

Everything seems to be running peacefully now, but just on word for those of you who attend the Amari Session. I was always of the opinion that the Pattaya Mail was distributed free to customers at many Hotels and other locations. Indeed, this is true; but it appears not to be the case at the Amari. You are free to read the papers in the lounge, but please do not remove them.

### No Trump Bids and Rebids.

When you hold a balanced hand it is normally best to inform partner by either opening in NT or rebidding in NT. The points required depend upon your adopted NT opening range and the summary below indicates the recommended bidding for either a weak NT or strong NT system: -

	Strong NT	Weak NT
Opening bid	15-17	12-14
Rebid	12-14	15-16
Jump rebid	18-19	17-18 (19)

Let's have a hand that occurred recently. A club member held this hand, they were playing a strong NT. What do you open? A flat 17 count. With points in the 'long' suit

and a ♥ tenace, this is an absolutely classic 1NT opening. You do *not* need a stop in every suit in order to open 1NT. He actually chose a 1♣ opening.

♠ KQ94      After a 1♥ response from partner, there is now no sensible bid. (1NT would show 12-14 and 2NT 18-19). A jump raise to 3♥ would show this point range, but would need 4 trumps and a less balanced hand. 1♠ is the only vaguely reasonable bid (you should never deny holding a 4 card major) but partner would certainly expect a much more shapely hand. The hand is now unbidable. He actually chose 2NT, which simply demonstrates the incorrect opening and compounded the error. How can you overvalue the hand and bid 2NT with these ♦'s if they deterred you from opening 1NT? Now I consider this to be an obvious 1NT opening and most experts these days would even open 1NT with a small doubleton in an otherwise balanced hand. Open 1NT whenever possible and get the hand off your chest.

Now let's have a hand from last Monday. You pick up this collection and open 1♦ with the intention of rebidding 2NT over a 1♥/♠ response from partner. Unfortunately,

it does not quite work out that way. LHO overcalls 1♥, partner passes and RHO bids 1♠. So do you still bid 2NT to show 18-19 points? - No. You can only do that when partner has bid (thus promising at least 6 points). To bid 2NT would be far too dangerous, as partner may well have zero points. In this situation the normal rebid rules do not apply and a bid of 1NT is sufficient. Now let's change the hand slightly to a balanced 16 count. You obviously open 1NT, end of story. But this time you are playing a weak NT so you open 1♦ with the intention of rebidding 1NT (15-16). However, the sequence goes the same as before, with LHO overcalling 1♥, partner passing and RHO bidding 1♠. What now? It would be far too dangerous to say anything now – simply pass. It may appear that playing a strong NT is superior in this situation; but in actual fact is probably is not. It is the opponents' hand and the less that they know about your hand, the better. Had you opened a strong NT, you may possibly have been doubled if LHO has 15+ points.

## A Double of 1NT.

That brings us nicely on to the next topic. We all know that a double of an opening suit bid is for take-out, showing shortage in the suit bid. But what is a double of a 1NT opening and what should the doubler's partner do? I have seen this go wrong enough times at the club to know that it is a subject that needs covering.

First of all, a double of a 1NT opening cannot be for take out. It is for penalties (except when playing some fancy defences to 1NT such as DONT). So, a double shows 15+ points and is for blood. It is not an invitation for partner to bid. Let's have a few hands where your partner has doubled a 1NT opening.

Hand A	Hand B	Hand C	Hand D
♠ J1094	♠ K76	♠ 87	♠ Q76
♥ 6	♥ 98	♥ 93	♥ 932
♦ A863	♦ J72	♦ 762	♦ 8762
♣ AJ85	♣ KJ976	♣ QJ10742	♣ 974

With hand A, you have sufficient points to make game your way. But you should pass. You will get more points for setting the opponents. The only possible exception is when you are vulnerable and they are not; then making *exactly* 9 tricks results in 600 for bidding 3NT and only a 500 penalty. This should, however, be ignored as you cannot know that you are making exactly 9 tricks. Simply take the money.

And hand B? No game, but you should set 1NT, so simply pass.

With hand C, 1NT is likely to make. Your hand is probably going to produce 4 more tricks playing in ♣'s rather than NT, so bid 2♣. This is a *weak* bid and partner should pass.

Hand D is unfortunate. 1NT may well make (possibly with an overtrick), but with no long suit, it is better to pass. To bid would be asking for trouble. The bottom line is – only 'pull' partner's double if you have 5 or less points and a long (5+) suit.

