

NEGATIVE DOUBLES A "Take-out" Double by the Responder

Since the purpose of all bidding is to tell our partner as quickly as possible about our distribution and point count. It is particularly important to let partner know about our major suit length at the first opportunity. The "Achilles heel" of the 5-card Major system is that we are vulnerable to pre-emption and overcalls by the opponents, since we often open the bidding with a minor suit. The bidding level may get too high very quickly...and the responder may not have either: A.) The correct number of points to compete at the two (2) level...(usually 10-11+) or B.) The correct number of cards with which to "overcall the overcaller"...since this promises five (5) or more cards in length. Three level pre-emptive bids...3C or 3D may be devastating.

Negative doubles to the rescue...In plain English the bidding message is "Partner...for some reason (either lack of points...or lack of length) I can't make the bid I had intended to make because of the opponents interference...so "take me out" of this double into one of the suits I am showing. Although a regular "Take-out" doubles only promises 3 card support for the unbid suits, "Negative" doubles promise 4 card support.

A negative double has a lower point count limit of 6 pts..and a top limit only by partnership agreement. This bid shows DISTRIBUTION...point count will be defined with subsequent bidding. (Common sense should tell us that if we are forcing our partner to bid at the 3 level we should have more points.)

EXAMPLE... Partner opens 1H and you hold S)K943 H)K5 D)Q953 C)542.....you were about to respond 1 Spade...correct? RHO interferes with a bid of 2 Clubs...you are "fixed" if your toolbox doesn't contain Negative Doubles! You certainly can't say 2H...promises xxx...2S should promise a 5 card suit...same for Diamonds...2NT would be a disaster....guarantees a Club stopper and not to mention that it would mislead partner about the points that you hold...

"DOUBLE" is the perfect solution...it is "negative" in nature in that it is not for penalty.

A negative double over a major suit PROMISES THE OTHER MAJOR and it tends to indicate that we also have 4 cards in a minor...(or else we have "limited" support for our partners opening bid major suit...xx)

1C...1H...x.....shows 4 Spades...6 pts...(possibly 4 Diamonds or at least xx in hearts)

1C...1S...x.....shows 4 Hearts.....6 pts...(possibly 4 Diamonds or at least xx in spades)

A negative double over BOTH MAJORS... Should promise BOTH MINORS!!!

1H...1S...x...shows D and C (...With a Spade stopper Partner could safely bid NT)

Everytime we choose to add a "conventional call to our arsenal of bidding weapons, we lose the "Natural" meaning the bid would have had..therefore if you choose to make a penalty double of a low level overcall...you must pass and your partner is almost **DUTY BOUND to "REOPEN"** with a double...unless their hand is "offensive" in nature (A sturdy 6/7 card suit for example...) or perhaps they themselves hold cards in the opponents suit...eliminating the possibility that you may have wanted to make a penalty double. The opener should always be on the alert for a bidding sequence that goes...1H...(1S)...P...P...??? Why did partner pass...and is this the time I must re-open with a double???

Start out by playing negative doubles ----->3D (thru 3D) this means that if the interference bid is 3D or lower...Partner is constrained to either make a re-opening double (which you may convert to a penalty double with a PASS... or with an unbalanced hand...partner should rebid in a suit bid.

EXCEPTION When the responder has long spades without the values to make a free bid because the overcall is in a minor suit at the 2 level...after an opening bid in the other minor suit...the responder can make the negative double even though he does not have support for hearts. Responder is prepared to "correct" to Spades whenever the opener bids Hearts, prompted by the negative double into believing that responder has Hearts...

NO MATTER HOW HIGH THE LEVEL..THIS IS A STOP BID!!i.e. 1D...(2C)...X...Partner says 2 H...Responder can "correct" to Spades...require 5 + spades 5 Pts