K Q 10  
 ♣ 2

4♣, a jump in a new suit, is a splinter. West found a heart fit and feels that if East has good points for his raise outside of the club suit, slam might be making. In this case East showed 6-9 points so West needs a monster hand to use a splinter bid. But when he does, the message to East is that if he has a maximum hand and nothing wasted in clubs, slam might exist. If East likes his hand, he will make a cuebid, and that gives West enough news that he can ask for aces. Note that bidding 4NT right away might find East with no aces. Oops!

W	N	E	S
2♣	P	2♦	P
2♠	P	4♣	

**WEST**  
 ♠ A K Q J 7 6 5  
 ♥ A K  
 ♦ 3  
 ♣ A 9 3

West has one of his biggest hands in years. As good as it is, West is concerned about possible club losers. When East bids 4♣, these worries are over.

East's 4♣ bid says he has spade support and he has a singleton club. This is the best possible news for West. He knows he can ruff his little clubs in dummy. West can use Blackwood on the off-chance that East has the ♦A, in which case he will bid 7♠. If East doesn't have it, West will stop in 6♠, which will be virtually cold.

Note that West can make 6♠ if East has nothing but:

♠ 9 4 2    ♥ 10 8 7 3    ♦ 10 8 7 4 2    ♣ 8

Remarkable. This zero-point dummy is all that's needed for 6♠.

Now if East had this hand: ♠10942, ♥J108, ♦KQJ, ♣874, there are three likely losers if the defenders lead clubs. West won't have time to set up the diamonds. The splinter bid of 4♣ puts opener's worries about clubs to rest.

W	N	E	S
			1♣
1♠	2♣	4♣	

You can even use splinter bids after the opponents open the bidding. Here are the hands that generated this splinter auction:

♠ A J 8 7 6 4	♠ K 10 5 3 2
♥ A Q 10	♥ K J 6
♦ 2	♦ A J 10 8
♣ 7 6 5	♣ 8

West overcalled 1♠ and when North raised to 2♣, East got excited. East could have just jumped to 4♠, but if West had extra values there could be a slam. Hence, East bid 4♣ and West was left to decide how well the hands fit. West had a sixth spade. West had no worries in hearts or diamonds. So West asked for aces and reached the cold slam. Could your partnership bid this slam if you didn't use splinter bids?

W	N	E	S
1♠	P	2♥	P
2♠	P	4♦	

Splinter bids can come up in all kinds of auctions. On this auction, West bid 1♠ and East responded 2♥, a game-forcing bid in their methods. West rebid 2♠, which only promised five. East now bid 4♦.

On this sequence, East shows a hand that is interested in slam. East only promises three cards in spades because the splinter bid came after West rebid the suit.

Here is a likely hand for East:

♠ KJ3   ♥ AKJ87   ♦ 3   ♣ K987

East should be thinking along these lines:

“If my partner, West, has this hand: ♠AQ1042, ♥Q9, ♦864, ♣A42, we have a good slam. I can see five spade tricks, five heart tricks, and two club tricks.” *East is telling West to reevaluate his hand in light of the fact that East has shown a heart suit, good points, three-card support, and a singleton diamond.*

This would be a good slam to reach. It will be difficult for any pair to bid it without using splinter bids.

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	1♠	P
?			

What would 3♣ mean?

What would 4♣ mean?

What would 3♦ mean?

What would 4♦ mean?

3♣ is needed as a strong jump shift.

Opener has something like: ♠3, ♥AKJ106, ♦K3, ♣AKJ98. 3♣ shows a big hand with hearts and clubs and is game forcing.

4♣ is a splinter bid. Given 3♣ is natural, 4♣ can show a big hand with club shortness.

The same for 3♦ and 4♦.

Consider this discussion as food for thought. It's tasty. I hope you decide to give splinters a try.

## Jordan 2NT After Partner Opens a Major And RHO Doubles

A convention that is so good that I can't imagine it not being on your convention card is the Jordan 2NT bid, used when your partner opens one of a major and your RHO doubles for takeout.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	2NT

The 2NT bid promises four trumps and limit-raise values or better.  
For example:

♠ K 8 5    ♥ K J 8 7    ♦ K 9 8 7    ♣ 4 3

This hand has limit-raise values, including the guaranteed four or more cards in support of partner's hearts.

♠ K J 4    ♥ K J 8 7    ♦ K 9 8 7    ♣ K 3

This hand has game-raise values along with four or more cards in support.

### *Why is this bid so important?*

When RHO doubles and you have a good hand, the typical response is to redouble. This is fine when you aren't sure where the hand is going, but when you have four-card support for a major, you know you aren't going to be interested in doubling an opponent. You are going to be interested in bidding games and slams.

*The 2NT bid is an idle bid.* If you have a hand that would have bid 2NT naturally, usually with 12-14 high-card points, you should redouble, not bid

2NT. There is a good chance that your opponents are in trouble and if they misjudge, you might be in line to get a nice penalty.

***How about if you have a limit raise with three trumps?***

If you have such a hand, you must not use the 2NT bid. Your partner will expect four trumps and will bid on that assumption.

The answer?

Redouble and then raise your partner.

If you redouble and then bid a minimum number of partner's suit, you show a limit raise with three cards.

If you redouble and then bid more than the minimum number of partner's suit, you have a game raise with three cards.

Here are some example hands where your side opens a major and the next player doubles. Partner has a good fit. No one is vulnerable unless noted otherwise. You are South.

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dbl	2NT
P	3♠	P	P
P			

**SOUTH**

♠	Q 8 7 5
♥	K 6 5 4
♦	Q J 7
♣	Q 6

Your 2NT bid says you have a limit raise or better with four trumps. Your partner bid 3♠, which says he is willing to stop in 3♠ if you have a limit raise. That's what you have so you pass.

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dbl	2NT
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

**SOUTH**  
 ♠ QJ87  
 ♥ A2  
 ♦ K876  
 ♣ K84

Here, you have a game-forcing hand. When partner bids 3♠, you just carry on to game, which confirms a normal opening bid.

*Here's a good trick to know:*

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dbl	2NT
P	3♠	P	?

**SOUTH**  
 ♠ KQ97  
 ♥ 54  
 ♦ KQJ5  
 ♣ AQJ

With around 19 support points, you might have a slam even though partner was willing to stop in 3♠. You should bid 4♣. This is a cuebid saying that you have slam interest *in spite of the fact that partner has shown a minimum hand*. Partner, if he is on your wavelength, will consider if he has a bad minimum or a good minimum given he has already said he has a minimum hand.

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dbl	Rdbl
2♣	P	P	2♠
P	3♠	P	P
P			

**SOUTH**

♠ J 8 7  
♥ K Q 7 6  
♦ Q J 6 5  
♣ Q 2

This hand is too good by far to bid 2♠ on the first round.

Nor can you bid 3♠. A jump raise after a double promises four trumps at least and around 5-7 points. It's a weak bid, not a limit raise.

Here's a typical 3♠ bid:

♠ Q 10 7 4    ♥ 5 4    ♦ 8 3    ♣ K 10 7 6 4

So you redouble. Your intent is to raise spades next, which would show three trumps.

When West bid 2♣, your partner passed. Don't assume he is weak. He knows you are going to bid something, and it's possible that you may wish to double 2♣. His pass says he has nothing he really needs to bid.

You have an 11-point hand with spade support but it's not much of a hand. Bid 2♠, a bid partner can pass.

Partner's 3♠ bid is a game try. He knows you have around 10 or 11 support points and wants you to use your judgment. You have soft values so should judge this hand to be minimum. Pass 3♠.



W	N	E	S
			1♥
Dbl	2NT	P	?

**SOUTH**

♠ K 9  
♥ J 8 7 5 3  
♦ A K 10 4  
♣ K 7

Your partner has a limit-or-stronger raise. The question you have to ask is this:

If you opened this hand 1♥ and partner made a limit raise, would you bid game?

With 14 high-card points and good shape, it's reasonable to do so. One thing you do not have to worry about is partner having only three hearts. He's not allowed to bid 2NT with only three. He has four. He might have five. Your good shape is significant. This is a better hand than one with 5-3-3-2 distribution.

## Criss-Cross Raises In a Minor After a Takeout Double

Criss-cross is a convention that is used by a small number of players. The situation is easy to describe.

Your partner opens one of a minor and RHO doubles for takeout.

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	?

What do you do with a hand like this?

♠ 8 4  
♥ 10 4  
♦ A J 10 7 6  
♣ K Q 7 6

Let me put one bid to bed: *Do not bid 2NT*. That bid is useful when your partner opens a major and gets doubled. The 2NT bid there can be used to show a limit-or-better hand for your partner's major.

When your side is bidding a minor, the last thing you want to do is bid 2NT over the double because it's possible that your side will want to play in 3NT.

On the hand above, do you really want to declare 3NT with the lead of the ♥Q or the ♠Q?

Since 3NT is a possible game for your side, you should make sure that you don't bid notrump unless you learn that it's the right thing to do.

***The answer is to make a jump shift into the unbid minor.***

Hence the name, criss-cross.

1♣	Dbl	2♦	Shows a limit-or-better club raise.
1♦	Dbl	3♣	Shows a limit-or-better diamond raise.

If using this convention, you will bid 3♣ over the double. Partner will learn that you have a limit raise or better in diamonds. He can do a number of things:

1. He can bid 3♦, showing a minimum opener. It will then be up to you to keep bidding if you have a game hand.
2. He can bid 3♥ or 3♠, showing a good hand and exploring for the right contract. Perhaps you can bid 3NT now that you know partner has something in the suit he just bid.
3. He can also bid 3NT. He will play the hand, which is much better for you than playing 3NT from your side of the table.

An important question arises. Does criss-cross give up a bid that you have use for otherwise?

I would say probably not. When was the last time your partner opened a minor and got doubled, and you jumped into the other minor? I can't remember such an occasion other than when using the criss-cross convention.

I point out that if you redouble, intending to show support on the next round, you may run into this kind of problem:

W	N	E	S
	1♦	Dbl	Rdbl
2♠	P	3♠	?

♠ 8 4  
♥ 10 4  
♦ A J 10 7 6  
♣ K Q 7 6

This is the hand you had a moment ago. If you choose to redouble, your opponents may be able to push the bidding up to the three level before you get to tell partner that you have good diamond support. Wouldn't you wish you had told partner about your diamond support on your first bid?

Here are a couple of example auctions:

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	3♣	3♥
P	P	Dbl	P
P	P		

♠ A J 4 2	♠ Q 8
♥ 8 2	♥ 10 9 3
♦ Q 8 7 6	♦ A J 9 3 2
♣ K Q 10	♣ A 6 3

East made a good bid that many would not think of. East doubled 3♥. He has already denied four hearts. A double says that your side has a big majority of the points and suggests a defensive hand, not a distributional hand. West doesn't have to pass. On this hand, West has a minimum boring balanced hand and is willing to defend 3♥ doubled. The defense ought to set it a couple of tricks for an excellent result.

