

Learning Points – Making a Preemptive Overcall

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This is part III in a 4 part series on basic preempt bidding.

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Bidding Level: BASIC

Jump Overcalls come in 4 flavors: **Strong, Intermediate, Weak** and **Undisciplined**. Strong Jump Overcalls typically show a good 6+ card suit and 15-17 HCP. Intermediate Jump Overcalls show 12-14 HCP and a good 6+ card suit (at least 2 defensive tricks). Both are rare today in direct seat.

Weak hands occur much more frequently than strong hands. Preempting more often leads to good scores than bad at the highest levels of competition. Most experts use weak jump overcalls (WJO). WJOs show playing tricks by the Rule of 2-3-4-5 (Partner might be 1 card shorter in the trump suit or 1 trick weaker at favorable vulnerability. The trend is for WJOs to be weaker than the equivalent opening preempt by 1 or 2 tricks. **In general, a 2-level WJO shows 5-7 cards, a 3-level 6-7 cards, and a 4-level 7-8 cards.**

Weak jump overcalls deny the ability to defend (“I **DENY** 2 Aces or 2 defensive tricks”). **With 2 defensive tricks or more, make a simple overcall**...BE sure you never confuse a weak jump overcall with a simple overcall. Keep them different.

Undisciplined Jump Overcalls show 13 cards and the ability to breathe – they are patently destructive to both sides – a raw gamble (*and a bid for a new partner*). Undisciplined approaches make advancer’s decisions much more difficult. (Opener, Overcaller, Responder, Advancer = overcaller’s partner).

Once opponents have opened the bidding they are a step ahead in the race to the final contract. If we hold 5-10 HCP and a reasonable 6+ card suit, consider a WJO. Disciplined WJOs follow the Rule of 2-3-4-5. Any tricks we take on defense will be in our suit. Shortness in any other suit is an asset. See [Opening Bid Prempts](http://www.cincybridge.com/Lessons/20100117_Opening_Bid_Prempts.pdf) (http://www.cincybridge.com/Lessons/20100117_Opening_Bid_Prempts.pdf) for Rule of 2, 3, and 4 opening preempt bids. Do not bid again once you make a WJO, unless partner forces you.

Because the opponents have struck 1st, we are a bit looser with WJOs than when we open with a preempt, especially NV. We might make a 3-level WJO with 6-card suit on a hand we would have opened with a weak-2 bid. However we stay as close to the Rule of 2-3-4-5 as possible. Do not risk a bottom when vulnerable just to make a WJO.

Seats 2 → 4

In 2nd seat, there are 2 more people to hear from. The opponents are likely to hold more than half the HCP. (Think: *If they open and I have 8 HCP, the remaining 2 players have 20 HCP or averagely 10 HCP each. This means they have 22 and we have 18 on average*). Getting in their way while telling partner you have playing strength but no defense is smart bridge.

OUR HCP:
8 or less: They are slammish
9-16: They are game-ish
17-23: Partials
24+ Our Game / Slam.
Distribution changes these estimates.

In 3rd seat and 4th seat, partner is a passed hand (RHO opens the bidding). We have fewer HCP in both hands, and they are likely closer to game. Interfere before they can sort out strain and level.

When we are a passed hand, a WJO at our 2nd turn tells partner we have a flawed preempt. We are 1 trick short of Rule 2-3-4-5 (NV only), have an undesirable suit texture, a side 4 card major, void or side 5 card suit suggesting an initial pass. Expect less from a passed-hand WJO.

Balancing Seat

The player who owns the 3rd and final pass is in **Balancing** position. If partner and responder (opener’s partner) passes and you are in 4th seat, a jump overcall by an unpassed hand is STRONG (15-17 HCP). This allows you to double and rebid simply with 18-21 HCP, and double then cue bid with 22+ HCP.

This way you will not miss the games you are entitled to. Partner's raise is INVITATIONAL, a new suit is forcing and NT is invitational promising stoppers. Game bids are to play. Responder's Jump Shifts here are best used as splinter bids or fit jumps.

