

Double Trouble – Week 4

Responding to Opener's Bid When They Interfere

In week 3, we looked at this hand. Partner opens 1♦ and next player overcalls 1♠. What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ 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 this problem but there are other awkward hands.

Partner opens 1♥ and next player overcalls 2♣. What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ T 9 3
♥ J 6
♦ A Q T 7 3
♣ J 9 6

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?

Partner opens 1♥ and next player overcalls 2♣. What do you bid?

Your Hand
♠ T 3
♥ 8 6
♦ A K T 2
♣ K J 9 6 5

Your opponent has stolen your bid! You could bid 2♦ but partner will expect five diamonds. You could bid no trumps – you certainly have the suit stopped. Maybe you would like to double 2♣ for penalties. After all, you have a likely two diamond tricks and three trump tricks. 2♣ certainly will not make. The trouble is, double here is a negative double promising four spades. It's a quandary.

In these two situations, it is best to pass. Your partner still has a bid and will be able to help.

Protective Doubles

Let's say you opened the bidding and next player overcalled. Partner passed and so did your right-hand opponent. What's going on?

There are several reasons for your partner to pass.

- Partner was too weak to bid, possibly at the two level.
- 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?

Your Options

You have...	You should...
A rock bottom opening.	Pass
Less than 17 HCP and three or more cards in their suit	Pass
Less than 17 HCP and two or less cards in their suit	Double. This is sometimes called a protective double or reopening double.
17 or more HCP	Bid something

Examples

Your Hand
♠ A 8 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ 8 4
♣ K 8 5

Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. That was passed back to you. What do you do?

You have 14 HCP and length (3) in 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 9 6
	South	
	♠ Q J 7 6 4 ♥ 9 4 ♦ K J 6 5 ♣ 4 3	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

If east had bid 2♦ instead of passing, east-west may have ended up in a hopeless no trump contract.

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.

Your Hand
♠ A 8 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ K 8 6
♣ 8 5

Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. That was passed back to you. What do you do?

You have 14 HCP and shortage (2) in clubs. Make a protective 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 9 6	
		South		
		♠ Q J 7 6 4 ♥ 9 4 ♦ J 5 4 ♣ K 4 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 protective double. East knows partner has less than 17 HCP and is content with a part score.

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

Your Hand

♠ A 8 2
♥ A K T 7 5
♦ K 8
♣ K 8 5

Partner opens 1♥ and next player bids 2♣. That was passed back to you. What do you do?

You have 17 HCP and need to bid something. What about 2NT?

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

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

With 17 HCP, west makes a re-opening bid. Knowing partner has 17+ HCP, east can go on to game.

On the likely club lead, declarer can make 3NT by keeping south, the danger hand off lead. If north finds the unlikely spade lead, declarer will have to work a lot harder, end-playing north in clubs for the ninth trick.

Rule of Nine

The rule of nine applies when your side has at least 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.

Your Hand
♠ 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. 14 HCP and shortage (2) in spades. Make a protective double.
3. Partner has less than 17 HCP so settle for a part score.

East-West should 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.

Deal 2

	North	
	♠ T 5 4 2 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ K 8 6 3 ♣ 2	
West		East
♠ Q 7 ♥ T 8 3 ♦ A J T 9 7 ♣ 8 7 3		♠ A J 9 6 3 ♥ K Q J ♦ 2 ♣ Q J 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 an almost hopeless no trump contract.
2. 14 HCP and length (4) in clubs. Pass.

Against best defence just about everything goes down. South won't make 2♣ if the defence finds the diamond ruff and east rises with the ♣J when a club is led from north.

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

Deal 3

		North	
		♠ K Q 9	
		♥ Q 7	
		♦ 7 6 3	
		♣ J T 9 5 4	
West			East
♠ A 8 6			♠ J 7 5 4 3
♥ 8 5			♥ J 6 3 2
♦ K Q T 9 5 4			♦ 8
♣ K 3			♣ 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, re-open with a bid – **not** a double.
3. 8 HCP along with a minimum of 17 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. West may change suit to prevent declarer making two diamond tricks. On a spade switch, declarer must hope west has the ace. The club finesse loses but now there are ten tricks.

Deal 4

		North	
		♠ A J 9 7 5 4	
		♥ 8 6 3	
		♦ 9 5	
		♣ A 2	
West			East
♠ 2			♠ K Q T 8 6
♥ K J T 5 4			♥ A 2
♦ A Q 7 4			♦ T 8 6
♣ K 9 5			♣ 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. 14 HCP and shortage in spades.
4. Apply the rule of nine. **Five** spades, **three** spade honours, **two** level contract. A total of ten.

A debacle for declarer. Defence starts off with three heart tricks. A spade to the king and a diamond to the queen. A heart ruffed and over-ruffed. A diamond to the ace and another over-ruff. Another trump trick and a club trick to come. Only three tricks for declarer. 1100 or 1400 for east-west.