W	N	E	S
1♦	Dbl	3♣	P
3♦	P	3♠	P
3NT	P	P	P

♠ 43	♠ KQ7
♥ AJ72	♥ 93
♦ QJ65	♦ A9872
♣ KQ6	♣ A82

West opens 1♦ and North doubles. East bids 3♣, showing a limit raise or better. You can have four trumps for this bid but five is very possible. Even six cards is possible.

West has a minimum and bids 3♦, which will end the bidding if East has a limit raise.

East has a full game-forcing hand and bids 3♠ to show values in spades. West can bid 3NT, which ends the auction.

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	2♦	P
2♥	P	3♣	P
P	P		

♠ 1053	♠ J82
♥ AKQ	♥ 92
♦ K107	♦ A4
♣ Q942	♣ KJ8763

The main point of this hand is that East must appreciate the value of his six cards in clubs. East should treat this hand as a limit raise, not a preemptive raise. Note also that West has too much to sign off in 3♣.

## **Postmortem for the Jordan 2NT and for criss-cross after a takeout double**

If you have a better method to use, go for it. I remind you that both of these conventions do one thing impeccably well. When you use Jordan or criss-cross, your partner learns immediately that you have a good or a very good hand with excellent support for his suit. Information like this is best when it is delivered quickly before the opponents have a chance to annoy you in the bidding.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# Conventions You Don't Need

**I** SUSPECT THIS CHAPTER will raise some eyebrows. You see many opponents playing a convention and you decide to add it to your card, and all of a sudden you learn that the convention is not recommended by everyone. I hope I don't shoot at too many of your favorite conventions but if you find one or more of them on this list, at least consider my reasons for suggesting you drop it.

## The Rule of Twenty

**D**UMP THIS ONE fast. The rule of twenty is a tool that takes the place of judgment; never a good thing.

This rule tells you that if you count the number of cards in your two longest suits and add to that the number of high-card points, you should open whenever it adds up to twenty.

♠ A J 7 6 5   ♥ A Q 4 3   ♦ 4 3   ♣ 5 3

Your long suits add up to nine (five spades and four hearts). Add to that your 11 high-card points and you have a total of twenty. Hence, you have an opening bid.

Good rule?

Many players would open this hand so I think it fair to say that the rule of twenty works reasonably well on this hand.

Let's change things a little:

♠ Q 9 7 4 3   ♥ K 6 5 4   ♦ K J   ♣ Q J

Here's another 'twenty-point' hand. In fact, you have twenty-one. Would you open this one? Not if you use your judgment, which would tell you that you have really poor-quality high-card points. This is a pass for sure.

♠ J 8 7 6 3   ♥ A K 7 6 3   ♦ Q 4   ♣ 5



This hand is another twenty-pointer. Here you have ten for the two long suits and ten for the high-card points.

If you open 1♠, you will get away with it if you find a good fit, but if partner bids the minors and you end up in 2NT or 3NT, I guarantee you'll get a lot of bad results.

Judgment. Much more useful than points.

If you forget about this rule, you will be forced to think. A good thing.

They are coming out with cars that drive themselves. You can sit at the wheel and take a nap and in theory, you will get where you're going on time and well rested.

Don't drive this way. Don't play bridge this way.

If you must have your rule of twenty, at least adjust it to the 'rule of twenty-two.' It will give you a more accurate rating system than the rule of twenty.

You will now have the pleasure of using judgment on this hand.

♠ A Q 10 8 4   ♥ 4   ♦ A 10 9 7 3   ♣ 4 3

You can, if you use judgment, elect to open the bidding 1♠. The 'rule of twenty-two' would have you pass. So it's not perfect either.

You would be opening because you have two excellent five-card suits with good spot cards, not because you are following some 'point' rule.

## Flannery

When I started playing bridge, the Flannery convention was just coming into usage. It was a minor hit and it has hung around for quite some time. But it has been sliding out of sight in the last ten years.

The Flannery convention works this way. An opening 2♦ bid shows four spades and five hearts and 12-15 high-card points. Its strengths include the fact that when you open 2♦, you sometimes get to games more quickly than normal. For instance:

W	N	E	S
	2♦	P	4♠
P	P	P	

South knows North has four spades and five hearts and a maximum of 15 points. South can bid 4♠ with a huge range of hands. By not conducting a scientific auction, you get to a game and the opponents don't know if you have a preemptive hand with lots of spades or a good hand with high-card points and a spade fit. The only thing they know for sure is that you didn't feel like exploring for a slam.

All of the following South hands are possible:

♠ 10 8 7 6 4 3	♥ 2	♦ A 8 7 6 4	♣ 8
♠ K 10 6 5	♥ 4 3	♦ Q J 8 7	♣ A Q 9
♠ K Q 8 4	♥ Q 8	♦ A Q J 6 2	♣ 7 6

W	N	E	S
	2♦	P	?

♠ 2   ♥ QJ7   ♦ AJ6543   ♣ K107

Bid 4♥. Opener has four spades and five hearts, and you have an opening bid with three nice hearts and good shape. No need to bid anything other than 4♥. You don't have slam points and you can see that game should have a play. Just like a jump to 4♠, a jump to 4♥ tells the opponents nothing about your hand. This is one of the big advantages you get with Flannery.

On hands where responder bids four of a major, the play is often a mystery to the defenders until the facts are known, which may be too late.

Flannery has its drawbacks, however. Life isn't always so nice with Flannery.

On a hand during the finals of a Nationals team game, opener on my right bid 2♦, Flannery. His partner passed holding this unusual hand. Here's the layout:

♠ 3	♠ A 8 7 6
♥ K	♥ A Q 9 6 4
♦ K 10 9 8 7 5	♦ A 6 4 2
♣ 7 6 5 4 3	♣ –

West didn't like his chances of finding a good contract if his partner had a normal 12 points with four spades and five hearts, so he guessed to pass. 2♦ became the contract.

I led the ♣A and when dummy came down, we all had a good laugh.

Declarer ruffed the opening lead and dummy on my left said, "Oh, my."

Ten seconds later, declarer, who had three aces and a club void, claimed all thirteen tricks.

Flannery has its warts. Here are some of them:

1. It doesn't come up that often.

2. On auctions where opener shows his distribution and then plays the hand, the defenders know exactly what the distribution is around the table as soon as dummy appears.
3. A great many Flannery hands can be bid to the right contract after an opening 1♥ bid. And when this happens, the opponents don't know what opener's distribution is. A non-Flannery pair may bid 1♥ - P - 2♥ and the opponents won't learn of declarer's shape until later.
4. On admittedly rare occasions, the Flannery convention will cause you to miss a good contract. (See the 7♦ hand shown above.)
5. If you use Flannery, its lack of frequency may cost you. You would like to have a meaning for 2♦ that has some merit and which does come up.

Players who use Flannery may wish a suggestion as to what works better. Here's one:

***Play a weak 2♦ bid.***

This is the least effective of all preempts because it isn't that hard to defend against. However, it comes with these good points:

1. It comes up more than any other known 2♦ bid. I'm guessing that you will have ten weak 2♦ bids for every Flannery hand.
2. A weak 2♦ bid is a precise bid showing a six-card suit and whatever range of points you assign to it, and it denies a four-card major. This helps you in many ways.
3. One of the ways 2♦ helps you is that responder can bid 3NT on some of his good hands.
4. One of the ways 2♦ helps you is that responder can double an opponent when he chooses a bad moment to bid.
5. One of the ways 2♦ helps you is that partner knows what to lead if he is on opening lead.
6. One of the ways 2♦ helps you is that your partner knows so much about your hand that he can compete in various ways, which includes raising diamonds.

- It's possible that the 2♦ bid will help you get to an otherwise
7. unreachable 5♦ or 6♦ contract. Even a 7♦ contract could be found on occasion.

Ask yourself: Is Flannery more valuable than the boring weak 2♦ bid?

## Gerber

Nix to Gerber. Why? It's not that Gerber is a bad convention. It's not. It's just that it is an abused convention that gets in the way of many good auctions. One ACBL Bulletin writer wrote up all kinds of bad things that can happen with Gerber. It's not just me that doesn't like it.

If you use Gerber in its original form, it will hold its own. But it has morphed into other things that it was never intended for.

Here are twelve auctions. On which ones is the 4♣ bid a proper Gerber ace-asking bid? My thoughts are below.

1.  
1♣ 1♥  
1♠ 2NT  
4♣

2.  
1NT 4♣

3.  
1♣ 2NT  
4♣

4.  
1♣ 1♠  
1NT 4♣

5.  
1♠ 2♥  
2♠ 4♣

6.  
1♠ 2♥  
3♣ 3♥  
4♣

7.	8.	9.
1♣ 1♠	1♥ 1♠	1♦
3♣ 3NT	4♣	1♥ 3♣
4♣		3NT 4♣
10.	11.	12.
1♦ 2NT	1♠ 2NT	2NT 3♣
3♦ 3NT	4♣	3♥ 4♣
4♣		

Answers:

1. 4♣ is Gerber. You can take it as a rule that for 4♣ to be Gerber, it has to be a jump response to a notrump bid.
2. 4♣ is Gerber. It's a jump response to a notrump bid.
3. 4♣ is Gerber. It's a jump response to a notrump bid.
4. 4♣ is Gerber. It's a jump response to a notrump bid.
5. 4♣ is a splinter bid. For starters, it isn't a jump response to a notrump bid.
6. 4♣ is a natural bid. Opener is showing at least five clubs.
7. 4♣ is natural. It's being bid over a notrump bid, but it isn't a jump bid.
8. 4♣ is a splinter bid. You will discover that there are quite a few auctions where a jump bid is a splinter bid. Many of these bids will be 4♣.
9. 4♣ is natural. Opener has a huge hand with at least six diamonds and five clubs. He's looking for a game or slam in one of the minors.
10. 4♣ is a natural bid. Opener has shown excellent diamonds. Now he is showing a club suit.
11. 4♣ is a splinter. It's a jump over a notrump bid, but in this case the 2NT bid is a Jacoby raise of spades. This 4♣ bid is a splinter.
12. 4♣ is natural. 3♣ was Stayman. 4♣ typically shows a good club suit. Responder is interested in a club slam.

Here's an auction that shows a different problem.

1♣	2NT
4♣	4♥
5♣	

Opener's 4♣ bid was Gerber. It was a jump bid after a natural notrump bid. 4♥ showed aces. Do you know for sure how many aces partner has?

Do you know what 5♣ is? Is it asking for kings or is opener signing off in 5♣?

I have seen all of these situations being misunderstood at one time or another. Based on multiple observations, I suggest abandoning Gerber in all auctions except for those 100% defined as asking for aces.



## Stolen Bids

I hadn't heard the phrase 'stolen bids' until twenty years ago when I got an email asking how to use Drury when partner opened 1♠ in fourth seat and the next player bid 2♣. Would double be used for Drury? I was told in this email that it was called a 'stolen bid' double where your double means that you had intended to make that bid yourself.

