

SUPPORT DOUBLES AND REDOUBLES

by Maritha Pottenger

In a competitive auction, it was difficult in the past to know what to do when you had only 3-card support for your partner's major (after you opened a minor). If you supported with 3 cards, your side could end up in a 4-3 fit. If you didn't support on 3, your side might miss a 5-3 fit. The solution is Support Doubles and Redoubles.

A support double shows exactly 3 cards in your partner's major when you open a minor, your partner bids a major and RHO makes an overcall. If you have 4 cards in the major, you simply raise the major. Thus, 1D by you; 1H by partner; 1S by RHO; DOUBLE by you is a support double. You promise exactly 3 hearts on this auction. (A bid of 2H would guarantee 4 hearts in your hand.) Any other bid (e.g., 2C, 2D, 1NT should deny 3 hearts.) **A Support Double can only be made by Opener!**

Similarly, if the opponent doubles, a **redouble** by you promises 3-card support. Thus, 1D by you; 1 heart by partner; double by RHO, redouble by you promises exactly 3-card heart support. (Support doubles are also appropriate if partner opens 1H, opponent passes; you bid 1S and LHO bids or doubles.)

Support doubles work wonderfully well when your partner does have a 5-card major. Sometimes, however, partner has only a 4-card major, and does not have a good rebid after you make a support double (or redouble). Thus, **a minimum rebid of the major by your partner does NOT promise 5 cards.** It may be that partner has no alternative but to play the 4-3 fit. For example, 1D by you; 1 heart by partner; 1 spade by opponents; double by you; pass; 2H by partner. Partner might have only 4 hearts and could easily have fewer than 4 diamonds (so cannot support diamonds), fewer than 4 clubs (so cannot bid clubs), no spade stopper (so cannot bid no trump).

Most people play support doubles and redoubles through 2 hearts (because you might be in 4-3 fit).

Occasionally, you will decide that the only makeable game for your side is to play the 4-3 fit in the major. (4-3 fits are also called Moysian fits after a great bridge player named Moyses.) In order for the 4-3 fit to work well at the 4 level, you need:

- 1) Good trumps in both hands (Ideally, something like AQJx opposite K10x.)
- 2) To be trumping the opponents' long suit (the reason you are NOT playing 3NT) in the SHORT trump hand. The "long" (4-card) trump hand cannot afford to ruff even once in a 4-3 fit because trumps will often be 4-2 and if you trump in the long hand, you will lose control of the hand and they'll be able to run their long suit just as in NT.
- 3) A secondary fit (usually in a minor suit) that provides an additional source of tricks.

REMEMBER: A standard Take-Out Double promises support for 3 (unbid) suits; a standard NEGATIVE double promises support for 2 (unbid) suits—or at least the one unbid major; a support double promises specifically 3 cards in the suit partner bid. *Negative Doubles are made by Responder. Support Doubles are made by Opener.*