

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

FISHING FOR CLUES

By: Brian Gunnell

As the play-of-the-hand develops Declarer is constantly on the look-out for the clues which will point to the right line of play. But these clues don't always come gift-wrapped, sometimes Declarer must go fishing.

	♠ 5 ♥ QJ63 ♦ AJ7432 ♣ A8	
♠ A98432 ♥ 84 ♦ ♣ T9754	North West East Declarer	♠ 76 ♥ 92 ♦ Q85 ♣ KQJ632
	♠ KQJT ♥ AKT75 ♦ KT96 ♣	

E-W Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Against 6♥, West tries a Heart lead and Declarer draws trumps in two rounds. It's a fine slam but not quite iron-clad. There's a Spade to be lost, and the key to success is not to lose a Diamond. How would *you* play the hand, looking only at the N-S cards?

If Diamonds are 2-1 then Declarer is home free, but suppose that the suit is 3-0. Now, Declarer has a guess. If he thinks that *West* is more likely to hold three Diamonds then he'll play his ♦K on the first round, later finessing against West's Queen if East does indeed show out. Conversely, he'll play Dummy's ♦A first if he suspects that *East* might have the three Diamonds. Which do you choose?

At this point it's a complete guess, so, before playing on Diamonds, Declarer goes fishing. He concedes a trick to the Spade Ace, and let's say that West returns a Club. Declarer ruffs that, then cashes Spades, and reels in a whopper of a clue when East shows out on the third round! Ha! Now Declarer knows that East started with four cards in the majors, and West with eight. The odds have changed dramatically! If one of the defenders has three Diamonds it's surely East. So Declarer plays Dummy's ♦A on the first round, and says a silent "Yippee!" when West shows out. 12 tricks if Declarer delays the Diamond play and first looks for clues in the other suits.

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Takeout Doubles

A takeout double is a bid made at the first opportunity. After the opponent has opened, 1C, *. It tells partner that you wish for him to remove the double "*" by bidding a suit or NT.

What is a takeout double telling partner?

First, it is conveying the fact that partner wants to compete in the bidding and has as many or more points than the opener.

Second, (in most cases) it is telling partner that the hand can support anything that is bid and please let partner know your best suit, preferably a major if applicable.

Third, in most cases, the person making the take out double is short in the openers' suit, two or less. (These are known as structured takeout doubles). It is always good to play a structured game with your partner so that he can count on your bids.

Does partner of doubler have to bid?

Partner is "off the hook", not obligated to bid, if the opponent has put in an intervening bid. IC, *, IH; if there has not been an intervening bid, IC, *, P - partner MUST bid. Partner MUST bid, partner MUST bid. If partner has a four card major and a five card minor, take preference to the major.

Since the responder to the double is "forced" to bid, even with zero points (ugh), responder needs to now how to convey information to partner. As a forced bidder, any simple response shows 0-9 points. In order to show partner 10 or more points, the responder should jump one level; e.g., IC, *, P, 2H. The 2H bid tells partner that he has 10 or more HCPs and at least 4 hearts. Or, if the forced bidder has stoppers for the opener's suit, he may bid INT (6-9 HCPs) or more in NT depending on points. INT is NOT an acceptable response if the responder has another 4 card suit unless he has stoppers in the opponent's suit. INT is not a bid to save partner; it conveys point information and stoppers in the opener's bid suit.

Take Out Doubler bids a new Suit after Responder Bids

What if the take out doubler bids a new suit of his own after the responder bid his suit? Remember that an overcaller could make his bid with 8-16 HCPs? Well, the take out doubler is telling his partner that not only does he have an opening hand, but the hand is 17 or more HCPs and he has a suit (5 or more) of his own. He chose to double and then bid his own suit to let partner know that his hand was much larger than was originally known to the responder. Now the responder to the takeout double can make a determination, by adding the points in his hand and that of partner to determine if the bidding should progress further.

Requirements

The basic requirement for a takeout double are:

1. Shortness in the opening suit. It is desirable to have 2 or less. With length and strength in the opening bidder's suit, the second hand must pass.
2. Support for the unbid suits – three or more cards for the unbid suits.
3. Values for an opening bid (or more), including points and distribution. Since your hand has shortness in the opening suits, and you can support any of the suits your partner would bid, you may count distribution in the short suit (dummy points).
4. A takeout double may also be made with a hand too strong for an overcall (17/18 points or more) A standard overcall is somewhere between 8-16.
5. Another consideration in making a takeout double is the level at which partner will have to respond. Also vulnerability.
 - A * of 1♣ means partner will bid at the 1 level
 - A * of 1♠ means partner must bid at the 2 level
 - A * of 2♥ means partner must bid at 3 level (unless bidding ♠'s)

Opponent	You
1 ♥	DBL

♠ AJ85
♥ 83
♦ KQ6
♣ K984

You can support any suit partner bids; but had the opening bid been in any other suit, you would have to pass.

Opponent	You
1 ♦	DBL

♠ AKJ85
♥ 54
♦ A5
♣ AJT2

Your hand is slightly too strong for a 1♠ overcall. You would also double an opening bid of 1♣ or 1♥.

The takeout double is a useful tool; make sure that you use it wisely and that you and your partner have the same understanding of your takeout double.

Do not use the takeout double to "double" the opener because you have his suit. Low level doubles are not for penalty!