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# Claim with Colchamiro

## Two faces have I

Some of you might remember the song "Two Faces Have I" by Lou Christie. It reached No. 6 on the Billboard charts in 1963. What can I tell you? I guess I'm stuck in an oldies time warp, although I do know who Lady Gaga is — she dresses funny, but has a great voice.

While playing bridge, I have heard people talking about negative doubles as showing "two places to play," and my mind thinks of that as "two places have I," and that's where Lou Christie comes in.

But that "two places to play" thing just isn't right. That's not what a negative double shows. In most instances, a negative double simply shows four cards in the unbid major.

For example, consider this auction:

Partner	RHO	You
1♣	1♥	Dbl

After right-hand opponent bids 1♥, double shows a 1♠ bid that is four-cards long. It says nothing about the other unbid suit (diamonds), nor does it promise or deny club support.

Think about this auction:

Partner	RHO	You
1♣	1♥	1♠

The 1♠ bid merely says you have at least five spades and at least 6 high-card points. It says nothing about clubs, diamonds or anything else. That's the way you should think about a negative double in this auction — four cards in spades, at least 6 HCP, and that's it. When hearts are the unbid major, things are pretty much the same.

What about this auction:

Partner	RHO	You
1♣	1♠	Dbl?

The double promises four cards in hearts. In some instances, you might have five or more hearts (or occasionally three), but often you will have exactly four — at least that's what partner should base her bidding on. If you have three or five, that's a choice you made because you believe no other bid can do a better job describing your hand. If you have three hearts, you are telling a bit of a white lie.

Why might you tell a lie and make a negative double with five hearts or even three? Well let's look at the following hands and this auction:

Partner	RHO	You
1♣	1♠	?

1. ♠763 ♥KJ762 ♦Q86 ♣Q3
2. ♠843 ♥K43 ♦Q743 ♣Q76

On hand No. 1, you should make a negative double to show hearts — partner won't know you have five of them, but at least she'll know you have four or more. The alternative bids have problems: pass (too many points), 1NT (no spade stopper), or

2♥ (not enough values).

On hand No. 2, there would be disagreements among experts: All the choices have problems, and making a negative double is probably no worse than the alternatives (1NT with no stopper, pass with values or 2♣ with insufficient trump support).

## Two places to play

There are times, however, when a negative double does promise (or at least suggest) two places to play: When there are two unbid majors or when there are no unbid majors.

1. Partner RHO You  
1♣ 1♦ Dbl
2. Partner RHO You  
1♥ 1♠ Dbl
3. Partner RHO You  
1♦ 2♣ Dbl

In auction No. 1, the mainstream view is that double promises four cards in both hearts and spades, certainly at least four in one and at least three in the other or "two places to play."

In auction No. 2, the double promises both minors.

In auction No. 3, the double promises either both majors (at least 4-3) or one major and somewhere else to play. □

*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.*