

DOUBLE TROUBLE

This month, we cover some low-level doubles, starting with one which has many different names.

DSI DOUBLES

This isn't an official name, but maybe it will become so. "DSI" stands for "Do Something Intelligent." Others might call it "Card-Showing" or "Cooperative." These doubles are hard to define, but basically mean what most low-level doubles mean: "Partner, I have cards, but no clear action. I don't intend this as penalty, but if you have no better ideas, we might end up defending. I'm not showing a trump stack." Here are some examples:

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>YOU</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	Pass	1S	2H
Pass	Pass	Double	

No call other than a DSI double makes sense for you if you hold, say:
AJ432 832 A2 Q76.

<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>PARTNER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>YOU</u>
1C	Double	1NT	Pass
2C	Pass	Pass	Double

It's not likely you have a club stack, but you could hold, say:
Axx Qxx Kxxx xxx. You are showing cards, but no clear direction. It's losing bridge to sell out to 2C, but there's no need to guess what to bid.

<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>PARTNER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>YOU</u>
1C	1H	Double	Pass
1S	Pass	Pass	Double

Do you think it likely you'll hold a spade stack and a penalty double (when you couldn't act the first time)? No. I'd prefer double to show something like:

xxx Ax KJxx xxxx.

Selling out to 1S isn't winning bridge, nor is raising into a 5-2 fit. The double is more flexible. It sends the usual general message of: "Partner, I have some values but nothing obvious to bid—please do something intelligent."

There are numerous low-level auctions where you or your partner have extra values, wish to compete, but have no suit (or notrump) to bid. In such cases, the DSI double is available. You don't have to memorize the auctions (there are thousands of them). It is more practical to simply agree that penalty doubles at low levels are the *exception*. At this point, I suggest a rule to help you sort out *all* of these low-level doubles:

“NO” PENALTY DOUBLES ON THE ONE- OR TWO-LEVEL

The “No” is in quotes, because there are a few exceptions (the most important and common of them, listed below). This concept can be difficult to grasp. For now, let's just agree that: *If the exception isn't listed below, then the double isn't penalty*. It's a great comfort to know that you can always make a DSI (give it any name you wish) double at a low level, without fear of partner's misinterpreting it. All doubles in this series, even though **not intended for penalty, can be converted for penalties**. If doubler's partner has some of the opponents' trumps (four would be nice), or expects to set them, he can always leave in the double.

Here is a list of exceptions. With an established partner, you can feel free to add any of your own:

WHEN A ONE- OR TWO-LEVEL DOUBLE IS ACTUALLY PENALTY:

- 1) We have opened, the Opponents double, and we redouble. All subsequent doubles are penalty (business).

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1H	X	XX	2D
Dbl=Penalty			

- 2) We open a weak two-bid and the Opponents overcall.

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>
2H	2S	Dbl=Penalty

- 3) We open a strong 2C and the Opponents overcall (although many play this as a “bust” with *pass* as forcing—this must be discussed by the partnership).

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>
2C	2H	Dbl=Penalty

- 4) The Opponents overcall directly with 1NT or 2NT

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>
1H	1NT	Dbl=Penalty

(Of course, if the overcall had been 1 in a suit, our Double would be Negative.)

- 5) We've already bid and raised a suit (but see "Maximal Doubles" later on).

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1H	Pass	2H	3C

Dbl (Note: Double is penalty, 3D would be any game try and 3H would be to play)

- 6) The Opponents have previously been doubled (or passed) for penalty.

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	1H	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	Pass	2C

Dbl=Penalty (because they were already passed for penalty in 1HX)

- 7) We are in a GF.

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1S	Pass	2C (GF)	2D

Dbl=Penalty

- 8) We make our third double of the auction.

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	1H	Dbl	2H
Dbl	2S	Dbl=Penalty	

- 9) Any other rules (exceptions) you wish to add to your partnership.

It's quite a burden to memorize this list. Some of the items are common sense, but do expect some accidents. Be aware that more than 95% of low-level doubles are not for penalty and you'll do just fine.

Warning: The first "x??" parts of this series were aimed towards my typical Intermediate-level audience. This installment is aiming much higher. Adopting everything here requires hours of study and partnership work.

TAKEOUT DOUBLES BY OPENER

What do you think of Opener's double in this auction?

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	Double	Pass	1S
Double			

No surprise, this shouldn't be for penalties. It shows something like:
A Axx AJxxx KJxx.

Another such double by opener:

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	2S	Pass	3S
Double,			

showing a hand such as: x AQxx AKQxx Kxx. As usual, opener can't be expected to have their suit (spades) for his double. Quite the opposite. The double is takeout-oriented? It shows extra values and a desire for partner to compete. Of course, if partner has nothing but a spade stack, he can leave the takeout double in, converting it for penalties. What if Opener doubles after his partner responds 1NT? This is a matter of partnership agreement:

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	Pass	1NT	2H
Dbl			

Does this show:

A) A32 KJ98 AK432 2

or

B) QJ43 3 AQJ10 K1082?

This requires partnership discussion. You can either add it to your list of exceptions (make it part of #9 above), or stay consistent and play all doubles by opener on round two as takeout.

What if the 1NT-responder doubles? This is also tricky. For example:

<u>OPENER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>	<u>RESPONDER</u>	<u>OPPONENT</u>
1D	Pass	1NT	2H
Pass	Pass	Dbl	

Is this:

A) A32 KJ9 J32 J872

or

B) J83 32 AJ9 K10832?

In other words, does it show decent hearts (four of them are impossible after the notrump response) or deny hearts? For consistency's sake again, non-penalty would be easiest on the brain. Furthermore, if you agree that opener can't double for penalty, then the only way to "get them" is for opener to pass and for the 1NT responder to double for takeout with the opener leaving it in.

This was not an easy month. The topic of doubles can get quite complex. I know I've confused some people; something I never want to do. Unfortunately, there is no shortcut around these auctions. You can study them and make agreements with your partner. Or, you can ignore them and just go with the general rule of "no penalty doubles at low levels."

Next month....