

Take the Hint

By Paul Marston (Australia)

Paul Marston was born in New Zealand in 1949 but immigrated to Australia in the early 1980s. He has represented both countries several times. He now lives in Sydney where he is a bridge professional and club manager as well as being the columnist for Financial Review and the author of several books. He is considered to be one of the world's leading authorities on strong pass and relay methods.

If they double you for penalties, take the hint and consider changing suit – especially if your partner has had no say in the choice of trumps. Shopping around like this will seldom make matters worse and will often improve your outlook dramatically.

<p>West Deals None Vul</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 5 ♥ 7 ♦ K 8 6 5 2 ♣ J 9 6 3</p>	<p>♠ A K J 10 4 ♥ Q J 10 9 ♦ J 9 ♣ Q 2</p>							
<p>♠ Q 6 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ Q 10 7 4 3 ♣ A 7 4</p>	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px;">S</td><td>E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	<p>♠ 9 3 2 ♥ A K 6 5 3 ♦ A ♣ K 10 8 5</p>	
	N								
W	S	E							
<p>West Pass Dbl</p>	<p>North Pass All pass</p>	<p>East 1 ♠</p>	<p>South 2 ♥</p>						

Passing is no success. West leads the queen of spades; East takes three spades and continues with a fourth spade to ensure three trump tricks. Declarer will eventually go three down. At the table South bid three clubs, West doubled, as defenders are prone to do, and the contract made without trouble. After three rounds of spades declarer crossruffed for nine tricks. 'What luck,' cried the defense, 'four trumps in dummy!' But the point is that this is quite likely since partner figures to be short in hearts and therefore long in everything else.

It would be wrong for North to run, fearing the double might be converted for penalties. Only by passing does North put East on the spot.


Sometimes, of course, there is no good contract. If the defenders don't lose their nerve and bid, your escape action has put you one level higher. This may not be good, but it is not so bad. At Pairs a bottom is a bottom and at IMPs the scale thins out at the top.

It also pays to take the hint from opponents who double at higher levels. In the Venice Cup in Perth in 1989 an American woman doubled seven diamonds with a trump trick and her opponents settled into an unbreakable 7NT.

Recently, a defender doubled 3NT (which in Australia is for a spade lead). Instead of accepting an outcome of -300, declarer ran to a four-card club suit and played in a 4-3 fit which made. The argument also applies to slams.

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<p>West Deals N-S Vul</p> <p>♠ J 10 9 8 7 6 4 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ 10 ♣ 8 5</p>	<p>♠ K Q 5 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ K 9 6 4</p>		<p>♠ 3 ♥ A K 9 4 2 ♦ 9 5 4 ♣ J 10 7 3</p> <p>♠ A 2 ♥ J 8 ♦ K J 8 6 3 2 ♣ A Q 2</p>
<p><i>West</i></p> <p>3 ♠</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p><i>North</i></p> <p>3 NT</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p><i>East</i></p> <p>Pass</p> <p>Dbl</p> <p>Dbl</p>	<p><i>South</i></p> <p>6 NT</p> <p>7 ♦</p> <p>All pass</p>

While West's pre-empt is pushy, North's 3NT and South's 6NT are fairly routine. East's double, however, is greedy and he paid. From South's position, what else can the double be except the ace-king of hearts? Accordingly, South moved to place West on lead. Against seven diamonds doubled, West had to find the winning lead. Faced with a guess, he tried a club and that was that.

Declarer ran six diamonds and three spades and East found himself unable to hold on to four clubs and a top heart, so the grand slam made.

So my BOLS bridge tip is:

BOLS TIP: *When they double you, don't just sit there – try a sensible alternative.*