

Bridge Theory for the Practitioners

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24. Demon Doubling

One advantage of sound opening bids is the ability to double opponents' part score contracts. This is more prevalent in Matchpoints; however, we do double part score contracts in IMP scoring as well and with good results. Typically the double or the conversion of a takeout double to penalty double (I like to call them conversion from takeout to "eat-in" double) comes from the opener's partner (responder) who trusts the opener with a sound opening bid with at least two defensive tricks.

In this column I will give some examples where such doubles could work to your benefit.

Example 1. You pass holding either a weak hand or a penalty double hand

Consider this auction:	Opener	They	You/responder	
	1S	2C	?	
You hold something like	x	AJx	Kxxx	Axxxx

If they are vulnerable and you are not, you have an easy pass hoping that opener doubles back in. If you are vulnerable and they are not, it is not totally clear what to do, particularly in Matchpoints. It is okay to pass in IMPs and take your plus.

Will opener always double back in? Not necessarily. Opener knows that he needs to double to protect your penalty holding, but even then he has to consider the *global picture*. What issues to consider for **not** doubling back in?

a. If opener is void in their suit

This is a big no, no. The inability to play even one round of trump from the other end makes it very difficult to set a low-level contract to a profitable level.

b. If opener has a monster two suiter

This is another holding to be careful about doubling back in. Your side might have game or slam your way and double of a low-level contract might not be as profitable.

c. When Opener has their suit

After opening 1S with: AJxxx KQx x QJxxx, the auction goes
1S 2C P P.

Opener must pass for two reasons. First, however much he wants to double 2C, his double will be for takeout and responder would bid something. Second, he needs to address this question as well: Why didn't responder use her negative double when opener has such good clubs? She must have a very weak hand. Now double will back fire.

Example 2. You have a fit with Opener and also have good holding in the opponents' suit

Consider the same auction:	1S	2C (they)	?	
But now you hold something like AQxx		xx	Kx	Axxxx

It is dangerous to pass and try to penalize them in 2C-X. The S-fit makes your hand defensively weaker for the fact that you are not winning too many S tricks. Go for the S game (may be even S slam) whatever the vulnerability might be.

Example 3.

This example of partscore doubling is from Augie Boehm's book "Demon Defense and Demon Doubling". Boehm is a regular columnist in the Bridge bulletin.

You hold:	7	Q9743	9842	AJ5 with both vulnerable.
1S (partner)		2H (they)	P (you)	P
X		P	?	

You can pass safely in both Matchpoint and in IMPs.

With accurate defense of first ruffing S, then, cashing side tricks and then going for trump promotion you can pick up a +800 which is good in all forms of scoring. For completeness, opener's hand was

AJ642	5	AK75	Q62
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And the overcaller had:

K8	AKJT82	Q63	K7
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Not too shabby a hand for the 2H overcall. And even then you can set it 3 tricks with correct defense. The requirement for demon doubling is of course demon defense.

Boehm points out something else in the same book that we often do not consider very carefully at the table. As I cannot say it better, I will quote him verbatim: "Ironically, sometimes it is more dangerous to double a five-level contract than a low partial because the chances of distributional volatility increase".