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Rebids by Overcaller

Unlike the situation when you are the opener, and you are expected to make a rebid when partner responds, when you make an overcall of the opponent's opening bid, and partner responds, you will often pass (at least you should!). Remembering that your partner should start with a cue bid if they have a limit raise or better, let's look at some auctions and hands. Remember that a simple raise by partner is strictly competitive, not an invitation to further action by you.

Also, remember that a new suit by partner is not forcing, and denies a fit for your suit. You should pass partner's suit unless you have a very good hand. Do not rebid your suit just because you do not like partner's suit! They heard you the first time you bid. A new suit by partner does not show a good hand on their part, and is just an attempt to get to a better contract.

Auction I.

You
1H - 1S - P - 2H
P - ?

Partner has at least a limit raise in spades, and could be stronger. Your rebid will show partner if you have anything extra for your overcall.

S-AKxxx H-xx D-Kxxx C-xx Just rebid 2S. You are a K better than minimum, but still not interested in game versus a limit raise. Partner can proceed if they have better than an opening hand.

S-AKxxx H-Kx D-KJxx C-xx Bid 3D. Spades are the agreed suit, so 3D must be a help suit game try. Bidding a new suit shows at least an opening hand, and partner can evaluate their holding. If partner just bids 3S, you should pass.

S-AKxxxx H-Kx D-KJxx C-x Bid 4S. If you opened this hand 1S, and partner made a limit raise you would accept the game. Your sixth trump and fine shape make game a good bet opposite a limit raise.

Auction II.

You
1H - 1S - 2H - 2S
3H - ?

This is a very common matchpoint auction, and getting it wrong here will cost you many more matchpoints than bidding (or not bidding) the occasional slam. The average player tends to bid on blindly here; but some discipline will pay large dividends.

S-AKxxx H-x D-Kxxx C-xxx Pass! Remember that partner gets another bid (and partner can see the front of their cards, while you can only see the backs). As before, you have nothing more than a basic overcall. (It is a very important principle that when you have nothing more than you have already shown by your previous bid, and partner gets another chance to bid, you should pass.) The singleton heart is nice, but you will be immediately tapped on the opening lead, and will probably lose control on a 4-1 spade split. You have no reason to expect a 9-card fit, and the 3 level is risky with an 8-card fit and the opponents holding the balance of power. On this auction partner will not have as good as a limit raise (partner could have cuebid 3H without taking you past 3S).

Some hands partner could have:

A. S-QJxx H-xxxx D-xxx C-Ax With this hand partner knows that your side has a 9 card fit and can bid 3S. Probably down 1, while 3 H makes.

B. S-Qxx H-xxxx D-xxxx C-Ax Partner did the right thing by raising to 2S, but should pass here because of the 8 card fit. Perhaps the opponents will carry on to 4H which may go down.

C. S-xxx H-QJ10x D- Qxx C-Ax Partner did the right thing by raising to 2S. Now that the trap has been sprung, partner will not be amused if you bid 3S. Three spades is likely down, while 3H is almost certainly down at least 1. Note that partner here does not have a limit raise worthy of a cue bid.

Same Auction, and you as overcaller hold:

S-AKxxx H-Kx D- KJxx C-xx Pass! You have excellent defense, and no reason to expect a 9-card fit. Partner will bid 3S when it's right. You have almost no chance of game with this hand when partner could not make a cuebid. 3H is likely to go down, and 4H by the opponents should go down hard.

Same Auction, and you as overcaller hold:

S-AKxxxx H-Kx D-KJxx C-x Bid 3S. If you have developed the discipline to pass with the first two hands, partner can draw the logical conclusion that your direct bid is a game try! After your direct 3S bid, partner should bid 4S with hand A above. With hand C above, partner can happily defend 4H, probably after doubling. With hand B, partner can pass and expect to make 3S

Same Auction, and you as overcaller hold:

S-AKxxxx H- x D- AKxx C-xx Bid 4S. This hand has good play for 4S even opposite partner hand C above. You are bidding here not because of your 14 points, but because of your fantastic shape and the known 9-card spade fit. The sixth trump gives you protection against the initial tap.

Note that for most partnerships this hand is not quite good enough to start with a takeout double of 1H and then bid (standard methods require about a K more for that action.)

(14)