

## SUPER-NATURAL AGAINST NOTRUMP

Suppose you have decided to play all your simple, two-level overcalls as natural over opposing 1NT openings. How might you then arrange to intervene with *two-suited* hands?

Two postulates of intervention over notrumps suggest an answer.

### The Spade Postulate

*When you have two other suits, responder will usually have spades and be able to make 2♠.*

So you'll seldom be able to buy the contract in one of your suits at the two-level. You may as well drive to the three-level immediately, and compel responder to bid his spades at the three-level or higher if at all.

The simplest method of intervening with a two-suited hand that does *not* include spades:

2NT shows the minors.

3♣ shows clubs and hearts.

3♦ shows diamonds and hearts.

### The Doubling Postulate

*Penalty doubles of 1NT openings are seldom profitable.*

When used to best advantage, the penalty double is based on a strong hand with a source of tricks and a good opening lead. Responder knows much more about the combined partnership hands than the doubler's partner, and is well-placed to run to a safe haven. This is especially true for pairs that have sophisticated rescue systems over the double, but it is also true for pair that have no fancy rescue system at all and can run to 2♣ or 2♦, bids that are otherwise unavailable to responder as natural.

So you may as well incorporate the double of a 1NT opening in your structure for describing your own hand. The most appropriate use of a *non-penalty* double of a 1NT opening is to *complement* the natural one-suited two-level overcalls and the 2NT, 3♣ and 3♦ overcalls that show two-suiters without spades. Therefore, use the double to show *spades and another suit*, a treatment first devised by Matt Granovetter as part of *Grano-ASTRO*.

If advancer wants to know intervenor's other suit, he bids an artificial 2♣ to inquire, with intervenor's 2♠ reply implying clubs. If responder bids at the two-level, advancer may double to inquire, but of course intervenor will pass a double of two of his second suit for penalties.

Intervenor may also act again if responder bids at the two-level and advancer passes. Over an opposing 2♣, intervenor's 2♦ or 2♥ is natural, and a second double is a penalty double showing clubs. Over an opposing 2♦, intervenor's 2♥ is natural and 2♠ implies clubs, so a second double is a penalty double showing diamonds. Over an opposing 2♥, intervenor has little bidding space, so a second double is best used not as a penalty double but to show which minor he has. *Same-Color-Action* applies: a second double shows the unbid red suit (diamonds), and 2♠ shows the unbid black suit (clubs).

### Super-Strong Hands

Strong hands with two suits, or one long major, can offer lively game prospects even after an opponent opens (a strong) 1NT. With spades and another suit, intervenor can double and then bid at the 3- or 4-level. With hearts and a minor, he can jump to 4♣ or 4♦. With both minors, he can bid 2NT and bid again. With one long major, he can jump to three or four of his suit. It's as simple as that.

### Merits of Super-Natural

A Notrump Defense is *comprehensive* if it provides ways to show all ten of the basic hand types with which you normally want to intervene: the four one-suiters and the six two-suiters. There are many other comprehensive Notrump Defenses, but few of them share the merit of showing *seven* of the *ten* hand types *directly*. And *no other* comprehensive Notrump Defense lets you enter *directly at the two-level*, where it is safest to do so, as often as *Super-Natural*. For the most frequent hand types are the one-suiters. Each one-suiter occurs nearly three times as often as any given two-suiter. A rough calculation I performed many years ago suggested that of every 100 hands with which you may want to enter, 16 will contain a one particular suit while 6 will contain two particular suits (even allowing that you will sometimes want to treat a 5-4 hand as two-suited). Moreover, the hands with which Super-Natural requires you to reach the three-level are precisely the hands where you are least likely to be able to buy the contract at the two-level: the hands that contain *ten cards in two suits other than spades* and are thus most likely to be short in spades.

*Super Natural* conforms to the *Spade* and *Doubling* Postulates. Another merit of *Super-Natural* is that it *adds* to natural two-level interventions rather than *changing* them, thus offering some protection against memory lapses.

If there are any atheists among my readers who feel offended by the name of this convention, *Super-Natural Against Notrump*, I apologize. I didn't want to give it that name: the *Backgammon God* made me do it.