

Reopening Doubles

Responding to Opener's Bid When They Interfere

Last week, we looked at this hand where partner opens 1♦ and next player overcalls 1♠.

♠ 5 2
♥ K 8 3 2
♦ T 4 3
♣ A J 3 2

You were planning on responding 1♥ but that is no longer possible. 1NT is out of the question because there is no spade stopper. Neither can you bid 2♣ or 2♥ because you only have 8 HCP and no five-card suit. As we discovered last week the solution is to make a negative double.

That solves one problem but what about this one?

♠ T 9 3
♥ J 6
♦ A Q T 7 3
♣ J 9 6

Partner opens 1♥ and next player overcalls 2♣.

You have a good diamond suit but a two-level bid is not a good idea with only 8 HCP. A no trump bid is unattractive without a club stopper. So, what do you do?

Or this one?

♠ T 3
♥ 8 6
♦ A K T 2
♣ K J 9 6 5

Partner opens 1♥ and next player overcalls 2♣.

Your opponent has stolen your bid! You could bid 2♦ but partner will expect five diamonds. You have clubs stopped and could bid 2NT. But partner will be short in clubs and finessing opportunities will be limited.

It would be nice to double 2♣ for penalties. After all, you have a likely two diamond tricks and three trump tricks. 2♣ is almost certain to go down. The trouble is, double here is a negative double promising four spades.

With both of these hands, it is best to pass. Your partner still has a bid and may be able to help.

Reopening Doubles

Let's say you opened the bidding with one of a suit and next player made a suit overcall. Partner passed and so did your right-hand opponent. What's going on? Why did your partner pass.

There are several reasons for your partner to pass.

- Partner was too weak to bid.
- Partner had no stopper for a no trump bid.
- Partner had the wrong shape for a negative double.
- Partner had length and strength in the opponent's suit.

[If it's me, there may be another reason. I fell asleep! 😴]



Despite the pass partner may still have some decent values. What can you do to help?

Firstly, evaluate your hand to include length points. With a five card suit, count one length point; with a six card suit, count two length points and so on. Then total points equals high card points plus length points.

If you have...

18 or 19 HCP and a stopper in their suit

17 or more total points and a six card suit

17 or more total points and a two suited hand (at least 5-4)

None of the above, at least 13 HCP and two or less cards in their suit

None of the above

you should...

Bid no trumps

Rebid your suit

Bid the second suit

Double. This is called a **reopening double**.

Pass

Examples

♠ A 8 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ 8 4
♣ K 8 5

You open 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. Partner passed and so did your right hand opponent. What do you do?

You have 15 total points and three clubs. Pass.

The full deal.

	North	
	♠ K 5 ♥ Q 8 3 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A Q T 7 2	
West		East
♠ A 8 2 ♥ A K T 7 5 ♦ 8 4 ♣ K 8 5		♠ T 9 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ A Q T 7 3 ♣ J 6 4
	South	
	♠ Q J 7 6 4 ♥ 9 4 ♦ K J 6 5 ♣ 9 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Suppose had bid 2♦ instead of passing. East-west would end up in 2NT or even 3NT, most likely going down.

Meanwhile, north south should go down in 2♣. After the ace and king of hearts, east can ruff and south won't be able to over-ruff.

Let's change your hand very slightly.

♠ A 8 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ K 8 6
♣ 8 5

You open 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. Partner passed and so did your right hand opponent. What do you do?

You have 15 total points and two clubs. Make a reopening double.

The full deal.

	North	
	♠ K 5 ♥ Q 8 3 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A Q T 7 2	
West		East
♠ A 8 2 ♥ A K T 7 5 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ 8 5		♠ T 9 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ A Q T 7 3 ♣ J 6 4
	South	
	♠ Q J 7 6 4 ♥ 9 4 ♦ J 5 4 ♣ K 9 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	2♦	All Pass

This time, west is short in clubs and re-opens with a double. Now, East can show the diamonds.