Here are the two most common examples that I have run into:

### AUCTION ONE

W	N	E	S
			P
P	1♠	2♣	Dbl

This is the example I referred to above.

### AUCTION TWO

W	N	E	S
	1NT	2♦	Dbl

The first double was intended to be Drury.

The second double was intended to be a Jacoby transfer to hearts.

I agree that a stolen bid double has some merit. It makes it easy to bid on some hands.

But it creates a ton of problems when the double could have had a more useful meaning.

I mentioned this in the discussion on Drury. It's worth a fast repetition.

*In Auction One:* A double of the 2♣ overcall to show a Drury hand loses when you have a negative double hand.

♠ 43   ♥ K 10 8 7   ♦ A Q 7 4   ♣ 5 4 3

This hand is a classic negative double. If a double means something else, then this hand is essentially unbidable.

A 2♥ bid would show five hearts. You're a passed hand so 2♥ isn't forcing. Your partner can pass it. There's more bad news. You have four good diamonds that partner doesn't know about.

The stolen bid double works only if you have a Drury hand. I suggest you will have a lot more negative double hands, and losing them would be awful.

*In Auction Two:* Using a double of 2♦ as a transfer to hearts can work. It's always possible that the stolen bid double will have its moments.

But there are other sane meanings for a double of 2♦.

It might be used as a penalty double.

It might be used as a takeout double.

Also, you have 2♥ and 2♠ available as natural bids, which isn't a bad thing.

I'm not going to detail how to bid without stolen bid doubles but I will offer the view that they are trouble waiting to happen.

## Limit-Or-Better Cuebids After Partner Opens and They Overcall

Here's the situation:

W	N	E	S
	1♠	2♣	?

Your partner opens 1♠ and RHO overcalls 2♣.

What does it mean if you bid 3♠?

What does it mean if you bid 3♣?

There are two ways to play these bids.

***The first way to play is the limit-or-better cuebid.***

Many players today use a treatment called the limit-or-better cuebid.

If you use this treatment, a 3♠ bid is a preemptive raise showing something like:

♠ J 8 7 4   ♥ J 9 7 6 3   ♦ Q 10   ♣ 5 3

This is not a bad treatment because it may hinder LHO from bidding on some of his hands.

If you use this treatment, a 3♣ bid shows a limit raise or a game-forcing raise. The idea is that you will tell your partner what you really have on the next round.

You would bid 3♣ on both of these hands:

♠ KJ32  
♥ 76  
♦ AJ74  
♣ 873

♠ QJ86  
♥ KQ8  
♦ AJ87  
♣ J5

Your limit-raise hands will all be in the range of a good 10 to a bad 12 support points with four- or five-card support. Don't do this with only three trumps.

Your game-forcing raise hands, ala the one on the right, have a wider range. You can have 13 support points, with no upper limit. The hand on the right is a decent minimum example.

***I have some objections to this treatment.***

Here's the biggest of them. If you make this 3♣ cuebid, all is well if the opponents don't bid again. But if the player on your left raises clubs, perhaps to the five level, your partner will have to make a critical decision at the four or five level not knowing if you have a limit raise or some much bigger hand.

Even if the opponents don't compete, you still have to tiptoe a bit to confirm whether partner has a limit raise or a big raise. The lost bidding space can lead to problems.

Today, players are busier bidders than a few years ago. They have learned that bidding a lot when they have a fit is a good idea, and these players will give you problems on enough of your cuebid hands that you won't enjoy the consequences.

***The second way to play is to revert to simple bridge.***

This method comes with no confusion at all in your bidding.

Play that a jump raise over an overcall shows a limit raise.

Play that a cuebid shows a balanced game-forcing raise.

Play that a jump to 4♣ (their suit) shows a singleton club with a game-forcing raise. (Optional.)

It's as simple as that.

*I'm the main voice against the limit-or-better treatment*, but I know a lot of experts who give nodding approval to my objections but don't have the time or inclination to get involved in this discussion.

**Hint:** If your partner overcalls and your RHO makes one of these limit-or-better cuebids, feel free to stick it to them by raising your partner's suit if you have any kind of support and any kind of shape. Your partner will know you don't have a good hand. The opponents' bidding has told everyone that they own the hand. Your partner will know you are just being a nuisance. Here's one possible hand you might have to raise. Vulnerability will be important so for this example, assume they are vulnerable and you aren't.

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♣	3♣	?

♠ 9 7 4    ♥ 10 9 7 4    ♦ 4 3    ♣ K 8 6 4

Bid 5♣. Don't bid 4♣. Don't pass. Don't double. Bid 5♣ and see if your opponents can do the right thing. Here's how you should look at this. Assume they can make their game. That's 620 points or more for them. If you get doubled in 5♣ and go down three, that's only 500. A good return. All you have to do is take eight tricks.

Given your partner overcalled at the two level, and you have this club support along with a little shape, don't you think that eight tricks is a fair goal?

If you had one less heart and one more diamond, 4♣ would be a fair effort.

## The Rule of Two or Three For Preempts

I discussed this at length in the earlier section on preempts. This is a reminder. The rule says that you should be within two tricks of your preempt if you are vulnerable and three tricks of your preempt if not vulnerable.

The way this is worded is poor. The rule does not tell you to consider the vulnerability for you and them.

The rule should be that you think you will take enough tricks that if you are doubled, you will go down less than the value of their game.

However you view this rule, skip it. Follow the suggestions and the reasoning shown in the section on preempts. Don't forget that much of your motivation is based on the hope that your opponents will make some mistakes, meaning you can get away with a lot of preempts that theoretically don't qualify. Sit up and look confident when you preempt. It will add to the atmosphere you project at the table.

## Split-Range Michaels and Split-Range Unusual Notrump

Everyone plays the unusual notrump. Most players abuse it. And some just misuse it.

Not so many players use Michaels cuebids.

I actually recommend both conventions highly. If you use these two conventions, don't look for anything in this section to discourage you.

What is in this section is a particularly malicious treatment that I do wish to discuss.

But first, a short note about each of these conventions in turn.

**Michaels cuebids:** Terrific convention. I insist on using them. The problem with them is that they require a huge number of understandings. I wrote fourteen articles on them for the ACBL Bulletin a few years ago, and feel that what I wrote didn't do full justice to the convention. For someone who doesn't use them, here is the nutshell of how they work:

After a 1♣ or 1♦ opening bid by an opponent, a cuebid of their minor says you have 5-5 or better in the majors and some agreed number of points. I suggest you promise about 8 useful points if not vulnerable and 10 when vulnerable. One of the big values of the Michaels cuebid is that the Michaels bid shows the majors after the opponents have opened one of the minors. Perhaps they have a notrump contract. Assuming your side has a fit and the values to compete you will be bidding a major, which is higher than their minor, and this gives you a big advantage. An additional plus for a Michaels bid is that if your side has a good fit, it may be possible to jack up the bidding in hurry before they can get their bidding together.

**The unusual notrump:** A less terrific convention that isn't as useful as some players think. The big problem with the unusual notrump is that players who bid 2NT over 1♥ or 1♠ get so excited when they hear partner bid one of the minors that they keep bidding no matter what they have. Because the games you can bid after the unusual notrump are usually five of a minor, there won't be many successful unusual notrump sequences.

Normally, you will compete and hope you do the right thing at the end of the bidding.

When you use a Michaels cuebid, you have a good chance of reaching a successful 4♥ or 4♠ contract. If your side has a fit, you can compete successfully, forcing the opponents to make the last decision. I have been on the receiving end of many Michaels auctions. I don't like it when my partner opens a minor and my RHO bids two of that minor. It's an omen that we might be in for a war.

So now to that malicious agreement that I am suggesting against.

It's the split range that some players like to use. Here's how it works. I'll use the Michaels auction as my example.

Say your RHO opens 1♣ and you have 5-5 in the majors. If you cuebid 2♣, your partner will know you have some points but he won't know whether you have 8 or 14 or 17.

The split range works this way. You bid Michaels when you have 8-12 or when you have 15 or more. Then, if the bidding continues, you pass when you have the weaker range and you bid again when you have the better range. Hence, partner learns how good your hand is. If you have 13-14, you just overcall 1♠ and later bid hearts. This will tell partner that you have a good but not great hand of 13-14 points.

### ***Don't use this treatment.***

One of the big advantages of Michaels or the unusual notrump is the shock value that comes with the bid. If your partner opens 1♦ and the next player bids 1♠, you have a relatively easy bid. Compare how you feel if your partner bids 1♦ and your RHO bids 2♦. It's less easy to bid here. Much less easy. And, whatever you choose to do, there is that sword hanging over your head that the opponents may be able to accelerate the bidding in a hurry. The bidding often becomes a race. For that reason, I insist that my Michaels bid is aimed at getting my majors into the picture as soon as possible. Let the chips fall where they may, at least my first thrust is meaningful.

Here's one hand to show why I don't like the split-range Michaels. Say RHO opens 1♦. You have: ♠A10764, ♥KQJ54, ♦K3, ♣3. If you are obliged to overcall 1♠ because you have a 13 or 14 point hand, you will sometimes not be able to complete your message. Say that over your 1♠ bid, your LHO jumps to 2NT. Your partner will pass and your RHO sometimes will bid



3NT. Dare you bid 4♥ now? If you do you will be lucky to survive if your partner doesn't have a good fit for one of your suits. Worse, if you guess to pass 3NT, your partner, knowing only of your spade suit, will lead a spade. I would infinitely prefer a heart lead and if I haven't shown hearts, my partner won't lead them.

Repeating: Consider bidding Michaels whenever you have the required 5-5 in the majors with proper values. Stick it to the opponents immediately. You will win some, you will lose some, but your winning percentage will be enhanced more from hands where you bid Michaels, thus forcing your opponents into a bidding situation they don't like.

There's another advantage to using Michaels whenever you meet the minimum requirements. Here's a hand to show it. You are South.

W	N	E	S
		1♦	1♠
2♦	P	P	2♥
♠ A J 8 7 3   ♥ K J 10 8   ♦ A 4 3   ♣ 9			

The 1♠ bid was routine, and when LHO raised to 2♦, passed back to you, you bid 2♥. If you play that you would have bid 2♦, Michaels, over 1♦ with 5-5 in the majors, your partner will know you have 5-4 in the majors. This isn't a little deal. It's a big deal because your partner will know for sure what your shape is.

While on the subject of Michaels and the unusual notrump, I offer one thought that will help you a lot when you have good hands.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	2NT
3♥	P	P	?

What should you bid with this hand?

♠ K9   ♥ 8   ♦ AQ987   ♣ AK1043

I predict that most players would bid 4♣, expecting their partner to choose a minor suit. I agree that you would like to keep bidding but 4♣ isn't the way to do it.

**Professional hint:** When you make a Michaels bid or an unusual notrump bid, and the bidding continues, you can later double (if legal) not to say you expect to crush the opponents, but because you have a maximum hand and still want to hear partner's opinion. Usually when you double (3♥ on the hand above), your partner will bid his better minor and you will pass, having shown the two minors with your first bid and having shown the extra values with your double.

