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Responding to Takeout Doubles

The last lesson reviewed takeout doubles and the need for the doubler to be disciplined. This lesson covers responding to partner's takeout double. Just as with the takeout double, bad things happen if responder does not maintain discipline and "follow the rules". One of the bad things that happen is that partner loses confidence in you and the system, and starts to improvise themselves. The funny thing about most partners is that they have long memories.

Case 1. Opener's partner passes.

You must bid your best suit, even if you have zero points and only 3 cards in each of the other suits. **YOU MAY NOT PASS***.

With 0-8 pts, bid your best suit at the lowest possible level. (If you have a really bad hand, bid the lowest suit possible to encourage the opponents to get back in the auction.

For example, after 1S – X- P -?,

with S - xx H - xxx D - xxxx C - xxx,

consider bidding 2C. You are desperately hoping that the opponents bid on. Why not make it as easy as possible for them?

With 9 – 12 points, **jump bid** in your best suit, even if you have only 4 cards in the suit. (With 8 points and a 5 card major you should also jump bid.)

With 13 or more, cuebid the opponents' suit to let partner know that game is likely.

Bidding 1NT after Partner's Takeout Double.

Players often respond 1NT to partner's takeout double because they are weak and don't have a suit to bid. This is wrong. A 1NT response should show a hand with 8 – bad 11 count and very good stoppers in opener's suit. An example after 1S – X- P -?, would be:

S-AJ10x H- Qx D – xxx C-Kxxx

1NT should be a lock, and if partner has a better than minimum 3NT by you may be on.

With a good 11 – 13, good stoppers, and no suit of your own, bid 2 NT (you will not have this hand very often). With 13+ and good stoppers, and no suit, bid 3NT (you will have this good a hand almost never, but it could happen).

* There is one type of hand where you can pass partner's double for penalties – when you have a long solid suit in opener's bid. In practice this will almost always be a minor suit, as opener may have only a three card suit. When you pass you are promising partner that you can draw trump. Partner should always lead a trump if they have one. A correct pass after the auction of 1D – X – P - ? would look something like:

S - xx H - Axx D - KQJxxx C - xxx or maybe: S - Kxx H - xx D - QJ109xxx
C - xxx

Also, vulnerability will enter into the decision. With the first hand, if you are vulnerable, the likely 3NT may well score better than 1DX. If you are non-vulnerable and they are vulnerable, 1D doubled down 2 is better than your game.

But after 1H – X – P -?, with S - xx H - KJ10xx D - Axx C - xxx, do not even think about passing. Opener is sitting behind you with at least 5 hearts. Your heart holding may take only 1 trick! Bid 1NT with this hand.

In practice you will have the correct hand to pass partners takeout double maybe once per year.

Case 2. Openers partner bids

In this case you are relieved of the requirement to bid. So if you do bid, you are showing real values of 6 or more and a fit.

So with S - K10XX H - xx D - Qxx C - Kxxx, and the auction is:

1H – X – 2H - ? Bid 2S (Partner has pretty much promised 4 spades).

With S - KQXX H - xx D - Qxx C-xxxx, and the auction is:

1C – X – 1H - ? Bid 1 spade as you would if RHO had passed.

With 8 – 10 pts and a real stopper in opponents' suit(s), you can bid 1NT.

With S - xxx H - Axx D - xxx C - KQxx, and the auction is:

1C- X- 1H - ? Bid 1NT

You only do this if you do not have a good suit of your own. With: S - Kxxx H - Axx D - xxx C - Qxx, bid 1S, not 1 NT. (Note that since RHO bid, your 1S bid shows values, and you do not need to jump to 2S as you would have if RHO had passed.)

Rebids by Takeout Doubler

This is pretty simple. Unless the takeout doubler has a much better than minimum hand, they should pass.

Since takeout doubler has forced partner to bid, they must have very extra significant values to raise the suit or bid a new suit. To take either of these actions, the doubler should have at least 17 – 18 points.

This rule is relaxed if doubler had a genuine takeout double (not just showing points) & partner makes a jump bid to show the 9-12 point hand. Now a raise should be invitational to game (something like 14 – 16 points and four card support). With 16 or more and a fit facing a jump bid by partner, bid game directly.

If partner cue bids in response to your double, then there should be a game and you can just start bidding suits until the right game is found. If partner responds to your takeout double with a cue bid, then no extra strength is required to bid again.

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