

Last week's winners: Monday 17/2/03

Friday 21/2/03

winner	Joe/Bengt	64%	winner	Mike/Ole	72%
2 nd =	John/Ralph; Hans/Bob	61%	2 nd	Kaj/Margit	59%

Take-Out Doubles

- A double of a Major opening always promises 4 cards in the other major (or a hand strong enough to cope with a jump in the other major).
- A double of a Minor opening always promises both majors – one may possibly be 3 card (or a hand strong enough to cope with a jump in either major).
- A double followed by a NT bid shows a hand too strong to overcall 1NT directly (so 19+).
- A double followed by a new suit after partner has responded shows a hand too good to simply overcall.

Let's have some examples of take-out doubles (and not). In all cases, an opponent has opened 1♦ in front of you. All these examples are for direct bids; bidding in the balancing seat is sometimes different.

Hand 1	Hand 2	Hand 3	Hand 4
♠ QJ87	♠ A2	♠ QJ8	♠ QJ8
♥ KQ87	♥ K864	♥ AQ764	♥ K96
♦ 4	♦ KJ7	♦ 4	♦ 85
♣ AQ42	♣ Q974	♣ AQ42	♣ AQJ54

Hand 1: The classic take out double.

Hand 2: Pass. You cannot double with only 2 ♠'s. You cannot overcall without a 5 card suit. You cannot overcall with 1NT as this shows 15-18 points. That just leaves pass!

Hand 3: With a 5 card suit, a 1♥ overcall is preferable to a double.

Hand 4: This hand is from a Dutch Magazine. In the article the hand doubled but there was no discussion of this bid. Perhaps it is standard practice in Holland? I would never double with two 3 card majors (one three card is acceptable). With this hand, overcall 2♣.

Hand 5	Hand 6	Hand 7	Hand 8
♠ AJ9	♠ A2	♠ AJ	♠ AQ
♥ AQ95	♥ AJ64	♥ AJ64	♥ AQJ1064
♦ 5	♦ KJ7	♦ KJ7	♦ J7
♣ Q8754	♣ K974	♣ KQJ4	♣ KQ4

Hand 5: Double is acceptable with this hand.

Hand 6: You cannot double with 3 cards in the opponent's suit and with just a doubleton in one major. With this hand, a 1NT overcall (15-18) is fine.

Hand 7: Double! This is the same as the previous hand except that it is too strong for 1NT. So you double first and then bid NT over partner's 1♠ or 2♣. Raise 1♥ to 3♥.

Hand 8: Double. And subsequently bid your ♥ suit. Too strong for an overcall.

One important point. I mention above that a 1NT overcall is 15-18. This is the case regardless of your opening 1NT range. Since an opponent has bid, you need a strong hand to intervene with 1NT. This 1NT overcall is less in the balancing seat (11-14).

Responses to Partner's take-out Double.

Response: -

- A non jump suit bid shows 0-9 pts * These 1st 4 responses are non-forcing.
- A jump suit bid shows 10-11 pts *
- 1NT shows 6-10 pts, denies 4 card major *
- 2NT shows 11-12 pts, denies 4 card major *
- A cue bid (bid of opponent's suit) makes the auction forcing (I prefer game forcing).
- 3 of an unbid major is game forcing showing a 5 card suit.
- Pass is for penalties

So, let's have a few examples. Partner has doubled a 1♦ opening in all cases:

Hand 9	Hand 10	Hand 11	Hand 12
♠ 954	♠ A92	♠ Q98	♠ QJ8
♥ Q72	♥ K864	♥ 764	♥ Q96
♦ 8742	♦ KJ7	♦ KJ7	♦ KJ107
♣ 842	♣ 974	♣ Q742	♣ Q87

Hand 9: Oh dear! Bid 1♥, do *not* pass, do not bid 1NT (insufficient values).