Here's the biggest gain of all. Some of the time your partner has a hand that can pass for penalty. If partner has a hand like this one: ♠QJ732, ♥J976, ♦43, ♣J8, your partner will be thrilled to pass. His spade holding may be a useful value. His four hearts can be useful, too. And his two doubletons are helpful.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	2NT
3♥	P	4♥	?

♠ A10   ♥ -   ♦ KQJ85   ♣ AK10842

If you think bidding again is wise, the way to do it here is not obvious. Double could work. So could 5♣, showing extra shape. You could bid 4NT too, telling your partner to choose a minor.

One last very important hand:

♠ Q8   ♥ 8   ♦ KQJ86   ♣ KJ987

Do not bid again. When you make an unusual notrump bid, you should abide by partner's decisions unless you have something spectacular. This

hand has nothing spectacular. You made your noise when you bid 2NT. Whatever partner does is OK with you. If he passes, you should pass too. If he doubles something, you should pass. Your partner knows what he has. You don't.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# Quickies

**I**N THIS CHAPTER, I will introduce a number of small ideas with big meanings. Much of what you will find here is advice on how to bid in certain situations. The things shown here are all meaningful and effective. In some cases, you will need to discuss these ideas in advance. Nothing is worse than having a good plan with a partner who doesn't know what you are doing.

## Bidding When Your RHO Opens a Strong 1♣ or Strong 2♣ Bid

When you hear someone open with a strong bid, there is a tendency to assume that their side owns the hand. If you bid something, might you not get doubled?

It's true.

But if you reflect on the examples earlier in this book showing how a simple hand can turn complex when an opponent bids something, you will also reflect that their bidding caused you some grief. In the same way, I am suggesting that if you bid against their strong bids, you may be able to bother them enough to cause them to get off their planned track.

*What I'm going to suggest is aimed at players who haven't encountered a lot of strong 1♣ bids and who tend to leave strong 2♣ bidders alone.* I'm going to suggest strongly that you do something. It doesn't have to be a lot. In time you will encounter a world of conventions to use against strong opening bids. The one consistent element is that you realize that bidding against them is better than letting them have a comfortable sequence.

The things you can do don't have to be extravagant. Start with something modest.

One needed caution here. *Keep an eye on the vulnerability.*

If your RHO opens a strong 1♣, you should be willing to make a simple overcall if you have a decent suit and nothing else.

If you have a hand that looks like a weak jump overcall, go ahead and make it.

If you have a hand that looks like a higher preempt, bid it.

The advice here is that you should not be afraid of their strong bids. In these examples:

1♣ shows 17 or more high-card points.

2♣ is a typical strong 2♣ bid. Perhaps with suits and distribution, perhaps with notrump values. Usually with 21 or more high-card points.

***Bidding against a strong 1♣ bid***

In these example hands, they are vulnerable, you are not. Learn to love this vulnerability.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	?

♠ A Q 10 8 7    ♥ 4 3    ♦ 7 6 3    ♣ 6 5 3

Bid 1♠. This hand isn't normally worth an overcall, but against a strong 1♣ bid a 1♠ overcall has merit. What you really hope is that your partner can raise you to 2♠ or 3♠. This deprives the opponents of one or two rounds of bidding.

♠ 4 3    ♥ Q J 10 8 5 3    ♦ 3 2    ♣ J 10 4

Bid 2♥. Be glad the vulnerability is in your favor, and especially appreciate the good heart suit. Bids at the two level take away additional bidding room. The emphasis here is that you have the courage to make such bids.

♠ J 10 9 7 6 5 2    ♥ 2    ♦ Q 10 8    ♣ 8 5

Bid 3♠. Feast or famine. You have an advantage in that opener can have such a wide range of hands, their side will be worried about looking for their best contract as opposed to doubling you. They won't always do the right thing.

♠ K Q 7 6 4    ♥ Q 6 4    ♦ Q 8    ♣ Q 10 5

Pass. You have a sane suit but the junk you have on the side may add up to some defensive tricks, in which case their side may not have a winning

contract. The point of this hand is that your values may not help you if you play the hand, but might help you if you end up defending.

These four hands should give you some incentive to consider competing. Note that as the vulnerability changes, you should tighten up a little, but you should not give up. Even vulnerable hands can compete if they have ‘something’ to offer. One example:

If you are vulnerable and they are not, the worst possible combination of vulnerabilities, you should bid with this hand:

♠ 3   ♥ KJ109543   ♦ QJ7   ♣ 32

Bid 2♥. You would bid 3♥ if not vul vs. vulnerable.

### ***Bidding against a strong 2♣ bid***

Assume no one is vulnerable for the moment. You are West.

W	N	E	S
			2♣
?			

♠ QJ984   ♥ 8   ♦ 86532   ♣ 43

Bid 2♠ with this rag. Here’s a short discussion of how much this can hurt their bidding.

If you bid 2♠, you prevent the opponents from using all of their bidding room. If opener had wished to rebid 2♥, for instance, he can’t do that. If he wants to bid hearts he has to bid 3♥. Their entire bidding plan has been pushed up one full level of bidding. They won’t like it. And if your partner can raise spades, their bidding will have been pushed up two levels of bidding. Here’s one example only to show you how much trouble your 2♠ bid can cause. Here’s opener’s hand:

♠ 3   ♥ AKJ973   ♦ A4   ♣ AKQ7

W	N	E	S
			2♣
2♠	P	3♠	?

What can opener do other than bid 4♥? What he had wanted to do was to bid 2♥. Find out if partner has anything. Then perhaps, explore for clubs. Your intervention was not welcome!

Here are a few more hands to think about after your RHO opens 2♣. No one vulnerable.

♠ 42   ♥ 543   ♦ KQJ105   ♣ 654

Bid 2♦. 2♦ doesn't take up much bidding space but your bid stops LHO from bidding 2♦. If your partner can compete to 3♦, that will take up bidding room. And, if your partner ends up on lead, he will know you like diamonds.

♠ 4   ♥ 3   ♦ QJ97653   ♣ QJ73

Bid 4♦. Daring? Yes. Potentially devastating to the opponents' bidding? Yes.

♠ K43   ♥ QJ107543   ♦ –   ♣ 1074

Bid 3♥. Hopefully, your partner can contribute something. Your opponent may find that his big hand isn't so easy to bid as he had hoped.

The key? Be heard on these hands. Don't be the one to say later that you thought of bidding but were afraid of being doubled. Bid something. If you get doubled and get a bad result, that's life. Look forward to doing it again.



## Doubles of Splinter Bids

This brief interlude is for those with a warped sense of humor. The double of a splinter bid works like this.

W	N	E	S
1♥	P	4♣	Dbl

The 4♣ bid is a splinter bid, which is defined as showing a singleton in the suit bid, four-card support or more for partner's suit (in this case hearts), and enough points for game. The purpose of the bid is to tell partner what you have. On this auction, the 4♣ bid will show something like this:

♠ Q87   ♥ KQ87   ♦ AJ543   ♣ 4

You can imagine wanting to double 4♣ now and then. Should you?

The fact is that when declarer plays the hand, he will lead clubs himself rather quickly in order to ruff his clubs in dummy. If you double, telling partner to lead clubs, he will lead them and that will be doing something that declarer was going to do himself. If partner leads your clubs you may or may not get a club trick, and importantly, you will never get one if their side can win the first trick.

Which brings up this rule, which is surprisingly effective.

**RULE – Never double a splinter bid just because you have a good holding in that suit.**

There is a bidding trick you should be aware of that will come up sooner or later and more than a few times.

If asking partner to lead the splinter suit by doubling isn't wise, perhaps there is another meaning for double. Well, there is and it's a good one. Play that a double of a splinter bid asks for a different suit. Here's a common agreement:

If you double a splinter bid, play that it is asking for the lead of the *the lowest unbid suit*.

Using the auction above, if you double 4♣, you are asking for a diamond lead.

♠ J 9 5 4   ♥ Q 6   ♦ K Q 10 5   ♣ A 5 3

If you double 4♣ and if your partner understands what you are doing, he will lead a diamond, not a club.

Sometimes there is only one unbid suit.

W	N	E	S
		1♥	P
1♠	P	4♦	Dbl

On this sequence there is one unbid suit, clubs. Your double says you want a club lead.

This is good stuff as long as you don't abuse the double.

Not only does the 'splinter double' help partner with his lead, on those occasions where you do not double a splinter, your partner will realize that you did not want to ask for a specific lead. This piece of information will be appreciated by your partner. It will make his decision easier.

## Your Partner Preempts and You Bid a New Suit

W	N	E	S
	2♥	P	2♠

This is the briefest of quickies. Your partner opens with a preempt and you bid a new suit. Should your bid be forcing or should it be a non-forcing bid aimed at improving the contract? Here are two hands that might wish to bid 2♠ after partner's 2♥ bid:

♠ QJ87643    ♥ -    ♦ QJ43    ♣ A8

You know 2♥ is a bad contract. Spades is sure to be an improvement. Might it be wise to bid 2♠, a non-forcing bid, in order to escape from hearts?

♠ AQJ10742    ♥ -    ♦ AKJ95    ♣ 5

If you have this hand, you know a slam is possible in spades or diamonds. If you play 2♠ is a weak hand, you can't bid 2♠ with this hand. You will have to find another bid. I suppose you could bid 3♠ if it was forcing, but that's a waste of bidding space. Better to play that 2♠ is forcing, allowing you to start with 2♠, which saves you bidding room.

So this quickie is just me offering an opinion that you will get better mileage out of using a new suit as a forcing bid.

This is especially a needed agreement when your partner opens a three-bid. If, for instance, your partner opens 3♠ and you have: ♠-, ♥A, ♦AQ10954, ♣KQJ1074, you are fairly sure that you have a game, even a slam, in a minor suit. But which suit is best? If you play that 4♣ or 4♦ isn't forcing, you have to guess which minor suit game to bid.

## Your Partner Preempts and RHO Doubles

### *What Does It Mean if You Bid a Suit?*

This is one of those moments where you can play a significant role.

W	N	E	S
	2♥	Dbl	?

There are many things you can do. In particular, you can bid a new suit. On this auction you can bid 3♣ and 3♦. What would these bids mean? It's possible that you want to play the hand but consider that the takeout doubler claims to have some values in these suits. It might be dangerous to bid clubs or diamonds.

Here's another bidding trick that will pay off in a big way.

Play that if RHO doubles your partner's two- or three-level preempt, a bid by you in a new suit says to your partner:

*"In fact, I am raising your suit. But in case they play the hand, I want you to lead the suit I am bidding."*

Here's an example of a 3♣ bid over RHO's takeout double:

♠ 1082   ♥ 1083   ♦ Q106   ♣ A Q109

You might have bid 3♥ instead, but if you bid 3♥ and LHO bids spades, your partner will be on lead and he will lead a heart. Is that what you want? If you bid 3♣, your partner will know you are raising hearts but you want a club lead if the next player bids a suit.

