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1. Introduction

I invented **Support Double and Redouble** in 1974. The original idea was that opener could double an overcall to show three-card support for responder's major. For clarity, opponent's bids are shown in brackets:

1♦ - (Pass) - 1♥ - (1♠)

- Double: three-card heart support

- 2♥: four-card heart support

- Pass or other bids: fewer than three hearts

A Support Redouble applies when RHO (Right Hand Opponent, and likewise LHO = Left Hand Opponent) makes a takeout double of the response of one of a major:

1♦ - (Pass) - 1♠ - (Double)

- Redouble: three-card spade support

I invented this convention originally to avoid playing in a 3-3 major suit fit. At the time we played Precision, and in response to the 1♦ opening, I thought it clever to bid 1♥ or 1♠ on a three-card suit. My partner, Mr. Bloom, thought it was right to raise with three-card support. So, the resulting 3-3 fit I named a 'Bloom Obstinace Fit'. One day the bidding went:

1♦ - (Pass) - 1♥ - (1♠)

At this point my partner, after long thought, said "Two Hots" (he's from Boston). At this point I thought "at least in competition, he can double to show three-card support". Thus the Support Double was born, though at the time I called it the 'Bloom Obstinace Double'. It has later been renamed the Support Double.

Though I no longer respond three-card majors, the Support Double is as useful as ever. Suppose I have this hand:

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♠ 10 9 3
♥ A K 8 7 6
♦ 3 2
♣ J 8 7
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Partner opens 1♦, RHO passes, I bid 1♥ and LHO bids 2♣. How high should I compete?

Let's first suppose that partner has passed, denying three or more hearts. In this case I know we have no eight-card fit anywhere (partner would rebid 2♦ with six diamonds). Thus I should pass and try for a plus on defense. Partner's hand is:

