

Penalty doubles of 1NT

When an opponent opens 1NT we know to double with 16+ points. Our 16 pts alone won't beat 1NT but there is an expectation that partner will hold 5/6 pts and that together we will hold the balance of the points.

e.g	N	E	S	W
	1NT	Dble	P	P
		AQxx		Kxx
		KJxxx		Qxx
		A		Jxxx
		Qxx		xxx

North in our above example is quite obviously outgunned by the combined points of E + W. { On a Hrt lead declarer is likely to go 2 or 3 off for between minus 300 and minus 500 }.

That was what can happen to an opening 1NT.

Now it is not just the opening 1NT that might get doubled. Here East bids 1NT as an overcall { showing 15-17 pts} but still South should double.

e.g	N	E	S	W
	1Hrt	1NT	Dble	
	Ax		KQxx	
	KQxxx		xx	
	Kxxx		Jxx	
	Jx		Axxx	

Now South was correct to double but what possessed them to double with "only" 10 points ? The answer is that S doubled knowing that their partner's 12 pts { N had opened the bidding } and their own 10 pts *together* gave them the balance of points and therefore a clear advantage in defeating the 1NT contract. In 1NT East will be sandwiched between the opponents and will find a dummy with probably less than 2 points.

For those who like their bids to come in terms of points we can say that *if partner opens the bidding and there is an intervening bid of 1NT then we should double with 10+ points.*

Here is another example:

e.g	N	E	S	W
	1D	1NT	Dble	
	AQx		xxx	
	KJ		Qxxxx	
	Qxxxxx		Kx	
	xx		KQx	

Again South with 10 pts doubles . Incidentally it is usual for North to pass the penalty double rather than (say) repeating a long suit. 1NT doubled is likely to score better than any other N/S contract.