

Intruding After a 1NT¹ Opener

(Part two of four – Weak NT)

In the previous article we introduced intruding over a 1NT opener and emphasized doubling and overcalling strong NT. Now we will concentrate on intruding on weak 1NT openers.

In the next article we will present Modified Hamilton as an alternative convention and then clean up odds and ends associated with intruding on 1NT. After that we will present a couple of advanced conventions that not on the ACBL General Convention Chart but you may run up against. Then Lebensohl and negative doubles as used over the overcall of 1NT will be described in detail.

Note: a list of all abbreviations is included at the end of the article.

The Double of a Weak² 1NT

The double of weak NT is best preserved to show at least as good a hand as *Opener's* hand hoping the double can be left in for penalty. A penalty double of a weak NT is really worthwhile if you defend well. If *Responder* passes the double, it is up to *Advancer* to decide whether to leave the double in for penalty or to run out to a suit contract. In making that decision you should count on *Intruder* having the top of *Opener's* range, and decide if it is likely you can set the hand. Even if you can set the hand, sometimes it is better to pursue a game depending on vulnerability. In order to run or pursue a game it is best to have *Advancer* bid as though it was *Intruder* who opened 1NT and all systems are on. That is after³ 1N-X-P-; 2♣ by *Advancer* is Stayman, and 2♦ and 2♥ are JTBS, etc.

Of course the opponents will have all kinds of approaches for handling the penalty double and you may have to adapt logically to bids by *Responder*. It is good to remember that inexperienced partnerships may not have an agreed understanding and may do most anything if they panic. If *Responder* immediately runs to a suit at the 2 level, you have to decide with your partner what *Advancer's* bids mean; especially the double.

¹ 1NT means one No-trump

² Any NT opener where the range begins below 14 HCP is considered weak.

³ X = double

If the opening side plays a "forcing pass"⁴ after 1NT is doubled, it is best to still play all systems on as if *Intruder* had opened the 1NT. If the opponents make a forcing pass, you will have another chance to bid (albeit it may be over a redouble or 2 of a minor), so if the decision is close you can pass. If instead *Responder* redoubles it is again usually best to ignore the redouble and leave all NT system bids on since often, the redouble will be a relay to 2♣; to be able to run to a single long suit. If the redouble is strong (unlikely) you should not pass with any useful distribution since the redouble would be like *Intruder's* "NT" had been doubled.

Edwin and I do play that after the double, all bids by *Responder* are treated as though *Opener* opened one of a suit and *Intruder* bid 1NT. So we ignore both a redouble as well as a forcing pass and have all NT system responses as "on" for *Advancer*. If the responder bids a suit, we Advance using negative doubles and Lebensohl⁵.

An overcall of the weak 1NT opener

As pointed out in the previous article, the meaning of an overcall depends on whether the NT is weak or strong but in either case it is best for you to have distribution to intrude. It is seldom right to bid over any 1NT without a short suit.

Even over a weak NT, because of the need for distribution it is good to be able to show hands with a single long suit of 6-cards or more, and to be able to show meaningful two suited hands. We have already discussed how over a strong NT it is popular to have the double show a single long suit which frees up all the suit bids to show multiple suits. In a similar way, when using the double as penalty as with weak NT, it is common to use a 2♣ bid to show a single unidentified suit asking partner to bid 2♦ to determine the suit. However, these bids have no defensive (lead) value and little interference value. They are generally ignored by the opening side with a double of the artificial 2♣ being Stayman "stolen bid?" and all other system bids still on. It does however free up other bids for showing two suits.

As mentioned before, meaningful two suited hands when bidding over a weak NT, include: both majors, both minors, 5-card majors with at least a 4-card minor, and a 4-card major with a longer minor. There are not enough bids to show all of these easily when using the double for balanced penalty hands. It is the 4-card major

⁴ Forcing opener to redouble (or rarely bid a 5-card minor) so that responder may pass the redouble or now start a scrambling sequence to escape.

⁵ To be discussed in a future article.

with a longer minor that is commonly dropped in the direct seat against weak NT; and why we do not use a penalty double except in direct seat against weak NT with an unpassed hand.

DONT (disturb opponents' NT) which is common over strong NT is really not effective over weak NT; partly because it does not include the penalty double and the double to show one suit has little interference or defensive value. This double is only considered a nuisance while providing the opening side some information if the opening side wants to compete.

Hamilton: the most common interference over weak NT

The most popular and common convention over weak NT is Hamilton (also called Cappelletti)⁶. As mentioned in the previous article it is also used over strong NT and uses the double for penalty and 2♣ for the one suited hands. This convention uses a 2♦ overcall to show both majors and 2NT as unusual for the minors. The direct major suit bids (e.g. 1NT-2♥) show major-minor hands with 5-cards in the bid major and at least a 4-card minor.

Over the 2♣ bid by *Intruder*, *Advancer* bids 2♦ to find *Intruder's* suit unless he has a good 6-card suit of his own. This works so long as *Responder* does not neutralize the 2♣ bid by bidding. *Responder* will stretch to bid, especially when weak. With a better balanced hand he may decide to reenter the auction after the opponents show their suit.

After a 2♦ overcall showing both majors, if *Responder* passes, *Advancer* bids his best major or bids 2N with both minors. *Advancer* can also bid 3♣ as an artificial GT and now *Intruder* will bid 3♦ if weak. Again this is useful unless *Responder* takes action. *Responder* can double the artificial 2♦ bid as a negative double to show both minors suggesting a distributional minor hand or can bid either major to show his lower stopper⁷ and invitational values. In fact if they play Lebensohl he can bid 2NT as a relay to 3♣ with a competitive one suited minor hand or a good hand with no major stopped.

⁶ The same convention but with different names used on the East Coast and West Coast. Three different men are credited with the approach.

⁷ It is common to cue bid the opponents' suit to ask for a stopper but it is just as common (but less well known) that when the opponents have shown two suits the cue bid of one shows a stopper.

Article #8 - 2012

After 2 of a major, *Advancer* can bid 2N to ask for *Intruder's* minor or bid a suit of his own. Of course he can pass or raise the major. After the 2N sequence *Advancer* can support the major as invitational or bid game.

Next

Next we will discuss in detail Modified Hamilton, which Edwin and I prefer, and discuss balancing over 1NT, etc.

Abbreviations:

X = Double

XX = redouble

NT = no Trump

JTB = Jacoby Transfer Bid

HCP = High Card Points using 4321 for Aces, Kings, Queens, and Jacks.