



By: Don Rogers

Support Doubles

The support double comes into play when partner opens one of a suit, you respond in your suit, and your LHO makes an overcall. Unless partner has four of your suit, this interference gives partner a rebid problem. For example:

You Pard
1C - P - 1H - 1S
?

and you hold: A-xx H- Kxx D-KJx C-AQxxx

If you bid 2H and partner has a 6 count with Jxxx in hearts, he/she will not be happy. If you pass, partner might show up with a 10 count and five good hearts. If you pass and your LHO bids 2S (likely), your partner will have no idea what to do. Letting them play 2S when you are cold for 3H will not get a good score, but partner cannot know that you have decent 3 card heart support.

The support double is designed to solve this problem. Playing support doubles, on the auction shown above Opener doubles to show specifically 3 card support for responder's suit. (With four card support opener should just raise.) Support doubles must be alerted! With 2 or fewer in partner's suit, opener passes.

Another example:

You Pard
1C - P - 1H - 1NT*
?

* showing other two suits

and you hold: S-Axx H- xx D-KJx C-AQxxx

Pass(!) and await developments. This hand looks like a misfit unless partner has club support. Partner should definitely take the inference that you do not have support for his/her heart suit.

Another example:

You Pard
1C - P - 1S - 2H
?

and you hold: S-Axx H-xx D-KJx C-AQxxx

Double showing 3 spades, assuming you are playing support doubles at the two level.

Four key points about support doubles:

1. In the heat of battle it is easy to forget this convention. Partner will not be happy if you forget that you are playing it, and the opponents will not be happy if you forget to alert it.
2. You need to decide in advance to what level you are playing support doubles. Obviously the higher you go the bigger the possible numbers if things go bad on you.
3. Support doubles usually only apply when responder bids a major suit. I suppose it is theoretically possible to have it apply after 1C – P – 1D (partner could be 3-3-5-2), but finding your 5-3 diamond fit is of lesser value than finding a potential 5-3 major fit. I would suggest that at least to start it only apply when responder bids a major suit.
4. Only Opener can make a support double! (This is because opener guarantees five cards when they open in a major suit, while responder may have only four cards when they respond in a major suit.) If responder doubles, it is negative (assuming it is responders first bid after openers first bid).

(9A)