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Bidding Basics

Taking out doubles of a preempt

The past two months, we discussed the basics of bidding after partner's takeout double.

This month, we will take out some more takeout doubles, but against a preempt.

When the opponents preempt and our partner doubles, we roughly follow the rules from the previous months. However, there isn't as much space. This results in some of the ranges from that infamous July chart being compressed. No, no more charts, but let's look at a typical auction and see what we might do when partner doubles a preempt. We'll start by looking at the auction 2♥-Dbl-Pass-?

2♠: Still could be 0 HCP. What else can we do with:

♠5 4 3 2 ♥4 3 2 ♦4 3 2 ♣4 3 2?

Is it still 0-8? Roughly, but we might not want to go jumping with a bad 9. Example:

♠Q J 8 7 ♥Q 3 2 ♦Q J 7 ♣J 3 2.

2NT: This isn't a jump, so it isn't 11-12 HCP as it was last month. It is natural (not for the minors). It shows a notrump hand with hearts stopped. This is a forward-going bid and quite a dangerous one (who wants to be in 2NT with only 6 HCP opposite maybe a shapely 12?). So, the range should really be about 8-12 but allow lots of latitude. Example:

♠Q 2 ♥K J 9 ♦Q 10 8 7 ♣Q 8 7 6.

Note: Some experienced players use 2NT here conventionally, but we are presuming "natural" as described above.

3♣/3♦: Could be 0 HCP. Picture:

♠5 4 ♥8 6 4 2 ♦4 3 2 ♣9 8 5 4,

but the upper range is maybe 9 or 10. You wouldn't want to jump to 4♦ with something like:

♠Q 5 4 ♥8 6 4 2 ♦K J 3 2 ♣K 9.

3♥: Cuebid of their suit is some strong hand, let's assume forcing to game. Unsure what to bid. Example:

♠A J ♥9 3 2 ♦K 10 7 6 ♣A Q 10 6.

3♠: Invitational, a good 9 to about 12. Could be only four spades. Example:

♠A Q 3 2 ♥J 4 ♦A 10 9 8 ♣J 3 2.

3NT: To play, usually balanced, definitely hearts stopped. Should be at least a decent opening bid. Bid 3NT with either of these:

♠J 4 ♥K Q 9 ♦A Q 10 8 7 ♣Q 4 3,

or

♠K 2 ♥A Q 2 ♦K J 3 2 ♣J 10 8 7.

4♣/4♦: Invitational and should be at least a five-card suit. Example:

♠4 3 2 ♥4 ♦A Q 10 8 7 6 ♣K J 2.

4♠/5♣/5♦: To play - enough for game.

The gist of the above is that we take out by not only choosing the strain (a suit or notrump), but by also showing our strength. Just like when they haven't preempted, a non-jump in a suit could be zero points. Be careful when taking out to notrump.

If their preempt is on a very high level, especially a game-level preempt, be reluctant to take out partner's "takeout" double. Do so only with a lot of shape. For example, after 4♠-Dbl-Pass, holding:

♠Q 10 2 ♥A 6 5 4 ♦4 3 ♣10 8 7 6,

pass and defend. Don't go to the five level in what might be a 4-3 fit.

♠4 3 2 ♥3 2 ♦A Q J 8 7 6 3 ♣2

With all of this shape (offense), take out the double to 5♦.

♠3 ♥4 2 ♦A 10 8 7 6 ♣K Q 7 6 5

Bid 4NT. Taking out a double of 4♥ or 4♠ to 4NT is not Blackwood and not natural. It shows a two-suiter (at least 5-5), presumed to be the minors.

Over 4♥-Dbl-Pass, we still pass with a flattish hand. Even with no defense, it is better to pass and hope to set them than to bid on a high level with flat shape. Don't pull to 5♣ with:

♠J 7 6 ♥8 7 6 ♦J 2 ♣J 8 7 6 2.

There is a small exception to this concept. If you have spades (at least four) and halfway decent shape or offense, it is OK to take out a double of specifically 4♥ to specifically 4♠. If either contract makes, your decision will be the winning one. For example, pull the double of 4♥ to 4♠ with:

♠A 10 7 6 2 ♥3 2 ♦Q 3 2 ♣J 3 2,

or even

♠Q 10 8 7 ♥2 ♦Q 10 8 7 6 ♣4 3 2.

After partner doubles their (rare) five-of-a-minor preempt, you would need extreme shape to pull. Just leave the double in with a flat hand - and hope to set them. ▶▶

Newer Players

Bidding Basics *(continued)*

QUIZ

After 2♦-Dbl-Pass, what is your call with:

- ① ♠10 8 7 6 ♥5 4 3 ♦10 8 7 6 2 ♣2
- ② ♠A Q J 10 8 7 ♥2 ♦6 5 4 ♣K J 2
- ③ ♠A 7 6 5 ♥A 7 6 5 ♦A 3 2 ♣Q 3

After 3♣-Dbl-Pass, what is your call with:

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

After 4♥-Dbl-Pass, what is your call with:

- ⑦ ♠Q 3 2 ♥J 7 6 ♦A 10 7 6 ♣J 7 6
- ⑧ ♠J 9 8 7 6 ♥3 2 ♦3 2 ♣J 10 8 7

ANSWERS

① 2♠. Don't pass (even with your five diamonds you don't have enough defense).

② 4♠. Enough to want to be in game.

③ 3♦. No rush to guess at the final contract. Enlist partner's help.

④ 3♥. Not enough to jump. Prefer the major.

⑤ 3NT. More practical than bidding diamonds.

⑥ Pass. At any vulnerability, collect a big number.

⑦ Pass. Don't take out at this high level without a lot of shape.

⑧ 4♠. Generally, bid 4♠ over 4♥ if it is in the ballpark.