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This series shows how to extract penalties when opponents make overcalls and run into bad breaks. This involves the idea of re-opening Doubles. It also details hands where re-opening with a Double is not a good idea.

VB#10 Re-opening Doubles (ACOL)	Contract: 2H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 4	
	♥ T53	
	♦ K8742	
	♣ KJ96	
West		East
♠ K9		♠ J8732
♥ A9		♥ 842
♦ QT3		♦ A6
♣ AQ8753		♣ T42
	South	
	♠ AQT65	
	♥ KQJ76	
	♦ J95	
	♣	

This series continues the theme of re-opening Doubles and how, on occasion, they can be used to extract penalties. In this second series on the subject we are going to look at different aspects of this problem.

Hand 1 asks the same question as we asked in the first series. Should we reopen the bidding and with what?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
2♣	P	P	2♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding. You have an obvious opening bid of 1♠ and West overcalls 2♣. This comes back to you in the South seat – do you reopen the bidding?

Well, with a decent opening bid, a 5-5 pattern and a shortage in the opponents' suit you simply have to contest the auction – but with what? Having followed the logic of the previous series you may well feel it right to Double here but that would be a mistake. Not a bad mistake but an error nonetheless. If partner Passed a take-out Double you don't really have enough defence to be confident of defeating 2♣ Doubled. Furthermore, it is often difficult to defend these hands when you have no trumps – often the most effective defence against a low-level trump contract is to lead a trump sometime during the hand.

So the right bid is to try your second suit – you bid 2♥. That ends the auction.

Play. West has a horrible choice of leads but can deduce that North has short Spades (else why not give preference back to your first bid suit?). With that in mind he starts off with the ♥A and another Heart. Good defence!

You can see what might have happened had you Doubled 2♣ – North might well have Passed that and East-West would have played 2♣ Doubled with nine trumps between them. Whether you would have beaten 2♣ is moot, but it would have been a close battle. It is surely better to play in 2♥.

Anyway... having taken the trump lead in hand you hasten to take a Heart ruff on table while you can and are both startled and gratified when the ♠K falls on the second round. You ruff a Club back to hand, draw the last trump and have to play on Diamonds. The best play is to combine your chances by running the ♦J and then running the ♦10. That's your intention, anyway, but when West covers the ♦J, you pop on the ♦K and East takes his ♦A.

Stuck for a return East can only try a Club. Rather than ruff with your last trump you pitch a

losing Spade and allow West to take his ♣A. Helpless now West cashes the ♦10 and concedes the rest.


Post-mortem. You should strain to reopen the auction when short in the opponents' suit. However, it is dangerous to make a take-out Double with a void in their suit, especially when you don't hold many Aces as defensive tricks. Having a concealed five-card suit is also not an asset as you may find yourself defending a part-score when you can make game in your second suit.



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VB#10 Re-opening Doubles (ACOL)	Contract: 2S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ Q3	
	♥ A2	
	♦ AJ9764	
	♣ Q62	
West		East
♠ K52		♠ A4
♥ KQT93		♥ J4
♦ 53		♦ KQT8
♣ AJ9		♣ T8753
	South	
	♠ JT9876	
	♥ 8765	
	♦ 2	
	♣ K4	

When your partner is about to go for a large penalty do you just sit and watch or do you dive in the dangerous waters and attempt a rescue?

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♦	P	P
X	P	P	2♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding. You (South) have a heap of turnips and expect to defend something or other when the opponents have finished bidding. However, West opens 1♥ and your heart sinks when partner overcalls 2♦ and that gets Passed to West. You know what's coming next – West Doubles for take-out, partner Passes and East converts the reopening Double into a penalty Double. Now what?

