

They Mess with Our One Notrump

[Pete Matthews Jr](https://3nt.xyz) - <https://3nt.xyz> - © November 12, 2023

This article describes advanced methods to cope with interference by the opponents over our 1 NT opening bid: TNT runouts from a penalty double, two of a minor for both majors, and transfer lebensohl. This material appeared in the Ultimate Draft of *EZ-Expert Bidding Tools*. It's value is relatively low, for the memorization required, so it has been removed from the first edition.

TNT (Touching/Non-Touching) Runouts

This advanced system of runouts applies in any of these cases, whether or not transfer or natural systems would otherwise be in effect:

- An opponent doubles our 1 NT opening bid or overcall *for penalty*.
- An opponent doubles our weak 1 NT opening bid, for any reason. (Since an artificial double of a weak notrump usually shows values, it can easily be converted for penalties.)

Except when playing weak notrump openings, the added complexity of TNT runouts is probably not worthwhile.

Primary TNT Runout System. These are the primary auctions of concern:

1. - 1 NT (Dble) ?
2. (1X) 1 NT (Dble) ?

Responder has three choices:

Bid the lower of two *touching* suits.

Rdbl with a single suit, asking opener to bid 2 ♣. Responder will either pass, or correct to the long suit.

Pass (alert) forces opener to redouble. Responder may pass for penalties or bid the lower of *non-touching* suits: bid 2 ♦ with diamonds and spades, or bid 2 ♣ with clubs and a major (might be a 4-3-3-3 stinker).

A direct 2 ♠ bid shows the black suits, but is reserved for hands that can brave a 3 ♣ contract.

Secondary TNT Runout System. The primary system won't work in the passout seat, for example:

– 1 NT (Pass) Pass
(Dble) Pass (Pass) ?

Here, all two-suiters are shown by bidding immediately. Bid the lower of any two suits (as the DONT convention). Redouble with a single suit, as in the main system.

We play penalty doubles of 1 NT when the opening is weak. When they play (as we do) that pass forces a redouble, we play the secondary system:

(1 NT) Dble (Pass!) ?

Again, a bid shows the lower of two suits. With a single suit, pass and bid it over the redouble.

They Overcall Our 1 NT Opening

Two of a minor for both majors. This situation does not come up that often. For a while, Stewart had me playing this plan, which he plays with Zach Grossack:

- Dble Values, penalty-oriented, forcing to 2 NT or 2 M doubled.
- 2 ♢ Natural, weak (over 2 ♣).
- 2 ♥ Both minors, competitive.
- 2 ♠ Transfer to clubs, at least invitational. New suit is short, and forcing to game (as usual).
- 2 NT Lebensohl (weak).
- 3 ♣ Transfer to diamonds, at least invitational. New suit is short, and forcing to game (as usual).
- 3 ♢ Artificial game force, worried about stoppers.
- 3 ♥ Short hearts, both minors.
- 3 ♠ Short spades, both minors.

Transfer lebensohl. Consider this South hand, from a club game:

♠ A J 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 6 5 ♦ 9 4 ♣ A Q

South *West* *North* *East*

Pass Pass 1 NT [14-16] 2 ♦

?

These folks play DONT, so 2 ♦ showed diamonds and a higher suit.

As North, I ignored the heart suit, and jumped to 3 ♠, forcing.

Partner raised with:

♠ K 8 5 4 ♥ A K ♦ K 3 2 ♣ J 8 6 5

The ♦ J came whistling through; East cashed two diamonds from a 6-card suit, and promoted a trump trick for West's ♠ Q-10 doubleton.

Making only four was a bad board. East also had ♣ K-10-2. When North declared, they cleared trump, won the club finesse, ruffed out the king and made six. It turns out that East had 2-2 in the majors – he forgot and bid his 6-bagger.

Transfer lebensohl would have right-sided the hand: I would leap to 3 ♥, invitational or better. Whether opener bids 3 ♠ or 4 ♠, North declares 4 ♠. On the other hand, had I simply bid 3 ♦ (Stayman without a stopper), partner would have declared without transfer lebensohl. So, in over two decades, I have never recognized a need for transfer lebensohl, as I would with:

♠ A J 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 6 ♦ 9 4 ♣ A Q 3

For more information, see this article:

Cohen, Larry; [HTTPS://WWW.LARRYCO.COM](https://www.larryco.com) > Search > “Lebensohl,” © 2012.

Backstory

Stewart Rubenstein got TNT runouts from Lew Gamerman. I started playing this with Stewart and Andrew Hanes, when we were playing weak notrumps, non-vulnerable. I applied the TNT name to this system; I took it from a system favored by Eric Schwartz to intervene over 1 NT.