

**The Revision Club System**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Ed. © 2009 by John Montgomery**

**PART X – Miscellaneous Bidding Agreements**

This is where we put bidding agreements that do not easily fit into any of the other chapters of the book, or which came up after the other parts were written. It is organized into three broad sections: “They Open,” “We Open,” and “Miscellaneous and Slam Tools.”

***They Open – We Intervene with Double:***

**NO CD-ROM**

NO CD-ROM stands for **No Clubs and Diamonds – Responsive = Other Major**. (Okay, *you* try to think of a name for it.) The idea is that when the opponents bid and raise a major, and intervenor has made a takeout double, advancer’s double focuses on the other major and does not ask for a minor suit, as it would in standard practice. Example: (1H)-X, (2H)-X. The double shows spades, and shows exactly four of them. With five spades, advancer would just bid the suit at the appropriate level. But when he has exactly four, he may fear that the original takeout double was based on only three. So, he doubles, asking intervenor to bid spades himself with four. When intervenor has only three spades, he does something else, which usually means bidding a minor. (A 2NT bid by intervenor would be natural and NF; if your hand is too strong for an initial 1NT overcall, bid 3NT now). If intervenor bids 2S, advancer can of course pass, or raise to the appropriate level. Further bidding is common sense; if there is a reraise to 3H, intervenor will of course strive to bid 3S if his hand is good enough, but can pass (because advancer will double again with extras). This treatment implies that with, say, 4-4 in the minors, advancer must pick one and bid it if he wants to go on (at the three and four levels, that is; 4NT is always available to force a minor-suit choice at the five level). This does not seem like much of a loss. The convention also applies when they raise to the three level, which most play as preemptive. If they raise to the four level, double is cards, and does not necessarily show four spades. Note that advancer, when he has a four-card spade suit that he is not afraid to play in facing three-card support (AKJ9), can just bid the suit as if he had five.

**WHEN DOUBLING AND BIDDING A SUIT IS NOT HIGH-POWER**

In normal defensive bidding, to double and then bid a suit shows a hand too strong to overcall. We play this rule too, except in a few situations. A direct takeout

double at the one level often gets a 1NT response by partner. Now, to rebid two of a minor just means some shape, and a desire to improve the contract. To show a high-power double here, you must cuebid (which creates a game force) or jump to three (which is invitational). But an auction like (1C)-X,(P)-1NT, (P)-2H does show that your hand was too strong to overcall 1H.

The same thing applies at the three level. (1S)-X, (P)-1NT, (2S)-3C or 3D is nonforcing, but a 3H bid here by doubler is forcing. A raise to 2NT is natural.

### **TAKEOUT DOUBLE FOLLOWED BY RAISE**

When you start with a takeout double at the one level, and partner responds in a major, a raise is mildly invitational. It shows four-card support, and something extra in distribution, high cards, or both. This is standard practice, of course, and is mentioned here only because some people play automatic raises with four. The rule applies when the opponents do not bid again. When they bid at the two level, doubler can raise to two with less, for competitive purposes.

### **SCRAMBLING 2NT**

In some auctions, bidding 2NT when partner has made a takeout double is not natural; it asks partner to pick a suit at the three level. The trick is to know when this rule applies. There are three scenarios. First, it always applies to balancing doubles when they have a fit in a suit, and it is the only suit they have bid. E.g., they bid 1S-2S-pass, and we balance with a double. Now, doubler's partner bids 2NT for takeout. Second, it also always applies (we will say) when the 2NT bidder is a passed hand, or when both the doubler and the advancer of the double are passed hands. Third, it applies if the double is in direct seat facing an unpassed hand, say (1S)-X, (2S)-2NT. Here the question is closer, but I think the takeout interpretation is more useful. So, we are going to say that whenever they have bid only *one* suit, and we double (either direct or balancing), 2NT is takeout. (But not when they have bid an old-fashioned 1D-2D or 1C-2C; in the first case, there is no need to "transfer" partner to clubs, since you could just bid them, and in the second case, you can bid anything you want at the two level). When they have bid two suits, e.g. (1D)-P, (1S)-P, (2S)-P, (P)-X, (P)-2NT, that is natural. The presumption is that when partner makes a takeout double for two suits, he shows at least four in each, and you pick the one for which you have a four-card fit. If you don't have four in either one, you might well want to play 2NT as the least of evils (including when the 2NT bidder is a passed hand).

## **DIRECT 3H IS INVITATIONAL**

This is a corollary to Scrambling 2NT and No CD-ROM. When the auction goes (1S)-X, (2S)-3H, the 3H bid shows five, usually (you can double to show four, although you can bid 3H here with four good ones), and it *also* shows an invitation. If you have a weak hand and just want to get out at 3H, you bid 2NT first. Partner will think you have at least one minor, and will bid a minor suit, but then you run back to hearts. Often you don't have to do this, as the opponents will have bid more spades before all this happens, but when you have a weak hand you are happy to hear the opponents bid again. Showing the invitational hand directly is more important, so that partner can decide whether to bid 4H intelligently if there is a 3S bid at his right. The invitational 3H also helps partner to judge when they jump to 4S.

There is also a corollary to Good/Bad 2NT, which is that when the auction goes 1D-(1S), X-(2S), 3H, you are inviting game in hearts. Opener bids 2NT, then runs back to hearts, when he has a minimum with four-card heart support.

## **DELAYED DOUBLES**

This deals with the situation where you pass directly over an opening bid to your right, then double at your next turn. (Thanks to Marvin French for sending me his unpublished monograph on the subject.) There are three different basic situations.

One is when opener rebids a new suit. 1H-1S, 2C; 1H-1NT, 2C. If you double either of these rebids, it is takeout. The hand is typically short in the last-bid suit, with some length in the first-bid suit, and 4-4 in the others. On either of these auctions, you would double 2C with Qxxx/AKxx/AQxx/x. (But if opener reverses into a new suit, as in the auction 1C-1S, 2H, you certainly are not going to double for takeout. I suspect that double of 2H in this auction doesn't exist.)

The second situation is when the response has been in a new suit, and opener rebids his own suit. Now, you once again have the hand short in responder's suit, (relatively) long in opener's suit, and with 4-4 in the other two. Whether you make this double depends on what suits they are bidding. If they bid 1C-1S, 2C, you would often want to double to show 4-4 in the reds, lest the bidding die in 2C. This double is for takeout, and it would also be takeout if they had bid 1D-1S, 2D or 1D-1H, 2D. But to double for minors when they have bid 1H-1S, 2H is much more dangerous, and 2NT is available to show minors anyway, so double here is penalty.

The third situation is when opener rebids his suit facing a 1NT response. If the suit bid and rebid is a minor, you are making a light takeout double; you have proper

shape, but not enough high cards to double the first time. You double now as a sort of pre-balance, since the auction may die at 2m if you don't do something. Things are completely different when opener rebids a major. Now, you are forcing partner to go to the three level (unless the suit is hearts, and he can bid 2S) if your double is takeout; and against opponents who use forcing notrump, responder is not even limited. It is far too dangerous to play this as takeout, so it is penalties.

### **BALANCING AFTER 1suit-1NT, Pass BY THEM**

When the bidding goes 1m-1NT-P by them, a balancing double is takeout of *the other* minor. If RHO opens 1D and you hold Axxx/AQxx/Kxxx/x, you have no bid. The 1NT response often shows clubs (and on this hand it is far more likely than not that it actually does show clubs), and opener is probably balanced for his pass of 1NT, so this is where you need to be able to double their presumed club fit for takeout. (If you held Axxx/AQxx/x/Kxxx instead, you would have doubled 1D already, so hands with shortness in diamonds are not nearly as much of a problem.) The same thing applies in reverse when they bid 1C-1NT; now a balancing double shows short diamonds. However, there is no such inference about any other suit when their bidding goes 1M-1NT, P. This auction is rare when responder is an unpassed hand, since most opponents will play 5CM and forcing NT; but it happens fairly often when responder is a PH, since most do not play a truly forcing notrump response then. This auction is likely to be a misfit for them, since responder could have raised, and he can have a pretty good hand for the semi-forcing NT response. Doubling with a weak three-suiter is dangerous. We will play that this balancing double is penalties, which is also a rare hand type. I do not have strong feelings about this auction.