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♠ A 8 7 4
♥ 9 2
♦ A K 8 7
♣ Q 9 3
```

We have an excellent chance to go plus against 2♣; 2♥ or other partials our way rate to go down. Put the ♣Q in the heart suit, so that partner has:

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♠ A 8 7 4
♥ Q 9 2
♦ A K 8 7
♣ 9 3
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Now it is right to compete to 2♥, and partner will double 2♣, the Support Double, to show me three-card heart support. I remove to 2♥. Both 2♣ and 2♥ figure to make so this is a good thing.

Now suppose partner has a fourth trump:

♠ A 8 7
♥ Q 9 5 2
♦ A K 8 7
♣ 9 2



♠ 10 9 3
♥ A K 8 7 6
♦ 3 2
♣ J 8 7

Partner will raise to 2♥ and you will pass, but if they compete to 3♣, you will try 3♥, confident that there is a nine-card fit. There is no assurance that this will always work but it is playing the percentages.

2. When do Support Doubles and Redoubles apply?

The short answer: when you and partner agree that they do! Regardless of what I say here, you need to discuss it with your partner. My suggestion is as follows:

Support Doubles apply through a 2+ bid on opener's right.

Support Doubles apply only when responder has bid 1, or 1+. It doesn't matter what opener's LHO did.

Support Redoubles have only one case: opener's RHO doubles the response of one of a major for take-out.

1♦ - (Pass) - 1♥ - (2♣)
- Double: Support. Responder has bid one of a major and there was an overcall on opener's right that was at 2+ or below.

1♦ - (Pass) - 1♠ - (3♣)
- Double: not Support. This double means whatever you have agreed: penalty, take-out, good hand, whatever.

1+ - (1♥) - 1♠ - (2♦)
- Double: Support. Responder has bid one of a major and RHO overcalled at the one- or two-level. It doesn't matter that LHO has overcalled 1♥.

In the last case you might wonder: the 1♠ bid shows at least five spades (since most play that a negative double would show exactly four spades), so why would you need a Support Double?

It is nice to know when there is a nine-card fit vs an eight-card fit. Suppose you have this hand:

♠ K J 8 4 3
♥ 2
♦ Q 7 6
♣ 10 7 6 5

No one vulnerable:

1+ - (1♥) - 1♠ - (2♦)
Double - (4♥) - ?

It might work very well to bid 4♠ here but it might be a disaster also. Pard might have three small cards in spades with a 4-1 split. Since partner has another chance to bid, it is best to pass (in tempo). He knows you have five spades. Say opener has:

♠ A Q 9
♥ 6 5 4
♦ A K 10 7 6 5
♣ 3

He can bid 4♠ himself, having strong trumps and a good side suit. If opener has:

♠ 9 5 2
♥ K 10 8
♦ A J 9 8
♣ A 4 3

of course he will pass and you have a good chance for a plus instead of a possible big minus.

If instead of double, opener had bid 2♦ promising four trumps, 4♠ is much more likely to work

well. Or if it is the wrong decision, at least it will be harder for them to double, and they might go wrong again by bidding 5♥. Give opener:

♠ Q 9 5 2
♥ J 8
♦ A K J 3
♣ J 8 7

4♣ will very likely make and 4♠ is down two if they can cash all their tricks. It isn't easy for them to double. Opener, having shown his hand already, can't bid 4♠ now since he doesn't know you have a stiff heart among other things.

Bottom line: Support Doubles are useful even if it is known that you have five or more spades.

3. Q&A I

Is the final double in the auctions below a Support Double?

1.
1+ - (Double) - 1♥ - (2♦)
Double
2.
1♠ - (1♥) - 1♠ - (3♥)
Double
3.
1♦ - (1♠) - 2♥ - (2♠)
Double
4.
(1♣) - 1♠ - (2♣) - Double

Answers

1. Opener's double in the first auction is support. Responder bid one of a major and there was a two-level overcall. LHO's take-out double doesn't affect anything. 2. This is not a Support Double, since the RHO's bid is at the three-level. What it does mean is up to you, I suggest it says "I have a good hand but no convenient bid".

3. This is not a Support Double because the response was not one of a major, it was two of a major. I once scored +1070 in 2+ doubled in the Cavendish Pairs (IMP scoring!) when my opponents had this exact misunderstanding.

4. This last double is not a Support Double because we aren't the opening side. This double is whatever you agree, but I suggest responsive (take-out).

4. Is a Support Double or Redouble mandatory ?

This is a matter for partnership agreement. You might wish to make certain common-sense exceptions, such as when you have a hand that looks better for defense than offence:

1+ - (Pass) - 1♠ - (2♣)
?

♠ 8 6 5
♥ K 3
♦ A J 8 7
♣ K Q 7 6