Your partner will never bid again unless LHO passes, in which case your partner will always return to his trump suit.

W	N	E	S
	2♥	Dbl	3♣
P	3♥		

If the next player bids over your 3♣, your partner always passes.

Here's a hand to show this trick at work. Say you bid 3♣ as shown, and your LHO jumps to 4♠.

♠ J 3  
♥ K J 9 6 5 4  
♦ 7 4 2  
♣ J 7

♠ A Q 9 7 4	♠ K 6 5
♥ Q 7	♥ A 2
♦ K 5 3	♦ A J 9 8
♣ 8 4 2	♣ K 6 5 3

♠ 10 8 2  
♥ 10 8 3  
♦ Q 10 6  
♣ A Q 10 9

If your partner leads a heart, declarer can make 4♠. He will finesse the heart lead to his queen, draw trumps, and play on diamonds. This will set up a diamond trick for a club discard. If your partner leads the ♣J, South will win three club tricks and will lead a fourth round. This sets up a trump trick for the defense. 4♠ will be down at least one.

This bidding trick will provide you with many good results. The one shown here is your goal. But just gaining one trick or perhaps not losing a trick will be a common result.

## Your Partner Preempts and RHO Overcalls

### *What Does It Mean if You Bid a Suit?*

W	N	E	S
	2♥	2♠	3♣

What does it mean if your partner opens with a preempt and your RHO overcalls and you bid a new suit? Is your bid forcing or just competing?

It will be very helpful to have an agreement. When I give a class and ask what my group thinks, I find that almost no one knows. This is a likely scenario so having an agreement is important.

Here's my suggestion:

Given that your RHO overcalled, he is showing a good hand, which lessens the chances that you will have a good hand yourself. But you may have a modest hand that wants to bid a suit.

Using the auction above, here are some examples.

♠ K54 ♥ 3 ♦ QJ98763 ♣ 83

Pass. Why bother bidding when your partner is weak and you don't have a fit? Bidding 3♦ has very little to gain and a lot to lose.

♠ 874 ♥ - ♦ KQJ9843 ♣ AQ9

This isn't a huge hand but it is one that has a future if your partner likes diamonds. I recommend you bid 3♦, with the understanding that you are showing a fair hand. Your partner should pass if he has nothing special. If he fits diamonds, he can bid. Let's be clear.

This is a nice hand. The big deal is that your partner can pass and he knows it. There is virtually no hand on which he will bid 3♥ as long as he

knows what your intentions are.

Another way of looking at this is to say that you have a hand which would have overcalled with 3♦ if RHO had opened with 2♠. Wouldn't you overcall 3♦ if RHO opened with 2♥ or 2♠ or 3♣?

♠ 8   ♥ K3   ♦ AKJ   ♣ AQJ10532

This is a huge hand that would like to bid 3♣ as long as it was defined as a forcing bid. In fact, you will never have this big a hand after partner opens with a preempt and RHO bids a suit.

So, my suggestion is that you decide what a new suit means in this situation. Having an agreement is the biggest thing of all. Then, I suggest, rather strongly, that you agree to play a new suit shows a decent hand with a good suit but that your bid is not forcing. (See 3♦ example above.)

## Overbidding By Opener – Jump Shift Rebids

Have you ever had this happen?

You pick up a nice hand like this one:

♠ 7   ♥ A Q 10 8 7   ♦ A K J 7 4   ♣ Q 4

You open 1♥ and hear partner respond with 1NT. What's your bid?

If you bid 3♦ you will have company, but it won't always be good company. Here's the layout:

♠ 7	♠ K 8 5
♥ A Q 10 8 7	♥ 4 2
♦ A K J 7 4	♦ Q 6 3
♣ Q 4	♣ K J 8 5 2

East likely will bid 3NT. It will make if you are really lucky, but you don't want to be in it. If West passes the defenders will lead spades and 3NT will usually go down. Might go down quite a few if East takes the heart finesse and it loses.

West could bid 4♦ instead of passing 3NT.

♠ 7	♠ K Q 5
♥ A Q 10 8 7	♥ 4 2
♦ A K J 7 4	♦ 8 6 3
♣ Q 4	♣ J 10 8 5 2

Now what? If this is the layout, East-West are in a mess with no light to guide them. A diamond contract could go down a lot.



The main reason for this is that opener fell in love with his hand and didn't find partner with the treasures he was hoping for. Which brings up the point of this topic.

### **A jump shift by opener is forcing to game.**

When you make a jump shift you need a very good hand, not a nice hand, not a pretty hand.

Here are examples of possible jump shifts:

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	1♥	P	?

♠ AKJ4   ♥ 4   ♦ AQ765   ♣ KJ8

Bid 1♠. If your partner passes, you won't miss a game.

You need four-card support to make 4♠. If partner has them, he will bid 2♠ unless he has totally awful hand.

If you can make 3NT, your partner will need around 8 points. If he has them, he tends to bid 1NT.

If you can make 5♦, your partner will need around 9 or 10 good-fitting points and if he has them, he will bid over 1♠.

Finally, a scary thought. If your partner rebids 2♥, you might be best off passing. You might chance 2NT but if all partner has is the ♥KQ8763, notrump will be a miserable adventure.

Here's the kind of hand partner might have to pass 1♠:

♠ Q73   ♥ KJ763   ♦ 43   ♣ 953

This hand has 6 high-card points. Your partner can pass 1♠ and will do so. Note that he shouldn't bid 2♥. That bid requires a six-card suit. No game is worth a look. In fact, 1♠ is as fair a contract as any.

If your partner is able to bid again, you can consider bidding again too. For instance, if partner bids 2♠, you can risk bidding game. Finding a fit can do wonders for you.

W	N	E	S
			1♦
P	1♥	P	?

♠ A   ♥ 6   ♦ KQJ863   ♣ AQJ73

This is a good 3♣ rebid. The key is that you don't need 10 points to make game. You need a few points in the right places and a smidgeon of a fit. If partner has an ace or the ♣K, game is cold. You might make a game if partner has none of these cards. It might require a club finesse, which isn't asking too much. Even slams are possible opposite weak hands. Four diamonds to the ace and a singleton club could do the trick.

♠ A87   ♥ 3   ♦ AK875   ♣ AQ94

This is a tempting hand but it isn't worth more than 2♣. If you can make a game, your partner will bid something over 2♣. If he bids again, you can consider making another bid.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	1♠	P	?

♠ K   ♥ KQ1064   ♦ AKQJ5   ♣ 84

Bid 2♦. Firstly, if partner passes 2♦, you will find it to be a good contract. If partner bids 2♥, you should consider passing. Partner's preference to 2♥ hints that he has only two of them. And, your ♠K is singleton. It may be useless. Even if partner has the ace, your king may not contribute anything. Bidding 2♦ is good judgment.

## You Open 1NT and Partner's Transfer Bid is Doubled.

### *How Do You Bid?*

This is an agreement you will be happy to have.

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♦	Dbl	?

If you use transfer bids (2♦ shows hearts) you have heard this sequence before. East's double says he has good diamonds and wants a diamond lead. Do you ignore the double and bid 2♥ as your partner asked, or is there more you can do?

Here are some suggestions. Most are easy to remember. The last part is a bit difficult but it's worthwhile to any pair willing to discuss it.

The easy part: When East doubles 2♦, opener bids as follows.

Pass: Opener says he has exactly two hearts. He is not saying he likes diamonds.

2♥: Opener says he has a minimum hand with exactly three hearts.

Rdbl: Opener is showing that he likes hearts.

1. Opener is showing a good hand with three hearts. He is hoping this information will be useful to partner.
2. Opener might have four hearts but not a great hand. The fact that he has four hearts makes his hand worth a redouble.

3♥: A jump to three of the major (hearts on this sequence) shows four trumps, a maximum in high cards, and some distribution. Don't do this with 4-3-3-3 shape.

There's a lot of value to these agreements. Here are some example hands that opener can have.

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	2♦	Dbl	?

♠ A Q 7 3   ♥ 10 4   ♦ K Q 10 9   ♣ A J 5

Pass. You might think of redoubling to show good diamonds, but you can't use that bid in this structure. Your pass says you have two hearts. This is important news for partner. It might keep him from getting carried away.

♠ Q 8 7   ♥ K J 3   ♦ K Q   ♣ K Q 10 6 3

Bid 2♥. This bid says you have three hearts and a minimum. The emphasis of this bid is that you do have three-card support, news your partner will generally be pleased to have.

♠ 10 9 3   ♥ Q J 8   ♦ A 8 3   ♣ A K Q 8

Redouble. You are promising a good hand, usually with three trumps. You might have four trumps and a hand that you like a little bit.

♠ K Q 7   ♥ Q 6 5 4   ♦ Q J 8   ♣ A Q 10

You could redouble with this hand. It's not good enough to bid 3♥ but it is good enough to treat it as a hand that likes hearts.

♠ A J 10 8   ♥ K J 7 5   ♦ K 7 6   ♣ A 2

Bid 3♥. You have four hearts, you have good high cards, and you have some shape. It's a hand that re-evaluates to 18 or 19 support points for hearts. If your partner has a fair 6 points, it might be enough to make game.

Partner will strain to continue to 4♥ after this bid. Note the nice ♠J10. They add a lot to the value of your hand.

The structure so far is the easy part. The next part is important if you want to tidy up the ensuing auction.

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	2♦
Dbl	P	P	?

You transferred to hearts and your LHO doubled you. Your partner passed, saying he has only two hearts.

Here are some bidding ideas that I admit aren't for the faint of heart.

Pass: Your partner's pass didn't say he likes diamonds. It said he doesn't have three or more hearts. If you pass, you have five diamonds.

2♥: You are willing to play in 2♥ from your side of the table.

Rdbl: You want your partner to bid 2♥.

2♠: Probably doesn't exist. Might be a weak hand with four spades.

3♣: A weak bid. You have five clubs and want to play in 3♣.

Anytime you bid a new suit after partner's pass, you are making a bid that is weak and which your partner is expected to pass.

Here's the part that hurts.

If you redouble, forcing partner to bid 2♥, your rules are changed. If you redouble and bid a new suit, you are showing a good hand and are looking for the best game.

Some examples:

W	N	E	S
	1NT	P	2♦
Dbl	P	P	?

♠ 9 5 3   ♥ J 10 7 6 4   ♦ Q 6   ♣ 7 3 2

You can bid 2♥, which your partner will always pass, or you can redouble and let partner play it. You might bid 2♥ in order to protect your ♦Q for a moment or two.

♠ 7 4   ♥ 10 9 7 6 5 3   ♦ J 4 3   ♣ 8 7

There's no reason in the world for you to declare 2♥. Redouble, telling your partner to bid 2♥, and let him play it with the lead coming up to his hand. At least you have six hearts.

