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Mirror, mirror on the wall — part 2

Last month I told you about the survey I took asking experts their view of mirror doubles. As the popular TV game show *Family Feud* says, let's find out the answers. The survey says ...

Q: Do you play mirror doubles?

A: Twelve out of 12 said no, except over 2♣. All indicated that they did in fact play that a double of 2♣ was Stayman, a form of mirror double. You should, too. Also, you should play "systems on" after a double or a 2♣ overcall.

Q: Do you know any of your peers who play mirror doubles?

A: Twelve out of 12 said no (other than to double 2♣ as Stayman).

Steve Robinson: "I don't know anyone above the Flight C level who plays them."

Mike Passell: "No one I know does."

Q: Do you know where, when or who invented mirror doubles?

A: Twelve out of 12 said they didn't know, but two made these comments:

Allan Falk: "I don't know, but surely a player with no credentials as a bidding theorist."

Barry Rigal: "Surely someone with too much time on their hands!"

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Q: Would you recommend mirror doubles to lower-level players?

A: Ten out of 12 said they wouldn't.

Eric Kokish: "No. Doubles above 2♣ are much more important as negative or value showing."

Rich DeMartino: "Absolutely not!"

Jill Meyers: "No. You are given more options to describe your hand if you play a double as negative or penalty."

Robinson: "No. You need double as either negative or penalty."

Later, I will discuss the negative or penalty double options that you and your partner should agree upon.

Passell: "I wouldn't recommend MD to anyone."

Falk: "No. MD takes away either negative or penalty doubles, both of which are far more important."

Two respondents see some benefits for lower-level players.

Zeke Jabbour: "I recommend anything that is comfortable to them, as long as there is no egregious technical flaw."

Steve Bloom: "Yes. Weaker players need simple and consistent rules to cover a lot of competitive auctions. It is much more important to have a solid agreement in effect, rather than to have the best possible agreements."

Q: What are the strengths of mirror doubles?

A: Some of those polled admitted that there may be two — one based on merit and one based on simplicity:

Jabbour: "They right-side the contract by maintaining the ability to transfer into all four suits."

Bloom: "There are simplicity and transfer gains."

Kokish: "Easy to remember."

Falk: "Preserving the ability to

transfer, which may be overrated."

Robinson: "Simplicity."

Meyers: "Not complicated to learn."

Rigal: "Transfer principle."

David Berkowitz: "Weaker players would have an easier time remembering these bids."

Q: If you do not play mirror doubles, what should double mean?

Bloom: "Either negative or penalty. You choose."

Jabbour: "My personal preference is for negative."

Falk: "Negative at the three level or penalty at the two level. I play both ways with different partners and don't have a real preference."

DeMartino: "With most partners, I play all doubles are negative."

Robinson: "I like double of one-suiters as negative, doubles of two-suiters as penalty and three-level double as negative."

Berkowitz: "I like negative."

Meyers: "Doubles are negative as long as their bid is natural."

Rigal: "Double of any call other than 2♣ is negative."

That's why the players polled don't like mirror doubles. They believe that double is needed for take out (negative) or penalty. Each partnership must choose. Ten of the panelists choose negative.

All the respondents still use transfers after a double or a 2♣ overcall. What do calls mean over other bids?

Q: After an overcall by an opponent (2♦ or higher), what would bid in the next higher suit mean the responder?

A: Rigal: "New suit at the two level is natural and not forcing, but forcing

as not having run stoppers in every
suit. Some teachers didn't like a 1NT

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to game if new suit is bid at the three level."

Meyers: "Bids at the two level are natural and to play."

Robinson: "2♥ and 2♠ are to play [not forcing], while bids at the three level are forcing or transfers if we've agreed on that."

Falk: "Natural and not forcing at the two level, natural and forcing at the three level."

Jabbour: "Natural."

Next month we'll put it all together and suggest the best way to deal with these situations. □

My first book, How You Can Play Like An Expert (Without Having To Be One), has great winning tips, Zia, Catherine Zeta-Jones and much more! It's available at my web site: www.melbridge.com (lots of free stuff, too) or e mail me at mcolch@optonline.net.

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