You are content to defend 2♣, and this will be a good idea if pard has only 4♠. Of course if pard has 5♠ not making a Support Double could complicate things but with weak spades and very good clubs an exception seems warranted, so pass.

The second exception comes when RHO bids 1NT. Now, it is more dangerous to make a Support Double with a minimum balanced hand. Example:

♠ Q 9 3
♥ A 2
♦ A Q 10 4
♣ 8 7 6 5

1+ - (Pass) - 1♠ - (1NT)
?

Pass. It is too dangerous when RHO bids 1NT to make a Support Double. However, in the case that the 1NT overcall is artificial – showing a two-suiter for instance – I suggest opener can launch a Support Double.

The final case, if you have agreed to play Support Doubles through 2♠, is when they bid 2♠ (over partner's 1♠). Now, a double would force partner to the three-level, so you should have a GOOD weak notrump, or a hand with shape (or any good hand).

1+ - (Pass) - 1♥ - (2♠)
 ?

♠ K93
 ♥ A J 3
 ♦ K Q 8 7
 ♣ 8 6 5

♠ 5 4
 ♥ K Q 9
 ♦ A K J 10 4
 ♣ J 7 6

♠ 4
 ♥ K 10 3
 ♦ A J 8 6 5
 ♣ A K 7 6

Hand 1 is too weak to make a Support Double that would force partner to the three-level; therefore pass.

Hand 2 is worth a Support Double in my opinion. Hopefully if partner can't bid 3♥ or 4♥ he can put you back in 3♦.

Hand 3 is a 'shape' hand with medium strength. You start with a Support Double and see what happens.

5. How does responder reply to a Support Double or Redouble?

I believe it is best to think of the Support Double as a take-out double. You know some additional things, such as what suit opener opened and that he has three-card support. If the Support Double or Redouble comes at a low level:

1+ - (Pass) - 1♥ - (1♠)
 Double - (Pass) - ?

- 1NT, 2♠, 2♦, or 2♣ : all non-forcing, up to 10 HCP (High Card Points)
- 2NT, 3♦, or 3♣ : all invitational to game.
- 2♠: game forcing
- jumps in new suits are probably best played as game forcing, but invitational is okay if you prefer

One thing that might surprise you: responder should bid 1NT on balanced hands with no fit, even with no spade stopper. Opener might have good spades for the double, and since you are in 1NT it is no big deal if the opponents can run spades anyway.

6. Q&A II

1♦ - (Pass) - 1♥ - (1♠)
 Double - (Pass) - ?

♠ 9 4 3
 ♥ J 8 6 5
 ♦ K 3
 ♣ A 9 6 5

♠ A J 3
 ♥ Q 9 7 6 5
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ J 8 3

♠ 9 7
 ♥ J 10 8 6
 ♦ K Q 9 7
 ♣ A J 9

♠ 9 7 6
 ♥ A 10 7 5
 ♦ K J 3
 ♣ A Q 3

Answers

Hand 1 should bid 1NT, in spite of having no spade stopper. Bidding 2♠, a new suit, should show a five-card second suit (with only four hearts, else you would sign off in the known 5-3 heart fit).

Hand 2 should bid 2♣. This strongly implies at least five hearts since so many other

choices are available at this level. You have 60 HCP but poor shape and soft values so you aren't quite worth an invitational 3_♠.

Hand 3 should bid 3₊, invitational, with 11 HCP and a good diamond fit. Of course you deny a fifth heart (you would invite with 3_♥ instead).

Hand 4 should bid 2_♠, a cuebid, to force to game. Of course you are hoping to hear 2NT now, opener's top priority in his rebid if he has a stopper in spades.

7. The Support Double at the two-level

If the Support Double comes at the two-level, responder has fewer choices:

1_♦ - (Pass) - 1_♥ - (2_♣)
 Double - (Pass) - ?

- 2_♦: at least three diamonds, only four hearts, non-forcing
- 2_♥: much more likely to be only four hearts than after a 1+ overcall; non-forcing
- 2_♠: natural, 4-4 in the majors; should be forcing one round, at least invitational
- 2NT, 3_♦, 3_♥: invitational to game
- 3_♠: game forcing cuebid

Two examples:

1+ - (Pass) - 1_♠ - (2+)
 Double - (Pass) - ?

♠ K J 3 2
 ♥ Q 10 7 6
 ♦ 7 6
 ♣ 9 7 6

♠ A 3
 ♥ J 8 3 2
 ♦ J 10 3
 ♣ 8 7 6 5

Hand 1 should bid 2_♠. Bidding 2+ would show 4-4, but would be forcing one round and at least invitational. Opener will be aware you might have only four hearts and not a good hand necessarily either.

Hand 2 should bid 2+. A 1+ opening has at least four cards unless 4-4-3-2 distribution. When opener shows three hearts, he must have at least four diamonds and might have more. Since your hearts are weak, why not try for a better fit in diamonds.

There is another possibility after a two-level overcall: passing and converting to penalty. You might be tempted to do this with balanced hands that have only four of the major because you don't like the alternatives, but I recommend doing so only when you have some real defense against their contract. The deal below is real, but from many years ago

West	North	East	South
1 _♠	Pass	1+	2+
Double	All Pass		