Hand 10: Bid 2♥, do not bid NT with a major

Hand 11: Bid 1NT

Hand 12: Bid 2NT

Hand 13	Hand 14	Hand 15	Hand 16
♠ Q852	♠ A2	♠ 72	♠ Q8
♥ KQ9	♥ AQJ64	♥ A6	♥ A96
♦ K10	♦ K7	♦ QJ1086	♦ KJ107
♣ KQ86	♣ Q974	♣ A982	♣ AQ86

Hand 13: Bid 2♦. A subsequent bid of 2♠ over a 2♥ reply would then show a 4 card ♠ suit and game forcing values. Of course you raise a 2♠ bid to 4♠.

Hand 14: Bid 3♥. Game forcing with 5 ♥'s.

Hand 15: Pass. Declarer will have a tough time.

Hand 16: Bid 3NT. Obviously where you want to play, and better played from your hand.

Next week we will have a look at a few specific types of doubles.

Bidding Quiz

Hand A	Hand B	You have Hand A and open 1♣. Partner responds 1♠. What is your rebid? (you are playing a strong NT if that affects your decision). What do you open with Hand B?
♠ 6	♠ A7432	Plan your rebid if you choose 1♠ and partner responds 2♥.
♥ AQ32	♥ 10	
♦ K76	♦ AQJ106	
♣ A10765	♣ 65	Answers later in this news-sheet.

Penalty Double?

1♦ pass 1♠ dbl
2♦ dbl

Hans asked my opinion on the meaning of the 2nd double. It is penalties. Partner's double promised both rounded suits, and so this falls into categories 8 (no unbid suit) and also 10 (doubler's partner has described his hand) mentioned last week and is for penalties.

The No-trump rebid.

Hand C	Hand D	Let's suppose you play a strong NT (15-17). Then you would open Hand C with 1NT. With hand D you open 1♣ and rebid 1NT (12-14) over any one-level suit response. If you play a weak NT, then it is the other way round. You would open Hand C with 1♣ (with a 1NT rebid in mind) and you open Hand D with a weak 1NT (12-14). Simple, n'est pas? I always thought so, but it appears not? I had a very interesting time discussing two of Monday's hands with Hans:
♠ QJ8	♠ QJ8	
♥ KQ	♥ K8	
♦ Q942	♦ Q942	
♣ AQ42	♣ AJ42	

Let's start with the South hand from Board 6: -

♠ QJ954 So, do you open? And if so, with what? I believe that most people (even
♥ - Chuck?) would open. If you open 1♦ then you are fixed over a 1NT or 2♣
♦ A9432 response. You cannot rebid 2♠ as that would be a reverse showing a much
♣ A102 stronger hand and more ♦'s than ♠'s and it would be difficult to convince
partner that you have 5 ♠'s (the hand is not strong enough to open 1♦ and
subsequently bid ♠'s twice). So we open 1♠ and partner (of course) replies 2♥. What now? I see no
alternative to bidding 2♠. 3♦ would show a much stronger hand. Hans suggested that I should rebid 2NT.
At first I assumed he was joking, but it turned out he was serious. Rebidding a 5 card major suit is not
ideal, but I much prefer it to bidding 2NT (this bid would never even cross my mind) with a void in
partner's suit! As it happens we were playing Acoll with 4 card majors, but I would bid the same playing
SAYC. Hans said that he would not open the hand playing 5 card majors because of the possible rebid
problem - so what do you do if you have a similar hand with a couple of more points? I feel that this hand
has far too much playing strength to pass. Playing 2/1 there is absolutely no problem; partner's 2♥ is then
game forcing and a 3♦ rebid does not show extra values. A good hand for the 2/1 system, you never have
a rebid problem.

