

Double, Double, Toil & Trouble

By John Tippet

In this session we will examine several of the less common uses of the Double: Rosenkranz Doubles (and Redoubles), Responsive Doubles and Maximal Doubles – I'll save Equal Level Conversion Doubles and Support Doubles (and Redoubles) for a later day. Note that you will find a lot of information on some of these conventions on Tommy's Bridge Blog: <http://tommybridgeblog.blogspot.com/> Tommy Solberg's blog is an excellent resource and I whole heartedly recommend it. You won't find a single article that will not pique your interest.

Rosenkranz Doubles and Redoubles

This convention was invented by noted bridge theorist, George Rosenkranz of Mexico City. It comes into play when the auction has started with: an opening suit bid by the opponents; a direct non-jump suit overcall by partner at the one or two-level; and (1) a bid of a third suit or (2) a negative double by opener's partner, the responder. In case (1) Double by advancer tells partner that you have a raise of his overcall but also that you have one or more top honors in his suit. In case (2) Redouble by advancer has the same meaning. Conversely, advancer's natural raise denies possession of a top honor in partner's suit. Depending on partnership agreement, a top honor is defined as either the Ace, King or Queen or just the Ace or King. In addition some partnerships reverse the meaning of the double (or redouble) and simple raise; this is called reverse Rosenkranz. Note that if you are playing this convention you should check the box that says card-showing under the Special Doubles section of the convention card.

Both cases above have the following in common: there is at most only one unbid suit by the time it gets around to advancer. When responder makes a Negative Double he is bidding a suit (or suits) by implication. It must have occurred to Mr. Rosenkranz that when there is at most only one unbid suit, it didn't make sense to use the Double by advancer as takeout so he came up with a better use of the Double. The Rosenkranz Double's main advantage is on defense. For example, if partner is on opening lead holding AQxxx in the suit he overcalled, he knows he can safely lead the suit if partner has made a Rosenkranz Double or Redouble but should probably lead something else if partner has made a simple raise of his suit. If advancer had doubled or redoubled holding Kx in partner's suit, advancer might even be able to get a rough on defense.

Example: Nov 13, 2017, Senior Center (E-W vul)

	♠K9643	
	♥95	
	♦96	
	♣J863	
♠AQ5		♠J87
♥Q6432		♥1087
♦3		♦KQJ842
♣K1054		♣2
	♠102	
	♥AKJ	
	♦A1075	
	♣AQ97	

With N dealer the auction went:

	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
	P	P	1♦	1♥
	dbl	2♥	3♣	P
	P	P		

West lead a heart against 3♣. Playing Rosenkranz doubles, west would have known not to lead a heart since east denied holding the ace or king of hearts. A diamond leads turns out much better for the defense.

Playing Rosenkranz doubles and redoubles imagine defending a 4♥ contract with this layout in the spade suit:

	♠xxx	
	♥AQxx	
	♦Axxx	
	♣Kx	
♠Axxxx		♠Kx
♥xxx		♥xx
♦KJx		♦Qxxx
♣xx		♣Jxxxx
	♠QJx	
	♥KJxx	
	♦xx	
	♣AQxx	

and the auction goes:

	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
	1♣	1♠	dbl	redbl
	2♥	P	4♥	P
	P	P		

The spade overcaller can safely underlead his ace of spades knowing that his partner has the king thereby allowing him to give his partner a ruff and setting the contract with a winning ♦ trick.

Responsive Doubles

A responsive double is a (takeout) double by advancer after the opponents have bid and immediately raised a suit and partner has either overcalled or made a takeout double. When the opponents have bid and raised a suit, it is more likely that the double would be useful as takeout rather than as penalty. For partnerships used to playing negative doubles, the responsive double convention is not much different. It is simple and effective, and the chances to use it occur frequently. It is popular among tournament players. How high to play responsive doubles is a matter of partnership agreement, but many play these through 3♠ or 4♦.

