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This Week in Bridge

(526) Raising Partner's Overcall

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Levels: 6 of 10

General

When partner makes an overcall in the direct seat, they could have a variety of different shapes and strengths. This is a very "blurry" bid and leaves us, as the Advancer of their overcall, in a difficult position. We need to describe our hand to partner and then let partner use that information to hopefully get us to the right contract. To effectively do this, we need many ways to let our partner know both the size of our fit and the strength of our hand. Here we focus on the many ways that we can raise partner in these auctions.

Raising Partner's Suit

When we raise partner's suit, we must communicate both our strength and the size of our fit.

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 = Limit 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

Simple Raise

The most common raise we use is a *simple raise.*

Example 1
♠ K53
♥ T852
♦ K5
♣ Q983
1♣ 1♠ 2♣ __
We raise to 2♠. This shows 6-9 points and usually 3-card support (4-card support is possible).

Jump Raises – Preemptive (Weak)

No matter if RHO passes or if there is further competition, all jump raises are weak. These bids generally show few HCP and apply the Law of Total Tricks.

- Jump Raise to 3-Level – 0-5 HCP (3-6 HCP Vul) and 4-card support
- Jump Raise to Game – 0-8 HCP (3-8 HCP VUl) and 5+card support

When we make these bids we usually do not have a completely flat hand.

Example 2
♠ K532
♥ T852
♦ 65
♣ 983
1♣ 1♠ 2♣ __
Here we bid 3♠, showing our weak values and 9-card fit.

Example 3
♠ K9753
♥ 2
♦ K5
♣ 98653
1♣ 1♠ 2♣ __
With this hand we jump to 4♠, showing our 5-card support and less than invitational values. These jumps to game can be a bit heavier than other "weak" bids, since there is no chance of "missing a game" when partner has a good hand.

Strong Raises – Cuebid is a Limit Raise or Better (Q=LR+)

When we have a fit for partner's suit and 10+ points, a limit raise, we show this by cuebidding the opponent's suit.

Example 4

♠ A532
♥ K54
♦ 54
♣ K873

1♣ 1♥ P __

Here we bid 2♣. This shows a limit raise or better: 3+card support and 10+ points. We can bid again later if we are stronger than these 10 HCP.

When there is more than one suit to cuebid, then the "cheaper" cuebid shows a lighter limit raise (often only a 3-card limit raise) and the higher cuebid shows a heavier limit raise (often a 4-card limit raise or better).

Example 5

♠ Q98
♥ K873
♦ AT853
♣ K

1♣ 1♥ 1♠ __

Here we bid 2♠. We have 4-card support, good values, and some nice shape. This is clearly an excellent hand and so we make the "stronger" limit raise (2♣ would be the "weaker" limit raise).

Splinter by Advancer

Since partner's overcall could be weaker than an opening bid we need more values to make a splinter opposite an overcall than we would if partner had opened the bidding.

Example 6

♠ A743
♥ K873
♦ AQT85
♣ 8

1♦ 1♠ P __

Jump to 4♣. This shows about 13+HCP, 4+card support for partner, and shortness (singleton or void) in ♣.

Mixed Raise by Advancer

We can use a jump cuebid in these auctions to show a mix of a simple raise and a weak raise. This is about 7-9 points and 4-card support.

Example 7

♠ Q98
♥ K873
♦ QT85
♣ J8

1♦ 1♥ X __

We jump to 3♦. This shows the values of a 2♥ bid, but enough of a fit to go to the 3-level.

Conclusion

Since we are not sure what partner has when they overcall, when we raise partner's suit, we try to describe our hand and let partner be involved in the decision about further bidding. This is very different than when you are Responder and tend to act more as the captain. Here, you need help from partner to make good bidding decisions. Fortunately, we have a lot of ways to raise partner's suit and that means our bids are narrowly defined, giving partner the information that they need to help decide what to do next. Make sure you take advantage of all these ways of raising partner's suit!