At the end of the session, Hans gave me another hand - the West hand from Board 1: -

♠ - You open 1♣ and of course partner responds 1♠. What is your rebid. To
♥ K874 me, 2♣ is obvious, especially as Hans/Bob play a prepared ♣ (could be 3
♦ KQ86 or 2 card). You cannot rebid a red suit as that would be a reverse, showing
♣ AK653 a much stronger hand (your hand is not good enough, especially once
partner bids your void). Apparently Bob rebid 1NT (a bid with which Hans
is in total agreement). I am aghast! In my opinion, a NT rebid should be similar to a 1NT opener (as
indicated at the start of this section) but the other point range. *Very* occasionally you may be fixed and have
to respond 1NT with a singleton in partner's suit (specifically 1444), but *never* with a void. This is a total
distortion. Hans disagrees, stating that you cannot rebid a 5 card suit. I have another objection to rebidding
1NT with this hand; the bid shows 12-14 points, this hand is too strong. True, partner's 1♠ bid has not
improved the hand, but with an excellent ♣ suit and decent ♦'s it is still worth 15 points; too strong for a
1NT rebid. So, who's right? Let's delve into the library, a few quotes should suffice:

Paul Marston's Introduction to Bridge: - *A 1NT rebid shows a balanced hand without a fit.*

Zia Mahmood – Bridge for Beginners: - *Rebid NT with a balanced hand after a new suit response.*

Max Hardy – Standard Bridge Bidding for the 21st Century: -

When opener has rebid 1NT to show 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand.....

Note the key word *balanced*. So, a pretty comprehensive argument? But let's just put the icing on the cake
and quote Paul Thurston – 25 steps to learning 2/1. No embellishment, this is an **exact** quote: -

*' There are some players (no-trump hogs) who think it's OK to rebid 1NT or 2NT with a singleton –
sometimes even with a void(!) – in partner's suit. I believe you really should try to avoid doing this; it
makes the auction very difficult if you tell partner you're balanced and then try to change the
message later on. Typically this comes up when you open 1♣ with something like*

♠ 6 ♥ AQ32 ♦ K76 ♣ A10765

*and partner is inconsiderate enough to respond 1♠. You lack the strength to reverse into 2♥, but
rather than rebid 1NT and promise a balanced hand, I would recommend you bid 2♣.'*

I could not have put it better myself (although I would never call a club member a no-trump hog). I
hate to think what this author would say about a similar hand with a void and a better ♣ suit rebidding 1NT
(such as West board 1)! I guess it would be unprintable?

Let's have a really silly bidding sequence: -

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ -	♠ AKQ10876432	1♣	pass	1♠	pass
♥ AJ54	♥ 8	1NT (1)	pass	4♣ (2)	pass
♦ A752	♦ J	5♠ (3)	pass	7NT (4)	all pass
♣ A9642	♣ 3				

- (1) silly, 'nuff said
- (2) Gerber, asking for aces
- (3) 3 aces
- (4) We have 13 top tricks, so NT scores more. What a great bid! And no danger of an initial ruff. Maybe we will get a prize for the best bid hand?

I guess South can make 3NT, but 9 or 10 down is unlikely to be a good score for E-W when 7♠ is cold.

This example may be extreme, but the examples of the bidding going astray because partner assumes that you probably have 2 of his suit are too numerous to mention. Indeed, it really is *'difficult to change the message'*. Playing game/slam contracts with 6-0 or whatever fits takes a lot of skill. Even taking a simple finesse is difficult, to say nothing about communication. Are you up to it?

Incidentally, if you and your partner still believe that it is OK to rebid NT with a void, then this is not standard practice and is a partnership understanding. As such, it must be alerted. It misleads opponents if you show a balanced hand when you have a void. I'm not even sure if it's allowed. Hate to think what Chuck would say, he would most certainly (correctly) call the director if there was no alert. If you find that it is tedious to alert every time your partner rebids NT, then play a sensible system. If you are unhappy rebidding a 5 card major, then one excellent option is to play 2/1. It is not just chance that most experts play this – it is far superior to Standard American. I have a few 2/1 books if anybody wants to borrow one.

