

Last week's winners: Monday 17/2/03

Friday 21/2/03

winner John/Ralph 64%
2nd Ian/Jon 61%

winner Lis/Finn 63%
2nd Bob/Hans 62%

Doubles

Heard this two weeks ago?

Ian: How could you pass my take-out double?

Ian's Pard: But I only had 3 points!

Ian: You must bid.

Ian's Pard: But I was not sure it was for take-out, and with just 3 points.....

An all-too-familiar story.

Ian asked me to try to clarify (for the benefit of all) which doubles are for take-out and which for penalties. To some extent, this is up to partnership agreement; but the following is a good general guideline:

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A double by us is normally for penalties if: -

- 1) We double a natural no-trump bid.
- 2) Anybody at the table had made a natural no-trump bid.
- 3) Either of us has made an earlier penalty double or penalty pass of a take out double.
- 4) Either of us had made a value showing double or re-double earlier.
- 5) Either of us has pre-empted.
- 6) Either of us has made a lead directing double of an artificial bid.
- 7) Either of us has made a strong 2♣ or other strong 2 bid.
- 8) There are no unbid suits (suits that have not been bid naturally or implied).
- 9) We have already found our fit.
- 10) The doubler's partner has already accurately described his strength and distribution.
- 11) One opponent is Jeff and he has obviously over-bid.
- 12) When both opponents have limited their hands and yet reach a pushy game.
- 13) Partner has made a take-out double and RHO introduces a new suit.

A double by us is for take-out if: -

- a) A double of an opening suit bid
- b) A double at a low level (below game) when the opponents have agreed a suit.
- c) You previously made a take-out double of the same suit.

There are a number of further things that we need to know. What sort of hand type do we need for a take-out double? What should doubler's partner respond? What if doubler's partner is virtually bust? Obviously there are volumes of material here and it will take me a few weeks (months?). So for this week I'll concentrate on the meanings of doubles - take-out or penalty.

So, let's cover the points mentioned above.

1) **We double a natural no-trump bid.**

A double of an opening 1NT or a 1NT overcall is for penalties.

2) **Anybody at the table had made a natural no-trump bid.**

Self-explanatory: - 1NT dbl 2♦ dbl both doubles are for penalties

But an exception is a sequence like 1♦ pass 1NT dbl where the double is a take-out of ♦'s.

3) **Either of us has made an earlier penalty double or pass of a take out double.**

2♠	pass	pass	dbl (1)	(1) take-out
pass	pass (2)	3♣	dbl (3)	(2) penalty pass
				(3) penalties

4) **Either of us had made a value showing double or re-double earlier.**

For example, when partner opens 1 of a suit and the next hand doubles (take-out), a re-double does *not* show support for partner's suit (with support for partner, raise to the appropriate level). A re-double should show 9+ points and a mis-fit for partner, i.e. we want to defend and are out for blood. We have the balance of the points and hope to set the opponents. Any pass by the bloodsuckers (us) is forcing and any subsequent double is to satisfy the vampire urge.

1♠	dbl	redbl (1)	pass	(1) 9+ points, usually poor ♠ support.
pass	2♥	dbl (2)		(2) penalties (a pass at (2) is forcing).

5) **Either of us has pre-empted.**

3♥	dbl (1)	4♥	4♠	(1) take-out
pass	pass	dbl (2)		(2) penalties

Opener should never pull this penalty double. The 4♥ bid is totally ambiguous; it could be a weak pre-emptive raise or a hand just short of slam. In this situation it was obviously a rock crusher.

Note that a subsequent double (of a game contract) by the pre-empter shows a better defensive hand than the initial pre-empt told - indicating that partner should not sacrifice unless necessary.

6) **Either of us has made a lead directing double of an artificial bid.**

1♠	2♣	3♦ (1)	dbl (2)	(1) splinter
3♠	pass	4♠	dbl (3)	(2) please lead a ♦
				(3) penalties

7) **Either of us has made a strong 2♣ or other strong opening 2 bid.**

e.g. 2♣ - 2♥ - dbl dbl indicates that responder considers 2♥ doubled will deliver a better score than a game if opener has a balanced 23+.