Some players in these circumstances put dummy down in stony silence and watch the resulting carnage with a “*What's it got to do with me?*” look on their faces. Considerate partners, however, look to see if there's a *rescue suit*. In fact, it's often best to play with the long suit in the weak hand as trumps on this sort of deal. Why? Well you will make some tricks with partner's high cards and then you'll make some tricks with your small trumps. Played in Diamonds, though, your hand will be next to worthless. The conclusion is that you should rescue 2♦ Doubled into 2♠ and pray that the result isn't even more expensive. Surprisingly, East-West Pass this out – well, it's not easy for them.

Play. 2♠ can't make against good defence. After the ♥K lead you may as well try for a Heart ruff on table by playing another Heart. Nope, the opponents are sharp enough to play two rounds of trumps to remove dummy's Spades and then can cash some more Hearts. In all they take three Hearts, two Spades and the ♣A. Still, when you consider what would have happened to 2♦ Doubled (down three, Doubled and vulnerable for -800) one off in 2♠ is getting off lightly.


Post-mortem. East-West can actually make 3NT on this deal so a penalty of -100 for 2♠ down one is a miraculous result for you. Partner's 2♦ overcall isn't great. True, he has a six-card suit but his hand is poor and the suit is tatty. Let's just call his hand a minimum overcall and leave it at that. A prudent Pass over West's 1♥ certainly could not be criticised. As it went, East should have bid 2NT when 2♠ came round to him on the second round. Passing out 2♠ was just wet.



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VB#10 Re-opening Doubles (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ KQJ98	
	♥ AJ	
	♦ JT42	
	♣ 84	
West		East
♠ A765		♠ 4
♥ 987642		♥ 53
♦ 65		♦ A873
♣ 2		♣ AK9763
	South	
	♠ T32	
	♥ KQT	
	♦ KQ9	
	♣ QJT5	

What do you do here when the opponents bid your best suit?

Do you want to try to penalize them?

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♣	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ 2

Bidding. North opens 1♠ and East steals your bid when he overcalls 2♣. (Or maybe you were going to respond 3NT, who knows?) Now what do you do?

You could Pass and await developments, hoping that North reopens the auction with a Double, which you will Pass. However is that wise? If you look at the vulnerability you will see that you are vulnerable and they are not so you are in danger of picking up an inadequate penalty (say 300 points) in lieu of a vulnerable game (worth 600+ points).

Best is to bid game, with the knowledge that the majority of the missing high cards are on your right. What game, though? Well, you may well think of 4♣ given that you have at least an eight-card fit. However, your hand has what we call "soft values" (basically queens and jacks) and this argues for playing in No-trumps rather than in a trump contract. You also have a secure stopper in Clubs - a holding that might be worthless if the hand were played in Spades. So the practical bid is a jump to 3NT. If North has some shapely hand (say a six-card Spade suit) he can convert to 4♠. As it is he is happy to Pass 3NT.

Play. On the sight of dummy you notice that 4♣ has no chance at all (there are four top losers) but 3NT has plenty of winners, albeit *slow* ones.

The opening Club lead (West is a dutiful partner who leads his partner's suit) is won by East's ♣K and you are allowed to win a second round of Clubs. You set about the Spades, allowing West to take his ♠A, which he does on the third round. You take the Heart switch with the careful ♥A, and start on the Diamonds. Again the opponents are stubborn, holding up the ♦A until the third round. Still, there is nothing East can do – eventually he has to give you another Club tricks and the ♥K Q. Strangely you never make the long Diamond nor the two winning Spades. However, you do make the contract...!

Post-mortem. You will note that East has a perfectly sound overcall of 2♣. Only 11 points, yes, but his hand has both good shape (6·4·2·1) and valuable honour cards (all of his points are "working"). He would expect to make five or six tricks on such a hand facing rubbish. On the


actual deal, 2♣ Doubled will make six tricks for East-West, giving you a penalty of 300 points. **Much** better to score a vulnerable game worth 600 points.