Bidding Quiz Answers

Hand A	Hand B	
♠ 6	♠ A7432	Hand A is the Paul Thurston example. You open 1♣ and if partner responds 1♠ then your rebid is 2♣.
♥ AQ32	♥ 10	Hand B is from a Marty Bergen bidding book. You open 1♠.
♦ K76	♦ AQJ106	If partner responds 2♥ then bid 3♦ if this does not show extra values (playing 2/1). He goes on to say that if 3♦ shows extra values (e.g. if playing Standard American) then you have to rebid 2♠. 2NT is out with a singleton in partner's suit <i>and</i> a worthless doubleton.
♣ A10765	♣ 65	

And now onto Friday, a couple of interesting hands: -

Friday Bidding Quiz

Hand E	Hand F	What do you open with Hand E? 21 points.
♠ AK1084	♠ AK8	You have Hand F, what do you open? If you choose 1♦ then what is your rebid over a 1♥ response? (you are playing a strong NT if that affects your decision).
♥ KQ7	♥ 109	
♦ AJ92	♦ KJ10943	
♣ A	♣ A5	

No Sensible Opening Bid?

Let's look at Hand E, South hand 6 from Friday. It looks a bit too strong for 1♠. Yet is too weak for 2♣ followed by 2♠ which most people play as game forcing. So pass? (only joking). Obviously a problem hand for all except Michael and his partner back in Germany (easy – open a precision 1♣!). For those of us who play SAYC, Acol or any similar natural system with weak twos this hand is a headache. The first time I saw it played it was 1♠ passed out (making +3). This is the problem with opening 1♠, if partner has very little it is much more likely to be passed out than a lower ranking 1 level bid (opponents need to compete at the two level and may not wish to).

So, a 2♣ opening then? I don't like this either. As mentioned above, the sequence is normally played as game forcing and this hand is simply not good enough.

I did a poll of many present on Friday. It was 50-50. 4 people opened 1♠ and the other 4 that I asked opened 2♣. What would be your choice? Nobody voted for my preferred bid; as I indicated, nothing is ideal, but I would open 2NT (20-22). Not so nice with a singleton, but a singleton ace is certainly acceptable. I believe that this is probably the best of a bad set of choices. If you don't like 2NT, then 1♠ is best, however ...

If playing strong twos (either direct or Benjamin) then there is no problem. The hand qualifies for a strong 2♠ opening. A good advert for Benjamin twos? Hans plays them with me, as does Chris. So do Martin and Rosemary and Gerry (and most Brits).

Die-hards like John Gavens play traditional Acol strong twos as do a few of the less experienced players. All the rest who have 'moved on' to weak twos will have extreme difficulty with this hand!

Way too strong for a 1NT Rebid?

Hand F	Hand F is North hand 12 from Friday. Everybody opened 1♦. The hand first caught my attention when held by Hans.
♠ AK8	Partner responded 1♥ and Hans rebid 1NT, passed out.
♥ 109	Before dummy hit the table, I asked Hans if he was happy with his 1NT
♦ KJ10943	rebid and he said yes. It made +2. Please check on the previous pages to
♣ A5	see if this hand qualifies for a 1NT rebid.

It is *way* too strong – 15 HCP with a decent 6 card suit and excellent intermediates. Everybody else I asked would rebid 3♦. Joe commented that it was closer to a 2NT (18-19) rebid than 1NT but that 3♦ was ‘obvious’. I believe that the hand is worth a 3♦ rebid but Hans disagrees. However, if the hand is not worth a 3♦ rebid, you *cannot* rebid 1NT (12-14). If you won’t rebid 3♦ then there is no choice but to open an off-beat 1NT. The hand is far too strong for a 2♦ or 1NT rebid after partner has responded. Hans claimed that if game is on, partner will bid on over the 1NT rebid. Not true. The 1NT rebid is a limit bid. Partner will normally need invitational values or better (11+) to bid on. You may well miss game (as in this case) if he has 8-10.

