

## **BIDDING 6 – PENALTY DOUBLES AT HIGH LEVELS**

### **Penalty doubles at high levels usually occur in 2 situations:**

- (1) Your side hasn't been in the bidding, but you have a little surprise for the opponent's game contract, usually in the form of a trump stack, or
- (2) Your side has bid a perfectly reasonable game and your opponents have sacrificed over the top of you in what looks like a not so reasonable game.

### **General scoring considerations that apply:**

- (1) In teams/IMPs scoring, you generally want to be reasonably confident that the opposition contract is going down 2 or more to double. You are not going to get rich getting +100 instead of +50 if the opponents are one down and a making doubled game will give the opponents more points.
- (2) In pairs/duplicate, you are more inclined to double if you think the action will succeed most of the time. An opposition vulnerable contract down one is +200 and bigger than almost any part score you could make. The difference between a non-vulnerable one down +50 and +100 could be the difference between an average and a top.

### **General considerations of whether the opposition contract is going down:**

- (1) Be wary of imputing any defensive tricks to a partner who has passed, weak jump overcalled, or merely shown a 6+ response.
- (2) A partner who has opened usually produces at least 1 ½ - 2 defensive quick tricks.

(The defensive hierarchy is:

AK = 2 quick tricks

AQ = 1 ½ quick tricks

A or KQ = 1 quick trick

K = ½ a quick trick)

- (3) A partner has shown about 16 points usually produces at least 2 ½ - 3 quick tricks.
- (4) Be wary that the opponents might have a better place to play and that the double could tip them off to go there.
- (5) Be wary that the double could point out to the declarer how the trumps should be played.
- (6) If you have a big fit with partner in a suit, be wary of imputing too many defensive tricks there.

♠ KQ97  
♥ K1076  
♦ 8  
♣ AQ72

W	N	E	S
1D	P	1S	X (1)
XX (2)	4H	4S	?

- (1) The double showed 4+/4+ in the unbid suits and opening points or more.
- (2) The redouble showed exactly 3 card spade support.

What should South do?

Dealer: W  
Vul: ALL

	♠ 10	
	♥ A85432	
	♦ 76	
	♣ J863	
♠ 652		♠ AJ843
♥ QJ		♥ 9
♦ AKQ952		♦ J1043
♣ 105		♣ K94
	♠ KQ97	
	♥ K1076	
	♦ 8	
	♣ AQ72	

W	N	E	S
1D	P	1S	X (1)
XX (2)	4H	4S	?

- (3) The double showed 4+/4+ in the unbid suits and opening points or more.
- (4) The redouble showed exactly 3 card spade support.

What should South do?

With West confined to no more than 3 spades, South must come to 2 spade tricks at least and the CA. There are further chances for a 3<sup>rd</sup> trump trick or a diamond ruff, the CQ to score or partner to have HA or a diamond trick. None of these chances is assured, but the combined possibilities would incline me to double, especially vulnerable.

The actual layout couldn't be better for NS – CK under the C AQ, S KQ97 over the S AJ and partner holding the HA.

On the opening lead, I would lead a heart. When you have a trump stack, it's often best to try to make the declarer ruff and shorten their trumps and try to take control of the hand.