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RHO doubles partner's strong 1NT opening

What to do when you have a weak one-suited hand

Your partner opens 1NT (15–17 HCP) and your RHO doubles. What do you do?

The first thing you should do is find out what that double shows. It may be part of a convention or it may be for penalty. Whichever it is, you better have methods that cater to all meanings.

If the double is artificial

Many players double 1NT to show a one-suited hand. The idea is that their partner will bid 2♣ and the doubler will then show his suit. Bidding after one of these artificial doubles is pretty easy. Just ignore it and use your normal bidding structure. Stayman, Jacoby, Texas and other treatments work fine here.

If the double is penalty

When your RHO doubles 1NT for penalty, it is likely that you do not have much of a hand. You will seldom have enough points that you want to redouble and play it there. The majority of the time you will pass, and partner will do whatever he feels like. Usually he will pass, too, but if he

has a good suit and is worried about playing in 1NT doubled, he can run to his suit.

In this issue I will discuss what to do when the opponents make a penalty double of 1NT and you have a weak hand with a long suit. In the following examples, North's double is business, typically showing a good balanced hand but perhaps a good suit. You won't know which it is, so you have to look at your hand and make a decision.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1NT	Dbl	?	

Rule: If you have a weak one-suited hand, redouble. This instructs your partner to bid 2♣. Here is how the bidding continues (assuming the opponents remain silent):

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1NT	Dbl	Redbl	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

♠8 ♥743 ♦964 ♣Q108753

Pass. When you pass 2♣, you show that your hand is based on clubs and only clubs. You usually have five clubs but six is possible.

♠63 ♥873 ♦J10963 ♣1042

Playing in diamonds rates to be an improvement on notrump. The way to play in diamonds is to redouble, forcing partner to bid clubs. You will then bid 2♦, which tells partner you only want to play in diamonds.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1NT	Dbl	?	

♠J763 ♥983 ♦Q7 ♣10873

With a relatively balanced hand, you should pass and hope nothing terrible happens. This is not a good

hand, but it is better than some hands you might have.

♠10873 ♥J8732 ♦2 ♣J104

Here you have a 5–4 hand, which means that playing in a suit rates to be best. How can you find your best contract? I will discuss that in the next issue.

Remember this rare exception:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1NT	Dbl	Redbl	Pass
2♦	Pass	?	

You asked partner to bid 2♣ and he bid 2♦. What's up? In this case, your partner is ignoring your instructions. The reason is that he has a good diamond suit that he wants to play in instead of hearing about your suit. If he does this, you usually pass. Only if you have a higher-ranking six-card suit to bid would you overrule your partner's decision.

An expert trick

If you redouble and partner bids 2♣ and gets doubled there, you have a trick available to you ... but you better not forget it if you and your partner decide to use this treatment:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1NT	Dbl	Redbl	Pass
2♣	Dbl	?	

When 2♣ is doubled, you can make sure your partner declares by passing if you have clubs, redoubling if you have diamonds (a transfer), bidding 2♦ to show hearts, or bidding 2♥ to show spades.

You can see that there is zero room to forget this one. The cost for failure will be enormous. Use this at your own risk. □