A balancing cuebid when their suit is a major is natural, a weak jump overcall (with a good suit) in the suit they bid. A delayed balancing cuebid of a minor in this auction is also natural. If your hand is too weak to make a Michaels-type bid the first time, continue to pass.

### **PENALTY DOUBLE OF 1NT WITH LONG MINOR**

It is stated elsewhere that a penalty double of a weak 1NT opening usually shows a balanced or semibalanced hand, or (rarely) a three-suiter, typically some 4441 type. It can also show a long minor suit, since we do not play transfer overcalls showing minor suits, just majors. So, with xx/A/AQx/AJ109xxx, you double 1NT, expecting to bid clubs next when someone runs out to something at the two level, as almost always happens. As advancer of this double, be aware that this type of hand is what partner shows when he rejects your transfer and bids three of a minor. (With normal hands, he

accepts simply; with big support, he superaccepts by bidding three of your suit; with shortness in your suit and a 4441 type, he bids 2NT.)

### **DOUBLE OF DRURY**

If they make a Drury response of 2C or 2D to a major opening, double is takeout of the major. It allows you to get in safely without committing partner to bidding higher than two of their suit. Your strength is necessarily limited, because responder is a passed hand, which means you passed too. A corollary is that if you pass the Drury response, opener signs off in 2M, and you double at your third turn, it is a Michaels double. You would make this delayed double of their 2H bid with 5-5 in spades and a minor. (Presumably, your hand was too weak to act earlier.)

### **SANDWICH CUEBID FOR HEARTS AFTER TAKEOUT DOUBLE**

This treatment, invented by Eric Rodwell, occurs in auctions like (1C)-X, (1S)-2C. 2C shows hearts, but only four of them, and invitational values. The idea is to avoid having to jump to 3H, invitational, with these hands, and perhaps end in a 4-3 fit when doubler must pass. After the 2C bid, doubler can sign off in 2H, or bid 2D to attempt to play diamonds instead (his shape might be 4=3=5=1). Playing this way, a jump to 3H over 1S shows five, and is invitational. If you happen to have a forcing hand with diamonds as advancer, you jump to 3C over 1S.

Similar principles apply if the bidding goes (1D)-X, (1S). 2D shows four hearts, invitational, and 3D is the general force, tending to show clubs.

### ***They Open – We Intervene with an Overcall:***

### **STOLEN BID DOUBLE**

When the opponents cuebid our suit after we overcall, double means “I would have made the same bid they just did.” (1H)-1S, (2S)-X shows that the doubler would have raised to two spades. If their bid is at the three level, it means the same. Here, responder could have bid 3S as a splinter raise of hearts; a double of that means spade support, not enough to bid four, but inviting partner to do so if he cares to.

### **CUE-BID DOUBLE**

The crucial auction for this is something like (1H)-1S, (2H)-X. The world plays this as responsive for minors. The competing treatment on the market is that double

shows a hand that would have cuebid 2H, i.e. a strong spade raise. The raise treatment is better. I have seen very few hands that really wanted to make partner choose a minor at the three level (and when this does come up, the opponents always seem to buy the auction in hearts anyway). The cuebid treatment comes up far more often. If you don't play it, you must cue 3H on this auction, forcing the partnership to 3S. We don't want to do this with the light overcalls we play at the one level. We would also give up the ability to buy it for 2S, which happens sometimes, and to defend 3H, which comes up very often. The same applies when the raise has been to 3H over our 1S; double invites game in spades. But not when they raise to 4H; then double is cards, and just bid 4S with support, if your hand merits it. Of course, the suits do not always have to be hearts and spades. The treatment applies any time their suit is lower than ours, and ours is a major.

Playing the cuebid double, you sometimes have a choice of double or of a "real" cuebid at the three level. The latter shows a sound hand, and always four trumps.

The cue-bid double as described above applies only when the opponents have bid and raised a suit, and our overcall was in a major suit. It does not apply when responder bids a new suit at the one level. Then, double shows tolerance (a doubleton) for partner's overcall, and some values. An example is (1D)-1H, (1S)-X. Double shows two hearts and something like nine or more points, and willingness to hear partner rebid his suit with six. The good thing about this treatment is that it frees overcaller from having to worry about rebidding 2H later on if he has a moderate six-card suit. If partner didn't double 1S, he either doesn't have doubleton support, or he has a weak hand.

The cue-bid double also applies to sandwich overcalls. (1D)-P, (1H)-1S, (2H)-X. The raise to 2H took away your cuebid below 2S, so double is invitational or better with spade support.

If partner's overcall was two of a minor over their major suit, e.g., (1H)-2D, (2H)-X, double shows the other major, which is spades here, five (or a bad six) long, and tolerance for partner's overcalled minor. When partner makes a two-level overcall of their major suit-opening, we always assume that he does not have four in the other major, since there is always a special two-suited bid available for him to show a 6-4 minor-major type. But it is possible for him to have three in the other major.

Concerning the basic auction (1H)-1S, (2H), please note that it *is* possible for advancer to show both minors, if he is a passed hand. He can bid 2NT for that, since it is not possible for a passed hand to have enough values to bid 2NT naturally here.

## **DOUBLE OF FIT-SHOWING BID**

Let's say it goes (1H)-1S, (3C) by them. Or the bid was 4C. If they explain that the last bid shows a real fit for hearts, double by us is also a fit-bid, showing support for partner's suit, and the fourth suit. A natural double here is unlikely to be useful; they will run back to their first suit, and it would be rare for us to want the lead of dummy's announced second suit. If you have a good holding in that suit, you can just wait for declarer to lead it.

## **OBAR BIDS**

This, of course, stands for "Over Bid and Raise, Balance In Direct Seat". There is no need to explain here, since the theory of the technique is explained in Larry Cohen's books on "the law of total tricks." We play it.

## **UNFORCED REBID TO MINIMUM LEVEL**

The above means that in a competitive auction, we bid some number of our suit when we could have passed instead. An example is (1C)-1S, (P)-2H, (X). The 2H "cuebid" (playing Rubens, 2H shows an invitational-strength raise of spades) by our side created a presumption that we were going to bid to at least 2S later on, if the opponents didn't bid to the three level first. Here, overcaller has a choice of bidding 2S, or passing the double. Our treatment is that a free bid of 2S shows an extra trump, but not extra overall values. Passing the double just shows nothing special to report. A redouble here would have a special meaning. Opener is saying that he has extra values, but does not want to get past two of his suit if partner has a minimum (10-12 support points) hand. This allows opener to show a full opening bid, rather than one of our typical junky overcalls, without getting too high.

## **4m OVER 3M IS (USUALLY) INVITATIONAL**

Edgar Kaplan once observed that bidding four of a minor in a competitive auction when the opponents had gotten to three of a major was usually a bad idea. (This refers to auctions where both sides have bid and raised.) It is worth understanding why this tends to be true. An example auction is (1S)-2D, (2S)-3D, (3S). First, you have often accomplished your objective just by pushing the opponents up a level. Second, playing three of a major is not a great thing to do if you can avoid it. You must make exactly nine tricks to get a good result. If you make eight, you have just gone minus. If you make ten, you missed a game. So, when you push the opponents into 3M, you tend to leave them there. If you bid four of your minor, *you* are the one taking the bad odds. Now, your side has to make exactly ten tricks. If you make nine, you go minus, and if

you make eleven, you missed a game. So, bidding 4m over 3M by them is a double parlay: You need it to be true that they would have taken (exactly) nine tricks, *and* you need it to be true that your side will take exactly ten.

If it is accepted that taking the push in this auction is generally not good, when would you ever do it? The answer is, when you are fairly confident that you *will* take ten tricks, and might take more. What this adds up to is that the bid is at least a mild game try. You are willing to bet that you can make four if partner has an averagely suitable hand for you, so if he has a perfecto, he can and should bid five. The lesson to take away is, don't bid four of a minor unless you are afraid you might be missing a game and want to give partner a chance to bid it. It is *not* a "bar bid" or a "signoff." In our example auction, the opponent who bid 3S barred his partner from bidding 4S, because 3S was not a game try. But if you bid 4D over his 3S, you are making a game try, and partner can accept it. (This reasoning applies to IMP scoring, where all small plus scores are more or less equivalent. At matchpoints, you might want to try to go down one not vulnerable, and so on. Our methods are designed for IMPs.)

