

Should you double with the example hand? Yes, indeed. The opponents have struggled up to game after each limited his hand severely: responder by answering one notrump originally and by rebidding two spades, opener by failing to jump to three hearts at his second turn or to four spades at his third. This doesn't mean that the contract must go down, but it does indicate that the enemy have stretched their values and need good breaks to make game. They are getting bad breaks, for the trumps do not split, and whatever heart strength is missing lies behind declarer. And when the opponents need good luck and are getting bad luck, you should double them. Another attractive feature of these "stretched" auctions is that neither opponent can have enough extra strength to warrant a redouble, even if the contract can, by some chance, be made. But had the bidding gone:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1 ♠	1 NT
3 ♠	4 ♠

you should not dream of doubling. The opponents are still getting bad breaks, but now they may be able to afford them since either one may have undisclosed extra strength. And that opponent may well redouble if you double a "jumpy" auction like this.

**Doubling by Ear**

A key consideration in deciding whether to double, then, is the sound of the opponents' bidding. Auctions like:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1 ♠	2 ♠
3 ♠	4 ♠

or

1 ♠	1 NT
2 NT	3 NT

are tempting to double, for each opponent has strained to reach game. But auctions like:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1 ♠	2 ♣
3 ♠	4 ♠

or

1 ♠	2 NT
3 NT	

must almost never be doubled. Either opponent may have strength in reserve—not sufficient for slam, perhaps, but enough to redouble, confident of making game even against an unlucky lie of cards.

Obviously, you do not double the opponents simply because they have stretched to reach game. They expect to make their contract, and will do so more than half the time. The limited auctions tell you not that the enemy will go down, but that they are on thin ice, that they cannot survive adverse distribution of key suits or high cards. Usually, you can look at your own hand and tell whether the opponents are running into good luck or bad. And when the lie of cards is foul for them and fair for you, double any game contract that the opponents have struggled to reach.

This decidedly does *not* mean to double a limited game auction whenever you hold a strong hand. Suppose the bidding goes:

OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	- Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	?

Should you double if you hold:

♠ A x x ♠ A x x ♠ A Q x ♣ J x x x

*Certainly not!* This is the sort of auction that you should like to double, but only when the opponents are



extra, according to whether the opponents redouble or make an overtrick. But when a slam is set *because you doubled*, your profit ranges from 1100 to 1600 points. So even if you defeat only one of the three example hands by directing an unusual lead, you will be handsomely ahead. And you figure to do better than that.

**DOUBLING THREE NOTRUMP**

*When Your Side Has Been Silent*

The most common reason for doubling an enemy game contract is that the trumps are breaking badly. But what if you double three notrump? More often than not, this is done to demand a specific opening lead. Suppose the auction goes:

OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	Double

On the surface, your double seems impossible. The enemy auction is not limited (they could have as many as 31 points), so you cannot be doubling speculatively, counting on partner to have a fair hand. You must expect to defeat the contract in your own hand; but if you are so strong, why weren't you in the auction?

The only possible answer is that you have a powerful hand, but passed over one spade because you were long in spades; your suit was bid ahead of you, so you could neither overcall nor double for takeout. Your hand might be:

♠ K Q J 9 x    ♠ A x    ♠ K x x x    ♠ x x

Your double commands partner to lead spades, the first suit bid by dummy. Only if he is void is partner allowed to lead any other suit, and even then he should be apologetic.

The situation is slightly different if you double three

notrump after the sort of enemy bidding sequence that begs to be doubled:

OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Double

Here you are doubling because the opponents cannot afford bad luck, but are getting it. If your hand is:

♠ x    ♠ K 10 x    ♠ K J 9 x    ♠ Q J x x x

you should double, knowing that the breaks are foul for the enemy. On this limited auction, your action is almost surely predicated on diamond strength behind dummy's suit, but does not necessarily call for partner to *lead* diamonds. Obviously, you are prepared for this lead, but you would just as soon have him open a long side suit of his own. You doubled in order to increase the set, not to direct the opening lead.

*When You Have Been in the Auction*

When your side has been in the auction, your doubles of three notrump once again demand specific leads. If partner has bid a suit:

OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♠	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 NT	Double

your double insists that he lead his own suit, undeterred by the opponents' bidding. You have club strength, and do not want partner to try to surprise the enemy by leading an unbid suit.

Similarly, if you have bid a suit but partner has not:

OPENER	PARTNER	RESPONDER	YOU
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♠	2 ♠
Double	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Double



your double commands the lead of your suit. Of course, partner should normally lead your suit anyway, but sometimes he gets ideas of his own. When you double, this is absolutely forbidden. Partner's failure to lead your suit when you double three notrump is justification for homicide in most states of the union. But be merciful if his opening defeats the contract anyway.

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