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This Week in Bridge

(355) Support Doubles and Follow-Up Bidding

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Level: 5/9 of 10 (2/5 of 6)

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General

When we open the bidding and partner responds with 1M, we raise their Major with 4-card support (showing our fit). With less than 4-card support we usually find another call. But if our RHO makes a simple overcall after partner bids then we have a new bid available to show support – the *Support Double*. In this auction, we raise partner's suit with 4-card support (full support) and make a support double with 3-card support (partial support). Let's look and see when this double is a support double and when it has other meanings. After we do that, we'll discuss how Responder continues the auction.

Support Double Auctions After a Simple Overcall

Let's just take a moment and list all of the low-level double auctions and examine them. This might be a little tedious, but it should help us understand which auctions are simple and which are more complex:

1♣ Opening with Overcall Auctions

1♣ P 1♦ 1♥

X

We generally do not play support doubles when partner bids 1♦ - we just raise with 3-card support since we rarely have 4-card support when we open 1♣. A double here usually shows 18-19 balanced with no ♥ stopper.

1♣ P 1♦ 1♠

X

We generally do not play support doubles when partner bids 1♦ - we just raise with 3-card support since we rarely have 4-card support when we open 1♣. A double here usually shows 18-19 balanced with no ♠ stopper.

1♣ P 1♦ 1NT

X

A double of a natural notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.



1♣ P 1♥ 1♠
X*

Support double, 3-card ♥ support.

1♣ P 1♥ 1NT
X

Double of a natural notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit.
If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.

1♣ P 1♥ 2♣
X*

This is a support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♣. Discuss with partner.

1♣ P 1♥ 2♦
X*

Support double, 3-card ♥ support.

1♣ P 1♥ 2♥
X*

Support double. If 2♥ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♣ P 1♠ 1NT
X

Double of a natural notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit.
If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.

1♣ P 1♠ 2♣
X*

Support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♣. Discuss this auction with partner.

1♣ P 1♠ 2♦
X*

Support double, 3-card ♠ support.

1♣ P 1♠ 2♥
X*

Support double, 3-card ♠ support.

1♣ P 1♠ 2♠
X*

Support double. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.



1♦ Opening with Overcall Auctions

1♦ P 1♥ 1♠
X*

Support double, 3-card ♥ support.

1♦ P 1♥ 1NT
X

Double of a natural notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit.
If the 1NT overcall is conventional, then double is support.

1♦ P 1♥ 2♣
X*

Support double, 3-card ♥ support.

1♦ P 1♥ 2♦
X*

This is a support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♦. Discuss this auction.

1♦ P 1♥ 2♥
X*

This is a support double auction. If 2♥ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♦ P 1♠ 1NT
X

Double of a natural notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit.
If the 1NT overcall is conventional then double is support.

1♦ P 1♠ 2♣
X*

Support double, 3-card ♠ support.

1♦ P 1♠ 2♦
X*

This is a support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♦. Discuss with partner.

1♦ P 1♠ 2♥
X*

Support double, 3-card ♠ support.



1♦ P 1♠ 2♠
X*

This is a support double auction. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

1♥ Opening and Overcall Auctions

1♥ P 1♠ 1NT
X

Double of a natural notrump overcall is penalty, showing extra values – either HCP or a long strong suit. If the 1NT overcall is conventional then double is support.

1♥ P 1♠ 2♣
X*

Support double, 3-card ♣ support.

1♥ P 1♠ 2♦
X*

Support double, 3-card ♠ support.

1♥ P 1♠ 2♥
X*

This is a support double, but it can be confused with showing extra ♥. This is a good auction to discuss with partner.

1♥ P 1♠ 2♠
X*

This is a support double auction. If 2♠ is natural (as it should be), then it is also penalty.

Support Redouble Auctions

As the Opener when our RHO overcalls, we use a support double to show our 3-card support for partner's Major. In similar auctions, but when RHO makes a takeout double, then we can use a support redouble to show similar types of hands.

1♣ P 1♦ X
XX*

This usually shows 18-19 balanced without a need to be declarer.

1♣ P 1♥ X
XX*

Support XX, showing 3-card ♥ support.



1♣ P 1♠ X
XX*

Support XX, showing 3-card ♠ support.

1♦ P 1♥ X
XX*

Support XX, showing 3-card ♥ support.

1♦ P 1♠ X
XX*

Support XX, showing 3-card ♠ support.

1♥ P 1♠ X
XX*

Support XX, showing 3-card ♠ support.

Double by Opener After the Opponent's Weak Jump Overcall

Level 9 of 10 (5 of 6)

When we open the bidding, partner responds, and RHO makes a jump overcall, the meaning of double can become more complicated. The traditional meaning of a double at this level was penalty, but with light opening bids and lighter responses it has become far more difficult for Opener to have a hand that knows that is it best to penalize (and for Responder to actually sit for the double). The modern approach is to use this double to compete in the bidding. Some partnerships choose to use this as a general takeout double, showing extra values and shortness in the opponent's suit. The modern expert treatment is to use this bid more specifically, as a support double with extra values (meaning at least 3 points more than a normal opener as well as some shape.)

Example 1

1♣ P 1♥ 3♦
X?

♠ AK84

♥ A84

♦ 8

♣ KQT84

This is a hand where any modern player would double, whether our agreement was takeout or support with extra values.



Example 2

1♣ P 1♥ 3♦

X?

♠ AK84

♥ A8

♦ 84

♣ KQJ84

This is a hand that would only double if our agreement were that it was takeout (the less common agreement for modern expert players). Most expert players would be forced to make a “big bid” of 3♠ and hope for the best.

Example 3

1♣ P 1♥ 3♦

X?

♠ A

♥ A84

♦ 842

♣ KQJ842

The modern expert player would happily make a support double, showing extra values, with this hand. Players that play a double in this situation as takeout would have a much more difficult time and would have to pass, raise ♥ on only 3-card support, or bid 4♣.

Conclusion

Doubling the opponents for penalty at a low level happens so rarely that we have basically given up that bid for a more common and useful call. Finding a Major suit fit is one of our priorities in the bidding and showing partner that we have “partial support” is a valuable thing to do. This is especially true when the opponents are in the auction and may choose to preempt on the next call. A support double allows us to show this partial 3-card support and make partner certain that when we raise in competition, we actually have 4-card support.