

An Opportunist's Way of Responding to Partner

The Negative Double

Recall, first, that the Responder is the Opening Bidder's Partner. If the Opener's LHO doesn't Bid, the Responses available are those outline in Chapter 6. If, however, the Responder's RHO OverCalls, a much wider ability to describe his hand is now offered to the Responder. Let's look at three hands:

a) ♠K7 ♥AJT5 ♦J75 ♣T752; b) ♠K7 ♥AQJT9 ♦J75 ♣T72 and c) ♠K7 ♥AQJ9 ♦JT75 ♣T72. Partner Opens with 1♣ and RHO Bids 1♠.

(a)'s 9 HCP restricts his non-support Bid to the 1-level so the 1♠ OverCall has shut out the Responder; but there is a way for Responder to show his 4♥'s. Responder does it with an X, a Negative Double. ♠K7 ♥AJT5 ♦J75 ♣T752. The bid is totally artificial but importantly the Responder isn't bidding at the 2-level and it is guaranteeing 4♥'s.

(b)'s hand has 10+ HCP and 5♥; he bids 2♥. This bid was possible with or without the availability of the Negative Double. Note: A Responder Bid of 2♥ over 1♠ **always**, repeat **ALWAYS**, promises 5♥'s and 10+ HCP. We call it the 'five and ten bid' or dime store bid. e.g. ♠K7 ♥AQJT9 ♦J75 ♣T72 → 2♥.

(c)'s hand has the same number of HCP as (b), but only 4♥'s therefore the 2♥ Bid is not available. It sure would be nice, however, to be able to show the ♥ suit. ♠K7 ♥AQJ9 ♦JT75 ♣T72. He can by bidding X, just as in (a).

(a) and (c) are opportunity Bids, both pass information that would be impossible without the availability of the Negative Double; and, of course, the intervening bid. It is important to note that the negative double allows the differentiation between the holding of 4 and 5 cards in a Major. Here is another set of holdings and bids to illustrate this most important aspect of the negative double. In both cases Partner's open in 1-of-a-Minor and next the opponent Overcalls with a Major. In one case you hold 4♠'s and in the other you hold 5. Your Partner starts the bidding 1♣ – 1♥ – ?

a) ♠KJ87 ♥AJT5 ♦T75 ♣T7 b) ♠KJ872 ♥AJT5 ♦T7 ♣T7

In (a) you have just 4♠'s so you Double to show that fact. In (b) you have an identical hand except now you have 5♠'s you bid 1♠, Doubling shows 4, bidding suit shows 5.

Bidding the unbid Major shows you hold 5; Doubling shows you only have 4. In this example the problem imposed by the 5-10 rule didn't impose itself. Let's change the Majors where it does... Partner starts the bidding 1♣ – 1♠ – ?

a) ♠KJ8 ♥AJT9 ♦Q75 ♣T73 b) ♠K98 ♥AJT54 ♦T7 ♣T73 In a) you have 10+ HCP but only 4♥'s so you can't bid 2♥; and in b) you have 5♥'s but can't bid 2♥ because you don't have 10 HCP. Problem solved you can tell Partner that you have at least 4♥'s by Doubling. That's the power of the Negative Double. It always shows at least 4-cards in the unbid Major.

Other Applications of the Negative Double

In all the following cases the Negative Double requires 6+ HCP.

1. We've already seen when Partner Opens with 1♣ and RHO Bid of 1♥ provides another opportunity Bid. A Negative Double allows the Responder to differentiate between a holding that includes either 4♠'s or 5♠'s. 1♣ → implies 5♠'s and X → implies 4♠'s

2. Partner Opens 1♣ and RHO Bids 1♦: A Bid of either 1♠ or 1♥ implies a 4-Cards in the suit. But only one suit can be shown with this way. X implies 4+Cards in the both unbid suits.

3. In the previous example we saw that a Negative Double after both Minors have been Bid shows at least 4-4 in both Majors. The reverse is also true if a ♠ and a ♥ are Bid then X implies a holding at least 4-4 in the Minors.

4. When a Minor and a Major have been bid the Negative Double always shows at least 4 in the

other Major! Even though 4 in the other Minor should be expected it often isn't there. That's OK!