### **REDOUBLETONS AFTER SIMPLE OVERCALLS**

There has been a lot of theorizing over the years about what it means when partner overcalls, responder doubles negatively, and fourth hand (advancer) redoubles. We have seen Rosenkranz, Snapdragon, and other methods. I think the redouble should relate to partner's suit. However, it shouldn't be Rosenkranz, saying "go ahead and lead your suit," at least not the way most people play it, which is that with Kx of partner's suit and nothing else in your hand, you redouble. Our treatment, the redoubleton, is that you redouble to show that you have decent high-card values (9+ HCP), but with a doubleton (usually a doubleton honor) in partner's suit. Partner now knows of some values, typically a nine count or better, but will not go higher with inadequate trumps. In the auction (1C)-1S, (X)-XX, responder might hold Qx/xxx/QJxxx/Axx. You do the same when partner overcalls at the two level, or the three level for that matter.

The redoubleton can be made with more than the usual expected values, but in that case, responder is planning to bid again most of the time. The redoubleton is not mandatory with all hands that qualify. If you choose to do so, you can bid notrump naturally instead.

### **NO GARD PANS DOUBLE**

No Gard Pans is "Snapdragon" spelled backwards. I used to play Snapdragon in auctions like (1D)-1H, (1S)-X. The Snapdragon double here, as it is called, means that you have a tolerance for partner's suit and some length in the fourth suit. It seemed



never to come up. Now I play that it just shows a doubleton in partner's suit, with some values (say a nine count), and no desire to bid 1NT. The same applies at the two level. All that is needed is to be below two of partner's suit. The idea is that partner will often have a six-card suit, and knowing of doubleton support and values may allow him to bid on.

It can be seen that the No Gard Pans double and the redoubleton are similar treatments that are used to show similar hands; which one you use depends on whether responder bids a suit, or doubles.

### **RESPONSIVE DOUBLE OF 1NT RESPONSE**

This comes up in auctions like (1D)-1H, (1NT)-X. It would be possible to play this as a No Gard Pans double, showing a doubleton in partner's suit, but I think it is better to show that you have length (presumably 5-5) in the other two suits. (This was suggested by Mike Lawrence, I believe.) You do the same thing when partner's intervention has been a double rather than an overcall. (1D)-X, (1NT)-X. Double shows four cards in at least two of the suits suggested by partner's double; you are trying to avoid having to pick a suit and possibly end in a 4-3 fit when a much better fit is available. At least one of the suits you are showing must be a major, so that if partner is 4-4 in the majors, he knows there is a major fit. If their opening bid was in a major, then of course your double shows four of the other major, with four in one of the minors.

### **OTHER MAJOR DOUBLE**

This is for auctions like (1H)-2C, (2H)-X. You are showing five of the other major, and a fit or tolerance for partner's suit. You are trying to find a 5-3 major fit (you know that four cards in the other major in partner's hand is unlikely, because of our Astro-style overcalls, but three is still possible).

***We Open:***

### **CD-ROM BAR BIDS**

This stands for **C**lubs and **D**iamonds – **R**esponder, **O**ver **M**ajor **B**id And **R**aised, **B**alances **I**mplying **D**ifficult **S**hape. This caters to the common situation where responder to an opening bid of 1D has no idea which minor opener really has. The auction typically goes 1D-(1M), P-(2M), P-(P) and responder has xx/xx/AQxx/Qxxxx. He couldn't raise diamonds the first time, since opener might have only two, and the clubs were too weak for a negative free bid. So, at his second turn (at the two level

*only*) responder doubles to ask for a minor. Opener bids his longest one. Opener can also bid 2S, if the suit bid and raised was hearts, to suggest a 4-3. What this gives up is the delayed penalty double with a trap-pass, but this would be unlikely ever to happen, because when you have a real trap, the suit is not often raised, and because opener would be short and would likely act again at his second turn (probably by doubling for you, which is what you want if you have a real trap pass). But if the raise is to three or higher, the delayed double does show a trap. It is also possible for responder to bid a delayed 2NT at his second turn, instead of doubling. We play that as for minors also (it can't be natural, since responder didn't bid 1NT or 2NT at his first turn), but with longer diamonds. So, the double suggests clubs equal or longer.

### **OPENER'S SECOND-ROUND CUEBID**

When our opening bid is 1D, partner responds in a major, and they overcall at the one-level (from either seat), it is possible for opener to cuebid their suit. Such bids usually show some form of raise.

1D-(P), 1H-(1S), 2S: This shows a real invitational raise to 3H, based on high-card strength and good shape; 3H here would be four-card support, probably a side singleton, but not maximum values. The idea is that the cuebid shows greater high-card strength than a direct raise to the same level.

1D-(1H), X-(P), 2H: Same thing, showing four-card spade support this time. A 2S bid would be weaker in high cards. 2H tends to show good high cards but not enough shape to go to the three level.

1D-(1H), 1S-(P), 2H: In this specific auction 2H means a raise to two with three-card support ("support cue-bid," analogous to a support double);

2S: Four-card support;

3H: Real invitational raise, based on good shape and high cards;  
and

3S: Shapely, but weaker in high cards.

If advancer bids 1NT, 2C, or 2D over the 1S bid, as long as the cuebid of 2H is available, we use it to distinguish from the direct raise to 2S.

1D-(1H), 1S-(1NT/2C/2D),

Double: Support double, three-card support; or

2H: Four-card support, and a somewhat better hand than a 2S raise, which can be a dead minimum. Of course, both the 2S raise and the 2H cuebid here deny the strength to go to the three level immediately.

If our cuebid comes at the three level, e.g. 1D-(P), 1S-(2C), 3C, that again is a real raise to 3S, with an actual direct 3S bid being weaker. The competing treatment for these cuebids is presumably to ask for a stopper, but you only need to do that with hands that can rebid 3D invitational anyway, which seems like a good enough treatment for, e.g., a hand like xx/Axx/AKQJxx/xxx in the auction 1D-(P), 1S-(2C). The raise hands are much more common than the ones where you have a solid suit and want to try to extract a notrump bid from partner.

### **EXTRA TRUMP REDOUBLE**

When the opponents balance with a double after we have settled into two of a major, opener having raised responder, redouble shows one more trump than you promised. 1D-(P), 1S-(P), 2S-(P), P-(X). Opener may have raised with only three. If opener has four, he redoubles to tell partner to apply the Law and consider taking the push to 3S when he has five. If opener passes over the double, he says he has only three-card support.

The same applies in direct seat. In the above example auction, if the opponent next to act over the 2S raise had doubled, now it would be responder who could, if he wished, redouble to show five, and invite opener to take the push at the three level with four-card support. Here, however, redouble is not mandatory with five pieces; responder may well choose simply to bid game when he has a good hand and a good suit. He redoubles only when he anticipates that the question will be whether to go on to 3S or not. Similarly, if you do in fact have five in this position, but your hand is so weak that you would rather not buy the contract, you can pass. The old-fashioned meaning of a redouble in this position was, presumably, that responder had a good hand and wished to either double the opponents or play the hand. The bid is not needed for that purpose. You can just pass, and if the opponents bid a suit you hold, double them next time. (Partner won't be taking the push to 3S ahead of you, since you didn't redouble to tell him that you have five.) If you want to play the hand regardless, just go ahead and bid something over the double. (All bids mean the same thing as if the opponents had passed throughout instead of doubling.)

All of this creates some interesting possibilities for playing, and defending, doubled and redoubled contracts. We are assuming that the opponents will never defend 2MXX when we have an eight-card or better fit (or that we will make if they do). Let's hope that turns out actually to be true. We also make it somewhat easier to double the opponents when they balance into the three level. If it goes 1D-(P), 1S-(P), 2S-(P), P-(X), P-(3C), responder knows that opener has only three-card support, and can more easily double 3C. The total-trick count is significantly less when our side turns out not to have an eight-card major fit.

The extra-trump redouble also applies to certain transfer auctions after we open 1NT. 1NT-(P), 2D-(P), 2H-(P), P-(X), XX is an example. Here, opener shows that he has three, not two, hearts, so that responder, with six hearts, will know that he can take the push to the three level if he likes. Failure to redouble here denies three.

