

Super Stolen After 1NT Overcalls

Introduction

Although the expert consensus is that the ‘Stolen Bid’ systems-on approach is poor over 1NT interference higher than 2♣, there are key advantages to using it if the major suit transfers are modified. These modified transfers are called Super Stolen Transfers, abbreviated SSTs, and are named such as they combine the Stolen Bid approach with Super Accepts.

The first advantage SSTs give is the transfer effect, so that the overcaller is leading into the strong hand. In more standard bidding, one sees a lot of sequences like:

1NT-2♦-2♥-All Pass

1NT-2♦-2♠-All Pass

1NT-2♥-2♠-All Pass

On these sequences the lead goes through the strong hand into the weak hand, while playing Stolen Bids with transfers the lead goes into the strong hand. However this one advantage would not be enough to switch to SSTs. By modifying the transfers to include more hand types, SSTs also deliver advantages when holding a variety of frequent game invite hands. With game invite hands the partnership can stay at 2NT when not having enough values for game, and can explore for 4-4 major fits. This is a key benefit that comes up often compared to the relatively rare need for penalty doubles.

There are two associated factors to Super Stolen. First, over interference one would not transfer to a major with a bust hand, since the interference allows for responder to pass and stay out of trouble. Given this, it is reasonably safe for opener to bring the bidding to the three level with a 4 card major fit. Second, if responder and advancer (partner of overcaller) both pass, opener should strive to reopen if short in the suit to be doubled. This will allow responder to trap pass to obtain penalty doubles, similar to what is done with suit openings when playing negative doubles. A secondary advantage is the SST structure allows responder to explore for a 4-4 major fit with long diamonds, signing off if no fit in 3♦.

Super Stolen Transfers

If the overcall is 2♦, double is a SST to ♥s and 2♥ is a SST to ♠s. If the overcall is 2♥, double is a SST to ♠s. The possible exceptions to this will be covered later.

If overcaller has shown a suit, a “stopper” is a stopper in that suit. If overcaller has shown two suits, a “stopper” is the highest ranking suit that can be held, not including any suit shown by responder. If overcaller has shown no suit, a “stopper” is the highest unbid suit at the point the stopper showing bid is made.

When opener makes a super accept of a SST by bidding above 2 of the major but below three of the major, then responder can always retransfer by making an immediate bid of the suit right underneath the major (the transfer bid suit). Usually this is at the three level, except when opener makes a super accept right below 3 of the major, in which case the retransfer is at the four level. Also after super accepts of SSTs, notrump bids are to play, not choice of game.

Double of 2♦ (or bid of 2♦) shows either:

- a) 5+♥s, any strength except not a bust and only 5♥s;
- b) 4♥s and game invite or stronger values;
- c) 4-4 in the majors and game invite or better values;
- d) Both majors, 4-5 or better either way, and game invite values;
- e) Game invite to 2NT;
- f) 4♥s and 6♦s (or decent 5♦s) and competitive values.

Double of 2♥ or bid of 2♥ shows either:

- a) 5+♠s, any strength except not a bust and only 5♠s;
- b) 4♠s and game invite or stronger values;
- c) Game invite to 2NT, and if overcall was not 2♥, then with 3♠s to see if opener has 5♠s;
- d) 3 or 4 ♠s and 6♦s (or decent 5♦s) and competitive values.

After Double of 2♦ or bid of 2♦:

- 2♥: Denies 4+♥s. Now:
 - 2♠: 4-4+ in majors, game invite values, non-forcing.
 - 2NT: Game invite values with or without ♥s.
 - 3♣: Transfer to ♦s, then after opener bids 3♦:
 - Pass: To play.
 - 3♥: Shows ♥s and ♣s.
 - 3♠: Shows ♥s and ♦s.
 - 3NT: Shows 5♥s and a stopper, choice of game.
 - 3♦: Transfer to ♥s with 6+♥s, game invite or better. 3♥ by opener declines invite. 3NT by either player is choice of game.
 - 3♥: 4-4 or 4-5 in majors, game force. 3♠ asks if 5♥s, 3NT says no.
 - 3♠: 5♥s, no stopper, choice of game
 - 3NT: To play.
 - 4♥: To play.
- 2♠: 5♥s, minimum. 3♠ asks for stopper.
- 2NT: 4♥s, minimum. 3♠ asks for stopper.
- 3♣: 4♥s, maximum. 3♠ asks for stopper.
- 3♦: 3♥s, good maximum, and good shape. 3♠ asks for stopper.
- 3♥: 5♥s, maximum. 3♠ asks for stopper.

