



Pass Partner's Take-out Doubles More Often

ONE of the nice things about pairs is that a bottom is only a bottom. If you salvage an overtrick on the next board, you are potentially back to average. Take doubling the opponents in a making contract – probably into game. Yes – it's a bottom. But if you think they'll go down a trick or so most of the time, doubling them may well be good long-term tactics.

Here's a classic situation where recent computer simulations have radically changed modern players' views:

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♥
Pass	3♥	Dble	Pass
?			

North has made a level-of-the-fit preemptive raise to 3♥, showing four hearts but not great values and East has made a take-out double. Here are three possible hands for you to hold as West. Let's leave the vulnerability unspecified as that is not my central theme.

Hand A	Hand B
♠ 8 5 2	♠ Q 8 3
♥ 8 7 5 2	♥ J 10 8 6
♦ J 8 5 2	♦ 9 2
♣ J 6	♣ J 9 7 6

Hand C
♠ 9 7 4
♥ J 9 7
♦ 9 7 2
♣ A 9 3 2

Hand A: 4♦. This is clear-cut. You have four cards in partner's first suit and he has asked you to bid. You actually have a rather good hand for him and certainly should not apologise as you table your assets. If he has, say:
♠ A Q 6 ♥ 4 ♦ A K 7 6 3 ♣ K Q 10 5
you may even make eleven tricks if all goes well (although he would pass 4♦). Don't even consider passing – this is a fit deal.

Hand B: Pass. Your heart holding – one almost certain trick in defence, worthless in offence – is strongly telling you to pass partner's take-out double. Plus, you have no obvious bid. You would pass this double at teams, pairs, rubber – whatever form of bridge. Yes, the opponents might occasionally make, but you'd hope to nip them at least a trick the majority of the time (and anything your side bid is likely to be torrid).

Hand C: here is where it gets very interesting. A few years ago, 4♣ would be considered reasonably normal, with 4♦ a close second choice (even 3NT as 'pick-a-

minor?'). And those are probably the correct options at teams or rubber, where doubling the opponents into game is very, very bad. A 4♣ contract does not rate to do very well, but the opponents are unlikely to double, and down a couple of tricks undoubled is much better than passing and seeing them make 3♥ doubled – into game.

At pairs, however, passing the double is the long-term match-point winner. Without a trump trick, I'd estimate you'd only defeat 3♥ about 60% to 65% of the time, but any other action gives you a lower match-point expectancy, particularly if you are vulnerable.

A Law of Total Tricks analysis is perhaps helpful here. Give partner an expected four spades, one heart, five diamonds and three clubs shape. The opponents have nine hearts and you have eight diamonds (assuming, charitably, you find diamonds, perhaps via a 'pick-a-minor' 3NT removal of the double, or a guess to bid 4♦ not 4♣): 17 total trumps means (using the Law) 17 total tricks. Quite likely, they make eight tricks in hearts, you make nine tricks in diamonds: both relevant contracts, namely 3♥ and 4♦, failing by one trick.

This is all too nail-biting at teams or rubber (especially as the Law is frequently out by a trick), but at pairs, you have

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BRIDGE LICENSED BY THE EBU – PARTNERS GUARANTEED – PRIZES – MASTER POINTS

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simply got to play the percentages and stomach the odd bottom (or, here, more than the odd bottom: a bottom more than one third of the time). You should pass the double, converting take-out to penalty. Computer simulations analysing tens of thousands of analogous positions confirm that pass is the long-term winner.

Take our deal:

Love All. Dealer East.

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

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♥
Pass	3♥	Dble	Pass
Pass ¹	Pass		

¹ Pluck up the courage and do it. You know it's right!

West leads the seven of partner's diamonds

(planning to follow with the nine to impart the 'high-for-hate' message without doing a high-low to imply a doubleton). East wins with the king and now, looking at dummy and the threat of discards on spades, realises the need to switch to clubs. In case of the actual club layout, he switches specifically to the jack (key play), to beat dummy's ten, a 'Surrounding Play'.

Declarer cannot now avoid losing three club tricks. If he plays low, the jack wins, followed by king and ace. Say he covers the jack with the queen. West wins with the ace and leads the nine (unusually, high from three remaining to clarify the position to partner). Say declarer covers with the ten: East wins the king, cashes the promoted eight and also scores the aces of diamonds and spades.

Down two and +300 to East-West, so much better than going down in some four-level contract. And note that declarer (in 4♣ or 4♦) could not know to play clubs in the way the defence was able to, not being able to see an opposing hand. A normal finesse (low to the jack) would likely take place at some point: losing to the queen. Defence is often easier than declarer-play.

Not doubled the opponents into game once all year? That's nothing to gloat about at pairs – you're simply not doubling enough, nor passing partner's doubles often enough. □

Jeremy Dhondy Elected New EBU Chairman

AT the October 2013 AGM Jeremy Dhondy was elected as the new EBU Chairman. Readers of *English Bridge* will know him from the excellent Laws column he wrote for many years, but his contribution to bridge administration at local, national and international level is equally impressive. Previously a member of Middlesex CBA Committee (until a recent house move) and Vice-Chairman of the Union, Jeremy is the Chairman of the Laws & Ethics Committee and Chairman of the *English Bridge* Editorial Board. He was Chairman of Bridge Great Britain in 2012-2013 and is the Membership Secretary of the International Bridge Press Association. Jeremy was also the non-playing captain of the highly successful English Women's team.



Jeremy's aims for the future include making bridge a more pleasant game to play at all levels as well as helping the EBU become the guardian of the history of bridge in England and to develop its archives.



EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

The EBU is looking for an enthusiastic and dedicated individual to employ as its Education Development Manager to help develop the new charitable incorporated organisation 'English Bridge Education and Development'.

The successful candidate will understand the game of bridge and will review and manage current education programmes and work with the Trustees to develop new projects, producing project plans and budgets and then implementing and managing these new initiatives.

Skills required include:

- Understanding education needs and processes for all age groups
- Project development and management
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Departmental management and budgeting
- IT literate
- Car driver

This is a full time position, based in our Aylesbury office, and will involve some outreach work. Some home working may be considered.

**Starting date:
April 1st 2014**

For a detailed job description and information about the application process please contact Karen Durrell at:

karend@ebu.co.uk