### **EXTRA-LENGTH DOUBLE OF CUEBID AT THE TWO LEVEL**

The prototypical auction is 1H-(1S), P-(2H). Here, double means "I have a sixth (or seventh) heart, but can't bid 3H by myself." You will have a maximum and some shape because you are in effect inviting partner to bid 3H with a doubleton honor if he likes, or with three-card support and a hand that was not strong enough to bid 2H the first time. Better have a good hand to do this. Some play that this double shows a takeout double of spades. The idea is that the opponents must retreat to 2S, and now partner has been given the choice of passing out 2S, or of bidding at the three level. If you pass 2H and then double 2S later, partner can't choose to defend 2S undoubled. But, playing our way lets you show two different hand types. With the three-suiter, you pass and double (or cuebid 2S at your second turn to show a really good takeout hand).

### **NON-TAKEOUT DOUBLE OF CUEBID AT THE THREE LEVEL**

Now the bidding goes 1H-(2S), P-(3H) or the like. Double is lead un-directing. You assume the opponents are going to buy it in spades, and pass of 3H just means that you are happy with a heart lead. If you want something else, you double to say so.

### **ONE-UNDER DOUBLE = GAME TRY**

We play this common treatment (also called a maximal double), where in an auction like 1H-(2D), 2H-(3D), double operates as the only game try. These doubles are penalties when there is a suit in between that could be used as an artificial game try. In the example auction, change the opponents' bids to clubs, and double is penalty by opener and 3D is the game try. This principle also applies to an overcall that is raised. (1D)-1H, (2D)-2H, (3D)-X is a game try in hearts.

## **GOOD-BAD 2NT**

In a Precision style, opener never has a good enough hand to need to rebid 2NT in a competitive auction to show, say, a hand too strong for a strong notrump opening (which can happen in standard). This frees up a competitive 2NT rebid for other purposes. Accordingly, in a competitive auction, when there is a bid at the two level to the right of opener that is *not* 2C, a 2NT rebid by opener is always Good/Bad (showing the bad hand) that is willing to play at the three level. A double is takeout.

For example, 1H-(P); 1NT-(2S); 2NT is Good/Bad. It is initially assumed to show a second suit of clubs, with a hand not strong enough for a direct 3C bid (which would show a maximum in high cards). It is also common after a 1D opening, as in: 1D-(X); P-(2M); 2NT, initially showing a diamond-club two-suiter with less than maximum high cards. Good/Bad applies regardless of whether responder has passed, doubled, bid a suit or whatever.

## **OPENER'S SECOND ROUND DOUBLE AFTER A WJS OR NFB**

In auctions where responder has made a WJS or a NFB at the two level, opener is sometimes faced with a decision at the three level or higher. For example, 1D-(P); 2H-(2S), or 1D-(1S); 2C-(2S). It is unlikely that opener could have a penalty double of the opponents; if he does have such a hand, he may as well just pass and defend, hoping that the opponents are in the wrong contract. In these situations, a raise of responder's suit is just competitive, usually with shape, and a double shows a true invite, with something extra in the way of high cards (14-15 HCP) or shape or both.

This treatment should work well for two reasons: First, the NFB or WJS does not promise any defensive tricks, so it is very unlikely that opener could have the hand to make a real penalty double; and second, it allows responder to make a nonforcing bid with what might normally be considered an invitational hand, because he knows that opener will always have a way to show a hand with a fit and extra values. So, in our style it is safe to make a NFB with a ten or eleven count. You should not miss game very often.

## **RENEGATIVE DOUBLE FOR MAJORS**

This occurs when responder has made a negative double at the two level that shows both majors, and opener next has to act at the three level. The typical auction is 1D-(2C), X-(3C), X. Here, opener's double shows three cards in both majors, and a good hand. His shape will typically be 3=3=6=1, or 3=3=5=2 with a good 14 or 15

count. The idea is that responder can very well have 5-4 either way in the majors, and start with a double, so there needs to be a way to back into a 5-3 fit.

## LEBENSÖHL AND NEGATIVE DOUBLES REVISITED

As is noted in the section dealing with the 1NT opening, we play transfer lebensöhl when they interfere at the two level. 2NT is a transfer to the next higher suit that they have not shown, and so on. Opener is entitled to treat any transfer as being of invitational strength; if he has a fit and an otherwise good hand, he bids past the suit to which he was transferred, in effect superaccepting. This does not mean that responder has to have a truly invitational hand, but he should have enough playing strength when he is light in high cards so that he can either sit for 3NT, or run to four of the suit (this is a minor suit we are talking about, for the moment) with hopes of achieving a reasonable result (i.e., making it or finding that the opponents were on for three of something). So 2NT lebensöhl always shows a real suit of clubs (or the next higher suit that was not shown by them, if they showed clubs), and so do all the other transfer bids at the three level. What do you do if you do not have a suit of five or more cards that you want to show?

The first option is, of course, to jump to 3NT. We play “fast implies” – this auction shows a stopper (well, really it *suggests* a stopper – you don’t have to have one if 3NT is the only reasonable bid) in the suit they showed (assuming their bid showed only one suit; let us use, for an example, a natural 2S overcall). The second is to cuebid their suit at the three level. This is a Roth shortness bid, and guarantees no more than one of their suit. It also strongly suggests four in the other major, and guarantees at least three there. We can afford to play it this way, because when you have a doubleton or more in their suit, you make a negative double first. Partner can pass this for penalties when he has four good ones in their suit, knowing that they are in at best a seven-card fit. The negative double can be followed up by raising the other major (if that is what opener bids), or bidding 3NT (shows other major and a stopper), or cue-bidding their suit (other major and no stopper). All of this assumes that partner’s bid over the negative double was 2NT or three of a lower suit. Opener can cuebid their suit himself in response to the negative double, which means that he is stuck for a bid – no stopper, no major to bid, no minor worth mentioning. Over this, responder does the best he can to locate a playable contract.

When responder doubles and then bids a new suit at the three level (this usually happens when they have bid 2S, and he doubles and then bids 3H), responder is showing exactly five, and invitational values. The five-card suit is probably weak, since otherwise he would have shown it directly, with a transfer.

## **THEY DOUBLE RESPONDER'S ARTIFICIAL REBID**

This is how we deal with doubles when responder has used fourth suit forcing, or similar treatments. It includes the artificial 2C and 2D rebids, after opener has rebid 1NT. These bids will often attract a double, since the opponent to responder's left knows that his partner either will be on lead against 3NT (if opener rebid 1NT, and responder used one of the artificial bids) or very likely will be (if responder used 4SF, which asks opener to look for a stopper in the fourth suit, and bid notrump if he has it). The double will often be on values insufficient to guarantee a set, hoping we cannot play in the suit. Actually, the situation is much like a double of a Stayman 2C response to 1NT. We play a similar treatment: opener can, if he wishes, redouble to strongly suggest playing it there, or can pass to say that he is not against the idea, but needs more help from partner in the suit. If opener passes, responder can redouble to agree to play the hand there. (He is not supposed to pass.) Otherwise, either partner just makes whatever bid he would have made anyway, without the double, and the bid means the same thing as it would have without the double. (There is an exception, which is that in an auction like 1D-(P), 1S-(P), 1NT-(P), 2C-(X), P-(P), responder can now bid 2D, which he could not have done without the double; when responder makes the otherwise-impossible bid, we define it as NF at the two level, F at the three-level or higher.)

## **INTERFERENCE OVER 1C AND FINDING 4-4 MAJOR FITS**

Let's say the auction goes 1C-(2S), X-(P). Double creates a game force, but it does not say much about responder's holding in hearts, or in any suit other than spades (where it shows a doubleton at least). It is clear that opener should be showing at least five hearts if he bids 3H now. What does he do if he has exactly four hearts? Since he can't be balanced (unless he has at least 21 HCP), the problem is eased somewhat. He can bid a minor suit with five or more. If he bids 2NT here, that is not (necessarily) the 21+ hand; it would be too restrictive to define the bid that way. Instead, it (at first, and presumptively) just shows a stopper in their suit, probably not five hearts, and a desire to hear a further descriptive bid from responder. If responder now bids 3H, he shows five. Responder shows four by cuebidding spades. Similarly, over the double, opener shows four hearts and spade weakness or shortness by bidding 3S himself. The general rule is: 1NT or 2NT by either partner does not deny four in an unbid major; an unnecessary cuebid when someone has already bid notrump implies four; bidding the major when you could have made a significantly cheaper bid implies five of them. There are too many possible auctions to try to define them all, so let us use these rules, plus common sense. If further definition seems possible and desirable based on experience, we will add to the rules.

