

Two Over One

Lesser Known Notrump Auctions

Handling doubled 1 NT contracts & interference over Stayman and transfers

Perhaps you grew tired of opponents who were always intruding into your notrump auctions with their Capelettis and their D.O.N.T.s. Perhaps you took the trouble to learn how to defend yourself using P.A.N.T., or perhaps even with the fabled Lebensohl. You and partner are totally prepared when you pick up this hand nonvulnerable against vulnerable opponents:

K 10 7 5	7 6 5	A J 3 2	6 4
pard	opp	you	opp
		1NT ♣P	2 dbl
2♦	P	???	

You mentally review Lebensohl or P.A.N.T. or whatever you are playing, but nothing applies. If you bid 2NT are you promising a club stopper? Has partner promised one already? If, lacking a club stopper, you can't bid 2NT, what should you do? Nothing you've ever discussed with your partner seems to apply. So finally you decide, perhaps, that partner should be responsible for the club stopper, and you bid 2NT. When partner takes 9 tricks for 150 points, you feel relieved that the opponents hadn't rattled off a long club suit. Then you open the traveler. A few North-Souths have bid and made 3NT for 400. Two other North-South pairs have scored 500 for setting 2 spades doubled, and two North-South's have played 2 clubs redoubled, one making two for 510 and one three for 710. You appeared to have escaped from a troubling auction successfully, but you got a below average result. What happened?

What happened is that some pairs were prepared for this auction. When the opponent sought to gain an advantage with the lead directing double, other North-South pairs knew how to twist this around to their advantage. When they can't twist it, they can at least communicate around it. Today's lesson is about several auctions

of this type.

Here is the full hand for the problem we have been discussing.

	NORTH	
	♠ K 10 7 5	
	♥ 7 6 5	
	♦ A J 3 2	
	♣ 6 4	
WEST	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; width: 100px; height: 100px; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin: 0 auto;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> </div>	EAST
♠ J 9 8 6 3		♠ Q 4
♥ Q 9 8 3		♥ K 10 2
♦ Q 7		♦ 10 6 5
♣ 8 2		♣ A Q 9 7 3
	SOUTH	
	♠ A 2	
	♥ A J 4	
	♦ K 9 8 4	
	♣ K J 10 5	

Your partner hadn't known what to do over the double of 2 clubs either, so he simply ignored it and made his normal bid. He wasn't supposed to notice you sweating about your response, but he couldn't help it, so he got worried and decided not to raise to 3NT.

Handling Lead Directing Doubles of Stayman

Experienced pairs have seen this sort of auction before and have prepared for it. Here are the standard agreements. When the opponent doubles Stayman for a lead director, opener must express to responder how they stand regarding stoppers in the club suit.

Pass shows 1 stopper. It also shows a willingness to play 2 clubs doubled if responder would like. Responder at his turn can then redouble to renew his request for the Stayman

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auction, or he could even pass to play 2 clubs doubled, if he wished. In any case, he is aware of opener's stopper, so he can take this into account for his future bids.

Redouble shows two or more stoppers. It also shows a willingness to play 2 clubs redoubled if responder would like, so opener has 4 clubs or more. If responder wants to renew his Stayman bid, he now bids 2 diamonds. (If he had been intending to bid Garbage Stayman, he would just bid his 5 card major.) Of course, responder can also pass the redouble, which puts the defender who made the lead directing double under severe pressure.

Responding directly to the Stayman call, without passing or redoubling, denies a club stopper. Opener continues with responder's Stayman auction because he knows they must search out their proper contract, notrump no longer being an option from his point of view.

The main orientation of these agreements is to ascertain whether notrump is safe or not according to whether or not the partnership can stop clubs. But in the sample hand given earlier, events were twisted to the disadvantage of the defender. Some potential auctions were:

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2 ♣	dbl
rdbl	P	P	P

North has invitational values only, so offense may gain only 120. But in 2 clubs redoubled, partner needs only 8 tricks for a score that will exceed 400. A 4-2 fit may allow this, given the superior power of North-South. If, on the other hand, East tries to run from 2 clubs redoubled, then N-S can double the runouts and play for doubled and vulnerable penalty points.

Yet another possible auction on our sample hand could have been:

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2 ♣	dbl
rdbl	P	P	2 ♦
dbl	2 ♠	dbl	P
P	P		

In this case, East decided to run, but N-S were now doubling all contracts.

Not only are you advised to add these agreements to your partnerships, but also to beware of low-level lead directing doubles against experienced players. They, like you, might have some surprises up their sleeve. Although our discussion featured nonvul vs vul, in fact the agreements exist at all vulnerabilities.

Handling Interference Over a Jacoby Transfer

When partner makes a Jacoby Transfer and the defender makes a lead directing double of the transfer bid, then opener behaves just the same as he did over the double of Stayman:

- pass signifies a stopper
- redouble signifies a double stopper
- simply continuing the normal transfer sequence denies a stopper.

But what if the action over the transfer is not a double, but an overcall? The principle guideline is this:

**Completing the transfer over the overcall signifies a fit in the transfer suit.
Do not complete the transfer in the absence of a fit.**

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But what happens if there is no fit?

