

TRAVIS-T(ip) #6

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IF YOU DON'T USE NEGATIVE DOUBLES, YOU SHOULD

How often does an opponent overcall your partner's opening bid and mess up your planned response?

For example, partner opens 1D and your RHO overcalls 1S:

- | | |
|---------|--|
| S 98 | You could Pass, but that is not satisfactory with 7 HCP. |
| H KQJ7 | 1NT (6-9 HCP) is not appropriate with no spade stopper. |
| D 976 | A bid at the 2-level shows 10+ HCP. |
| C J1098 | You shouldn't support diamonds with only 3 cards. |
- But equally, you don't want to Pass just because of the intervention.

Hands where you want to make a penalty double of the opponent's overcall occur rarely.

Instead we use doubles of low level overcalls to give partner the message:

"I would have responded to your opening bid but the overcall has made my life difficult."

These doubles are called NEGATIVE DOUBLES and are like takeout doubles. They say:

- I have the other two (unbid) suits, or
- I have a one-suited hand which I cannot bid freely (not enough HCP), or
- I have one of the other suits (major) and support for your suit (minor)

So on the hand above, you would make a negative double; you have the perfect hand for it, being able to cope with any rebid partner makes.

POINT COUNT FOR NEGATIVE DOUBLES:

- At the 1-level 6+ HCP
- At the 2-level ~8+ HCP (more shape = fewer points allowed)
- At the 3-level 10+ HCP
- There is no upper limit (HCP) for negative doubles.

HOW HIGH TO PLAY NEGATIVE DOUBLES:

I would recommend playing them to the 3-level, but it is a matter for partnerships to agree on.

WHAT OPENER DOES NEXT:

- Opener introduces a new 4-card suit.
- Opener can rebid NT with the opponent's suit stopped.
- *Minimum rebids show minimum hands.*
- ***You need to jump to show a stronger opening hand (16+ HCP) or bid game with enough values***
(REVERSES are cancelled because the double tells partner to bid).

EXAMPLE 1:

The auction starts: 1H (1S) ??

You hold: xx
xx
KJxx

Kxxxx

What can you bid? You cannot bid 1NT (6-9 HCP) because that shows a spade stopper.

You cannot bid 2C because that shows 10+ HCP.

You have an ideal hand for a negative double.

If partner bids 2C or 2D (minimum opening bid) you will happily pass, having won the part-score battle.

If partner rebids 2H (showing 6 cards) you can pass, having won the part-score battle.

If partner jumps, depending on what they bid you may pass or head to game.

EXAMPLE 2:

The auction starts: 1D (2C) ??

You hold: **Kxxx**
Kxxx
Qx
AKx

What can you bid? If you bid a Major at the 2-level it will show your points and be forcing BUT it will show a 5+ card suit. You could bid 3NT (values for game, clubs stopped) BUT you haven't had the opportunity to explore for a Major fit. Furthermore, you close down the auction when you might belong in slam.

You should use a negative double first, because you can always bid 3NT with your next bid.

You are now ready to deal with whatever partner rebids.

If partner rebids 2H or 2S (minimum opening bid), your next bid will be game in that suit.

If partner rebids 2D, then you can rebid 3NT confident that you have eliminated a Major fit.

If partner rebids 3H or 3S you can explore for slam in that Major.

EXAMPLE 3:

The auction starts: 1C (2S) ??

You hold: **x**
K10xx
AKxx
Axxx

What can you bid? Bidding a new suit at the 3-level would be forcing, but would show a 5+ card suit.

Bidding clubs (3C) would be non-forcing.

You have a perfect hand for a negative double.

After partner's rebid you will be in a good position to determine where to go in the auction.

If partner rebids 2NT you will bid 3NT.

If partner rebids a new suit at the 3-level (minimum opening bid), you will settle for game.

If partner jumps to show a stronger opening bid, you will head to slam via RKCB.

EXAMPLE 4:

The auction starts: 1H (2C) ??

You hold: **AQ10xxx**
x
Qxx
xxx

What can you bid? If you bid 2S you are showing the 5+ card suit, but you are showing 10+ HCP and making a forcing bid. At the same time, you don't want to pass with such a nice hand/suit.

Again, you start with a negative double.

If partner bids 2D or 2H, you now bid 2S. Partner then has to work out that you have a WEAK hand with a long suit of your own; if you held 10+ HCP then you would have bid 2S at your first bid, so your hand becomes like a weak 2S opening bid.

EXAMPLE 5:

You hold: **QJ10xxx**
 K
 Qxxx
 xx

The auction starts:	Partner	You
	1H (2C)	X (negative) P
	3NT P	??

You had planned to rebid spades (as in Example 4) but now you Pass – to protect your partner's clubs.

WHEN YOU WANT TO DOUBLE FOR PENALTIES

WHEN YOU PLAY NEGATIVE DOUBLES YOU CAN NO LONGER DOUBLE AN OVERCALL FOR PENALTIES...

WHAT ABOUT PENALISING THE OVERCALL:

When you want to penalise the opponent's overcall you have to PASS and wait for partner to double.

When you have length in the opponents suit, ask yourself:

- Do I want to play this hand or do I want to defend and take them down.
- If the answer is 'Defend', then you need to Pass first, then Pass partner's double.

There is more onus on the opener to look at their hand and think about whether you may have a penalty double if the bidding goes: OPENING BID – OVERCALL – PASS – PASS...

Opener must think:

- Am I short in 'their' suit? Where are the rest of that suit (since RHO hasn't raised)?
- Where are the rest of 'their' suit (given RHO hasn't bid/raised)?
- If the answer is "With partner", then you must re-open with a DOUBLE, which initially asks partner to bid another suit (i.e. you are short in their suit) OR to PASS if they had a penalty double of the overcall.
- Where are the HCP on this hand (since RHO hasn't bid)?
- If the answer is "With partner" and partner hasn't bid, then clearly your partner has the opponent's suit! If you have any 'normal' shape for your opening bid, and shortage in 'their' suit, then you must re-open with a DOUBLE which allows partner to PASS with the penalty double of the overcall, or bid another suit if they are, in fact, weak (when you now find your best fit).

Opener MUST reopen with a double when short in the opponent's suit – i.e. singleton or small doubleton.

The only exception is when you have 'extreme' shape (like a 7-4 or 6-5) when you bid your shape/suits.

Otherwise (for example with a 5-4-3-1, short in the overcall) you should double.

EXAMPLE:

The auction starts: 1S (2H) ??

and you hold:
x
KJ10xx
Axx
xxxx

You want to penalise 2H, so you have to Pass.

Now the auction continues:

1S (2H) P (P)

and partner is expected to re-open with a double because they will be short in hearts:

X (P) and now you can convert their double to Penalties

by passing.

On the other hand, if your initial pass was based on a poor hand, then you must bid after the re-opening double.

Say you hold: **xxx**
 Jxx
 Qxxx
 Qxx

Now it should go: X (P) 2S (clearly weak since you didn't bid the first time).