## **LEBENSOHL OVER DELAYED OVERCALLS OF 1NT (OR 1 ANY) REBID**

Sometimes this happens: 1D-(P), 1H-(P), 1NT-(2D). The delayed overcaller couldn't bid diamonds naturally over 1D, and had to wait until the second round. In this situation, double of 2D is penalties, 2H is NF, as usual, reverses and jumps are forcing, and so on. But a 2NT bid by responder is lebensohl, for the purpose of puppeting us to 3C. (Most hands that might want to bid 2NT naturally – remember, partner hasn't promised a diamond stopper, and probably doesn't have one on this auction – can double for penalties.) A direct 3C bid over the 2D would be forcing. I suppose this would apply also over a delayed overcall of 2H, although this shouldn't happen since there is no hand that can logically refuse to bid 1H or 2H over 1D, and then bid 2H later in a much more dangerous situation. But I have seen people do it.

Actually, there is no reason the same shouldn't apply if opener had rebid 1S instead of 1NT, so let's play that it does.

## **HIGH LEVEL SUPPORT DOUBLES**

I was reviewing Rodwell-Meckstroth's convention card and notes from a world championship, and noticed that they played support doubles through 4H. After thinking about it for a few minutes, I saw why. Suppose you hold AJx/x/AKQxxx/xxx and open 1D. Next hand doubles, and partner responds 1H (showing spades). Let's say advancer now bids 3H. Which is more likely, that you hold the hand given, or that you have a real penalty double of hearts? And suppose the enemy advance to the four level? The considerations are the same. So, when partner has shown a major suit at the one level (in a situation where his major is or could be five cards or longer), and the opponents carry the bidding to the three- or four-level, your double shows three-card support, length in the suit opened, and a shapely maximum. Unlike when the opponents compete to the two level, failure to double doesn't more or less deny holding three-card support; it merely denies a hand good enough to act. But with the example hand or similar, you double, and partner has the choice of bidding four of his major, going back to your suit, or passing for penalties. (Or he could bid 4NT, which we will define as RKC for his major; or he could bid the fourth suit (5C in the example) which we will define as a slam try in an unspecified suit, either his major or your minor.) These high-level support doubles also apply to auctions where partner has shown five already, as with a 1S response over a 1H overcall. The question is whether to play them when fourth hand bids a suit unilaterally, as in 1D-(P), 1S-(3H). I would say yes. And when fourth hand bids 4H here, as well. The treatment loses only when partner can't pass and beat their contract, and also can't profitably save or make by bidding one of our suits. With opener doubling on shapely hands, it seems far more likely to gain than to lose.



## **4NT OVER FOUR-LEVEL INTERFERENCE**

Sometimes the opponents will bid four of something as a direct overcall. If our opening bid was 1H or 1S, the meaning of all bids except 4NT is fairly obvious after a four-level bid by them: A new suit is forcing if not game, not forcing if it is (e.g. 1H-(4D), 4S); a raise to four of the major is natural (if available). 4NT (e.g. in the auction 1H-(4S), 4NT) is played by some as RKC for partner's major, takeout by others. I vote for RKC. You are far more likely to be going places when you have a fit for partner's suit than when you do not, and at least some of the hands where you hold the other two suits can be handled by a negative double.

Things are different when partner opened 1D. You need at least six diamonds in support to be absolutely sure of a fit. It is better to treat 4NT as takeout with at least two places to play in the auction 1D-(4S). After 1D-(4H), it should show the minors. After 1D-(4C), I think 4NT should be natural (although RKC for diamonds is probably OK too). Any hand that wants to move toward slam in diamonds can bid 5C here. After a 2C opening by partner, I think 4NT should always be a general slam try in clubs, regardless of whether the opponents overcall 4D, 4H, or 4S. You are unlikely to want to bid up without a club fit, and there should be some way to ask partner to bid a slam in clubs. If partner has opened 1NT or 2NT, a 4NT bid is to play if the opponents overcall in a minor, takeout if they bid a major (because negative doubles of 4m overcalls take care of most takeout-oriented hands). A direct 4NT after other opening bids should be RKC for partner's suit if he has shown one (if he preempted, for example). If the opening bid was 2D, followed by a 4M overcall (or a natural 4D overcall), a 4NT bid is a slam try for clubs.

## **DELAYED 2M AFTER PASSING 1NT OPENING**

This comes up after an auction like 1NT-(P), P-(2H), P-(P), 2S. Our policy is to always run to a major when we have five; passing 1NT guarantees no more than four. Accordingly, the 2S bid in this auction (and similar bids in other auctions) shows only four, with at least one minor suit (probably five cards long) to play in if partner cannot stand spades. The question of why responder is bidding 2S now instead of doubling (which would be takeout here) is worth asking. The answer, probably, is that he could not stand to hear partner pass, or maybe that he cannot stand to hear the highest response (with QJ10x/xx/xx/J109xx, you don't want to hear partner bid 3D over a double).

## **RESPONDER'S REBID OF A LOWER-RANKING SUIT**

Responder will often find, at his second turn to bid, that he has the option of bidding two or three of an unbid suit that is lower in rank than his first-bid suit. We will

take as our example auction 1D-(1H), 1S-(2H), P-(P). Here, responder can bid 3C. We play that in this and similar situations, 3C is natural and nonforcing. It does show some values, and opener is allowed to bid again, but it is not forcing. This is contrary to the rule of standard bidding that a new suit by responder, if he is a UPH, is forcing below game. Experience has shown that too often, responder holds something like Kxxxx/xx/x/KQxxx and needs to show clubs. There are some complicated methods based on using 2NT as a lebensohl-type bid in this situation, but I like to have responder's second bid of 2NT be natural and invitational whenever this is reasonable, which it certainly is here. So what do you do if you have a hand that wanted to bid 3C, forcing? You double with two or more in their suit, or you bid 3H, a sort of Kantar cue-bid, with shortness. Double followed by a new suit is forcing. So if you double here, and partner next bids 2S (showing a doubleton, since he didn't make a support double earlier), or bids 2NT, you can follow with 3C, forcing. We play the same at the two level. 1H-(P), 1S-(2C), P-(P). Now 2D is nonforcing, 3D is natural and invitational, double suggests at least two in their suit, 3C is a KCB.

### **REBID OF SPADES AFTER NEGATIVE DOUBLE**

This is for an auction like 1D-(1H), X-(2H), P-(P). If you bid 2S here, it means that you have extras, but are too short in their suit to risk a double, which might be passed for penalties. It is not forcing. To force, you bid 3H.

### **THRUMP DOUBLES**

This treatment was invented by Marty Bergen. The idea is that a negative double of an overcall of three of a major after our 1D opening does not necessarily guarantee four cards (or even three) in the other major. Opener's first priority is to bid 3NT ("thrump" is a joking way of saying "three notrump") if he can, with a stopper in the opponent's suit. In the auction 1D-(3S), responder would double with xx/Kx/xxx/AKQJxx, hoping to hear you bid 3NT. A 4C response pretty much forces the bidding to 5C, which could be very wrong. I was a bit leery of the convention when I first heard of it, because it seems to require responder to have very specific hands, which don't seem to come up very often. Still, I suppose there is no harm in it as long as responder has something else to bid if opener bids four of the other major, which he will do if he has four of them and doesn't have a stopper in the opponents' suit. Opener will have to remember that in an auction like 1D-(3S), X-(P), 4H-(P), 5C or 5D, responder is simply correcting. He is not making a slam try in hearts.

Please note that the Thrump treatment is somewhat controversial, and we consider it an experimental part of the system. We will change it or get rid of it if it doesn't work.

## **Miscellaneous and Slam Tools:**

### **2NT OPENING BID IS OPTIONAL**

Our 2NT opener is defined as 19-20, balanced or semibalanced, 5422 types permissible. But if you hold AKxx/xx/AKQxx/Ax, open 1C. If the response is 1D, you rebid 2C, showing diamonds, and if partner next bids 2D, showing weakness, you follow with 2S, showing the spades. You have shown both of your suits, in correct length order, and your approximate strength (better than a minimum 1C, otherwise pass 2D), and you have done it below the level of 2NT, the alternative opening bid. Doesn't this seem better? 2NT is not even ruled out as the final contract, since partner can bid it now and you will pass; and the heart lead comes up to him. But if you hold AQ/Qxxx/AQ10xx/AQ, opening 2NT seems best, so do that instead. You don't want to hear them overcalling spades over your 1C opener, and you want the lead in notrump to come to your hand.