Now for a bit of fun, I will give you a hand that I held a couple of years ago. A typical rubber bridge hand for me, but this time it was at the club. I was playing with John Gavens, an Englishman who plays traditional Acol. My LHO opened 2NT (20-22) and my partner

♠ 9864	doubled (20+). RHO passed as did I. Now everybody at the table knows
♥ 98754	that the points are distributed 20,20,0,0. Opener produced a 3♦ bid which
♦ 763	partner doubled, round to me. What do you do? What does this 2 <sup>nd</sup> double
♣ 6	mean? Take-out or penalty? The answer is overleaf. Now this would not
	be a particularly memorable hand (I tend to forget hands like this) except
	that it turned out to be a disaster. My partner said that he did not like my

choice of bid and that his partner in England would bid my hand differently. That may well be the case, but I maintain that my bid was correct and I told him so. The matter, however, did not rest there. Next week when he returned to the club, he simply pointed at me, saying 'you are wrong'. So what does partner's double mean and what should you do? Who was wrong?

Incidentally, the answer to what the 2<sup>nd</sup> double means is exactly the same as if the sequence had gone 1NT . dbl . pass . pass . 2♦ . dbl . pass . ?

Do not take this example too seriously. These 20-20-0-0 distributions do not occur that frequently. These days, most people play a double of a strong opening 2NT as some sort of distributional take-out.

The theory as to what this 2<sup>nd</sup> double means is important as it applies when the opening bid was just 1NT (i.e. this 2<sup>nd</sup> sequence). I could not find any literature to support my case (there is definitely a lack of suitable books covering these 20,20,0,0 distributions) but there is certainly loads of material covering the analogous case of a 1NT opening.

So back to the 20-20 problem. Partner has doubled a 2NT opening, indicating that both he and your LHO had exactly 20 points each. He subsequently doubled a retreat into 3♦. What is partner's hand type?

Hand A ?	Hand B ?	Hand C ?	Your Hand
♠ AQ2	♠ AQ72	♠ AK72	♠ 9864
♥ A62	♥ Q62	♥ KQ2	♥ 98754
♦ KJ4	♦ AQ	♦ Q4	♦ 763
♣ KQJ	♣ KQJ7	♣ KQJ7	♣ 6

With hand A, partner would expect to set 3♦ by 2, perhaps 3 tricks. A penalty double is clear.

With hand B, 3♦ will still be defeated and so a penalty double is best. Hand C is different. Assuming that opener has 5♦'s, then 3♦ may well make. So a take-out double is in order?? See the problem?

A double cannot mean two things. Anyway, I cannot see that a take-out double has any point whatsoever, a 3 level contract may well not make opposite a zero count. Now there is a good maxim in bridge: - Do not bid your hand twice.

Partner already knows that you have 20 points (he heard you the 1<sup>st</sup> time) and a double of 3♦ is (in my humble opinion) 100% for penalties. With hand C you should simply pass. Partner knows that your 20 points have not gone away, but are less useful against a ♦ contract. He will then either bid 3 of a major with a suitable hand (possibly 3♥ in this case) or simply pass. What really happened?

The doubler had hand C, I passed the double and 3♦ doubled rolled home.

Now obviously this case of two 20 point hands will never come up again, but the same philosophy is true when a 1NT opening bid is doubled. Any subsequent double of anything by anybody is for penalties.

Generally speaking, a double of a natural NT bid is for penalties, but there are exceptions. A notable one is when LHO opens 1 of a suit, partner passed and RHO bids 1NT. A double by you would then show a take-out double of opener's suit.

E.g. 1♥ - pass - 1NT - dbl is a take out of the 1♥ bid, showing tolerance for the other 3 suits. But be wary of using a take-out double in this situation. Opener is unlimited and knows his partner's points (6-10); you really do need a good shapely hand for this bid and 4♠'s are a must. To use this double on a relatively flat hand (e.g. 4243) would be asking for trouble. A redouble by opener here would show a very solid opener, 15+ (i.e. a certainty of the balance of the points) and a desire for you to get your wallet out; you would normally be doubled in a two level contract. Also be wary if the opponents play a forcing NT (as I do with Chuck or Chris) as the 1NT bid could easily be as many as 11 or even 12 points.

It really is worth knowing what doubles (and redoubles) are for penalties. Last week alone, I managed one 1100 and one 1400. I guess dbl is my favourite bid? It certainly is if playing for money. On one hand last week, I actually beat Alex's record (3 doubles) and used all 4 red cards – this was the 1400. My bidding partner (Martin) had no problem in the auction – he had opened (possibly light in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat – we all know Martin) but he appeared to be more amused every time one of my X cards hit the table.

Just as an aside, opening light in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat is a very sound tactic. In fact, it is done so frequently in the States that there is a convention (Drury) that asks partner if he has a real opener!