♠ 4 3   ♥ 10 8 7 6 3   ♦ 8   ♣ K 10 7 6 3

Bid 3♣. When your partner says he has a doubleton heart, you know hearts isn't a great spot. The odds are huge that your partner has some clubs. Bid 3♣. This is a weak bid which your partner will pass.

♠ Q 3   ♥ A J 7 6 4   ♦ 7   ♣ K J 10 7 4

Redouble. When you redouble, your partner will bid 2♥. It's his only option. Now you will bid 3♣. *When you redouble and then bid a new suit it is forcing to game.*

♠ Q 3   ♥ Q 10 8 7 6 4   ♦ 3 2   ♣ K J 4

Redouble, telling partner to bid 2♥. When he does, you will raise to 3♥ to invite game in hearts. Because you know partner has only two hearts, you must have six when you invite.

My apologies for showing something as complex as this. I offer it only because the number of times someone doubles a transfer bid is fairly high, and having agreements can be helpful.

## Overbidding With Balanced Hands

Balanced hands are notorious for being worth less than their point total suggests when the hand is being played in a suit contract. Some of your high-card points may turn out to be worthless. But equally important, balanced hands mean you don't get to do much ruffing in your hand. The point of this is that when you are involved in a bidding war, you may find that your balanced hands aren't as big a deal as you would like. Here are two examples to compare.

W	N	E	S
1♣	1♥	1♠	?

### HAND 1

♠ J43   ♥ K87   ♦ QJ8   ♣ KJ73

What do you think this hand is worth?

The good news is that you have the ♥K. That could be the end of the good news.

Your ♠J is a nervous value.

Your ♦QJ could be useful. Grade them as a modest positive. But don't count on it.

Your ♣ KJ73 could easily be worthless. Maybe not totally worthless, but you shouldn't be pleased to have them.

The fact that you have only three-card heart support is a big deal in a bad way.

The fact that you have 4-3-3-3 shape is another big deal. Also in a bad way.

How much is this hand worth in support of partner's hearts?

The ♥K is a good card and it should be worth 4 points, since it is in the trump suit where your partner will appreciate it. Your diamonds could be



worth something. Call them a tentative 3 points. The rest of your hand is full of wishful thoughts. At best, you have 7 points.

But that's still not counting your bad shape and only three trumps.

Deduct one point for each of these things and your hand might come to 5 points worth of playing value to your partner.

You are entitled to raise partner to 2♥, but if the opponents compete to 2♠ you should call it a day. There is no good reason to continue to 3♥.

Now, compare Hand 1 above with this hand.

## HAND 2

♠ 43   ♥ J1084   ♦ 97   ♣ A8764

This hand has only 5 high-card points. Do you think this hand is worth a 2♥ bid? Do you think that if the opponents bid to 2♠ that you should go on to 3♥?

The answer is that this 5-point hand is hugely better the balanced Hand 1 above which has 11 high-card points.

This hand starts with 5 high-card points. Every honor you have is working. Hand 2 has two tremendous ingredients that Hand 1 doesn't have.

Hand 2 has two doubletons. You have real ruffing values. Hand 1 has no distributional points. Hand 2 has two distributional points.

Hand 2 has four trumps. An extra trump is usually a good thing. For starters, when you have four trumps, the chances are improved that you won't run into a bad trump break. If your side has eight trumps, you may be hurting if trumps divide 4-1. Have you ever had that bad experience? Your fourth trump helps avert that.

So what is your hand worth now? I would guess about 9 points. That's almost twice the Hand 1 total.

Understanding the differences between Hand 1 and Hand 2 will help in a lot of your auctions. Evaluating hands is important.

## Some Opening Bid Thoughts When You Have Dangerous Shape

I suspect you have never seen a discussion like this one.

Here are some examples to show you the problem. You will notice that all of these hands have awkward distribution with marginal opening bid values.

1. ♠ 43 ♥ Q2 ♦ KJ84 ♣ AQ864

If you open 1♣, what do you do when your partner bids 1♥?

If you open 1♦, what do you do when your partner bids 1♥?

2. ♠ 2 ♥ K9854 ♦ AJ8743 ♣ A

This surely looks like an opening bid, yet it is an uncomfortable hand to open.

If you open 1♦, what do you do when your partner bids 1♠?

If you open 1♥, what do you do when your partner bids 1♠?

3. ♠ AQ653 ♥ KJ7542 ♦ Q ♣ 4

If you open 1♥, what do you do when your partner bids 1NT?

If you open 1♠, what do you do when your partner bids 1NT?

4. ♠ AKJ2 ♥ Q9763 ♦ QJ ♣ 43

If you open 1♥, what do you do when your partner bids a forcing 1NT?

**RULE – When you open the bidding, you must always plan ahead.**

The four hands above all have distributions that can lead to troubles. Here are some thoughts on these hands.

Let's make some tiny changes in each of the four hands above.

1. ♠ 43 ♥ Q2 ♦ KJ84 ♣ AQ864

Compare with:

♠ 43 ♥ 42 ♦ KQJ8 ♣ AQ1094

You have the same number of high-card points and shape as before but your suits are much better. Opening the bidding is more reasonable now.

Compare with:

♠ 43 ♥ Q2 ♦ KJ843 ♣ AQ86

You now have longer diamonds than clubs. Opening 1♦ is *relatively* safe now. You won't have to worry about playing in the wrong minor suit.

2. ♠ 2 ♥ K9854 ♦ AJ8743 ♣ A

Compare with:

♠ 2 ♥ K98543 ♦ AJ874 ♣ A

You now have longer hearts than diamonds. Opening 1♥ is fine. This change turns a potentially obnoxious hand into a very comfortable hand.

3. ♠ A Q 6 5 3 ♥ K J 7 5 4 2 ♦ Q ♣ 4

Compare with:

♠ A Q 6 5 3 2 ♥ K J 7 5 4 ♦ Q ♣ 4

You now have longer spades than hearts. Opening 1♠ and rebidding hearts is perfect. You will always find your best fit. A hand with headache distribution is now rid of concerns.

4. ♠ A K J 2 ♥ Q 9 7 6 3 ♦ Q J ♣ 4 3

Compare with:

♠ A K J 8 2 ♥ Q 10 9 6 ♦ Q J ♣ 4 3

You now have longer spades than hearts and you have some useful spot cards too. You should feel that changing the distribution from four spades and five hearts to five spades and four hearts makes a world of difference.

## Two Tentative Solutions to Rebidding With Awkward Hands

Here's one last hand. I'm including it to show two possible rebids that some players like to avoid.

♠ Q 10 3    ♥ J    ♦ K Q 10 4    ♣ K Q 8 6 4

With the hand above, if you open 1♣ or 1♦, you won't much care for your rebid if your partner responds 1♥, a definite possibility.

**Consider rebidding 1NT when you have a singleton in partner's suit.**

1NT is right on values but your shape is wrong. If I chose to open this hand, I would rebid 1NT after partner's 1♥ response, but would be nervous about it.

**Consider raising when you have three-card support for partner's major suit response if you don't have a better rebid.**

If you open and partner bids 1♠, I would raise spades. Raising with three cards isn't universal, however.

My suggestion with this hand is to pass as dealer. If your partner can't bid, you won't miss much. The result is that you will avoid some bad moments when you do open and the bidding goes poorly for you.

Note, for aficionados of the rule of twenty, that this hand has 'twenty-two points' yet it might be better off bid by passing initially.

Passing doesn't mean you don't get to bid. Say you pass. This auction could occur:

W	N	E	S
			P
1♥	P	1♠	?

You have a perfect bid to use if the auction goes as shown. Double for takeout. You are showing the minors, which is exactly what you have.

This example offers a guideline that can help you in two ways.

When you have minimum strength to open and have a hand with awkward shape, consider passing.

1. If you pass and then bid, perhaps by making a takeout double or even an unusual notrump bid, you will show your hand accurately in one bid.
2. By bidding this way, you will avoid bad results when you open one of these awkward hands and end up in a poor contract. It's possible you will miss your best fit, and that's expensive.

This hand is from the four examples shown above:

♠ 2    ♥ K9854    ♦ AJ8743    ♣ A

Open 1♥ or 1♦ if you must, but realize that your side may choose the wrong red suit to play in.

Perhaps passing and bidding is the answer.

W	N	E	S
			P
1♣	P	1♠	2NT

This would show the red suits, not the minors.

W	N	E	S
			P
1♠	P	2♠	2NT

This one is tricky. Even dangerous. If you bid 2NT and partner bids clubs, you will then bid diamonds, telling partner you were kidding about

clubs. You really have hearts and diamonds.

W	N	E	S
			P
1♥	P	1♠	2♦

LHO has hearts. You can forget about them. But you have a good hand for diamonds and can bid 2♦.

These hands are a thorn, no matter how you approach them. Just knowing and accepting they are problem hands will be helpful.

## A Question For Two Over One Players

Your partner opens one of a major and you respond 2♦. Partner rebids two of his major. How many cards do you think he has in his major?

There are two schools of thought here.

W	N	E	S
	1♥	P	2♦
P	2♥		

1. Some insist that opener have six cards if he opens a major and rebids it after a two-over-one response.
2. Some insist that it is acceptable for opener to rebid a five-card major after partner's two-over-one response.

Who's right?

Both views are valid. But that doesn't mean both are equal.

### *Advantages to playing a rebid of your major shows six cards:*

1. On many hands, it makes the bidding easy for responder because he knows of a six-card suit right away. He learns quickly if the major will be a good trump suit.
2. Looking for reason two. Still looking. Still loo.....

### *Disadvantages to playing a rebid of your major shows six cards:*

Here are four hands. You have opened 1♥ and partner responded 2♦. What should you bid if rebidding hearts promises six cards?

♠ 643    ♥ QJ863    ♦ K    ♣ A QJ8



Is 3♣ a good bid? Most players play that a new suit at the three level shows extra values. This is a good requirement. Should opener bid 2NT without a spade stopper? This hand is not a good recommendation for needing six cards.

♠ QJ6   ♥ AK763   ♦ 2   ♣ Q1085

I don't recommend 3♣ on this hand, either. The last possible bid is 2NT when holding a singleton in partner's diamond suit. Won't he expect you to have at least a doubleton?

♠ QJ6   ♥ QJ986   ♦ AK   ♣ 873

You can't bid spades. You aren't allowed to rebid hearts. You can't raise diamonds with two. And that leaves you with a very imperfect 2NT bid.

♠ KQ3   ♥ AKJ86   ♦ AQ   ♣ 873

You have a tremendous hand. How can you show it? Should you reverse into spades? Should you bid 3NT without a club stopper?

My belief is that requiring six cards for opener to rebid a major after a two-over-one response is bad bridge. So what should opener rebid on these hands?

The four hands above are typical hands that can't consider anything other than rebidding a five-card major. I recommend you read the discussions again. It's important.