8) **There are no unbid suits (suits that have not been bid naturally or implied).**

1♣	dbl	1♥	pass	the last double is penalties, partner has shown a big hand with ♦'s; so dbl cannot be take-out – no suit(s) left.
1♠	2♦	pass	pass	
2♥	pass	pass	dbl	

1♥	2♣	dbl	2♠	the 1st double is negative, showing the two unbid suits; so opener's dbl is penalties.
dbl				

9) **We have already found our fit.**

1♥	1♠	3♥	3♠	Penalties.
dbl				

There is one notable exception here. If the opponent's suit is ranking one below our major, then a double of a three level bid has to be a game try (there is no room left): -

				The opponents have robbed us of the space for a game try.
1♥	2♦	2♥	3♦	This double is a game try, inviting partner to bid 4♥ if max.
dbl				A 3♥ bid here would be competitive, not an invitation.

10) **The doubler's partner has already accurately described his strength and distribution.**

1♣	1♥	1♠	pass	Penalties. Cannot possibly be take-out (to what?). You know opener's hand: weakish with ♣'s.
2♣	2♥	dbl		

11) **One opponent is Jeff.**

	player A	Alex	player B	Jeff
(1) transfer	1NT	pass	2♦ (1)	2♠
(2) turning a big + into a big -, a penalty double was called for.	pass	pass	3♥	3♠
	pass	pass	4♥ (2)	dbl

This is a typical Jeff auction from 3 weeks ago. I have no idea why he gets away with it. Both 4♥ and 3♠ were 2 off. It was a partscore hand! Why give away 500 when 500 has been offered? When your partner opens 1NT and you have the balance of the points, look for the penalty - the NT bidder has said his (her) hand and often cannot double, so it's up to you. If it's Jeff, double!

12) **When both opponents have limited their hands and yet reach a pushy game.**

1♣	1♥	1♠	pass	Penalties. Probably with an unpleasant trump holding such as ♠QJ109 (you should double with this holding regardless of the rest of your hand) – 2 unexpected tricks.
2♠	pass	3♠	pass	
4♠	pass	pass	dbl	

13) **Partner has made a take-out double and RHO introduces a new suit.**

1♠ dbl 2♥ dbl

The first double is take-out, showing a willingness to play in ♥'s (I personally would insist on 4♥'s for a double of 1♠ unless a very big hand). The 2nd double is best played as penalties. This is a typical psyche situation and you need a double to expose a possible psyche (of course, nobody would psyche at our club – you all know the director's opinions).

And take-out doubles: -

a) A double of an opening suit bid

The standard take-out double. It should have at least 3 cards in the unbid suits with shortage in the suit bid, but there are exceptions which I will cover at a later date.

b) A double at a low level (below game) when the opponents have agreed a suit.

1♦ pass 3♦ pass take-out, too weak to bid first time. But when
pass dbl both opponents have limited their hands, partner
must have values.

c) You previously made a take-out double of the same suit.

1♦ dbl 2♦ pass
pass dbl both doubles are take-out.

There are other more specific doubles; negative (sputnik), responsive, support etc.
I will cover these in next week's exciting instalment.

d) A delayed double.

1♦ pass 1♥ pass take-out. He did not double first time as he did not
1NT dbl have ♥'s. This take-out double shows ♣'s and ♠'s

RKCB - A Matter of Logic

A hand from Monday 10th, Board 21 E-W. Yes, I still have a few Chuck hands in the archives.

West - Chuck	East - Terry	West	North	East	South
♠ Q98	♠ AJ102	1♣	2♦ (1)	2♥ (2)	pass
♥ A4	♥ KQ9652	4NT (3)	pass	5♠ (4)	pass
♦ A	♦ 96	6♣ (5)	pass	6♥	pass
♣ AKJ9874	♣ 10	pass	pass		

- (1) Weak
- (2) Forcing, 5+ ♥'s (Chuck and I do not play negative free bids, thank God).
- (3) RKCB with ♥'s as the key suit
- (4) 2 key cards (♠A and ♥K) plus ♥Q
- (5) An excellent suit, a suggestion for the final contract.