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VB#10 Re-opening Doubles (ACOL)	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 87653		
	♥ 42		
	♦ JT3		
	♣ AJ8		
West		East	
♠ AKQ42		♠ JT	
♥ 7		♥ J985	
♦ A742		♦ 86	
♣ 642		♣ QT753	
	South		
	♠ 9		
	♥ AKQT63		
	♦ KQ95		
	♣ K9		

The old, old story. The bidding gets back to you in the *reopening seat*. How can you express the hand?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
1♠	P	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ A

Bidding. You open 1♥ and West's overcall of 1♠ gets Passed back to you. Now what? Well, you clearly aren't going to Pass 1♠ out and allow East-West to steal the deal at the one-level but what are you going to bid?

Double is a possible call but you haven't that much in the way of *defensive tricks* and you have a lot in the way of *offensive tricks* (or *playing tricks*). This hand isn't really suitable for defending 1♠ Doubled if partner were to get it through his head to defend by Passing your take-out Double. Just bidding 2♥ would be too wet on this type of hand (see Hand 4 of the previous series for comparison) as you have too much playing strength to do that.

Best is to suggest some real muscle by jumping to 3♥, showing a fine suit and genuine interest in game (and yes, you know partner has Passed over 1♠). With his actual hand (6 points including an all-important Ace) partner makes a brave but eminently correct raise to 4♥. Well done, partner.

Play. This is an easy contract – the main interest in the deal lies in the bidding. At first glance there are eleven tricks (six Hearts, three Diamonds and the ♣A K). So you can ruff the second round of Spades and draw trumps. You get hit by the 4-1 trump break but it's nothing much, a glancing blow that doesn't even leave a bruise. You draw the three top trumps and leave East with the boss ♥J. Now you set about your side-suit, knocking out the ♦A. West forces you to ruff again by leading another Spade but you have no problems, you just lead winners, allowing East to take his top trump when he pleases. Contract made.

Post-mortem. Had you Doubled 1♠ in the *reopening seat* North would have had a really awkward bid. What do you suggest? His trumps are too poor to Pass but what else can he do? Nightmares are made of this. He might have tried a miserable 1NT but whether that would have led your side into 4♥ is unlikely.

3♥ is much the most descriptive call on these cards to emphasise the length and strength of


your suit and partner should raise to 4♥ with any excuse.



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VB#10 Re-opening Doubles (ACOL)	Contract: 2H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ AQT75		
	♥ AK42		
	♦ 87		
	♣ K2		
West		East	
♠ J82		♠ K963	
♥ QJ87		♥ 6	
♦ 95		♦ AQT643	
♣ Q954		♣ AJ	
	South		
	♠ 4		
	♥ T953		
	♦ KJ2		
	♣ T8763		

Sometimes you get caught with a heap of garbage and suddenly find partner is putting a gun to your head, forcing you to bid.

Keep calm and carry on.

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	2♦	P
P	X	P	2♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ 9

Bidding. You have a collection of used tram tickets here so don't expect to play much part in this deal. Partner opens 1♠ (not exactly filling your heart with joy) and East intervenes with a 2♦ overcall. You Pass, West Passes and partner makes your heart sink further by Doubling. East Passes. What now?

Well, you can't Pass. True, you have two probable trump tricks with the ♦K J over the likely ♦A Q but that's it. To make a *penalty Pass* you need a surprise for declarer (essentially that's at least four trumps) and you don't have it. So you have to bid. You might bid 3♣ – your longest suit – but in these desperate situations cheapest is usually best and you should try 2♥. This gets Passed out and you await the sight of dummy with some anxiety.

Play. You are delighted by the sight of dummy's four trumps – 2♥ facing (say) ♥A Q × would have been tiresome to say the least.

East wins the Diamond lead and, hoping his partner has a singleton, returns the suit. You, however, can **read the lead** and know where the ♦Q is. With that in mind you pop on the ♦J and immediately lead the ♦K to pitch a Club.