Responding to Partner's 2nd – 4th seat WJO (*Unpassed advancers bid as if partner preempted*).

Pass with misfits. Cue bids invite game or more and promise a fit. Raises (3+ cards) and game bids are to play. *Unpassed advancer*: **New suits** force 1 round and J/S force game (consider splinter raises).

Passed advancer: New suit to play and J/S are natural and invitational or better if below game (passed advancer would promise a good suit and a fit in a distributional hand).

2N after a 2-level weak jump overcall makes little sense as 12-13 HCP. Instead, use your weak 2 asking approach - less memory strain.

If advancer is a passed hand, 2NT as natural or asking makes little sense. Partner wants to invite game with a **distributional fit**. Use 2NT as "I like your preempt partner, we have 10 trumps or more. I have useful shortness. Might we have game?" If you have your Rule of 2-3-4-5 tricks, bid your singleton or void so partner can judge. With complementary shortness (0/1 in 2 suits) and 10 trumps, partner will bid your 10-trick contract and expect to make it. No shortness or a <Rule hand? Rebid your suit. Avoid 3N – partner can't have enough. A cue bid (not past 3 of partner's suit please) by a passed advancer is a sound raise with no 0/1 suit.

Example Hands	Comments
2-level Weak Jump Overcall	
♠ KQJ876 ♥K103 ♦42 ♣96	Clear preempt over 1♣ or ♦, touchier over 1♥. (5 ½ winners)
♠ KQ10876 ♥103 ♦4 ♣J962	2L-WJO over any 1 bid. Good 2♠ overcall/strong 1NT. (5 winners)
♠ 103 ♥KQ10876 ♦4 ♣J962	Good 2L-WJO. Some would bid 3♥ over 1♠ (5 winners).
♠ KQ1076 ♥3 ♦ K1042 ♣963	Good 2♠ over any 1 bid. Yes, only 5 cards (4 ½ winners).
♠ AQJ876 ♥J103 ♦K4 ♣96	Simple overcall better - too much outside ♠s. (5 ½ winners).
♠ 103 ♥4 ♦J962 ♣ KQ10876	Can't make a 2L-WJO in ♣s!!
3-level Weak Jump Overcall	
♠ KJ98765 ♥K103 ♦4 ♣96	7 card suit and 5 ½ winners. Classic NV. Beware unfav.
♠ 4 ♥KJ98765♦K103 ♣96	3L WJO. 3 rd seat try 4♥ over 1♠-force them to make the last decision
♠ KJ98765 ♥K10 ♦43 ♣96	5 ½ winners – beware the 7222! 2LWJO ok.
♠ AKQJ987 ♥109 ♦43 ♣96	4 bid NV, 3 bid V. Rule of 2-3-4
♠ 103 ♥4 ♦J962 ♣ KQ10876	3L-WJO? 5 winners. Only Fav vulnerability w/ a knowing partner.
♠ 103 ♥4 ♦J96 ♣ AKQ10876	Jump Cue bid asks partner for a stopper in their suit...
4-level Weak Jump Overcall	
♠ QJ1098762 ♥109 ♦A3 ♣96	7 Winners. 4 bid NV, 3 bid V.
♠ QJ1098762 ♥9 ♦A3 ♣1096	7 Winners but the singleton ♥ makes 4 tempting both V & NV.
♠ AQJ10987 ♥9 ♦A3 ♣1096	7 Winners, but too much defense. Simple overcall then jump!
♠ AKQJ9872 ♥- ♦ J1093 ♣96	8 winners. 4 bid please.
♠ AQ1098732 ♥- ♦ A109 ♣96	8 winners. 2 Aces suggest simple overcall then jump.
♠ KJ1098762 ♥- ♦ A109 ♣93	7 winners. 3 bid V, 4 bid NV.

Responding to partner's WJO

Remember Partner has less than the equivalent preempt when NV vs V.