After the hand was over (it made +1, the ♠K was on-side with trumps 3-2), one opponent asked me how I could possibly bid 6♥ when partner had not supported the suit. This is where the subtleties of RKCB come into play. Partner has used RKCB for ♥'s when he does not have ♥K. Thus ♥K must be an important card for him (as important as an ace) – using RKCB, the key king is counted along with all the aces. Thus he must have at least two ♥'s. Now, especially as I hold ♥Q, in order for partner to use RKCB he must have the ♥A (with xx he would not use RKCB – or any type of Blackwood!). I know that Chuck does not have ♥Axx (I have shown 5 ♥'s including the ♥Q, with 3 card support he would probably bid the slam in ♥'s). Thus Chuck has exactly ♥Ax in ♥'s. Since I had a 6 card suit opposite Ax, and poor ♣'s, I thought 6♥ would be a superior contract (it also scores more). And so it was. The hand was bid 9 times and a slam reached on just 3 occasions (one was in 6♣, the other in a rather silly 6♠ which makes with the ♠'s 3-3 and ♠K onside – How did you reach 6♠, Alex/Jeff? – tell me about it!). I guess that if I keep it up (difficult sometimes), I will eventually get everybody to play RKCB?

p.s. Don't ask me what a negative free bid is, you don't want to know. Ask Hans if you must.

Responding to Partner's take-out double.

I will cover responses to a take out double in a later news-sheet, but two hands came up on Friday where I was asked the correct bid: -

This is the South board 22 from Friday.

Bidding :- 1♦ dbl pass ?

- ♠ Q852 Your partner has doubled a 1♦ opening. What should you bid? The board
 - ♥ KQ9 was played 5 times and game reached only twice. Alex's partner bid 2NT.
 - ♦ K10 This is incorrect as it shows 10-12 points and is non-forcing. Also, of
 - ♣ KQ86 course, it denies a 4 card major and so is doubly wrong. 1♠ and 2♠ are both also incorrect as they show 0-9 and 10-12 points resp and are non-forcing.
- 3♠ is a reasonable bid, but I prefer a 2♦ cue bid to establish a forcing auction. A subsequent ♠ bid would then be game forcing. I do not like a direct leap to 4♠ – partner may have only 3 ♠'s.

And the North board 20 from Friday.

Bidding :- 1♥ dbl pass ?

- ♠ J73 Your partner has doubled a 1♥ opening. What should you bid? The board
- ♥ Q62 was played 5 times and 2♣ was bid twice. I can only repeat what I have
- ♦ KQ3 said in previous news-sheets; do not go out of your way to play in a minor
- ♣ J1063 suit. With this hand the correct bid is 1NT (6-9 pts). The hand is perfect for this bid. 2♣ went 1 down (a 4-3 fit). 1NT was bid just once and made with overtricks for a clear top.

The 4-4 Major Suit Fit

What can I say about this? It is what every bidding system is all about. It is all-important. It is the elixir of life. It is Buddha to a Thai, it is a cow to India, it is freedom to Palestine, it is Bin Ladin to a terrorist, it is George W Bush to America. Nothing else matters... It is worth going to war for, ... it is worth dying for! ... It simply is am I getting carried away?

- ♠ A942 This is the North hand from board 5 on Friday 14th. Partner opens 2♣
- ♥ 87 (23+ points), you respond 2♦ (negative, waiting, whatever) and partner
- ♦ 965 bids 2NT (balanced 23-24). What now? I bid 3♣ Stayman (as did Hans at
- ♣ J853 another table), partner bid 3♠ which we both raised to 4♠. 4♠ made exactly, despite an adverse 4-1 trump split (QJ86). Four other tables were in 3NT (minus 1) and one in 6NT (minus 3). There really is no excuse for this. Sam Stayman did not invent his convention for no reason. Quite simply, a 4-4 major fit is nearly always better than 3NT. It usually gets one more trick. On this particular deal it scored two more tricks despite the very bad 4-1 split. The NT bidders (every other N-S except Hans/Bob and us) got what they deserved.

Incidentally, over a 2NT opener (either directly or via 2♣) most players play Stayman and transfers. A popular alternative in UK is Baron 3♣ and Flint 3♦ (as played by John). Baron is designed to locate any 4-4 fit. When you are looking for slam (often the case opener) then any 4-4 fit (even a minor) will do.

The bottom line? With hands like this (and similar with more points when partner opens 1NT), bid Stayman. *Always* look for the 4-4 major fit. Do not be mis-lead by the belief that 9 tricks are easier than 10. Do not be greedy and go for the extra 10 points at pairs. Go for the 4-4 major fit. Trust in Buddha, the cow, freedom, me or even George W Bush – no that would be going too far.

p.s. My word processor has underlined George in red, seems to think it warrants a capital letter? In this case, I don't think so. (Chuck's gone, so no holding back). p.p.s There is just one exception to playing in NT rather than the 4-4 major fit, that is when you have *plenty* of points to spare and at least a double stopper in each suit, but this is the exception rather than the rule.