It isn't clear whether you have two losing Clubs (the ♣A could be with West) but it is likely given the overcall. When West ruffs you throw a Club anyway. You have lost nothing and if West has ruffed from three trumps (or four) you have gained a trick. This trump split (three or four in West's hand) is *likely*. Why? Because a sane East wouldn't overcall on a 5-3-3-2 shape. Therefore he must have a singleton *somewhere* - Gess where?

West now plays a Club and East plays two rounds, forcing you to ruff. You cash the ♥A K now, hoping the remaining trumps break 2-2. Nope – West still has a winner. So be it.

Undaunted you embark on a *crossruff*, ruffing Spades in hand and Clubs on table. You score eight tricks before the defenders can do anything. After that it's all over, East-West have the rest – but contract made.


Post-mortem. To make a *penalty Pass* of a low-level contract you need long trumps, not just honours in the suit. When forced to bid something cheapest is generally best. Here, 3♣ would have been painful to play.



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VB#10 Re-opening Doubles (ACOL)	Contract: 2S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KT954		
	♥ JT987		
	♦ 86		
	♣ 3		
West		East	
♠ J2		♠ A86	
♥ K43		♥ AQ65	
♦ J72		♦ KQT94	
♣ KJ942		♣ 5	
	South		
	♠ Q73		
	♥ 2		
	♦ A53		
	♣ AQT876		

In some hands you find yourself in deep waters, heading for a nasty penalty. We have already seen one deal (Hand 2 of the previous series) where partner can launch a rescue operation. This deal introduces you to what may be a new idea.

When your partner is drowning you should throw him as many lifelines as you can.

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♦	2♣
P	P	X	P
P	XX	P	2♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ 2

Bidding. You have a decent hand with which to overcall 2♣ after East opens 1♦. West and your partner Pass and East reopens the auction with a Double.

You Pass serenely and are then woken up when West Passes (the man is out for blood! Your blood) and partner Redoubles. Time for a rethink. What's going on?

Well, West clearly has a *trump stack* – at least four good Clubs – and thinks 2♣ Doubled is booked for a penalty. He is probably right. You may have six Clubs but they are holey (as distinct from holy) and vulnerable to attack if the missing honours are stacked offside.

And what is partner up to? Redouble? Well, if you have never been here before this is not (repeat **not**) to play. If North though West an idiot and that 2♣ Doubled was making he'd Pass and smugly display the dummy. It is the opposite – he is sure that 2♣ is going off and wants to play in something else – anything else.

What can he have? Well, the answer is the other two suits – Hearts and Spades in this case. So, like it or not, you are going to have to choose between them. Here you bid 2♠ and are amazed when this ends the auction.

Play. When you see the dummy you note that the deal has echoes of Hand 2. Partner might have Passed 2♣ Doubled and sat there as a witness to a car-crash. However, he preferred a more active role and chose to rescue you from the carnage (2♣ Doubled was booked for about three down – maybe more) into something better. "Thank you, partner!"

West leads a Diamond so you take the ♦A and immediately play a Heart, trying for ruffs in hand (*trumping in the short hand*, note). East tries his luck by leading his singleton Club but the bidding points the way.

You lead another Club and – when West covers that – you pitch a losing Diamond. West now prevents the threatened crossruff by leading trumps and East plays another. Thwarted? No,

you can make use of our new weapon – the ***ruffing finesse***.

You lead a Heart from dummy and let it go, allowing West to take his ♥K. West leads anything he likes now – you ruff on table and lead Hearts through East, ruffing out the ♥A. With dummy set up you can reach the table, draw the last trump and cash the winning Heart. Astonishingly, 2♠ makes an overtrick.

Post-mortem. The so-called *SOS Redouble* is not something that you want to use too often and it does need careful partnership discussion (away from the table, please!) There are many tales of outlandish penalties where partners mistook an *SOS Redouble* for a penalty Redouble... not best bridge. However, when used effectively, as here, it can dig you out of a deep hole.