Your Hand	Bidding	Call	Rationale
♠ 1034 ♥4 ♦J962 ♣ KQ1087	1♥ - 2♠ - P - ???	3♠	3 winners (1♣ and 2♥ ruffs) for partner
♠ 103 ♥42 ♦J96 ♣ KQ10876		Pass	1 winner. Don't raise with <3 card support
♠ Q103 ♥4 ♦A96 ♣ KQ10876		4♠	4-5 winners. 10 card fit. Might not make. But how will opponents know what to do??
♠ - ♥J1064 ♦KQ10 ♣KQ10876		Pass	Not enough for 2NT. 3C is 1 level too high.
♠ 10 ♥4 ♦J962 ♣ KQ10876		Pass	Don't panic. Nobody's doubled yet.
♠ Q10 ♥KQ4 ♦A96 ♣ K10876		2N _{ask}	Follow Rule 2-3-4-5. 3 tricks only. 20 HCP+
♠ Q10 ♥KQ4 ♦A96 ♣ KQ1087		3N	Should be enough using Rule of 2-3-4-5
♠ J1064 ♥- ♦AQ10 ♣ AQ10876		3♥	Cue bid on way to game. Partner will show a feature with a strong hand. You need ♣K for a chance at 6! Be sure to ask for aces on the way.
♠ 10342 ♥4 ♦J96 ♣ KQ1087	1♦ - 3♠ - P - ???	4♠	Where are the ♥s?
♠ Q103 ♥4 ♦A96 ♣ KQ10876		4♠	Let the opponents have the 5 level!
♠ - ♥4 ♦J962 ♣ KQ1087652		4♣	To play. Better than ♠.
♠ Q10 ♥KQ4 ♦A96 ♣ K10876		2N _{ask}	Follow Rule 2-3-4-5. You have 3 tricks for partner.
♠ Q10 ♥KQ4 ♦A96 ♣ KQ1087		3N	3 Tricks outside plus 6 + tricks in ♠ seems right. Pass partner's correction to 4♠.
♠4 ♥10342 ♦J96 ♣ KQ1087	1♦ - 3♥ - Dbl - ???	4♥ V 5♥ NV	4 tricks, but opponents might bid 4♠ over 4♥.
♠ - ♥J1064 ♦KQ10 ♣ KQ10876		4♥	Expecting to make. Where will they find tricks for 4♠? Speculative double anyone...
♠ - ♥J1064 ♦KQ10 ♣ KQ10876	1♦ - 3♥ - 3♠ - ???	4♥ V 5♥ NV	♥s figure to be 5-3 or better. Same as over their negative double.
♠ A10 ♥K8734 ♦9642 ♣ 76		5♥ V 6♥ NV	Worth 5-6 tricks to partner (2 Tops and 3-4 black suit ruffs).
♠ - ♥J1064 ♦KQ10 ♣ KQ10876	1♠ - P - P - 3♥ - P - ???	4♠	A cue bid inviting slam. Partner will cue bid aces (lowest rank first) or bid 7♥ with ♥AKQ and 2 minor aces.
♠ Q10432 ♥- ♦A96 ♣108762	2♣-3♠-P-???	5♠ Unfav 6♠ Else	Responder's pass is game forcing. Someone is void in ♠s. Block out their ♥ suit and consume as much bidding space as you can. Do not fear their Strong 2 bid.
♠ Q10432 ♥- ♦A96 ♣108762		2♥¹-3♠-P-??? 1= weak	4♥
♠ A10 ♥K8734 ♦9642 ♣ 76	1♠ -P-1N -P 2♦-3♥-P-???	4♥	Partner has a flawed preempt. Maybe long ♠s, or 1 trick less than Rule of 2-3-4. 4♥ down 2 at worst.

Further Reading:

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Keywords: *Weak Jump Overcall, Total Trumps, HCP, Sacrifice, Vulnerability, Raises, New Suits, Jump Shifts, Rule of 2-3-4-5*