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This Week in Bridge

(381) Raising Partner's Sandwich Seat Overcall

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Levels: 6 of 10 (2 of 6)

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General

When partner makes an overcall in the sandwich seat then a few things are different from a direct seat overcall. First, we have already passed, likely limiting our hand in values. Second, both opponents have bid. These two facts give us a variety of different options for how we may choose to describe our hand. Let's take a look at how we raise partner's suit when they make a sandwich seat overcall.

The Opponents Bid and Raise a Suit

When the opponents bid and raise a suit, partner will overcall aggressively. They will often bid with fewer HCP than normal, called "pre-balancing" – OBAR bids. Given that partner is stretching to bid in this situation we should not compete aggressively.

Example 1

♠ 753

♥ Q52

♦ K985

♣ Q983

1♥ P 2♥ 2♠

3♥ ___?

Pass. Although we have some values and a fit for partner, we should not "bury" partner.

Example 2

♠ Q53

♥ A52

♦ K985

♣ Q983

1♥ P 2♥ 2♠

3♥ ___?

3♠. Although we have limit raise values. we just make a simple raise.



Responder Bids 1NT

When RHO opens the bidding with something like 1♦ and LHO responds with 1NT then partner may compete in the bidding with more shape (and less strength) than we would normally expect for a 2-level overcall. We need to keep into account that partner may bid with a hand like this.

Example 3

♠ AQT85

♥ KT3

♦ 9432

♣ 6

1♦ P 1NT 2♠!!

Since partner will stretch to compete in the bidding here, we should be careful about raising partner if the opponents further compete (cut partner some slack).

Example 4

♠ 874

♥ J83

♦ K83

♣ KT83

1♦ P 1NT 2♠

3♣ —

Although we have some values and a fit for partner, we should not raise to 3♠. Partner has already bid some of our values (“pre-balanced”) by coming into an auction like this. We should not punish them for doing so. It is best to pass here.

Opponents Bid Two Different Suits

When RHO opens the bidding with a suit at the 1-level and LHO responds in a different suit at the 1-level then if partner makes a sandwich seat overcall, then we have a variety of way to bid the opponent’s suit.

Example 5

♠ KT53

♥ A852

♦ K955

♣ 3

1♣ P 1♥ 1♠

2♥ ___?

This is an important auction to discuss. A cuebid of 3♥ is clearly an artificial bid (if we had a good hand with long ♥ we would have overcalled 1♥ over RHO’s 1♣ opening). So we can use this as a strong raise (limit raise or better) of partner’s ♠ suit.



Example 6

♠ K3

♥ A93

♦ 94

♣ KQT843

Here is the type of hand where we bid 3♣. Because we did not have the opportunity to overcall ♣ earlier (as RHO opened the bidding 1♣), many partnerships use this bid of the opponent's suit as natural. This is because we did not have the opportunity to bid our suit on the first round of the bidding (the opponent opened it) and we are "well-positioned" behind the opponent that bid our suit. This is different from when we bid the opponent's Major suit.

Conclusion

When partner makes an overcall in the sandwich seat, they may be stretching to bid. This can be done to try to win the contract, get us off to a good opening lead, push the opponents out of their 1NT contract, or a variety of other reasons that may not be clear to us. The key to handling these situations is to know when to cut partner some slack as well as having agreements about which bids are natural and which bids are raises of partner's suit. When you have the choice of multiple calls, make sure that you choose the clear one.