

Takeout doubles

Rakesh Kumar

Everyone knows about takeout doubles. Or do they? Unless very strong, the doubler should promise shortage in opener's suit and tolerance for the other suits i.e. 3+ cards. However, it's not unusual to see folks at our club double on any 13+ hcp hand without a 5-card suit worthy of an overcall i.e. including hands with no shortage in opener's suit and lacking tolerance for one of the outside suits. That of course is one of the [Seven Deadly Sins](#) discussed back in April 2024 – in fact it's the first of those viz. Lust.

While I don't like the idea of making a takeout double without shortage in opener's suit, I really do like the idea of doubling with ideal 4441 shape and fewer high card points. How low can one go? Well, perhaps 9-10 hcp with good enough shape ...

Say you hold this hand, vulnerable against opponents who are not vulnerable, and hear RHO open 1D in third seat:

♠ J987
♥ AQ2
♦ 8
♣ QT964

Would you make a takeout double on that? You have only 9 hcp and only 4-3 in the majors. And partner is a passed hand. And the vulnerability is against you. However, you have a singleton diamond. You might find a 4-4 spade fit. Or if partner does bid 1H, there's no law against her holding a 5-card suit. And the long clubs might become a source of tricks. So you should!

Hugh Frame has obviously caught on to that idea, because on Monday 28 September he was sitting East on the deal below and doubled:

BD: 3	♠ K6	Dlr: S
	♥ KT5	Vul: EW
	♦ AJ932	
	♣ J73	
♠ QT42		♠ J987
♥ J943		♥ AQ2
♦ KT4		♦ 8
♣ K2		♣ QT964
	♠ A53	
	♥ 876	
	♦ Q765	
	♣ A85	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	T
N	3				2	12
S	3				2	9 9
E	1	1	2			10
W	1	1	2			

At every other table, North-South declared, usually in a part-score in diamonds, although one pair played in the higher-scoring contract of 2NT. However at our table, after Hugh's double and South's raise to 2D, West now bid 2S and thus East-West successfully bought the contract. That was already a win for them, compounded by the fact that other than on double-dummy defence, they will always make an overtrick!

Shape beats points almost every time ...



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