After Double of 2♥ or bid of 2♥:

- 2♠: Denies 4+♠s. Now:
 - 2NT: Game invite values with or without ♠s.
 - 3♣: Transfer to ♦s, then after opener bids 3♦:
 - Pass: To play.
 - 3♥: Shows ♠s and ♣s.
 - 3♠: Shows ♠s and ♦s.
 - 3NT: Shows 5♠s and a stopper, choice of game.
 - 3♥: 5+♠s and 4+♥s, game force. 3♥ asks for further description, 3NT showing 5-4 in majors.
 - 3♦: Transfer to ♠s with 6+♠s, game invite or better. 3♠ by opener declines invite, and 3NT by either player offers choice of game.
 - 3♠: 5♠s, no stopper, choice of game
 - 3NT: To play.
 - 4♠: To play.
- 2NT: 4♠s, minimum, and if SST in ♥s not available, can be 5♠s. 3♠ asks for stopper. If 2NT can have 5♠s, 3♣ asks if 5♠s (3♠=yes, 3♦=no). 3♦ to play if opener has just 4♠s.
- 3♣: 4♠s, maximum. 3♠ asks for stopper. 3♦ to play.
- 3♦: 3♠s, good maximum, and good shape. 3♠ asks for stopper.
- 3♥: 5♠s, maximum, and when 3♠ shows maximum too, this is with a stopper.
- 3♠: 5♠s, minimum, or if 2NT shows this, maximum without a stopper.

For a more granular view of the structure, oriented towards ETM 1NT structure methods, see the end of this document.

Over 2C Overcalls

If you use SSTs after 2♦ and 2♥ overcalls, you can also use them over a 2♣ overcall, thus freeing up the double compared to the “systems on” approach over 2♣.

It is suggested to use Double to show values, forcing to 2NT and confirming that the opponents will be unable to play a contract undoubled, so that passes directly over an opponents bid require partner to take appropriate action.

Over Double

Over a Double of 1NT, if you use SSTs, then 2♣ is freed up compared to “systems on”. This allows schemes like this to be played:

Pass: To play 1NT doubled or nothing to say.

Redouble: Signoff with ♣s and higher suit or with long ♦s.

2♣: Signoff with ♦s and a major

Exceptions - When SSTs Do Not Apply

This is the suggested rule for when to use SSTs or not.

If the overcall is artificial and shows one or both majors, do not use the SST for a major shown by the overcall. If the overcall is natural, use SSTs even if the overcall also shows the major.

When the overcall is 2♥, and shows ♠s and not ♥s (e.g. some play transfer overcalls), then play double as a SST in ♥s, with opener passing the double if not a super accept hand.

When the overcall is 2♦, and the bid shows ♥s and perhaps another suit not including promising ♦s (e.g. 2♦ shows both majors), then:

Double shows 3+♦s and values, looking for penalty possibility.

Pass then double shows 2 or less ♦s, and values, often not a clear game force.

The second cheapest cuebid shows clear game force values and 2 or less ♦s, unwilling to pass in case 2♦ is passed out.

This last bid is required since after 1NT-2♦-Pass-Pass-?, it is recommended that opener pass with all dead minimums (e.g. most 15s if playing 15-17) that are not short in ♦s, and to double otherwise. Using this approach prevents the overcaller’s partner from passing 2♦ knowing that a double will occur, and then being able to redouble to get suit choice from partner.

