

Interference over 1NT by Derrick Browne

Regular readers will be aware that, following an invitation from Larry Cohen, we have shared thoughts from his larryco.com website over recent months. This week: coping with interference over 1NT.

If they make a penalty double, agree on what your runouts are. The standard treatment is that Stayman and transfers are off – all suit bids are natural and weak. Over a penalty double of partner's 1NT opening, what action do you take with this hand?

S 72  
H 54  
D 42  
C K986432

Passing could be a disaster if the clubs do not come home. A bid of 2C would be a natural escape (not Stayman), but better is to put a little pressure on by bidding 3C with the 7-card suit. This should still be weak.

This assumes the double of 1NT was penalties, the traditional style. Nowadays, many pairs use double of 1NT as artificial. For example, some play it to show a single-suiter (the partner of the doubler can then bid 2C, allowing the doubler to show the suit). Cohen believes it is best to ignore artificial doubles of 1NT – system is on (Stayman, transfers etc apply as if they had not doubled).

He also recommends "system on" if they overcall with 2C – transfers apply as usual. Double can be used as Stayman, a "mirror double" or "stolen bid" to say "I would have bid 2C". A possible exception is if their 2C overcall showed both majors – see larryco.com for such refinements.

If the opponents overcall with a bid of 2D or higher, Cohen advocates that bids be natural and that double be takeout, like a negative double. Say partner opens 1NT and they bid 2D to show diamonds and a major:

(a)	(b)	(b)
S AQ52	S A52	S J52
H T97	H A97	H KT97
D 62	D 62	D 2
C J653	C 65432	C Q6532

Cohen would double 2D with each of these hands. "It doesn't promise the other major(s), but try your best," he explains.

When an enemy overcall robs your side of 2C, you can Stayman by bidding their suit:

NORTH			
S AJ43			
H Q6			
D A753			
C 732			
WEST	EAST		
S K6	S 752		
H KJ9854	H T7		
D K42	D Q98		
C JT	C 98654		
SOUTH			
S QT98			
H A32			
D JT6			
C AKQ			
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
2H	3H	Pass	3S
Pass	4S	All pass	

There are several defensive tips on this deal. Firstly, West should lead the safe CJ, top of touching honours, rather than compromise the holding in one of the other suits.

Say declarer then leads the SQ. West should cover just in case partner has the S10, but as it happens declarer wins the SA, SJ then S10.

A heart is led towards dummy's HQ and West must hop up with the HK before exiting passively, with a heart or club.

If declarer later leads the DJ, West must NOT cover, else after the DA wins a diamond back will allow the D10 to score. To have led the DJ, declarer will have at least the D10 or DQ. As usual, it is best to cover the latter of two touching honours. On best play and defence, ten tricks are made.