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This Week in Bridge

(52) Support Doubles

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Level: 2

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General

Most partnerships that play Support Doubles have had a conversation about when they apply and when they do not. But many players forget to discuss what Responder should do after the Opener makes a support double. We will focus on the detailed meaning of Responder's rebids both in terms of strength (*bucket*) and finding a fit.

Support Double and Support Redouble Auctions

Let's just take a moment and list all of the low-level double auctions and examine them. This might be a little tedious, but it should help us understand which auctions are simple and which are more complex:

1♣ Opening then Overcall Auctions

- 1♣ 1♦ (1♥)
 - We generally do not play support doubles when partner bids 1♦ - we just raise with 3-card support since we rarely have 4-card support when we open 1♣. A double here usually shows 18-19 balanced with no ♥ stopper.
- 1♣ 1♦ (1♠)
 - We generally do not play support doubles when partner bids 1♦ - we just raise with 3-card support since we rarely have 4-card support when we open 1♣. A double here usually shows 18-19 balanced with no ♠ stopper.
- 1♣ 1♦ (1NT)
 - Double of a natural Notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values - either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.
- 1♣ 1♥ (1♠)
 - Support Double.
- 1♣ 1♥ (1NT)

- Double of a natural Notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.
- 1♣ 1♥ (2♣)
 - This is a support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♣. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.
- 1♣ 1♥ (2♦)
 - Support Double.
- 1♣ 1♥ (2♥)
 - Support Double. If 2♥ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.
- 1♣ 1♠ (1NT)
 - Double of a natural Notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.
- 1♣ 1♠ (2♣)
 - Support Double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♣. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.
- 1♣ 1♠ (2♦)
 - Support Double.
- 1♣ 1♠ (2♥)
 - Support Double.
- 1♣ 1♠ (2♠)
 - Support Double. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♦ Opening then Overall Auctions

- 1♦ 1♥ (1♠)
 - Support Double.
- 1♦ 1♥ (1NT)
 - Double of a natural Notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.
- 1♦ 1♥ (2♣)
 - Support Double.
- 1♦ 1♥ (2♦)
 - This is a Support Double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♦. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.
- 1♦ 1♥ (2♥)

- This is a Support Double auction. If 2♥ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.
- 1♦ 1♠ (1NT)
 - Double of a natural Notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional then double is support.
- 1♦ 1♠ (2♣)
 - Support Double.
- 1♦ 1♠ (2♦)
 - This is a Support Double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♦. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.
- 1♦ 1♠ (2♥)
 - Support Double.
- 1♦ 1♠ (2♠)
 - This is a Support Double auction. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♥ Opening then Overcall Auctions

- 1♥ 1♠ (1NT)
 - Double of a natural Notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional then double is support.
- 1♥ 1♠ (2♣)
 - Support Double.
- 1♥ 1♠ (2♦)
 - Support Double.
- 1♥ 1♠ (2♥)
 - This is a Support Double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♥. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.
- 1♥ 1♠ (2♠)
 - This is a Support Double auction. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

Redouble Auctions

- 1♣ 1♦ (X)
 - XX in this auction usually shows 18-19 balanced without a need to be declarer.
- 1♣ 1♥ (X)
 - XX is Support.
- 1♣ 1♠ (X)

- XX is Support.
- 1♦ 1♥ (X)
 - XX is Support.
- 1♦ 1♠ (X)
 - XX is Support.
- 1♥ 1♠ (X)
 - XX is Support.

Note: If the interferer bids above 2-of-Responder's suit then it is not clear if Opener's double is a support double or not - we need a partnership agreement.

- Most players play this higher-level double by Opener as takeout, showing some extra values.
- Some expert players play support double+: higher-level doubles by Opener show 3-card support and extra values.

Responder's Rebids after a Support Double

When Opener makes a support double and the opponent passes, then Responder is forced to describe their hand and bid something. It is good to have some detailed agreements about how Responder shows their strength and shape:

Minimum Hands

- Rebidding the "supported" suit (Responder's suit) at the 2-level shows a minimum hand (6-9 points) and could still be only a 4-card suit.
- Rebids below 2-of-Responder's suit show a minimum hand (6-9 points), and are non-forcing and natural.
 - If Responder supports Opener's suit, that shows a better fit there than in the "supported suit." - implying only a 4-3 fit.
 - If Responder bids a new suit this shows 5-cards in this suit and denies a real fit in the "supported suit" - only 4-3 fit.

Invitational Hands

- Rebids of a new suit above 2-of-Responder's suit show invitational values (10-11 points) and are natural.
 - If Responder supports Opener's suit that shows a better fit there than in the "supported suit." - implying only a 4-3 fit
 - If Responder bids a new suit this shows 5-cards in this suit and denies a real fit in the "supported suit" - only 4-3 fit.
- Rebids of 2NT are natural, invitational (10-11 points), show a stopper in the opponent's suit, and have only a 4-3 fit in the "supported suit."

Game-Forcing Hands

- Rebid 4M with a known 5-3 fit in the Major (if no slam interest.)
- Rebid 3NT with no fit (only 4-3) and a stopper in the opponent's suit.
- Cuebid the opponent's suit with a game-forcing hand that is not sure what to do (no stopper in the opponent's suit.) This is similar to a Western Cuebid, asking for a stopper.
- Cuebid the opponent's suit with a hand interested in slam.
- Pass with a game-forcing hand and length in the opponent's suit, waiting for partner to reopen with a double. Some partnerships might agree that this can be done with an invitational or better hand.

Other

- 4NT should be Keycard in the "supported suit."
- Double Jump Shifts (into unbid suits) are splinters showing at least a 5-3 fit in the "supported suit."

Responder's Rebid after a Support Redouble

After a support redouble, Responder's rebids are similar to after a support double. The major difference is that responder will pass more frequently, since we are XX in our "fit." This pass shows invitational or better values and usually only a 4-3 fit – it often will be interested in penalizing the opponents if they run to another suit.

Conclusion

Doubling the opponents for penalty at a low level happens so rarely that we have basically give up that bid for a more common and useful call. Finding a Major suit fit is one of our priorities in the bidding and showing partner that you have "partial support" is a valuable thing to do. This is especially true when the opponents are in the auction and may choose to preempt on the next call. A support double allows us to show this partial support, 3-card support, and make partner certain that when we raise in competition we actually have 4-card support.