Waiting for six cards to rebid the major is nice when it happens, but it comes at a big cost. If opener has to make a bad bid when he doesn't have a six-card major to rebid, the auction is not going to go well from there. Almost always, you will have a chance to rebid a six-card suit a third time, and that will promise six cards.

## Opening Leads

**The single most important moment of every defense is the opening lead.**

Make the right lead and you will take most or all of the tricks you are entitled to.

Make the wrong lead and you will suffer in multiple ways. A bad lead can easily cost you two or three tricks. There are instances where the wrong lead can cost 13 tricks. It won't happen to you, but in bridge literature you can find examples of this happening. Always makes for a good story.

There are many rules about making opening leads. Remember earlier I told you about some rules that are horrible? Well, the following two rules are the opposite.

These two rules are so good that if you follow them without fail and without exception, your leads will improve because you will be avoiding the disasters that come from violating these rules.

### ***Most important opening lead rule one:***

If you are on lead against a suit contract, do not lead an ace unless you have the ace-king of that suit.

The reasons are many.

1. If declarer has the king, you may have given him a trick he couldn't get.
2. It might have been important to keep your ace for later.
3. If another lead was best, it may be too late for you to switch to that suit after taking your ace.

Here's just one example. South is in 4♥.

W	N	E	S
			1♥
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
P	P	P	

♠ J  
 ♥ KJ73  
 ♦ A10984  
 ♣ 954

♠ A10954	♠ 8632
♥ A	♥ 65
♦ 763	♦ KQ52
♣ KJ76	♣ Q103

♠ KQ7  
 ♥ Q109842  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ A82

West is on lead and he remembers that East raised spades. Should West lead the ♠A? Let's see what happens if he does.

West's ace wins trick one.

After seeing dummy, West switches to the ♣6.

East plays the queen and South wins the ace.

South plays his ♠K and queen, getting rid of the two clubs still in dummy. South then leads trumps. The defenders win their ace but there are no club tricks to be had now so declarer makes 4♥ with an overtrick.

Leading the ♠A was a disaster. (More on this hand shortly.)

If you don't like this example, get my book *Opening Leads*. It will provide you with a lot more examples.

*A confession:* Very few rules turn out to be 100% in practice. If you like to lead aces, you will be right some of the time. But you will be wrong far more often. The odds on being right when you lead an ace are dim. If you do choose to lead one, you need a good reason. A doubleton ace is worth *thinking* about if your partner has bid the suit. There are other exceptions to this rule. But they are rare. Routinely leading an ace to get a ‘free’ look at the dummy is a horrible guideline. The hand above shows the problem with that thinking.

***Most important opening lead rule two:***

When you make a lead against a notrump contract, leading low from an ace is a common choice. You may give up a trick by doing so but your hope is that you will get a lot of tricks when your side gets in. Leading low from an ace against a notrump contract is often correct.

*Against a suit contract, leading low from an ace is almost always wrong.* Why? There are many reasons why underleading an ace can cost in a suit contract. Here are three:

1. If declarer or dummy has a singleton in this suit and your partner doesn't have the king, declarer gets a free trick.
2. If declarer has something like K2 in his hand and 974 in dummy, he has two losers unless he can get rid of them somehow. Underleading your ace gives away a trick immediately.
3. Your partner, not expecting you to underlead an ace, may make an error in the defense. Take this layout. South is in 3♦. West incorrectly leads the ♠3.

Here's the spade suit:

♠ Q 9 2	
♠ A 8 5 3	♠ K 10 7 4
♠ J 6	

Dummy plays low and East plays... what? If West is leading from the jack, logical, East better play the ten. If West is leading from the ace, a bad idea, East better play the king. I would hate to be in the East seat.

On defense against a suit contract, you seldom take a lot of tricks in any one suit. Your defensive tricks against a 4♥ contract typically come from a trick here, a trick there, perhaps a ruffing trick, and perhaps from declarer taking a losing finesse.

If you underlead an ace and it costs you a trick, it is often an expensive trick. It may be the setting trick.

Worse, your lead gives away a trick *and it leaves declarer in to do what he wants*. You lose a trick and you may also lose timing.

Reflection: It's too difficult to judge when underleading an ace is wise. Let me put this in a different perspective. If I watch a super expert player over a year, I might see him lead low from an ace twice. He might be right once. He might be right twice.

Let's make the assumption that my expert player plays 20,000 hands of bridge a year. Let's say that I see him do it two times out of 20,000 hands.

Let's say that you play 2000 hands a year. If you accept that underleading an ace is right two times out of 20,000, then it would take you ten years before finding two right moments for it. It's easier not to try to find that perfect moment.

### ***Important guideline:***

Leading away from a king (or a queen) is not necessarily bad. You have surely heard many times that leading away from a king is bad. You've seen your partner do it and it didn't work. You've had an opponent turn to you and sagely say that he couldn't have made his contract if your partner hadn't led away from that king.

Is this good thinking?

It's very bad thinking. Here's the hand I showed you a moment ago where West led the ♠A against 4♥ and it was a disaster.

♠ J  
 ♥ KJ73  
 ♦ A10984  
 ♣ 954

♠ A10954	♠ 8632
♥ A	♥ 65
♦ 763	♦ KQ52
♣ KJ76	♣ Q103

♠ KQ7  
 ♥ Q109842  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ A82

There is a killing lead available. If West leads the ♣6, declarer is booked for down one.

If you would 'never' lead away from a king, you would never set 4♥.

One hand doesn't prove a lot. Looking at many hands does. You can prove this for yourself. In the next session of bridge, get out the hand records and look to see how often leading from a king or a queen would have been the best lead. You will find numerous hands where this is so.

Not all of them will be obvious choices but some of them will be worth considering.

My advice? Put those aces back in your hand and give serious thought to leading something else. Don't automatically discount leading from kings (and queens).

## Should You Open 1NT When You Have a Five-Card Major?

Once upon a time, it was considered right to open one of a major whenever you had opening bid values and a five-card or longer major. When I wrote *Judgment at Bridge*, I included a few examples of hands where you have opening 1NT strength with a five-card major and asked if you should ever open 1NT. The question of opening 1NT with a five-card major was, at that time, relatively unexplored territory. In general, it was considered correct to bid one of the major except in rare cases.

Today you can get opinions on just about anything in less than a few seconds. This topic has undergone scrutiny and the opinions you hear now are quite different from 30 or 40 years ago. Time has demonstrated that the less you tell an opponent about your hand, the better it is for you. Here are some reasons why opening 1NT with a five-card major isn't considered a bad thing anymore.

If you open 1NT, your opponents won't know you have a five-card major. They may, in all innocence, lead the suit. This will usually be an excellent result for you. Or, if your RHO gets in early, he may feel that switching to that suit is a good idea. By hiding your five-card major you keep important information from the opponents, and they may not discover this until too late.

In comparison, if you open one of your major, the opponents learn that you have a five-card suit and on many auctions, the opening bidder makes another call that gives further information to the defenders. Here's a general truth with teeth: 1NT - 3NT auctions are harder to defend against than auctions where you open a major.

Don't forget the times when an opening 1NT bid helps you bid a slam.

Don't forget the times when an opening 1NT bid hinders their bidding, which a 1♥ or 1♠ bid might not do.

Here's a hand your LHO may have after your opening 1♥ bid:

♠ Q875   ♥ 8   ♦ AJ87   ♣ KJ43

Your LHO might reasonably choose to double. This could provide their side with the ability to hassle your bidding.

If you open 1NT instead, this hand probably will pass and your side will have an uncontested auction.

Here are some example hands to consider. In all cases, you are in first seat with no one vulnerable.

♠ QJ754   ♥ K4   ♦ AJ4   ♣ KJ4

Tradition has it that this is an opening 1♠ bid. Many would do that, and normal bridge ensues. If you open 1NT instead, you have a lot going for you, including that you may not get best defense.

♠ 43   ♥ AQ874   ♦ KJ3   ♣ AQ4

If you open 1NT you may get a spade lead, which you won't like. Let's say that you open 1♥ instead.

What will you bid if your partner responds 1♠?

What will you bid if your partner responds 1NT?

Neither response is easy to handle. If your partner responds 1♠, you have difficult choices. If you rebid 1NT you promise a maximum of 14 points, and you have 16. If you rebid 2NT you promise 18 or 19, and you still have 16.

If your partner responds 1NT, you won't like that much either. I believe that a raise to 2NT should show 18 or 19 points so that bid isn't available to you.

If you open 1NT instead, the bidding will be easy.

I'm not saying the bidding will be perfect. You may get a bad result, one possibility being that you miss a good heart fit. However, I can promise you that having a heart fit or a spade fit isn't always the key to bidding and making a game. I can recall numerous hands where 3NT was a better contract in spite of having an eight-card fit in one of the majors.

More examples:



♠ KQ7 ♥ Q10874 ♦ AK9 ♣ K9

This hand looks like a 1NT opening bid and with all suits stopped, it's likely that this will work best. How would you feel if you opened 1NT and played it there, and your LHO leads the ♥6? That would be nice.

In no way am I saying that opening 1NT with a five-card major always gets you a good result. I am saying that when you do it, there is a good chance that:

- a) You will get to a normal contract but will play it against uninformed defense.
- b) Even if you get to a less than optimum contract, you aren't always in trouble.

♠ A8 ♥ AQ1087 ♦ 43 ♣ AQ105

You have 16 good points and a relatively balanced hand. Open 1♥. Your hand has too much value for play in either hearts or clubs to open 1NT. Not every hand with a five-card major and 1NT values is a proper 1NT opening bid.

♠ QJ ♥ J8754 ♦ AQ ♣ AQ63

Even though you have 5-4 shape, opening 1NT rates to be best. If you open 1♥, you will have trouble later. Bidding 1NT describes your values in one accurate bid.

♠ 84 ♥ AKJ3 ♦ AQ1043 ♣ Q8

This is just one more example of a 1NT opening bid that makes some sense. If you open 1♦ and your partner bids 1♠, your choices are not

pleasant. You might reverse into 2♥ but is your hand really good enough to do that? 1NT makes for an easy and comparatively uninformative auction.

*Auxiliary question:* How about opening 1NT with a six-card minor?

If your hand has proper stoppers and proper points for 1NT, opening 1NT with a six-card minor can be an effective solution.

♠ K 3   ♥ Q 3   ♦ K Q 10 7 6 4   ♣ A J 3

If you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥ or 1♠, you won't feel comfortable rebidding 2♦ since you have a pretty good hand. But at the same time, you won't feel good about bidding 3♦. Opening 1NT is a sane solution.

♠ A 8   ♥ K 3   ♦ A K Q 10 8 5   ♣ J 10 8

You have the points for 1NT and your shape is suitable for a notrump contract. But you have too good a hand. You have a lot more tricks than normal for a 1NT opening bid. If you open 1♦ and partner bids 1♥ or 1♠, you can rebid 2NT, which is a closer approximation of your hand than an opening 1NT bid.

