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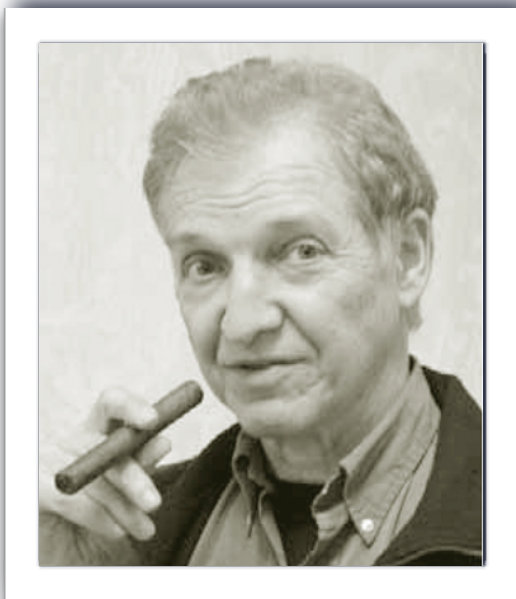
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**Defenses to 1 NT**

**Today's expert: Mike Cappelletti**



Mike Cappelletti walked into the Daily Bulletin office Sunday night and said, "I see you're running a series on notrump defenses."

We can take a hint.

With the proliferation of 1NT defenses, the reputations of older systems such as Cappelletti among expert players have sometimes suffered. The newest toy is always shiniest. Cappelletti, however, continues to enjoy immense popularity with many club and tournament players who embrace it for its simplicity.

The eponymous Mr. Cappelletti provided some history about the convention, as well as his views on bidding theory.

"When I started playing bridge, the convention Brozel was very popular as a defense to 1NT. At the same time, however, the Kaplan-Sheinwold system was coming into vogue, and the weak 1NT it uses was robbing us blind. We needed a penalty double, but in Brozel, double showed a one-suited hand. So I thought 'Why not make double for penalty, and let 2♣ show the single-suiter?'" Thus, Cappelletti was born. Its structure is this:

Double	=	penalty / values
2 ♣	=	one-suited hand
2 ♦	=	majors
2 ♥	=	hearts and a minor
2 ♠	=	spades and a minor
2 NT	=	minors

Cappelletti is unwavering in his view that double needs to be defined as value showing and penalty oriented.

"You need the penalty double. These fancy systems are giving up too much. If you have a balanced 16 or 17 points and they open 1NT in front of you, double is best in the long run. It's like Blackjack: when dealer has 10, but you have 11, you should double down. On a particular hand it might not work, but in the long run it's best. Remember that you're *over* the 1NT opener and that you get to make the opening lead."

According to Cappelletti, whatever the range of the opponents' 1NT, double should show a good 14 or more.

On weak no trumps, he said, "If you don't double, but defeat 1NT by one or two tricks (plus 50 or 100), you get an inferior score at matchpoints or IMPs if you could have made 1NT yourself for plus 90 or plus 120.

"Also, it's important to compete against the weak no trump (with appropriate values). If you can show both majors, you're at a terrific advantage since your partner will have a good idea of what to do. I've run many, many computer simulations that show it's right to compete with the majors even if you're only 4-4 with hands as light as 10 or 11 high-card points.

"What about the "modified" Cappelletti convention?"

"I can't stand it. Using 2♣ to show several possible hand types is inferior to just showing your major-minor two-suiters with 2♥ or 2♠. The problem with using 2♣ as first step in modified Cappelletti is that the opponents compete over 2♣, your side could wind up losing the major."