



# Adventures in Bridge

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## *This Week in Bridge*

### **(147) After Partner's Negative Double**

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Level: 2

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#### **General**

When we open the bidding with a suit, LHO overcalls (or jump overcalls), and then partner makes a negative double, if RHO passes we are forced to take a second bid. Partner is implying support for the unbid suits (though not promising support for both) and asking us to further describe our hand. When we are forced to make a bid in a competitive auction, with limited bidding space, this can lead to some difficult bidding decisions. Let's look at some of these situations where we are faced with a difficult rebid problem as the Opener.

#### **Opener Has a 4-Card Major**

When partner makes a negative double and we have a 4-card Major in an unbid suit, we have a relatively easy rebid. We show our shape to partner:

#### *Examples*

1♣    1♠    X    P

2♥

This shows a 4-card ♥ suit and a minimum hand, 12-14 points.

1♦    2♣    X    P

2♥

This also shows a 4-card ♥ suit and a minimum hand, 12-14 points.

#### **Jump Bids**

In both of the above example auctions a jump to 3♥ shows a 4-card ♥ suit and extra values, 15-17 points. Since Opener did not start the auction with a 1NT opening bid, this jump implies an unbalanced or semi-balanced hand.



## What Does a Negative Double Promise?

When we are considering what to rebid in these negative double auctions it is important to think about how many values partner has shown with the negative double before selecting your call.

The higher Responder makes a negative double, the more values it promises.

*A Negative Double of a 1-level overcall shows 6+ points.*

The values Responder promises for a negative double increase from there:

Vs. Overcalls:

- 2♣ About 7+ points.  
...
- 2♠ About 10+ points  
...
- 3♠ About 12+points.

Considering how many values partner has shown is helpful in selecting a rebid. This is especially true when considering a Notrump rebid.

## Rebids When Opener Has a Balanced Hand with 12-14 Points

With a minimum balanced hand, we planned to open the bidding and rebid 1NT in a non-competitive auction. Let's look at how these plans change when LHO overcalls and partner makes a negative double.

*Example*

1♣ 1♠ X P This Negative Double shows 6+ points.  
1NT

A 1NT rebid still shows a balanced 12-14 points. It usually denies 4-card ♥ and often has a ♠ stopper.

*Problem Rebid Hand (from example above)*

♠ 873  
♥ A93  
♦ AK6  
♣ Q543

With this hand we are forced to make a rebid after partner's negative double of 1♠. Even though we do not have a ♠ stopper it is still best to rebid 1NT. A rebid of 1NT does not promise the same kind of stoppers as a higher-level Notrump rebid.



*Example*

1♦ 2♣ X P This Negative Double shows about 7+ points.  
\_\_\_?

This auction can give Opener a serious rebid problem.

With a balanced hand, only 12 points, and no suit to rebid, Opener should not rebid 2NT. Opener only knows that partnership has 19+ combined points (12 and 7+) and it usually takes about 22-23 combined points to have a reasonable chance of making 2NT. Instead, Opener must find some other rebid.

*Problem Rebid Hand (from example above)*

♠ 873  
♥ AJ2  
♦ AK95  
♣ 874

With this hand Opener has no good rebid. 2NT is not a good choice with only 12 points and without a ♣ stopper. The other options are also flawed:

- 2♦ is a flawed rebid because Opener does not have enough ♦.
- 2♥ is a flawed rebid because Opener does not have enough ♥.
- 2♠ is also a flawed rebid with only 3-card ♠ and no honors in the ♠ suit.

Opener has no good rebid, so either 2♦ or 2♥ is the best lie.

### Higher Level Negative Doubles

When Partner makes a negative double of a high-level jump overcall and we have a strong holding in the opponent's suit we can pass and convert partner's negative double to penalty.

*Example*

♠ KQT8  
♥ A5  
♦ 653  
♣ A943

1♣ 3♠ X P  
\_\_\_?

With this hand we happily pass and convert partner's negative double to a penalty double – expecting to collect a large penalty!

But in a similar auction without such a good ♠ holding we may be faced with a much more difficult rebid choice. The higher that partner makes a negative double, the more values they promise and the more we can count on them to produce defense if we are faced with a problem rebid.



*Example*

♠ 873  
♥ A4  
♦ AK73  
♣ QT65

1♦    3♠    X    P  
\_\_\_?

In this auction we pass partner's double not because we are happy to do so, but because it is our best chance to produce a good score (a positive score). We would prefer to have an honor in the opponent's ♠ suit, but that would make the decision to pass too easy!

### **2NT Rebids that Show Some Extra Values**

Consider the following rebid problem:

1♦    2♥    X    P  
2NT

This 2NT rebid shows a hand that is willing to play 2NT opposite a good 8 points. That means that we should have either a balanced hand with 14 points and ♥ stopper or a bit more values, like a semi-balanced or unbalanced 15-point hand.

We should try not to rebid 2NT with a balanced 12-point hand. With that hand we need to find some other "reasonable rebid".

*Example*

♠ 8  
♥ AQ7  
♦ AKJ54  
♣ 8643

This is an unbalanced hand that should rebid 2NT because it has 14 points and a double stopper in the opponent's ♥ suit.

### **Conclusion**

When the opponent's bid eats up valuable bidding space and partner makes a negative double then we are likely to need to change our original rebid plans. With a balanced hand, we are most likely to have rebid problems – especially if we do not have a stopper in the opponent's suit. Keep in mind the values partner has shown and don't commit your side too high without enough values to compensate – avoid a 2NT rebid with a balanced 12-point hand and find a better lie. When these auctions happen problems often occur, so be prepared to make the best lie you can figure out in these difficult rebid situations. Remember partner forced you to bid, so whatever happens, you have a scapegoat!