Of course the 2+ overcall was pretty crazy, but it was made by a well known player who is still in action today. My partner led the ♠A and we proceeded to get three heart ruffs, three spades, the ♠A and ♠A and king. Then with four cards left we led a club and declarer had to ruff it and give up the ♠Q, +1400!

Of course you don't need this much to pass a Support Double. Five trumps will do or four trumps and some defense. You might consider with three trumps and balanced with 11+ HCP but that is

W/All	♠ 7 5 4		♠ K J 8 2
	♥ K Q 8 3		♥ -
	♦ 5 2		♦ Q 9 8 7 4 3
	♣ Q J 9 7		♣ K 8 4
		♠ A 10 3	
		♥ A 10 7 6 2	
		♦ 6	
		♣ A 5 3 2	
			♠ Q 9 6
			♥ J 9 5 4
			♦ A K J 10
			♣ 10 6

dangerous if LHO is not a frivolous overcaller

There is one more point of theory about responder's rebid that even experts disagree on:

1+ - (Pass) - 1+ - (2_♠)

If this is invitational, on the theory that we just have to play 2+ on the 4-3 fit, so that responder has a way to show game interest with a diamond fit? Or is it showing say 4-5 in spades and diamonds, trying to play the partial in the much better fit?

There is no clear best answer here. I have a slight preference for the 'invitational' agreement, but decide with your partner which you prefer.

8. What actions can opener take having started with a Support Double or Redouble?

I think you might find the 'take-out double' analogy helpful once again. If opener has a normal hand, 12-14 balanced, he will pass any non-forcing bid. And he will consider whether to accept an invitational bid.

If opener has a shape hand, his range is wide. With a minimum he will pass non-forcing bids, but have more interest in invitational bids (if 3NT isn't the main target). With shape and extra values, opener must consider bidding again even over a non-forcing response. The best idea normally is to bid naturally and leave the rest to responder:

1+ - (Pass) - 1+ - (2_♠)
 Double - (Pass) - 2+ - (Pass)
 ?

♠ A 10 3

♥ 3

♦ A Q 10 7 3

♣ Q 9 8 3

♠ A 10 3

♥ 3

♦ A K J 7 5

♣ K 9 8 3

♠ K 8 7

♥ 8 7

♦ A K J 9 7 6

♣ A 3

♠ K 9 3

♥ 7 5

♦ A K Q 9 7 6

♣ A Q

With hand 1 pass 2+. You have a little extra considering the shape but not enough to bid again.

With hand 2 bid 3+. This shows extra strength and is natural, so expect 3-1-5-4 and about a good 14-17 HCP.

With hand 3 bid 3+. This shows six diamonds and extras. HCP is less clear with a long suit but you should have some interest in hearing partner bid 3NT if he can.

Hand 4 is too strong for 3+ so should cuebid 3_♠, showing a game forcing value hand. Another type opener can have is 18-19 balanced. With this hand, your next bid over something non-forcing is to bid 2NT:

1_♠ - (Pass) - 1+ - (2+)
 Double - (Pass) - 2_♠ - (Pass)
 ?

♠ A Q 3

♥ A Q 9 8 4

♦ K 3

♣ K 10 3

2NT. This shows 18-19 balanced with a club stopper. Responder should now place the contract.

9. Some more advanced final thoughts

There is certainly plenty of additional things a serious partnership might consider about Support Doubles and Redoubles. I'll list some of these in no particular order.

1. Opener might make a Support Double with 18-19 balanced and only two-card support, if he has no stopper in their suit either:

1+ - (Pass) - 1+ - (2_♠)
 ?

♠ K J
♥ 8 7 6
♦ A Q 3
♣ A K Q 9 8

What to do? 3+ seems inadequate and misdirected, as does pass. 3+ is a substantial distortion but might be your preference anyway. 2NT is the value bid but is out with your heart holding.

I think you should double, then over 2+ bid 3_♣. It isn't wonderful but it seems like the least of evils. If pard has five spades the hand might play best in 4+ anyway.

2. Responder's double jump (or jump to for of a NEW minor, or jump cuebid) is 'autosplinter', showing that the major is agreed, and shortness there, with slam potential.

1+ - (Pass) - 1_♣ - (2+)
Double - (Pass) - ?

- 4+: autosplinter, diamond shortness and slam interest
- 4+: invitational and natural (opener bid clubs)

3. If responder's RHO takes a bid, responder no longer has to act. Responder can compete in either previously bid suit. New suits should be forcing and jumps and 2NT still invitational.

1+ - (Pass) - 1_♣ - (1+)
Double - (2+) - ?

- Pass: nothing special
- 2NT: invitational
- 3+: new suit, forcing
- 3+: competing, but might have decent hand
- 3_♣: same

I suggest that double then 3_♣ shows a full-value invitation in a situation like this.

There is a lot of meat on the Support Double and Redouble 'bones', but the convention is still very worthwhile. If there is sufficient interest I might write a second article with even more fine points on the subject. Enjoy