### **ONE NOTRUMP BYPASS RULE**

This rule, invented by Jeff Rubens, holds that anytime you bid 2NT in a defensive auction where you could have bid 1NT earlier and chose not to do so, you are showing some kind of two-suited hand, not a natural 2NT bid. An example is (1H)-X, (P)-2C, (2H)-P, (P)-2NT. You could have bid 1NT (or 2NT) the first time, but chose to bid 2C instead. Do you really want to play 2NT now? No, says Jeff, you are showing a desire to get to three of a suit, and a second suit to go with the one you have bid, which can only be diamonds here. He says he has never seen a hand where this rule didn't apply. I haven't thought of one either, so let's play the rule. But note that it doesn't apply to auctions where the first bid by the eventual 2NT bidder showed a good hand. Here, the 2C bid showed no values and could have been passed.

### **DOUBLES OF 3NT**

When they bid 1NT-3NT, or 2NT-3NT, or the like, double by opening leader's partner means "find my suit." It could be any in theory, but in practice is almost always a major.

When they have bid only one suit, and that suit is going to come down in dummy, double by opening leader's partner means "lead their suit." 1D-2NT, 3NT by them is an example.

When we have bid one suit, double *by the partner of the bidder* means lead it. But if you have bid a suit and you are not on lead, double tells partner to find something

else. Example: 1S-(1NT), P-(3NT), X. You have Qxxxx/xx/x/AKQJ9. You hope that the double will help partner to find the lead of a club instead of a spade or a red suit.<sup>1</sup> Here, as after an auction where we have not bid and the opponents have bid notrump only, the double tells partner to look for a suit in which he has no high cards, and probably one where he is relatively short as well.

When we have bid two suits, one by each hand, the meaning is controversial. Some say double means “lead your own suit,” on the theory that opening leader will tend to lead his partner’s suit if not told to do otherwise. I disagree that this is a good idea. When will you ever know that for partner to lead his suit will beat the hand? It almost can’t happen facing one of our light one-level overcalls. So, double means “lead *my* suit, even with a small singleton; I can establish it and get in later.”

When there is a conflict of rules, such as the one about dummy’s suit and our suit, the lead of dummy’s suit takes precedence. (1C)-1H, (1S)-2H, (2NT)-P, (3NT)-X. Double means “lead dummy’s suit for me; I will either continue it or lead your suit back, through their stopper.” A hand for the example auction might be AQ109x/Jxx/Qxx/xx.

### **RKC 1430**

We play Roman Keycard Blackwood (or Kickback, or Redwood) when there is an agreed trump suit. The trump suit agreement can be explicit or implicit, but an effort has been made to point out the implicit situations in the text.

The responses are (assuming the RKC bid was 4NT): First step (5C) = 1 or 4 keycards; second step (5D) = 0 or 3, third step (5H) = 2 (or 5) keycards without the queen of trumps; fourth step (5S) = 2 (or 5) keycards with queen of trumps. As is common practice, we play that when answerer knows that the combined fit is at least ten cards, he “shows” the queen of trumps when he can, regardless of whether he has it or not. The queen relay, when answerer has not shown or denied the queen already, is always the cheapest step that does not mean something else, which is to say, not five of the agreed suit. In response to the queen relay, there has been some question what the two responses mean when the relay is two under the trump suit. Example: Spades are agreed; someone bids 4NT; the answer is five clubs. Now five diamonds is a queen ask. Does 5H deny (first step = weakest), or does 5S deny (return to trump suit is weakest)? For simplicity, we will say that the first step is always the weakest bid, regardless of whether the asking bid employed has been RKC, Kickback, or Redwood.

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<sup>1</sup> There was a famous deal where Rodwell and Meckstroth used that double, with a hand almost identical to my example. The double worked perfectly, up to a point. Partner knew what to lead, all right. Except he was void in clubs.

When the queen-ask is made and answerer has to go past five of the trump suit, we follow the Kantar technique. Cue-bid a side king, bid 5NT to show the queen but no outside king, and bid six of the trump suit to deny the queen. This comes up in situations where asker's bid of five of the trump suit acts as the queen ask; as Kantar points out, this is the case when hearts are trump, the initial RKC response has been 5D, and asker bids 5H – he can't want to stop in five facing three keycards, so 5H asks for the queen (if, in fact, answerer does have three keycards, not zero; but answerer presumes that asker can tell, and with zero he passes anyway).

When asker follows up with 5NT (or whatever is the next bid that is not five of the agreed suit, and not the queen ask), that is always the “outside king ask.” Answerer cues the cheapest suit in which he holds the king, skipping over the ones in which he doesn't hold it. The alternative treatment is total kings, but I have seen several hands in which specific kings is the winning method, and do not know of any where total kings gets you to the right spot, and specific kings doesn't. 5NT is always a grand slam try. If responder knows there must be enough tricks for seven, he drives. He should do it directly over 5NT, not showing kings, since if he shows a king and asker thinks before returning to six of the trump suit, there could be ethical problems. We are not concerned with finding 6NT instead of six of a suit, or 7NT instead of seven of a suit. Those are matchpoint considerations, and the system is designed for IMPs.

In Kantar's book on RKCB, you will find extended discussion of the “direct ask” and “delayed ask” in side suits, after asking for key cards. We do not play any of those. I have never seen a hand where anyone used them, or needed to use them to reach the best spot. The whole business seems to me to be an intellectual exercise, an effort to assign meanings to otherwise (apparently) useless bids. Actually, bids of six of a suit other than the agreed suit, after bidding 4NT, can and do have another use – natural. Example: 1S-2C (this hand came up playing 2/1GF), 2S-3S, 4S-4NT, 5H-6C. This actually happened, and 6C was the correct contract, not 6S. I suppose a bid of 6D instead of 6C could not possibly have had a natural meaning, but we are not going to define those. They are just “do something intelligent” seven-tries. The rule is, the Blackwood bidder places the contract, and if he bids something that could possibly be a final contract, then that is what it is. Of course, a rebid of 5NT is not a possible final contract in any form of Blackwood.

Responding to RKC with a void: There are numerous techniques. I have never seen any reason to give up the Romex treatment I learned many years ago, which is, bid 5NT with two keycards and a void you think is useful, and bid six of the void with one keycard and a void you think is useful. If the void is higher-ranking than the trump suit, jump to six of the agreed suit. (Actually, this should be modified to read: 5NT means an

even number and a void; six of a suit means an odd number and a void. But two and one are the usual numbers for answerer to have.)

More than one eight-card fit: There are numerous forms of “six-ace Blackwood” on the market. Ours is explained elsewhere in this chapter.

If 4NT is doubled: I have seen this happen a few times. Invariably in my experience the doubler has a runout spot (or he knows/expects his partner will run), and is hoping the other side does not have agreements about how to show keycards in this situation. Here are ours. Pass, the first step, is 1 or 4, redouble is 0 or 3, etc. Very simple.

We play DIPO/DEPO when the opponents bid immediately over the RKC bid. DIPO is for five-level bids by them; DEPO is for the six (or seven) level by them. DIPO means double with one (or four), pass with zero (or three), and so on by steps. DEPO means double with an even number, pass with an odd number.

The responses to “regular” Blackwood (no agreed suit) just show aces. The step responses go, in order, 1 or 4, 0 or 3, 2. (However, there are some situations defined in the text where the first step can show 0. These must be memorized.)

Blackwood after control-bidding: When one of us has made a control-bid (or more than one of them) that presumably shows the ace of a side suit, that ace is still counted later on, if partner uses Blackwood.

## **GRAND SLAM FORCE**

A jump to 5NT after suit agreement is the GSF. Since the GSF asks for trump honors, and so does RKC 1430, the question arises, why bid 5NT instead? The usual reason is that asker has a void, and does not want to hear about the total number of aces, which could include a non-working ace in his void suit. That is reason enough to employ the convention. Usually, though, 5NT must be a jump if it is to have the GSF meaning. If there is more than one possible slam spot (almost always true when we have bid or shown more than one suit), a non-jump 5NT means pick a slam. This is true even when a suit has been agreed; slam in the other suit could still be better. This situation comes up only when the opponents bid to the five level, cutting off a possible 4NT bid by us.