♠ A Q   ♥ 5 4   ♦ A 9 2   ♣ K Q J 10 7 6

Again, too good for 1NT. Open 1♣ and if partner bids 1♥, rebid 2NT. If partner responds 1♦ or 1♠, rebid 3♣.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# The Best For Last – The Art of the Penalty Double

**K**NOWING WHEN TO double a contract for penalty is an art that is not universal. Some players will double if they have a huge trump holding or a ton of high-card points, but these are rather rare. There are, however, many other opportunities to double which are rewarding, but are not often found. This brief chapter will show a few of them, along with some examples. I think that I made the comment elsewhere in this book that I could ‘write a book’ about something or another. Add penalty doubles to that list. The best I can do in this chapter is to show you some ideas. The rest is up to you. Here are three classic situations that many players don’t take advantage of.

### 1. What do you show if you double a 1NT overcall?

W	N	E	S
	1♦	1NT	?

Your partner opens 1♦ and RHO bids 1NT, showing an opening notrump hand. Mostly, a 1NT overcall shows 16-17 because it is dangerous

to bid 1NT with only 15. However, a lot of players bid 1NT with 15 because 'it's the thing to do.'

This is a recurring theme. It's important. What should you bid with the following hands after RHO's 1NT overcall? All of these hands have something to offer.

♠ AKJ94   ♥ Q43   ♦ 43   ♣ J98

Double. Double is almost universally played as penalty. Your partner has an opening bid. You have 11 points. RHO has his 16 or so points and his dummy has one or none. Double 1NT and expect to set it from two to four tricks.

♠ Q874   ♥ 10983   ♦ J3   ♣ AQ9

Double. This time you have only 9 points. The reason I am touting a penalty double is that your side has the majority of the points. You're on lead and you have a comfortable choice in the ♥10. A double by you won't always be successful. However, it rates to work more often than not. If you set 1NT doubled 60% of the time or more, you will end up well ahead. Keep in mind that they don't always stay in 1NT. They may decide to escape. That might not be a good idea for their side.

♠ A43   ♥ Q9874   ♦ 73   ♣ K74

Double. Lead the ♥7. Whatever happens will happen. As before, your side has the majority of points and declarer will find it hard to play in 1NT when dummy puts down only a point or two.

♠ QJ1074   ♥ Q43   ♦ 65   ♣ QJ4

Double again. You have only 8 points but you have a very leadable suit. The ♠Q stands out. If your partner has a spade honor, the defense will be well placed. Even he doesn't have a spade honor, you still have enough guns that you can hope to set 1NT doubled.

♠ 3 2   ♥ QJ 10 9 4 3   ♦ Q 3   ♣ Q 7 4

You might even double with this hand. It has only 7 points but it has defensive potential. If you can set up the hearts, your hand may produce five tricks. Double has a lot going for it. If you aren't brave enough to double, then bid 2♥. 2♥ isn't a forcing bid so your partner won't bid again without reason to do so. For the record, if you didn't have the ♦Q, 2♥ would still be a reasonable bid.

Note: There will be times when you have a hand that wants to bid, but that's another story. Hands like the following will be awkward.

♠ K 8 7 5 4   ♥ J 10 7 5 4   ♦ K 4   ♣ 9

When you have a hand like this one, you will probably feel like bidding something. But what you should bid isn't the point of this discussion. If you have a convention that lets you show this hand, terrific. There are conventions that apply here, but they are not widely used.

## **2. Doubling when your partner opens with a preempt and RHO bids something**

As you know, bidding over a preempt is difficult. Assuming you are aware of this, then be aware that it's just as hard for your opponents to bid when your side preempts. If your partner opens 2♠, your RHO has to bid at a higher level than he might like. You know very much what your partner has. Your RHO has no idea what his partner has. Even if an opponent makes a cautious bid after a preempt, he can get doubled when he chooses the wrong time. And, if your opponent is an uncautious type, your opportunities for penalty doubles are increased.

Here's an example I use when I discuss bidding against preempts. I'll show you all four hands.

**SOUTH DEALS**  
**NO ONE VULNERABLE**

♠ 3  
♥ K J 8 2  
♦ A K 6 2  
♣ K 8 7 3

♠ J 4	♠ A 9 7 6
♥ A Q 9 7 4	♥ 10 5 3
♦ 9 8 4	♦ J 7 3
♣ A Q J	♣ 9 6 5

♠ K Q 10 8 5 2  
♥ 6  
♦ Q 10 5  
♣ 10 4 2

South opens 2♠, in my mind very acceptable. What should West do?  
Should he:

Pass  
Double  
Bid 3♥

Passing runs the risk of partner having 10 fair points, in which case East-West can make something. If you pass, you may lose out on reaching a good contract. But finding 10 points in partner's hand is asking for quite a bit. If he has a moldy hand, passing 2♠ can be the winner.

Double runs a more serious risk. If partner doesn't have much, your side will be in trouble.

3♥ is possible, but even more frightening. East needs some useful values and he needs a heart fit. If East fails in either of these, bidding may cause a catastrophe.

A rule of thumb says that if you are considering bidding over a preempt, you must ask yourself this question: Do you feel luc....? Oops. Not that question. Ask this question: If your partner has 7 ordinary points, will you be safe in making your bid?

## The Rule of Seven

Some wise person (not me) came up with the idea that you will almost never have a good enough hand to guarantee your bid. You will always have to wish for something from partner. That wise person determined that wishing for 7 ordinary points was a sound approach to bidding over a preempt. Here's how it works on this hand:

West has 14 points with balanced shape and a so-so heart suit. Facing 7 ordinary points, any bid is likely to be wrong since 21 points doesn't usually produce nine tricks. Note you can't expect partner to have four trumps to an honor, an ace, and a useful singleton. The key word is ordinary.

Here's what 7 ordinary points would look like for the purpose of this discussion. A potential 7-point hand for East:

♠ A 10 5 3    ♥ J 2    ♦ Q 10 2    ♣ 9 6 5 3

Here's the hypothetical layout from West's point of view. You can see that the West hand doesn't do very well with this possible East hand as dummy.

WEST	EAST
♠ J 4	♠ A 10 5 3
♥ A Q 9 7 4	♥ J 2
♦ 9 8 4	♦ Q 10 2
♣ A Q J	♣ 9 6 5 3

In this layout, West rates to lose a spade, two or three hearts, and two or three diamonds, to say nothing of losing a trick to the ♣K. I suggest West should pass.

Now comes the part of this discussion that I am touting:



Say West passes. North should pass. He should not bid. He has 14 points but he has a singleton spade. Game is rarely better than 20%.

Say West doubles. Again, North should pass. But he is not passing from boredom, he is passing because he wants to double East-West when they get through bidding. No matter which suit East-West find, or if they play in notrump, North will double. North expects he has around five defensive tricks and he is facing a partner who has announced a modest hand. East-West are in trouble.

Say West overcalls 3♥. North will double. This is a perfect penalty double. North has two heart winners. He has four hearts. He has the ♦AK. He has the ♣K. There's no reason that he won't take five tricks, and that's a conservative estimate. This is one of those moments that astute doublers dream of.

So when this hand is played in my classes, what do I usually see?

Firstly, all of the South players open 2♠. That's good bridge.

40% of the West players pass. That's also good bridge.

When West passes, half of the North players pass. That's excellent bridge.

But the other half of the North players bid and the final contract is always down as long as the defense plays sanely.

Now the shocker:

When West doubles, only a few of the North players look for a penalty. They either pass throughout or they bid 2NT, thus losing a golden opportunity.

When West bids 3♥, most of the North players also pass, again missing out on a nice penalty.

I'm not sure why this is so. My guess is that the North players just don't give much thought to doubling. Or they may fear doubling the opponents into game. Whatever the reasons, the East-West pair escapes.

The worst cut of all came when I saw one of my North players double 3♥ only to hear his partner rebid his spades. "I didn't know what the double was," lamented South. "Anyway, I didn't have any defense." In answer to both of these thoughts, South should know what double means. And, South does have some defense. Not much, but then he didn't promise much. He has what he promised; a weak two-bid.

In conclusion to this hand, be aware that your preempts may push the opponents into bad contracts and if that happens, you should be ready to

double.

**3. When you and your partner are known to have most of the points, you can't just pass it out.**

Here's an example to show you what the convoluted heading above means.

**SOUTH DEALS  
NORTH-SOUTH VULNERABLE**

W	N	E	S
			1♥
P	2♦	2♠	3♥
3♠	4♥	4♠	P
P	P		

This auction is impossible. (I'm assuming you're playing the Two Over One system.) South opens 1♥ and North bids 2♦, a game-forcing bid in Two Over One bidding.

East comes in with 2♠. He can't have a good hand so his bid is pretty much known to be a nuisance bid. Perhaps East has a good suit and wants a spade lead.

South rebids 3♥, showing a six-card or longer suit. Most likely South is showing a little bit more than a minimum.

West raises to 3♠. This is not a strong bid. West is telling East that he has some spades and is just competing. There's no 'I have a good hand' flavor to this 3♠ bid.

North raises hearts. He already said he has a good hand and is now showing that he has heart support. Because South rebid hearts freely the round before, North is entitled to raise to 4♥ with a doubleton.

East bids 4♠. This isn't a bid that says East hopes to make 4♠. It's a clear statement that he thinks 4♥ will make and he hopes that 4♠ won't go down too many if doubled.

You can see in the bidding diagram that North-South quit bidding. They didn't bid over 4♠ and they didn't double it either.

Something went wrong.

Here's the point of this hand. When your side clearly owns the hand and the opponents compete, you should almost always either bid something or double them. If you go quietly you will set them some number of tricks and that result will be worthless to you because you let them get away with grand larceny.

Here's a possible layout of the hand:

♠ 8 3	
♥ K J	
♦ A Q 8 7 6 3	
♣ Q 8 2	
♠ A J 7	♠ K Q 10 9 6 4
♥ 7 6 3	♥ 9 2
♦ J 10 9	♦ 5 4 2
♣ J 10 7 6	♣ A 5
♠ 5 2	
♥ A Q 10 8 5 4	
♦ K	
♣ K 9 4 3	

Everyone bid acceptably up to East's 4♠ bid. Then good bidding stopped.

There are some auctions where you know the hand belongs to your side, and this is one of them. North's 2♦ bid said the partnership has game values, and that means your side will either play the hand or will double the opponents.

So who should double 4♠?

It turns out that South should double. He has two spade losers and his hand isn't all that good. And, he has a good lead in the ♦K.

But North should have doubled it if South didn't. North has his bids but there's nothing special about his values.

4♠ doubled will be down 500, which is a decent result for East-West if North-South bid and make 4♥. If no one doubles 4♠ or if North-South bid to 5♥, which goes down, East-West will get a terrific result.

## Postmortem to the topic of doubling

I showed three situations in which a penalty double works wonders. There are dozens more. My intent here is to get you to think more about doubling than you may have been up to now.

In conclusion, remember the topic of this book.

It's not about system . . .

It's not about agreements . . .

It's not about conventions . . .

It's about

## Judgment