2NT Clarify Ask

After responder uses a SST and rebids 2NT, opener does not know if responder has 5 in the major suit. If a minimum, opener will have to pass and sometimes a 5-3 fit will be missed, which will have mixed results since notrump will be a better contract in some cases. However if opener is non-minimum, opener can employ a 2NT Clarify Ask with 3♣.

After 1NT, SST in major, non-super accept, responder rebids 2NT, now 3♣ asks:

3♦: Fewer than 5 in **M**. Now 3**OM** asks if stopper.

3**M**: 5 in **M** without a stopper, not 5-5.

3**OM**: 5 in **M** and 5 or longer in the highest minor not shown by the opponents.

3NT: 5 in **M** with a stopper.

4♣: 5 in **M** and 5+♣s, if 3**OM** does not show this hand.

A clarify ask is also used after 1NT-2♥-Double-Pass-2NT, where 2NT can be 4 or 5♠s. 3♣ asks, and 3♦ shows 4, 3♠ shows 5.

Examples

All three examples assume a 15-17 notrump opening by the lower of the two hands shown and 2♦ overcalls to show ♦s and a minor, 2♥ overcalls to show ♥s and a minor.

♠ KJ4
♥ KQ2
♦ 872
♣ T865

♠ AT87
♥ J84
♦ AQ3
♣ KQ2

The bread and butter of SSTs: 1NT-(2♦)-Double-2♥-2NT-Pass and 1NT-(2♥)-Double-2NT-Pass.

♠ KJ65
♥ KQ
♦ 872
♣ T865

♠ AT87
♥ J84
♦ AQ3
♣ KQ2

1NT-(2♦)-2♥-2NT-3♥-3♠-Pass and 1NT-(2♥)-Double-2NT-3♥-3♠-Pass

♠ K965
♥ KQ32
♦ 872
♣ T8

♠ AT87
♥ J84
♦ AQ3
♣ KQ2

1NT-(2♦)-Double-2♥-2♠-3♠-Pass and 1NT-(2♥)-Double-2NT-3♥-3♠-Pass

As this section was being written, this board came up in an online bridge tourney, so here's a fourth example:

♠ AT2
♥ J5
♦ T8732
♣ AJ8

♠ KQJ95
♥ T2
♦ KQJ
♣ K63

1NT (not everybody's cup of tea)-(2♥)-Double-2NT-3♣(Clarify?)-3♠(5♠s)-4♠

Changes to the ETM 1NT Structure

In the latest ETM notrump structures, 1NT-2NT(transfer to ♣s)-3♣-3♦ is used as Stayman with a game force and one four major that has a weakness in the other major. After interference, it is suggested the Stayman bid show a weakness in the highest ranking suit the opponents have shown, if any, not including the major held.

Also the structure 1NT-2♠ can be modified so that 2♠ shows a game invite in a minor or a competitive or better hand with the two lowest ranking suits not shown by the opponents, with only four in a major if that is the highest of the two suits. Over 2♠, opener bids 3♣ to show likes the lower of the two possible suits when a two suiter, and 2NT if instead likes the higher of the two possible suits. Over 2NT, 3 of the higher of the two possible suits is to play. Over 2NT, 3♣ is game invite in ♣s, and 3♦ is to play if one of the two possible suits, and otherwise is a game invite in ♦s. Over 3♣, 3♦ is a game invite in ♦s. 3NT is to play, and it promises a stopper in the opponent's major if 3♥ or 3♠ is available as a cuebid to ask for a major.

ETM Detailed Super Stolen Transfers Structure

Here is the SST approach in a detailed structure:

After Double of 2♦ or bid of 2♦:

- 2♥: Denies 4+♥s. Now:
 - 2♠: 4-4+ in majors, game invite values, non-forcing.
 - Pass: 4♠s, minimum.
 - 2NT: Not 4♠s. Now 3 of either major natural.
 - 3♠: 4♠s, not enough to bid game.
 - 3♣: Maximum, bid a five card major if holding one.
 - 3NT: Maximum, to play.
 - 4♠: To play.

