

TRAVIS-T(ip) 12

by Barbara Travis

WHAT DOES A TAKEOUT DOUBLE SHOW?

I had a game at the Club today, and the auction went:

ME	OPP 2	PARTNER	OPP 1
		1H	X
Pass	Pass	??	

What is the meaning of this auction? Opponent #1 made a takeout double of 1H, which should show support, ie at least 3+ cards, in each of the three unbid suits. Opponent #2 converted the takeout double into a penalty double, which should show hearts galore, with the intention of defeating 1HX.

What did they hold?

Opponent 1	Opponent 2
KQ10x	Jxx
Q87xx	A9x
Jx	xxx
Ax	Q98x

Bear in mind that it was Opponent 1 who doubled, and Opponent 2 who penalty passed. Who did the right thing? The answer is: NEITHER of them.

Opponent #1 made a takeout double of hearts when her longest suit was hearts! Opponent #2 converted it to penalties with A9x in hearts. I held a dreadful hand with 2 HCP and a 5-0-5-3 shape, so if #1 had passed we would have played in 1H which would not have been fun.

It is a very bad habit that many players have, not just those who are inexperienced, to double with opening values regardless of hand shape. This is a long-term losing strategy because you will often end up in a lousy contract or you will guide the opponents to a better resting spot (as happened in our case). Doubles do NOT just say, "I have opening points, partner". They say:

- Opening points
- No biddable 5+ card suit (especially a decent 5-card Major)
- At least 3 cards in each of the unbid suit
- They are forcing on partner, unless partner has the bid suit and plans to defeat that contract-doubled.

One of the benefits of playing takeout doubles properly is that partner is able to determine the contract level that their hand is worth and tell their partner that, all in their one bid. For instance, you hold:

			KQ10xx
			AKx
			xx
			xxx
1H	X	Pass	??

You can bid an immediate 4S, based on the fact that you know partner will hold opening values AND 3+ spades. Of course, if your partner is prone to double just to show opening values, and might have a singleton spade, then this sort of bid is impossible!

I've encountered too many people who just double to say opening values, with the offset that an overcall denies opening values. This is incorrect and a losing way to play the game. So play takeout doubles correctly!