

DEFENSIVE BIDDING CONVENTIONS

One of the things that would make defense a lot easier is if partner could tell us how to defend during the auction. Then we wouldn't have to guess what to lead and, a lot of times, we'd get pictures of everyone's distribution during the auction instead of in the middle of the hand—when it might be too darn late. How do we do that?

LEAD-DIRECTING DOUBLES

The double of an artificial bid asks partner to lead that suit and also tends to show length in the suit. If you double Stayman, you want partner to lead a club. If you double a transfer bid, you want partner to lead that suit. If you double a 2♣ opening, it means you have clubs—unless you play a specialized defense system.

One bid that's difficult to defend against is when an opponent doubles your Stayman bid. What in the world are you supposed to do? Who has a club stopper?

Well, below is one way to defend against an opponent's double of Stayman in your notrump sequences. The bidding:

1NT-P-2♣-X
?

1. Pass: Shows a club stopper.
2. Redouble: Says, "I want to play it here. They have made a serious error." It shows either five clubs or four good ones.
3. 2♦, 2♥ or 2♠ denies a club stopper.

So, you ask, "But what do I do with a club stopper *and* one or two four-card majors?" Well, you have to pass to show a club stopper and partner now bids 2♦ as Stayman and you respond as you would to regular Stayman except now 2NT says no four-card major.

If the opponents double a transfer bid and you have five of the suit that the opp doubled, you can always redouble. If you pass the double, you are denying having 3 of the suit partner transferred to and you're asking partner what to do. You should accept the transfer with three or more cards in the suit transferred to.

ROSENKRANZ DOUBLES

These doubles come up when partner overcalls a suit and you have support for him. You can tell him whether or not you have one of the top two honors by either raising or doubling.

For example, LHO opens 1♦, partner overcalls 1♥ and RHO bids 1♠. Playing a double here as penalty is foolhardy, so what should a double mean?

Double means you have a heart raise with one of the top two heart honors. A direct raise to 2♥ denies one of the top two honors.

This can also be played if RHO makes a negative double; in that case, redouble shows a raise with one of the top two honors. Many people expand this to one of the top three honors, which is also fine. I have no negative or positive feelings about which treatment is better. This is a good convention for matchpoints, to prevent you from giving up a trick on the opening lead because you finessed yourself. It can also tell you if you can underlead your ace on opening lead to partner's king. This can be a valuable commodity.

Remember: This is only when the opps open the bidding and you or partner overcalls and the next opponent acts. There is no such thing as Rosenkranz if the partner of the opener does nothing. In that case, you just raise your partner's overcall.

SUBMARINE SPLINTER DOUBLES

A splinter is a jump made by responder to the opening bidder showing a singleton or void in the suit jumped in and a fit for opener's suit. We used to play a double over the splinter bid showed that suit and asked for that lead, ala our rule of doubles of artificial bids. But experts have decided that it's not very helpful because you get one trick out of the suit at most, so it was decided to make doubles of the splinter bid to tell partner that you want her to lead the suit below the splinter suit, i.e., 1♠-P-4♦(splinter)-Double (asks for a club lead).

DEFENSE AGAINST BERGEN RAISES: THE EXCEPTION THAT MAKES SENSE

We all know that 3♣ and 3♦ responses to partner's major suit opening show some kind of raise and is artificial. So, what is a double of a Bergen raise?

Well, we would guess that a double of 3♣ or 3♦ shows that suit since they are both artificial bids. Well, that's close: 3♣ shows a fairly weak raise, so it's important to have the double of 3♣ as a takeout double since we know we have a fit somewhere and may have the majority of points and it may be our hand. On the other hand, since 3♦ is a limit raise, we know our side probably has at most 18 points, so it is not our hand. In that case, a double of 3♦ is best used to show diamonds and asks partner to lead a diamond.

1♠-P-3♣-X = takeout double of spades

1♠-P-3♦-X = lead a diamond, partner

MCCABE ADJUNCT

In our 2/1 class, we learned about the law of total tricks and raising partner to the limit of the law especially when we're preempting. The McCabe Adjunct occurs when partner opens a weak 2 bid and the opponents make a takeout double. If we bid a suit, it says, "Partner, I have a raise in your suit, but if we are defending, this is the suit I would like you to lead. I have defensive values in this suit." So, for example, 2♥-X-3♦ ("Lead a diamond if we're defending, but correct this to 3♥ because I have a fit for you").

This is a great convention because the opps have difficulty defending against it and it gets partner off to the right lead and a lot of times will stop the opps from bidding notrump or will help you defeat a lot of notrump contracts.

So, you're saying to yourself, "Mark, what if I have seven clubs to the KQJ and I am void in partner's suit. Partner will correct to his suit because he thinks I have a fit." Well, the way to get out into your own suit is this: Over the double, you bid 2NT, which is a relay to 3♣ and whatever you bid next is to play. That is the way you get out.

SMITH ECHO

This is a great signaling convention against notrump. It's used by both the opening leader and the partner of the opening leader. If partner leads a suit and declarer takes the trick and leads another suit, the height of the spot card that partner plays will tell you if she liked your lead or not. A high spot card says, "I liked your lead;" a low spot card says "Your lead was terrible." This can also be done by the opening leader. When declarer plays his own suit, a low spot card says, "I didn't like the suit I led. Find something else." A high spot card says, "I liked my opening lead. Keep it coming."

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