After 1♦ by LHO, dbl by partner, 2♦ by RHO:

(1) ♠J863 ♥KJ43 ♦83 ♣Q103

Double to show both majors.

After 1♦ by LHO, dbl by partner, 3♦ by RHO:

(2) ♠J863 ♥KJ43 ♦83 ♣Q103

Pass: right shape to double, but not strong enough to compete to the 3-level.

After 2♥ by LHO, 2♠ by partner, 3♥ by RHO:

(3) ♠Q4 ♥8 ♦KQ743 ♣AJ853

Double: you want to compete but are not sure which suit to bid and you can stand for partner to rebid his suit.

After 1♦ by LHO, 1♠ by partner, 3♦ preemptive by RHO:

(4) ♠32 ♥K743 ♦Q5 ♣KQJ103

Double to show ♥ and ♣ and the strength to compete to the 3-level.

After 1♦ by LHO, dbl by partner, 2♦ by RHO:

(5) ♠QJ9873 ♥QJ10987 ♦--- ♣7

Bid 3♦ rather than double to show a very distributional major-suited hand.

After 1♥ by LHO, dbl by partner, 2♥ by RHO:

(6) ♠964 ♥52 ♦AQ53 ♣AJ84

Double to show both minors and the strength to compete to the 3-level. If you had had 4+ spades you would have bid some number of ♠.

After 1♠ by LHO, dbl by partner, 2♠ by RHO:

(7) ♠108 ♥KJ632 ♦963 ♣K98

Double to show both minors and the strength to compete to the 3-level. Then convert partner's 3♣ or 3♦ bid to 3♥. With a slightly stronger hand you could bid 3♥ directly to invite game. This is kind of like Lebensohl.

Maximal Doubles

Maximal Doubles come into play in a competitive auction when you want to make a game try and your opponents are bidding the suit directly below yours. For example: after 1♠ by you, 2♥ by LHO, 2♠ by partner, 3♥ by RHO how would you make a game try holding: ♠AK873 ♥92 ♦AJ109 ♣KJ? Is 3♠ inviting game or just competing for the contract? In the old days, Double would be for penalty. Bridge theory has evolved and now the Double is used to make a game try to handle this type of auction. It says you have a maximum hand (typically 6 losers) - hence Maximal Double and invites partner to bid game. Conversely, if you held ♠KQJ873 ♥93 ♦A53 ♣Q2 you just want to compete to the 3-level. Playing Maximal Doubles you can do that by just bidding 3♠.

What if the opponents' suit is not directly below yours? In this case you have room to bid one of the suits beneath your trump suit to invite game. Would the double in this case be a penalty double? Some play it that way but another option that I like is to use the double in this case as a short-suit game try in opponents' suit.

What if there are two suits that you could bid to make a game try, for example: after 1♠ by you, 2♣ by LHO, 2♠ by partner, 3♣ by RHO you could bid either 3♦ or 3♥ to make a game try. In this case you should bid the suit in which you have a feature to help partner evaluate how well the two hands mesh. Double here can still be used as a short-suit game try in opponents' suit, in this case ♣.

Example: Dec 19, 2017, Senior Center (N-S vul)

	♠KQ1093	
	♥73	
	♦K5	
	♣A764	
♠A2		♠J6
♥1085		♥AKQ2
♦QJ1072		♦963
♣932		♣J108
	♠8754	
	♥964	
	♦A84	
	♣KQ5	

With S dealer the auction went:

<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
P	P	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	P	P
3♠	P	P	P

11 of 12 N-S pairs were in 3♠ making 4. South might consider making a maximal double instead of bidding 3♠ since he has the best hand he could have on this auction: 4 trumps, length in hearts making it likely that partner can rough this suit, and 3 premium cover cards. Even though North has only 12 HCP, he has a 6-loser hand and no wasted values in hearts so he might consider bidding 4 if South had made a maximal double. North could also have made a maximal double of east's 3♥ bid to invite game. To make 4, you need the trump suit to behave, either the ace on-side or the trumps splitting 2-2.