The responses to 5NT have engendered a lot of theory. The basic rule, which we use, is bid seven if you have two of the top three. We play that the usual bid is 7C, to allow partner to play a grand slam in a suit other than the agreed suit, which happens

sometimes. What to do with fewer than two of the top three is the question. If the suit is spades, there are four steps available, from 6C to 6S, without committing to seven. In this situation, we play: 6S is weakest possible trump holding; 6H is no ace or king, but with ten known trumps or the queen; 6D is the ace or king, but no extra length; 6C is the ace or king, with extra length. Here, extra length means enough so that it is possible, but not certain, that we have a ten-card fit. With a known ten-card or better fit, always show the queen even if you don't have it. When the agreed suit is hearts, there are only three available steps. Now, 6H = weakest; 6D = queen; 6C = ace or king. When the agreed suit is diamonds, 6D = weakest, 6C = ace or king. And when the suit is clubs, you know what to do. I do not know what a 6NT response to 5NT means, regardless of the agreed suit. I suppose it should show either the ace or the king, but not both, and sufficient high cards in the other suits to be sure that the missing trump honor is the only loser. Obviously this won't happen very often, since use of the GSF is usually based on wild shape in one or both hands. It would be hard to imagine that you could know that you had stoppers in all the side suits, plus the ability to count twelve tricks.

## **REDWOOD AND KICKBACK**

When spades is the agreed suit, the keycard ask is always 4NT, of course. When the agreed suit is hearts, the general rule is that 4S, Kickback, is the way to ask for keycards. The only problem is deciding when a bid of 4S might be natural instead. This only happens when one partner has already bid spades naturally, or made some other bid that showed them. Then, a 4S bid might be a selection of a different place to play. It is not possible, I don't think, to give a hard and fast definition of when 4S might be to play. When one partner has not yet been able to support spades, or might have planned the auction with the intention of supporting spades, 4S is natural. Example: 1S-2H, 4H-4S. Responder always intended to go back to spades. But if the auction goes 1S-2H, 3H-3NT, 4H-4S, 4S is RKC for hearts. Both partners expressed willingness to play in hearts, so responder can't change his mind and decide that spades is better now. As a general rule, unless it is utterly illogical for 4S to be the final contract, it is natural. When it *is* utterly illogical, 4S is RKC for hearts. And when 4S is RKC, a bid of 4NT (by a player who might have bid 4S instead) is a substitute control-bid, showing a spade control.

We also play Redwood when a minor suit has been agreed. If clubs are agreed, 4D is usually RKC for clubs. When diamonds are agreed, 4H is generally RKC for diamonds. These rules do not apply when the bids might be natural. The usual problem is whether or not a 4H bid might be to play. If hearts have been bid naturally, a return to 4H is usually a suggestion of a ten-trick game, rather than 5D. Example: 1H-2D, 3D-4C, 4D-4H. Responder has a doubleton heart and is suggesting 4H as a final contract (probably because neither partner has been able to show a spade control). When 4H

would be natural, 4S becomes the keycard ask for diamonds. But even this rule fails sometimes. If the bidding begins 1S-2H, 3D-4D, either a 4H or a 4S bid by opener is a suggestion of an alternative game contract. In this case, 4NT is the only bid to ask for keycards in diamonds, so that is what 4NT means. Generally, only if it is completely illogical for the 4M bid to be natural is it considered Redwood. (When you play Redwood, sometimes spades are a red suit.) R-M call this using an “unfocused” major as keycard-asking. It should be added that we do not use the treatment, played by some, that a bid of 4m is RKC in that minor (sometimes called “Autowood”). Our keycard ask is always in a different suit (unless specifically defined as being four of the same suit; these occasions must be memorized). As usual, 4NT substitutes for the control-bid in the Redwood suit, unless it is specifically defined otherwise.

## **REDWOOD IN COMPETITIVE AUCTIONS**

This one is not likely to come up very often, but we may as well have some principles. When a minor suit is agreed, and the opponents have bid a suit in the meantime, a simple cuebid of the opposing suit at the four level shows a control; it is not Redwood, even if it is the next suit up from the agreed minor. Example: 1S-(P), 2C-(3D), 4C-(P), 4D. Responder is showing a diamond control. If he had wanted to ask for keycards here, he would have bid 4H instead. It is too important to be able to show a control in the opponents’ suit at a cheap level to give up that bid for RKC purposes instead. This principle could also apply when we bid hearts and they bid spades. After 1H-(P), 2NT-(3S), a later bid of 4S by either partner shows spade control, and 4NT becomes RKC for hearts.

A jump cuebid in the opponents’ suit in competition is always a splinter.

## **SIX-ACE KEYCARD**

Occasionally, two suits will have been bid and raised, so that it is clear we have a double fit. When this happens, the RKC bid is asking for six keycards and two queens. The responses are: First step, 1 or 4 keycards; second step, 0 or 3 keycards; third step, 2 or 5 keycards without the queen of either suit; fourth step, 2 or 5 keycards with one queen; fifth step (a single raise of the RKC bid), 2 or 5 with both queens. If the fifth-step response is made, a bid of the next step after that by the keycard asker is asking for kings, unless it is six of one of the agreed suits, in which case the next available bid (if there is one) serves as the king-ask. As in regular RKC, if answerer did not show how many queens he has, the next step by asker asks for that information. The responses are: First step, none; second step, one; third step, both. After queens are sorted out, the next available step (if there is one below six of the highest playable suit) asks for side-suit kings.



There are a few tricks that should be learned here. One is that the side-suit-king ask is very rarely, if ever, going to be needed. If you have a double fit, two solid suits, and two side aces, you should be able to bid seven without needing a side king. The only time you might need one is when both suits are only five long. (But it could happen.) Another is that you must be very careful about counting extra length as a “queen” of a key suit. In normal RKC, where there is only one trump suit, it is fairly safe to count known ten-card length as being equivalent to the queen of trumps. When there are two “trump” suits, this can be very dangerous. Imagine Axxxx/Qx/KQx/Kx facing Kxx/Ax/AJxxxx/x. The auction can begin 1S-2D, 3D-3S, 4C-4H. (4C was an Italian-style control-bid, not necessarily promising the ace.) At this point, 4NT by opener would be six-ace RKC. Responder bids 5D, promising 0 or 3 (obviously three here). If opener now bids five hearts, asking for queens, there is big trouble if responder decides that his seventh diamond counts as a “queen.” Opener, thinking that responder has the queen of spades (because opener holds the queen of diamonds himself), will bid the bad slam. To show extra length as a queen, you need to hold the other queen yourself if you think there is danger partner won’t know which one you have. Another point is that when a double fit is known to exist, the RKC bid is always the next available bid above the *highest* of the two suits; in our spade-diamond example above, that means 4NT (by either partner). A 4H bid (by either partner) is just a control-bid. This allows control-bids to be exchanged without getting past four of a major.

### **4NT ROMEX RAISE**

Years ago, George Rosenkranz observed that when one hand has shown great strength and the other has shown weakness, it is not a good idea for a 4NT bid by the weaker hand to be Blackwood. (He was assuming that 4NT would have been Blackwood otherwise.) An example, in our system, would be 1C-1D, 2S-2NT, 3H-4NT. By our normal rules, 4NT would be RKC for hearts. But what hand could responder have to do this? For situations like this one, Rosenkranz suggested that the 4NT bid should show a hand with support for opener’s suit, but too strong simply to bid four. We will adopt this approach, and add to it that when the weaker hand bids 4NT, a bid of 5C by opener becomes RKC. (This applies only when the suit involved is a major.) Also, if the suit involved is hearts, then 4S (when available) becomes the strong raise of hearts, and now 4NT by opener is RKC for hearts. Example: 1C-1D, 2H-2S, 3H-4S. Responder did not know that he was going to be raising hearts until opener rebid the suit, showing six, but responder’s hand was too strong to bid only four. So, he bid 4S instead. Now, opener can bid 4NT, asking for keycards.

