



Play & Learn

BY PAT HARRINGTON ✉ ppharr@gmail.com

Responding to partner's negative double

Before we discuss how opener bids after responder makes a negative double, let's review basic bidding. As opener, what's your rebid with each hand below in this auction?

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
?			

1. ♠A92 ♥Q762 ♦AK52 ♣65
2. ♠A92 ♥Q762 ♦AKJ52 ♣5
3. ♠A9 ♥KQ62 ♦AQJ532 ♣5
4. ♠72 ♥A4 ♦AJ10752 ♣K65
5. ♠75 ♥A4 ♦AKJ853 ♣A65
6. ♠75 ♥A6 ♦AJ1052 ♣KJ65
7. ♠852 ♥A6 ♦AKJ5 ♣J753
8. ♠A642 ♥62 ♦AQJ5 ♣K65

HAND 1 Partner showed at least four hearts and at least 6 points. Rebid 2♥ to show a heart fit and your minimum opening hand.

HAND 2 You still have a heart fit but this hand values to more than the 15 points (14 high-card points plus 1 length point) you counted originally. Instead of adding a point for length, add 3 dummy points for the singleton. Your 17 total points merit a raise to 3♥.

HAND 3 Again, dummy points increase the distributional value of your hand from a medium 18 points to a maximum 19–21 point opener.

If you raise hearts, go all the way to 4♥. (More experienced players could use a conventional splinter bid.)

HAND 4 Without a fit for partner's suit, make a descriptive rebid of 2♦. Rebidding your own suit tends to show six cards, and the bid of an old suit at the two level shows a minimum hand.

HAND 5 Again, you'll rebid diamonds, but bid 3♦ to show a 16- to 18-point opener.

HAND 6 Still no heart fit. Your best rebid is 2♣. You show an unbalanced hand with at least four clubs and likely five diamonds.

HAND 7 While you could rebid 2♣, 1NT is the best description of your hand: a balanced 12–14 points without a heart fit.

HAND 8 Rebid 1♠, to show four spades but no known heart fit.

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	Dbl	Pass
?			

This time, your left-hand opponent overcalled 1♠ and partner made a negative double to show at least four hearts and at least 6 points. Let's look at hands 1–8 again. Don't be surprised to find that many of opener's rebids are the same.

With a fit for the suit shown by responder's negative double, opener raises to the appropriate level for his strength – just as he would have if responder had bid the suit at the one-

level. Without a fit, opener will make a descriptive rebid. Sometimes the overcall makes opener's normal rebid an illogical choice. Then opener tries to find a better alternative.

The only hands where you should have made a different rebid are these two:

HAND 7 Introducing notrump in a competitive auction suggests that you have your opponent's suit stopped. With no heart fit and no spade stopper, rebid 2♣ rather than 1NT.

HAND 8 When your opponent showed a five-card or longer spade suit, there's no longer any point to investigating a spade fit! Rebid 1NT to show a minimum opener with a spade stopper.

Worthy of note are opener's "raises" of hearts after responder's double. Even though opener is the one who bid hearts for the first time and will be the declarer, 3♥ in No. 2 is an invitational jump raise of responder's heart suit; it is not a game-forcing jump shift. Responder's negative double does not promise another bid.

Opener's rebids are critical in getting the partnership to the best contract. Responder will use that rebid to help decide where to play and, if opener made a non-forcing rebid, responder may pass. All of opener's rebids in these examples were non-forcing. Finding the best rebid won't always be easy – especially when the opponents get more active. Stay tuned for more. ■