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(140) Bidding Philosophy: Lead-Directing Doubles

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General

In Bridge, doubles are a large subject and making a double can mean very different things based on the situation. Here, we will focus on doubles of artificial bids and discuss their general meaning and purpose –generally to be lead directing. As part of this discussion we will also look at when making a double of an artificial bid is not lead directing and what other uses we have for it.

Defeat the Contract

Remember, when making a lead directing double, make sure that you can defeat the contract you are doubling. The lower the contract you double, the more defense you need to have in order to ensure beating the contact. This defense can be the form of a great holding in the suit you are doubling or it can be just a decent holding in the suit you are doubling with more high-card points in the outside suits.

Example

When you double 2♣ Stayman, you will usually have a decent 5-card ♣ suit and some outside values as well – you and partner will need to be able to take 6 tricks in order to beat 2♣. If you only have a 4-card ♣ suit for doubling Stayman, your suit should be very strong and you should have a significant amount of extra values outside the ♣ suit.

Bids We Can Double as Lead Directing

The number of different places where making a double of an artificial bid asks partner to lead that suit is very high.

Examples

- *Stayman* – Double usually shows a good 5-card ♣ suit.
- *Transfers* (both Jacoby and Texas) – Doubling the lower level Jacoby Transfer requires a bit more defense.
- *Ace-Asking Responses* (Blackwood, Keycard, or Gerber responses) – Doubles are all at high levels so less is needed to double these for lead direction.
- *New Minor Forcing* – Double occurs at a relatively low level so you must have more defense in order to double this artificial call.
- *4th Suit Forcing* - Double also occurs at a low level and you must have more defense in order to double this artificial call.

Doubles of Artificial Bids for Other Uses

There are some artificial calls where a double is not best used as lead-directing. You must have special agreements with partner in these situations, but we will discuss here a few of the cases where double is best used in other ways and why.

Splinters

A double of a splinter bid when the opponents have a major-suit fit does not make much sense to use as lead-directing, since the opponents have shortness (singleton or void) and a large fit, and they will be playing in a trump suit. Instead, a double of a splinter bid should suggest sacrificing in that suit, especially at favorable vulnerability.

Example

1♠ P 4♦ X

This double shows long ♦ and suggests that partner sacrifice in 5♦ with a ♦ fit.

Drury

Drury is a low-level response that shows a fit and a good hand with limit raise values. It is often used in auctions where the opening bidder has opened light in the third seat. So, instead of using a double of a Drury bid as a lead-directing double, it is more common to it use as a takeout double of the opponents' fit – allowing our side to compete in the bidding at a low level when we have some values and shortness in the opponents' suit.

Bergen Raise

Bergen Raises are another example of artificial bids that show a large fit, at least 9 cards. These bids are either a 3♣ or 3♦ bid at the 3-level that shows a raise of partner's major suit. When a Bergen raise shows limit raise values, it is unlikely that our side wants to compete in the bidding to the 3- or 4-level, so a double in this auction is best used as lead-directing.

But when the opponents' Bergen raise shows only constructive values, 6-9 points, we might want to compete in the bidding – they have a big fit, often so will we. In this case, a double of the Bergen raise is best used as a takeout double of the opponents' fit, showing a good hand, shortness in the opponents' major suit, and a desire to compete in the bidding.

Conclusion

Keep in mind that lead-directing doubles are available when the opponents make an artificial bid. You should try to make one whenever you can. Partner should also keep an eye out for when you make lead-directing doubles, and just as importantly when you do not. If you had a chance to double an artificial bid and did not, then partner should probably look to lead something else unless they have a powerful holding in that suit. The negative inference about the fact that you did not make a lead-directing double is one of the most useful ways you can help partner make the right opening lead. So keep an eye out for when partner does and does not make use of the double card.