East-west should comfortably make their contract while north-south would almost certainly have made their 2♣.

Changing your hand again...

♠ A Q 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ K 8
♣ K 8 5

You open 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. Partner passed and so did your right hand opponent. What do you do?

You have 19 HCP and a club stopper. Bid 2NT.

The full deal.

	North	
	♠ K 5 ♥ Q 8 3 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A Q T 7 2	
West		East
♠ A Q 2 ♥ A K T 7 5 ♦ K 8 ♣ K 8 5		♠ T 9 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ A Q T 7 3 ♣ J 6 4
	South	
	♠ J 8 7 6 4 ♥ 9 4 ♦ J 6 5 4 ♣ 9 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

With 19 HCP, West reopens the bidding with 2NT.

Declarer will win the club lead and start on diamonds. They don't break so declarer switches to hearts, finessing towards North, the safe hand. Declarer cannot cope with a club lead from South.

Here's another one.

♠ A Q 2
♥ A K T 9 7 5
♦ K 8 6
♣ 8 5

You open 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. Partner passed and right hand opponent bid 3♣. What do you do?

You have 18 total points and six hearts. Bid 3♥.

The full deal.

	North	
	♠ K 5 ♥ Q 8 3 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A Q T 7 2	
West		East
♠ A Q 2 ♥ A K T 9 7 5 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ 8		♠ T 9 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ A Q T 7 3 ♣ J 6 4
	South	
	♠ J 8 7 6 4 ♥ 4 ♦ J 5 4 ♣ K 9 5 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	3♣
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

With a guaranteed eight card fit in hearts, East has no need to show the diamond suit.

The hearts break unkindly and the spade finesse fails but declarer will discard losers on the fourth and fifth diamonds.

And one more...

♠ A 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ K J 8 6 4
♣ 8

You open 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. Partner passed and right hand opponent bid 3♣. What do you do?

You have 17 total points and a two suited hand. Bid 3♦.

The full deal.

	North	
	♠ K 5 ♥ Q 8 3 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A Q T 7 2	
West		East
♠ A 2 ♥ A K T 7 5 ♦ K J 8 6 4 ♣ 8		♠ T 9 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ A Q T 7 3 ♣ J 6 4
	South	
	♠ Q J 8 7 6 4 ♥ 9 4 ♦ 5 ♣ K 9 5 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	3♣
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

East can add a couple of points for the extra diamond. West will push on to game.

Rule of Nine

The rule of nine applies when your side has roughly half of the high card points and the opponents have reached a suit contract.

- Count the number of trumps in your hand.
- Add the number of trump honours (A, K, Q, J and ten)
- Add the level of the opponent's contract

If the total of this is nine or more, the opponent's contract is likely to fail.

And one more...

♠ T 3
♥ 8 6
♦ A K T 2
♣ K J 9 6 5

Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. You pass and your partner re-opens with a double. What do you do now?

Apply the rule of nine. You have **five** trumps including **two** trump honours. They are at the **two** level. That makes a total of **nine**. Pass, leaving the double in for penalties.

The full deal.

	North	
	♠ K J 5 ♥ Q T 3 2 ♦ 9 ♣ A Q T 7 2	
West		East
♠ A 9 6 4 ♥ A K 9 5 4 ♦ Q 5 3 ♣ 4		♠ T 3 ♥ 8 6 ♦ A K T 2 ♣ K J 9 6 5
	South	
	♠ Q 8 7 2 ♥ J 7 ♦ J 8 7 6 4 ♣ 8 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

Declarer will be hard pressed to make more than five tricks. That will be 500 or 800 to east-west.

That's an excellent outcome on a deal where east-west don't have an obvious game contract.

