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Bidding Basics

Negative doubles – continued

The past two months, we examined opener's actions after responder's negative double. This month, we will look at the negative doubler's second call. As explained in previous months, a negative double has no upper point limit. It is up to the negative doubler to stop in a partscore, invite game, insist on game or even investigate slam. This month, let's assume opener has shown a minimum hand (he hasn't jumped). For example, the auction has started:

Opener	Overcaller	Responder	Advancer
1♦	2♣	Dbl	Pass
2♥			

Opener is basically saying he would have raised a 1♥ response to 2♥. Opener will have something like:

♠K 2	♥Q 10 8 7	♦A K J 3	♣8 7 6
or			
♠7 6	♥A Q 10 2	♦K Q J 6 4	♣9 2.

(Notice that opener's reply to a negative double is not considered a "reverse.")

Now what?

If responder has nothing extra, he can (and will) pass. For example, responder will pass opener's 2♥ on the auction above with:

♠A 9 8 3	♥K 9 6 3	♦7 5	♣Q 10 3.
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Responder can invite by raising to 3♥ with something like:

♠A 9 8 3	♥K 9 6 3	♦7 5	♣A 5 3.
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Responder can insist on game by raising to 4♥ with something like:

♠A Q 8 3	♥K J 9 3	♦7 5	♣A 10 3.
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Responder could have even more! One way to express slam interest is a cuebid (this time our auction has a 1♠ overcall):

Opener	Overcaller	Responder	Advancer
1♦	1♠	Dbl	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	

This 2♠ bid says nothing about spades (it doesn't ask for nor show a stopper, it doesn't show nor deny a spade control). It just says: "We are going to at least game – let's explore." Here are some example hands for responder that match the auction above:

♠K 3	♥A Q 8 7	♦K J 2	♣A Q 7 6
♠Q 2	♥A J 10 5	♦A K J 8	♣A 3 2
♠8 7 6	♥Q 4 3	♦A K Q	♣A 10 3 2

Here are examples for responder after this auction:

Opener	Overcaller	Responder	Advancer
1♣	1♥	Dbl	Pass
1NT	Pass	?	

♠K J 7 6 ♥Q 4 3 ♦K 10 3 2 ♣J 2:
Pass. Opener has shown 12–14 balanced.

♠K Q J 9	♥A 2	♦Q 7 6 4	♣7 3 2:
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2NT, invitational. Opener will pass with 12 and go to game with 14 – and use judgment with 13.

♠A Q 10 8	♥4 3	♦A K Q 2	♣Q 3 2:
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Raise to 3NT. Opposite 12–14 balanced, slam is not likely.

♠A K Q J	♥A 3 2	♦A J 2	♣10 8 7:
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Raise to 4NT (inviting slam).

Next month, we will examine what to do after making a negative double when opener shows extra values. ➤

Newer Players

Quiz

What is responder's second call after:
1♦-(1♥)-Dbl-(Pass); 2♣-(Pass) with:

- ① ♠A Q J 6 ♥10 7 6 5 ♦Q 3 2 ♣3 2
- ② ♠K J 7 6 ♥K J 2 ♦A 2 ♣J 10 8 7
- ③ ♠Q 8 7 6 ♥5 4 3 ♦A 2 ♣A J 10 2
- ④ ♠10 8 7 6 ♥A Q 2 ♦3 2 ♣J 10 8 7

What is responder's second call after:
1♠-(2♦)-Dbl-(Pass); 2♥-(Pass) with:

- ⑤ ♠K 2 ♥J 7 6 ♦J 7 6 ♣A J 8 7 6
- ⑥ ♠A 2 ♥A 10 8 7 ♦J 7 6 5 ♣A Q 2

What is responder's second call after:
1♣-(3♥)-Dbl-(Pass); 3NT-(Pass)
with:

- ⑦ ♠A 10 9 2 ♥J 4 ♦A Q 2 ♣A J 7 6
- ⑧ ♠A 10 9 2 ♥J 4 ♦A Q J 2 ♣A K Q

Answers

- ① 2♦. Just a minimum preference back to opener's first suit.
- ② 3NT. Yes, there is a club fit, but only a spade fit was of interest here.
- ③ 3♣. Natural, invitational (at least four-card support to raise opener's second suit).
- ④ Pass. No reason to take a second call.
- ⑤ 2♠. A "false preference" to keep the bidding alive, but likely to end the auction.
- ⑥ 4♥. Enough for game; but not enough to look for slam (opener has a minimum).
- ⑦ Pass. Delighted to find such a partner who has hearts stopped.
- ⑧ 6NT. Delighted again, but make sure to reach slam with roughly 33 HCP combined. ■