 - 2NT: Game invite values with or without ♥s.
 - Pass: To play.
 - 3♣: Clarify Ask:
 - 3♦: Fewer than 5♥. Now 3♠ asks if stopper.
 - 3♥: 5♥s without a stopper, not 5-5.
 - 3♠: 5♥s and 5 or longer in the highest minor not shown by the opponents.
 - 3NT: 5♥s with a stopper.
 - 4♣: 5♥s and 5+♠s, if 3♠ does not show this hand.
 - 3NT: To play.
 - 3♣: Transfer to ♦s, then after opener bids 3♦:
 - Pass: To play.
 - 3♥: Shows ♥s and ♣s.
 - 3♠: Shows ♥s and ♦s.
 - 3NT: Shows 5♥s and a stopper, choice of game.
 - 3♦: Transfer to ♥s with 6+♥s, game invite or better. 3♥ by opener declines invite. 3NT by either player is choice of game. 3♠ is a waiting bid by opener. After 3♥ or 3♠, responder can make these special bids:
 - 3NT: Choice of game.
 - 4♣: 6+♥s, balanced, slam try.
 - 4♦: 6+♥s, singleton/void in ♠s.
 - 3♥: 4-4 or 4-5 in majors, game force. 3♠ asks if 5♥s, 3NT says no.
 - 3♠: 5♥s, no stopper, choice of game
 - 3NT: To play.
 - 4♣: Singleton/void in ♣s, 6+♥s, slam try.
 - 4♦: Singleton/void in ♦s, 6+♥s, slam try.
 - 4♥: To play.
- 2♠: 5♥s, minimum. 3♠ asks for stopper.
 - 2NT: 4♥s, minimum. 3♠ asks for stopper.
 - 3♣: 4♥s, maximum. 3♠ asks for stopper.
 - 3♦: 3♥s, good maximum, and good shape. 3♠ asks for stopper.

3♥: 5♥s, maximum. 3♠ asks for stopper.

After Double of 2♥ or bid of 2♥:

2♠: Denies 4+♠s. Now:

2NT: Game invite values with or without ♠s.

Pass: To play.

3♣: Clarify Ask.

3♦: Fewer than 5♠s. Now 3♥ asks if stopper.

3♠: 5♠s without a stopper, not 5-5.

3♥: 5♠s and 5 or longer in the highest minor not shown by the opponents.

3NT: 5♠ with a stopper.

4♣: 5♠ and 5+♣s, if 3♥ does not show this hand.

3NT: To play.

3♣: Transfer to ♦s, then after opener bids 3♦:

Pass: To play.

3♥: Shows ♠s and ♣s.

3♠: Shows ♠s and ♦s.

3NT: Shows 5♠s and a stopper, choice of game.

3♥: 5+♠s and 4+♥s, game force. 3♥ asks for further description, 3NT showing 5-4 in majors, 3♠ showing 6+♠s, and 4X showing 5-5.

3♦: Transfer to ♠s with 6+♠s, game invite or better. 3♣ by opener declines invite, and 3NT by either player offers choice of game. After 3♣ or 3NT responder can cuebid on the 4 level to show a balanced slam try.

3♠: 5♠s, no stopper, choice of game

3NT: To play.

4X: Singleton/void in X, 6+♠s, slam try.

4♣: To play.

2NT: 4♠s, minimum, and if SST in ♥s not available, can be 5♠s. 3♠ asks for stopper. If 2NT can have 5♠s, 3♣ asks if 5♠s (3♣=yes, 3♦=no). 3♦ to play if opener has just 4♠s.

3♣: 4♠s, maximum. 3♠ asks for stopper. 3♦ to play.

3♦: 3♠s, good maximum, and good shape. 3♠ asks for stopper.

3♥: 5♠s, maximum, and when 3♠ shows maximum too, this is with a stopper.

3♠: 5♠s, minimum, or if 2NT shows this, maximum without a stopper.

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