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Bidding Basics

What distribution?

Last month, we discussed how many high-card points were needed for a negative double. This month, we start to explore what the double says about responder's distribution, namely what it shows in the unbid suits. We will be discussing only two auctions this month – both of which have very specific requirements. These auctions will involve an overcall of 1♦ or 1♥. Let's start with 1♦.



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

The clubs and diamonds both present temptations for an unwary defender, but look what declarer can do if you play either at trick two. The ♦Q will allow declarer to win the ace and eventually (after dealing with trumps) lead a diamond to the king and take a ruffing finesse against your ♦J.

A club switch would allow declarer to play low and later finesse your king.

The key to being a good defender is to figure out how to avoid helping declarer. A ruff and sluff can be a disaster; however, a more common defensive mistake is to break a new suit. ♣

Of course, the opening bid was 1♣. What would it mean if responder *didn't make a negative double*? What if responder just brushed off the interference and responded 1♥ or 1♠:

1♣–(1♦)–1♥

or

1♣–(1♦)–1♠?

It is important to know that these 1♥ and 1♠ responses show exactly the same thing had there been no overcall. What would that be? The way you learned it: four or more cards in the suit and 6+ HCP. So, you would respond 1♥ to 1♣ (with or without the 1♦ overcall) with either of these hands:

♠A 2 ♥Q 10 8 7 ♦Q 3 2 ♣8 7 6 5

♠A 2 ♥A Q J 10 8 2 ♦4 3 ♣A Q 2.

You would respond 1♠ to 1♣ (with or without a 1♦ overcall) with:

♠10 8 7 6 ♥2 ♦J 3 2 ♣A Q 7 6 5

or

♠A K 7 6 5 ♥A ♦6 5 4 3 ♣Q 3 2.

Make sure you completely digest this concept, because it will be different when the overcall is 1♥.

So, what (and why) would we use a negative double for when there is a 1♦ overcall? We can simply bid a four-card major if we have one. Accordingly, a negative double after a 1♦ overcall *guarantees both majors*. In stone. At least 4–4. So, after 1♣ (1♦), double with:

♠Q 10 8 7 ♥K Q 7 6 ♦3 2 ♣J 3 2

or

♠A K Q J ♥A K 10 2 ♦Q 3 2 ♣6 5.

Partner will know he can bid either major with four and it will be an eight-card fit. (With 5–4 in the

majors, you can either double, or bid the five-card suit – depending on what you have in mind for later in the auction.) Do not make a negative double with only one four-card major. With 4–3 in the majors (or 4–2 or 4–1 or 4–0), just respond in the four-card major.

After a 1♥ overcall

This is a different animal. *If responder bids 1♠ after a 1♥ overcall, it promises five or more spades. With only four spades, make a negative double.*

For example:

After 1♦–(1♥), with:

♠Q 7 6 5 2 ♥A 3 2 ♦K 3 2 ♣3 2,

bid 1♠. With:

♠Q 7 6 5 ♥A 3 2 ♦K 4 3 2 ♣3 2,

make a negative double.

The negative double here says nothing about the other suit (clubs in the auction above). All it says is, “Partner, I have enough to respond and exactly four spades. I was dealt nine other cards that are in the other three suits.”

While these two (1♦ or 1♥ overcall) negative doubles have strict rules, all the other negative doubles (covered in future months) don't. Before proceeding, make sure you understand these two special situations inside and out. In my experience teaching and writing, it requires study and more study and then needs to be studied again. ▶▶

QUIZ

What is your call after 1♣-(1♦) with:

- 1 ♠A1087 ♥KQ2 ♦86 ♣J765
- 2 ♠A1087 ♥KQ32 ♦86 ♣J76
- 3 ♠J543 ♥8765 ♦J32 ♣Q2
- 4 ♠QJ2 ♥Q102 ♦KJ2 ♣7654

What is your call after 1♣-(1♥) with:

- 5 ♠KJ876 ♥AQ43 ♦876 ♣2
- 6 ♠10876 ♥43 ♦J32 ♣AKQ2

What is your call after 1♦-(1♥) with:

- 7 ♠K654 ♥2 ♦AQ872 ♣AJ2
- 8 ♠J87652 ♥AKQ ♦J432 ♣-

ANSWERS

- 1 1♠. This shows four or more spades (double would show possession of four or more spades and four or more hearts).
- 2 Double. Guaranteeing both majors.
- 3 Pass. Not enough strength to respond.
- 4 1NT. 6-10 balanced with their suit stopped, typically no four-card major.
- 5 1♠. Shows five or more spades (and 6 or more points).
- 6 Double. Shows exactly four spades and any other nine cards (and 6 or more points).
- 7 Double. Same explanation as No. 6.
- 8 1♠. Same explanation as No. 5. ♣

CHALLENGE OF THE MONTH

North (Dummy)

Dir: South ♠ K Q 8 3
 Vul: Both ♥ 8 5 3
 IMPs ♦ 7 6 5
 ♣ Q 8 4

South (You)

♠ A J 9 5 4 2
 ♥ Q
 ♦ A K J
 ♣ A 10 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♥A and ♥K, East following. What's your plan to guarantee the contract?

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