

55. Failing to reopen with a take-out double

The take-out double is a very powerful tool. Not only at your first turn. Don't forget you can double at your second turn, having already spoken. Provided partner passed, your double is still for take-out.

Exercise: You opened 1♥, left-hand opponent bid 2♦ and the next two hands passed. What would you do now with these?

♠AQ32	♠AQ8	♠A2
♥AJ742	♥K8542	♥A8532
♦9	♦85	♦AKJ6
♣AJ3	♣AKJ	♣J6

With the first two, make a take-out double. Whatever partner does, you're happy. Note, with the first the reopening take-out double is preferable to 2♠ for it creates more options. For example, if partner then bids 2♥, you'll pass (whereas if you'd have bid 2♠, she'd have had to go to 3♥ to give a preference back to your first suit). With the third, you should pass 2♦ — happy to defend. Doubling would be very wrong, for partner would bid say 2♠ or 3♣ — oops.

What Happened

West led ♦A v the unsavoury 3♥, switching cleverly to ♥8 to cut down ruffing. Declarer won ♥K then crossed to ♠K to lead to ♣Q. West won ♣K and led ♥7. Declarer won ♥A and could make only the two black aces and the long heart. Down three — declarer could have made one more by spurning the club finesse.

What Should Have Happened

East leads ♦5 v the altogether happier 2♠ by North. West wins ♦Q and switches to ♠J. You cash

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠K7432	♠Q98
♥32	♥QJ109
♦8642	♦J75
♣52	♣974
♠J10	
♥87	
♦AKQ93	
♣KJ106	
♠A65	
♥AK654	
♦10	
♣AQ83	

What Happened

S	W	N	E
1♥	2♦	Pass	Pass
3♣(1)	Pass	3♥(2)	end

- (1) Does South miss an opportunity here?
 (2) All North can sensibly do is give preference back to opener's five-card suit, the one trump suit known to have seven cards.

Contract: 3♥ (by S), Opening Lead: ♦A

What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
1♥	2♦	Pass	Pass
Db1(1)	Pass	2♠	end

- (1) So much better than 3♣ on grounds of economy (double is always the cheapest call, taking up no bidding space at all) and flexibility. For example, if partner is very poor, say 3♠3♥4♦3♣, she can go back to 2♥ and you're a level lower than if you bid 3♣ and she goes back to 3♥.

Contract: 2♠ (by N), Opening Lead: ♦5

♠AK and play ♥AK and ruff ♥4 (revealing the 4-2 split). You ruff ♦4, ruff ♥5 then cross to ♣A and lead the long ♥6. Whether or not East ruffs with his remaining ♠Q, that's nine tricks made.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk