

TRAVIS-T(ip) #13

by Barbara Travis

HOW TO RESPOND TO TAKEOUT DOUBLES

Last month we looked at what a takeout double shows/means. On the basis that you are now making 'correct' takeout doubles, let's look at how to respond to your partner's takeout doubles.

The first thing to realise is that when your partner makes a takeout double they do not promise to bid again. Whereas if your partner opens the bidding and your response in a new suit is forcing, after a takeout double (and RHO has passed) your bid is 'forced' rather than 'forcing'. Your partner may be using the takeout double to say "I'm here, I've got an opening bid, but now it's up to you." When that is the case, ie they have a minimum takeout double, they do not plan to bid again if you make a minimum response. **As such, if you have a 5+ card suit (in other words, a known fit) you should bid the MAXIMUM VALUE of your hand immediately!**

Hence, in the example I gave last month, the bidding has gone:

(1H) X (Pass/2H) ??

and you hold: **KQ109x**
 AKx
 xx
 xxx

You should respond 4S, because your hand is worth 13 TP together with your partner's opening hand (and 3+ card spade suit. Imagine partner has doubled with:

AJx
xx
AKxx
xxxx

If you only bid 1S, you are showing a weak hand and your partner (the doubler) should be passing. In fact, the doubler should only bid again opposite a minimum response if they hold 16+ HCP, given you should already be bidding the maximum value of your hand immediately.

Using this structure, the only time you have any problems is if you have a good hand (10+ HCP) and only 4 cards in your long suit/s. The best solution to bidding on these hands is to 'cue bid' the opponent's suit. This tells your partner (the doubler) that you have a good hand but no clear-cut bid and asks them to bid their suits 'up the line'. [It wouldn't be natural or you would Pass the double, converting it to penalties.]

As an example, you hold: Jxxx
 AKxx
 KQx
 Xx

(3C) X (P) ??

At the table my opponent bid 4H to show her game values. She was rather unlucky because she found her partner with a 4-3-4-2 hand shape but 4H failed when the trumps broke 6-0. On the other hand, 4S on the 4-4 fit was unbeatable. She asked me how to bid it, but wasn't interested in the solution I proffered – which was to bid 4C (the opponent's suit) which would ask partner to bid her suits. Her partner would then have bid either:

- 4D then she'd bid 4H
 4S and there you would rest, having found your fit,
 OR
- 4S immediately (as her 4-card Major)

In summary, when you are responding to your partner's takeout double, your bid is not forcing (unless you cue bid the opponent's suit), rather it is 'forced', so you should bid the full value of your hand immediately.