That was not the end of the matter, however. I followed the hand around the room (I was not playing) and saw some equally atrocious bidding! I spectated the hand 3 more times, each time it was totally different with a multitude of bids that simply have to be commented upon. The other tables had intervention, so it’s best to see the complete deal:

Friday board 12: -

Table A:		West	North	East	South
Dealer:	♠ AK8	pass	1♦	pass	1♥
West	♥ 109	pass	1NT	all pass	
N-S vul	♦ KJ10943				
	♣ A5				
Table B:		West	North	East	South
♠ 1097653	N	♠ J4			
♥ 76	W E	♥ KJ42	pass 1♦	1♥ (1)	pass (2)
♦ Q7	S	♦ A85	pass 2♦ (3)	all pass	
♣ K73		♣ QJ104			
	♠ Q2				
	♥ AQ853				
	♦ 62				
	♣ 9862				
Table C:		West	North	East	South
		pass	1♦	pass	1♥
		1♠ (4)	3♦ (5)	pass	3♥
		pass	4♥ (6)	all pass	
Table D:		West	North	East	South
		pass	1♦	1♥ (1)	pass (2)
		1♠	2♦ (7)	pass	pass
		2♠	3♦ (8)	3♠	pass (9)

None of these auctions are anything to be proud of. Let's examine them all in detail.

Table A : This was the auction at Hans' table. West, East and South all bid sensibly, unfortunately North's rebid of 1NT was appalling. Hans continues to say that the bid is correct, funny how he can find nobody who thinks it is remotely sensible.

Table B: What do you think of the 1♥ (1) overcall? (it was also chosen at table D).

Appalling is an understatement, it deserve to go for 1100 or more, read on – in fact it can go six down (see table C). Now south loved it and, (2) playing negative doubles, passed; awaiting partner's 'automatic' re-opening double. Unfortunately North either forgot how to play negative doubles or has been listening to the wrong people (the penalty pass and re-opening double are explained in news-sheet 10). Now the N-S pair at table C were Joe/Jeff, obviously not beginners. I think Joe's 2♦ bid (3) is a poor bid, so I checked with Hans. He would bid the same as Joe!! Hans maintains that a double by opener shows strength. This is *absolutely* not true. It shows a fundamental mis-understanding of negative doubles. The re-opening double is simply a courtesy bid just in case partner has a penalty pass (unable to double for penalties because you play negative doubles) – it is *not* a penalty double. If partner does not have a penalty pass (so a heap with less than 6 points) then he will pull this double and opener can then simply convert to 2♦. The re-opening double costs absolutely nothing here. Either partner has a penalty pass (and your hand is ideal for defending) or he has a heap (in which case you reach 2♦ anyway). There is absolutely no % in bidding 2♦ rather than the 'automatic' double. A failure to penalise overcalls like this simply encourages them. If Hans/Joe doubt the wisdom of my words, refer to 'Bieden met Berry' deel 2, page 249 – 'Als hij kort is in de kleur van de tegenpartij zal hij anticiperen op een strafpas en het openhouden met een doublet. Gezien de hartenholding is een strafpas goed mogelijk'. And what about South's (Jeff) bidding? The initial pass (2) is fine playing negative doubles, and when opener simply rebids 2♦ (showing a weakish hand unhappy to defend!) then Jeff can take no further action. His bidding was beyond reproach.

Table C: The bidding here was more sensible. East passed (correct) and South bid the obvious 1♥.

West then entered the lists with a rather dubious 1♠ (4) and the rest of the auction was sensible. I like the 3♦ rebid (5) although I would perhaps consider 3NT rather than 4♥ at (6) – but 4♥ turned out better. The 4♥ contract made +2! Well played Ole! This result demonstrates the power of the North hand. Only 23 HCPs, but game is a doddle. You have to up-grade with a good long suit and excellent intermediates. Incidentally, a weak 2♠ opening at this vulnerability is not too bad (better than a 1♠ overcall). But it is not everybody's cup of tea with no honour (always pass playing with Chuck).

Table D: Both East and West got carried away here. Opposite a passed hand, North's bids (7&8) show a strong hand, so South's final pass (9) was feeble.

I guess everybody is eagerly awaiting Chuck's return so that they are not in the spotlight quite so often?