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(30) Overcalls: Advancing Partner's Overcall with a Fit

Date: February 2012 ©AiB

Level: Intermediate

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General

When partner makes an overcall the most important thing we can do is to raise – “support with support.” Knowing how to raise an overcall and what our options are is an important discussion to have with partner. We will want to have lots of gadgets to raise partner in a variety of ways. We will discuss these here.

Before we talk about the different ways to raise partner, let's take a moment to consider partner's overcall. If partner makes an overcall at the 2-level (showing 12-18 points) we will raise it in a similar fashion as if he had overcalled at the 1-level (showing 7-18 points.) Our raise will get us a level higher, but the fact that partner has promised more values for his overcall compensates for being at this level. So we raise partner in a similar way whether he overcalls at the 1-level or 2-level.

Advancer's Hand

We are only discussing hands where Advancer has a fit for partner's overcall here (3+card support.) Advancer wants to show the strength of his hand and the size of the fit. We want to try to accomplish this in one call if possible.

Strength

We want to define Advancer's strength. We do so in the usual way (with buckets):

- 0-5 points = Weak
- 6-9 points = Minimum
- 10-11 points = Limit Raise
- 12-13 points = +Raise (more than a Limit Raise)
- 14+ points = Game Forcing Raise



Fit

We also want to show the size of our fit:

- 3-card support
- 4-card support
- 5-card support

Weak Raises (0-5 points)

With a weak hand we use the Law of Total Tricks; we compete to the size of our fit. With an 8-card fit we try to compete to the 2-level, with a 9-card fit we try to compete to the 3-level, and with a 10-card fit we try to compete to the 4-level.

- Pass with 3-card support and a weak hand.
- Jump Raise (usually to the 3-level) with 4-card support and a weak hand.
- Jump to the 4-level with 5-card support and a weak hand.

Minimum Raises (6-9 points)

With a minimum hand we want to support partner and let him know we have some values.

- With 3-card support: Simple Raise = Raise partner's overcall one level.
- With 4-card support: Partner has overcalled at the 1-level so we can make a jump cuebid showing a *mixed raise*: 4-card support and 6-9 points.

Limit Raises or Better (10+ points)

When we have 10+ points and 3+card support for partner we start by cuebidding the opponent's suit. The shorthand for this is Q=LR+.

- If we have 10-11 points we start with a cuebid and when the Overcaller tries to sign off by rebidding his suit, we pass.
- If we have 12-13 points we start with a cuebid and make one more try for game by raising again.
- If we have 14+ points we start with a cuebid and then we force to game.
- If we have 14+ points, 4+card support, and shortness, we want to force to game and try for slam. We can show our shortness by *splintering* - a double jump shift.



Choice of Games

When we have a hand that might want to play 3NT instead of playing in the 4M game in partner's suit, then we want to engineer an auction that gives partner a choice between these two contracts. First, we support partner by cuebidding the opponent's suit then we bid 3NT to offer this as a choice of games. Overcaller can then choose between 3NT and 4M.