## SERIOUS 3NT, MECKWELL STYLE

Elsewhere it is stated that we play Serious 3NT in various auctions. We play it in the Meckwell style. The rules are as follows: It is mandatory for the partner of the 3NT bidder to control-bid a suit if he has a control to show below four of the agreed suit. We control-bid first- and second-round controls indiscriminately, Italian-style (a later keycard ask will sort out the existence of the necessary number of keycards). A control-bid of a suit you have previously bid naturally shows two of the top three, e.g., 1S-2D, 3D-3S, 3NT-4D means you have AK, AQ, or KQ of diamonds. If you control-bid in a suit partner has bid naturally previously (not including trumps), it shows one of the top three. 1S-2D, 3D-3S, 3NT-4C, 4D is an example. Bidding past four of the agreed major means that the bidder has control of any suit that has not already been control-bid. Control-bids at the five level are discouraged; they are used to show voids, primarily. We do not play “last train” in Serious auctions; it is too important to be able to show control in that suit. (This part of our method is not Meckwell; I think they do play last train here.) If there is a double fit in hearts and spades, spades is presumed to be the trump suit, to allow control-bids in hearts. (But an auction like 1S-2H; 3H-3S is not a control bid in spades. It shows a double fit. To indicate serious slam interest, responder must bid 3NT over 3H, which does *not* deny a control-biddable spade card; we hope that the existence of spade help, or lack thereof, will be uncovered via RKC.)

## PASS-DOUBLE INVERSION AFTER A 1C OPENING

This treatment, which applies in forcing-pass auctions when the opponents intervene, was invented by Eric Rodwell. For a long time, I was aware of its existence but did not play it, because I did not really understand how it was supposed to work, or why it was an improvement on more standard treatments of forcing-pass situations. Enter Sabine Auken. In her book, *I Love This Game*, she explains everything about it in great detail. She also says that not only Rodwell-Meckstroth, but also Bob Hamman and Berkowitz-Cohen, swear by it. That’s enough to sell me on the product. Who says you don’t learn anything by reading bridge books? I consider myself to know a fair amount about the theory of the game, but I certainly don’t know everything, and *ILTG* taught me several things I hadn’t known before (and not just PDI). Thanks, Sabine.

So how does it work? Examples are best, I think, and since PDI is of greatest value in big-club auctions, let us look at those. We will take as our model an auction that begins 1C-(1S), with the 1S overcall being natural. Now responder has several ways to force to game. The first one is double, a general game force. Let’s suppose the auction starts 1C-(1S), X-(4S). Now opener can of course bid a suit naturally at the five level (or higher). This shows a one-suited hand, not interested in playing in any other suit. Simple enough. But opener can also pass, forcing. This asks responder to double

with any normal hand that does not want to bid something itself (and responder will almost always double again here, since his initial double implied a more or less balanced hand, at least two spades, and no great suit of his own to bid). The general rule is that responder will double, as he is being asked to do, unless he holds a hand that would have pulled a penalty double by opener. When responder doubles, opener can pass and the auction will end. But opener can also pull the double, as part of a preplanned sequence. When he does so – say the auction goes 1C-(1S), X-(4S), P-(P), X-(P), 5C – he is showing at least two places to play. Here, opener says that he has a second suit, either diamonds or hearts, to go with his clubs, and probably at least 5-5 shape. Responder can pass or correct, and can also cuebid or bid 5NT to force to a slam if he wants to know about opener's second suit. (In such situations, we play that the notrump bid is simply for takeout, showing interest (at the very least) in playing opener's other suit. What a cuebid should show instead is not obvious, since there are several possible meanings, but I am going to say that the cuebid means first-round control of their suit and some interest in bidding seven of something.)

Playing this way, opener does not, of course, always have to make a forcing pass or bid something. He can also double. Since the way to play for penalties is to pass and wait for partner to double, a direct double is takeout, probably more or less three-suited and asking partner to bid his own best suit. Of course, if responder has an unexpectedly good holding in the opponent's suit, he can pass the double for penalties.

Now let us change the auction a bit. 1C-(1S), 3H-(4S). Responder bid three hearts to show game values and a long heart suit. We are again in a forcing-pass situation, but the circumstances are changed because opener knows what responder's main suit is. Now a direct double is defined to mean an optional raise of hearts, sending the message that opener has heart support and is prepared to play 5H if responder wants to bid it, but allowing responder to pass if he thinks 5H would be a doubtful contract. A direct raise to 5H would show support in a hand that definitely wants to play hearts and which is not interested in defending; opener's message here is that he expects to make 5H opposite a minimum, and that responder can carry on to slam if he has enough extra values. 4NT is RKC, a suit is one-suited ("my suit is better than yours"). A cuebid of 5S would be Exclusion Blackwood for hearts, void in spades, and trying for seven. And to pass 4S asks for the double, probably with intention of passing it, but perhaps intending to pull to, say, 5C, which would mean an extreme minor two-suiter, demanding that partner select a minor unless his hearts are self-sufficient. A pass and pull to 5H is a clear slam try, a somewhat better hand than a direct raise to 5H.

Another possible auction is 1C-(1S), 3H-(3S). Now the meanings of bids are slightly different, because we are below our own game level. Double is a good raise, better than bidding 4H here. Other bids have the same sort of meaning as if the

opponents had bid 4S. Pass, if partner responds with a double as requested, followed by a pull to 4H, shows another place to play (there may be a better trump suit than hearts for slam, if responder wants to keep going).

An interesting point about all of these auctions is that every time the opponents bid something more, a new PDI decision is initiated. Thus, if the bidding were to go 1C-(1S), 3H-(3S), P-(4S), responder would no longer react in the normal way to opener's forcing pass, because the opponents have bid again and raised the level to 4S. Now it is up to responder to be the one to make a forcing pass, to double, or to bid something, according to the agreed rules for PDI.

Fortunately, Sabine gives the complete set of rules for PDI auctions, which is a good thing, because I never would have been able to work them all out on my own. Here they are.

If responder has not shown a suit of his own: Opener's direct double = takeout; bid a suit = one-suited hand; pass asks for double; pull of double shows two places to play.

If responder has shown a suit of his own, and we are forced to go above game level in that suit if we want to bid further: Double = optional raise; bid a suit = one-suited hand; pass asks for double; pull of double to new suit shows two places to play; pull of double to responder's suit = slam try; direct raise = fit, no interest in defending and hoping/expecting to make opposite a minimum (not as strong as pass and pull to a raise).

If responder has shown a suit of his own, and it is still possible for us to bid to the minimum game level in that suit: Double = good raise, better than direct raise; direct raise = natural, minimum; bid a new suit = one-suited hand; pass asks for double; pull of double to new suit = two places to play; pull to responder's suit = slam try with a second suit possible for trumps if we do bid slam; pull to cuebid = slam try with void (direct cuebid is exclusion).

This is fairly complicated, but it can be learned, and should work well. PDI applies only over opposing bids at the four level or higher, or jumps to the three level. The PDI rules do not apply to other auctions where we are in a high-card game force, such as a two-over-one response; it is only used when the auction has started with a strong club. I am not sure why this should be true, but the authorities on PDI say it is so.

## FORCING PASS AUCTIONS

We will use more normal rules for forcing-pass auctions that arise in other situations, but with Matt Granovetter's suggestions. Granovetter says it is a very bad idea to play the common high-level treatment of forcing pass auctions, where you pass and then pull partner's double back to your agreed suit to show a slam try. The argument in favor of the treatment is that when you do this, it will be unmistakably clear to anyone (like a committee) that you always intended to bid again, but Granovetter doesn't agree. I think he is right. Is it really true that it will be clear? Many hands that have good values that might be interpreted as good enough to invite slam are also powerful defensive hands that could reasonably pass a double. The problem, of course, is that if partner produces a slow double and you pull, it's committee time. Our treatment of FP decisions at high levels is as follows: Pass just shows nothing special, presumably indicating that if partner doubles, you are willing to sit, and that if he takes the push himself, you will not raise to slam. Double warns partner not to bid more (although he can if he wants to). Taking the push indicates offensive orientation, which in turn means willingness to hear partner bid the slam. This is Granovetter's recommended set of treatments. (We will add that when there is room, i.e. at least one bid in between their suit and ours, a bid of an in-between suit is a real slam try, while just bidding our suit, although it shows offensive orientation, denies serious extras.)

Of course, these methods don't always avoid ethical problems, since you can have a problem in direct seat which might lead you to produce a slow double or slow pass of your own, but at least you are likely to have the problem only on one round of bidding, not two different ones.