S	W	N	E
1NT	P	2♥	3♦

If opener bids 3 spades, he promises a fit. If he calls 3NT, it would be to play. If he doubles, it means business. If he bid 3 hearts he would show 5 hearts, deny a diamond stopper, and a spade fit and be trying for a game in hearts.

Over an intervening overcall of a transfer, bids are natural, with an emphasis on completing the transfer if there is a fit, or of bidding 3NT, or doubling for penalty.

When your 1NT opening or overcall is doubled for penalty

When the left hand opponent (LHO) doubles a 1NT opener for penalty, it is not opener who knows what to do next because he cannot guess what responder holds. It is responder's responsibility to guide the partnership as best he may. Responder should view his hand as one of the following 5 types:

- a hand suitable for using Stayman
- a hand suitable for a transfer
- a hand that should escape either to 2 clubs or 2 diamonds
- a hand that should sit for the penalty expecting to make the contract
- a hand that should escape, but responder does not know what the best destination is

With a hand suitable for Stayman, just use Stayman. Stayman is on over a penalty double of 1NT.

With a hand suitable for a transfer, just use the transfer. Transfers are on over a penalty double of 1NT.

With a hand that should run out either to 2 clubs or to 2 diamonds, responder should redouble. This redouble informs opener that responder has a 5 card minor that should be their best refuge. Opener is instructed to bid 2 clubs. Responder at his next turn will either pass 2 clubs or correct to 2 diamonds. This will be a hard contract for the opponents to double.

With a hand that should sit for the penalty double, responder should just pass the opponent's double. If responder has 5 or more HCPs, then the partnership possesses at least 20 and may hold a small majority. This is worth a play. The doubler probably needs at least some of these points in his partner's hand to set you, so you most likely have the upper hand. Your pass, then, not only suggests to opener that your side can make it, but it also instructs partner to redouble. When he has redoubled, you will now be confronting the defenders with the proposition of allowing you to collect the game bonus if you make it, and a sure bottom for themselves. They may accept this proposition, of course, or they may decide that it is they who should now do the running.

If you have a poor hand that should be running from this double (less than 5 points), but you have no place to run to, then you should pass the opponent's double. Perhaps you will have no points at all. You may notice that Pass is the same bid as when you want to sit for it. You are making partner redouble, just as if you are willing to play 1NT redoubled. Partner cannot

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tell what your intention is. But neither can the opponents. The best result you can attain is that they will decide that they should run to a suit. Since the doubler's partner will not have much, this may indeed be tempting to him. If they elect to run, then you and partner will be off of a dangerous hook. If neither opponent runs from it, and partner's redouble comes back to you, then you will run for it. Bid your lowest ranking 4-card suit, and you and partner will try to find a 4-3 fit as your best refuge.

If you have the 5-card or longer minor suit and you redouble, instructing partner to bid 2 clubs, then partner will ALERT your redouble.

If you pass the double of 1NT, then partner will ALERT your pass. If asked, he will explain that he has been instructed to redouble, but that he doesn't know if your intention is to show strength or weakness.

When the 1NT bid has been an overcall.

When the opponent has opened 1 of a suit, and then either you or partner has overcalled 1NT, then the agreements just described pertain. An opening bid of 1NT is rarely doubled for penalties, but an overcall of 1NT can be doubled more frequently. In fact, an overcall of 1NT is a bid that entails definite risk. The old-style of Standard Bidding required about 18 or 19 points for this overcall in order to reduce risk. The modern style reduces it to the typical 15 to 17, and many a player drops his requirement down even to 14 in order to state some values and show that he possesses a fair holding in the opener's suit.

If an opening suit is overcalled by 1NT, then the opener's partner will start considering a penalty double with about 8 points, and

certainly with 9 points a double starts becoming the preferred action. Do not mistake the meaning of the following auction:

S	W	N	E
<hr/>			
1♦ 1NT dbl			

This is not a negative double. North has some fair values and wants to score doubled penalty points by setting 1NT. East's system is still on, and part of his system are the running bids we've just discussed. They can prove very useful on this auction. It may be easy to remember that Stayman and transfers are on. It may be easy to remember that redouble prepares a runout to 2 clubs or to 2 diamonds. But will you remember, from both sides of the table, that a pass by East calls for a redouble by West?

Opposite Side. If partner's opening bid of 1NT passes around to the 2nd opponent, the 1st not having acted, and if that 2nd opponent doubles, then there may be action in front of you. Partner may elect to go to a 5-card suit, or the other opponent may elect to go to a suit. But in the event that the auction returns to you as 1NT doubled, then observe the following agreements:

- all suit bids are natural. If you had held a hand that was appropriate for Stayman or a transfer, you would already have made such a bid. Therefore your call shows a 5-card suit.
- Redouble would suggest to partner that you run, but you have no 5-card suit.
- Pass simply means that you want to play it. It gives no instruction because your pass ends the auction. You may feel very certain it will make, so you're

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looking forward to it. Or, you may have no confidence at all that partner can make it, but you feel that this contract is as good as any.

There is no need to ALERT any of these bids.