Deal 1

	North	
	♠ K 4 ♥ A Q 9 5 3 ♦ Q 7 6 ♣ K 9 3	
West		East
♠ J 9 ♥ J 8 7 6 ♦ A T ♣ J 8 6 5 4		♠ A Q T 8 2 ♥ K 2 ♦ 8 5 4 ♣ Q 7 2
	South	
	♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ T 4 ♦ K J 9 3 2 ♣ A T	

West	North	East	South
	1♥	1♠	Pass ⁽¹⁾
Pass	Dble ⁽²⁾	Pass	2♦ ⁽³⁾
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. This is too weak for a two-level bid and there is no stopper for no trumps. Pass and see what partner will do.
2. With only two spades, make a reopening double.
3. South can now show the diamond suit.

East-West would probably make their 1♠ contract. It is hard to find the best defence and they may end up with 8 tricks. Leading trumps to stop the diamond ruff may work best.

North-South have an easy time in 2♦. They may well make nine tricks, losing two spades, a diamond and a heart.

If South overcalls 2♦ instead of passing, North may bid 2NT. That is likely to go down.

Deal 2

	North	
	♠ T 5 4 2 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ K 8 6 3 ♣ 2	
West		East
♠ J 7 ♥ T 8 3 ♦ A J T 9 7 ♣ J 8 3		♠ A Q 9 6 3 ♥ K Q J ♦ 2 ♣ Q 7 6 5
	South	
	♠ K 8 ♥ 9 7 5 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ A K T 9 4	

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♣
Pass ⁽¹⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽²⁾	

1. Once more, too weak to bid 2♦ and no stopper for no trumps. If west risks 2♦ here, the partnership will probably end up in a trump contract. Against decent defence, that will go down.
2. With, 15 total points and four clubs, pass.

Against best defence just about everything goes down. South won't make 2♣ if the defence finds the diamond ruff.

If east-west go on to 2♠, north-south can beat it as long as they get their club ruffs.

If West bids 2♦ instead of passing, East will bid 2NT or 3NT. That should not make.

Deal 3

	North	
	♠ K Q 9 ♥ Q 7 ♦ 7 6 3 ♣ J T 9 5 4	
West		East
♠ A 8 6 ♥ 8 5 ♦ K Q T 9 5 4 ♣ K 3		♠ J 7 5 4 3 ♥ J 6 3 2 ♦ 8 ♣ 8 6 2
	South	
	♠ T 2 ♥ A K T 9 4 ♦ A J 2 ♣ A Q 7	

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2♦	Pass ⁽¹⁾	Pass	2NT ⁽²⁾
Pass	3NT ⁽³⁾	All Pass	

1. Not strong enough to bid the clubs at the two level.
2. With 18 HCP and a diamond stopper, re-open with a NT bid.
3. 8 HCP along with a minimum of 18 from partner. Bid game.

The contract needs a little luck but west should have most of the outstanding points for the two-level overcall. No doubt, west will lead ♦K. Declarer should duck this. (Bath coup.) West may change suit to prevent declarer making two diamond tricks. The club finesse loses but game will still make.

Deal 4

	North	
	♠ A J 9 7 5 4 ♥ 8 6 3 ♦ 9 5 ♣ A 2	
West		East
♠ 2 ♥ K J T 5 4 ♦ A Q 7 4 ♣ K 9 5		♠ K Q T 8 6 ♥ A 2 ♦ T 8 6 ♣ Q 7 6
	South	
	♠ 3 ♥ Q 9 7 ♦ K J 3 2 ♣ J T 8 4 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass ⁽²⁾	Pass
Dble ⁽³⁾	Pass	Pass ⁽⁴⁾	Pass

1. Weak jump overcall.
2. Bidding no trumps is possible, but doubling their contract looks better. Partner will either double (short spades) or bid something.
3. Shortage in spades.
4. Apply the rule of nine. **Five** spades, **three** spade honours, **two** level contract. A total of ten.

The rotten spade break gives declarer an awful time. Defence starts off with three heart tricks and things only get worse.