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This Week in Bridge

(282) Support Doubles Complete

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Level: 2, 5

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General

Most partnerships who 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 Auctions After a Simple Overcall

Level 2

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 and Overcall Auctions

- 1♣ P 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♣ P 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♣ P 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♣ P 1♥ 1♠
 - Support double.
- 1♣ P 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♣ P 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♣ P 1♥ 2♦
 - Support double.
- 1♣ P 1♥ 2♥
 - Support double. If 2♥ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.
- 1♣ P 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♣ P 1♠ 2♣
 - Support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♣. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.
- 1♣ P 1♠ 2♦
 - Support double.
- 1♣ P 1♠ 2♥
 - Support double.
- 1♣ P 1♠ 2♠
 - Support double. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♦ Opening and Overall Auctions

- 1♦ P 1♥ 1♠
 - Support double.
- 1♦ P 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♦ P 1♥ 2♣
 - Support double.
- 1♦ P 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♦ P 1♥ 2♥

- This is a support double auction. If 2♥ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.
- 1♦ P 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♦ P 1♠ 2♣
 - Support double.
- 1♦ P 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♦ P 1♠ 2♥
 - Support double.
- 1♦ P 1♠ 2♠
 - This is a support double auction. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♥ Opening and Overall Auctions

- 1♥ P 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♥ P 1♠ 2♣
 - Support double.
- 1♥ P 1♠ 2♦
 - Support double.
- 1♥ P 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♥ P 1♠ 2♠
 - This is a support double auction. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

Support Redouble Auctions

- 1♣ P 1♦ X
 - XX in this auction usually shows 18-19 balanced without a need to be declarer.

- 1♣ P 1♥ X
 - XX is support.
- 1♣ P 1♠ X
 - XX is support.
- 1♦ P 1♥ X
 - XX is support.
- 1♦ P 1♠ X
 - XX is support.
- 1♥ P 1♠ X
 - XX is support.

Double by Opener After the Opponent's Weak Jump Overcall

Level 5

When we open the bidding, partner responds, and RHO makes a jump overcall, the meaning of double can become more complicated. The traditional meaning of a double at this level was penalty, but with light opening bids and lighter responses it has become far more difficult for Opener to have a hand that knows that is it best to penalize (and for Responder to actually sit for the double). The modern approach is to use this double to compete in the bidding. Some partnerships choose to use this as a general takeout double, showing extra values and shortness in the opponent's suit. The modern expert treatment is to use this bid more specifically, as a support double with extra values (meaning at least 3 points more than a normal opener as well as some shape.)

Example 1

1♣ P 1♥ 3♦

X?

♠ AKxx

♥ Axx

♦ x

♣ KQTxx

This is a hand where any modern player would double, whether our agreement was takeout or support with extra values.

Example 2

1♣ P 1♥ 3♦

X?

♠ AKxx

♥ Ax

♦ xx

♣ KQJxx

This is a hand that would only double if our agreement was that it was takeout (the less common agreement for modern expert players). Most expert players would be forced to make a “big bid” of 3♣, and hope for the best.

Example 3

1♣ P 1♥ 3♦

X?

♠ A

♥ Axx

♦ xxx

♣ KQJxxx

The modern expert player would happily make a support double, showing extra values, with this hand. Players that play a double in this situation as takeout would have a much more difficult time and would have to pass, raise ♥ on only 3-card support, or bid 4♣.

Responder's Rebids After a Support Double

Level 2

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 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. A later bid of the "supported suit" implies a 5-3 and a slam try, because with only interest in game responder would have just bid it.
- Pass with a game-forcing hand and length in the opponent's suit. 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

Level 2

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 can be used to show a game forcing hand and set up an opportunity to penalize the opponents. Some partnerships may allow this with 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 given 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, 3-card support, and make partner certain that when we raise in competition we actually have 4-card support.