

COMMON-SENSE HAND EVALUATION

Lesson 2, 1 Dec 2011

Bob Boyd

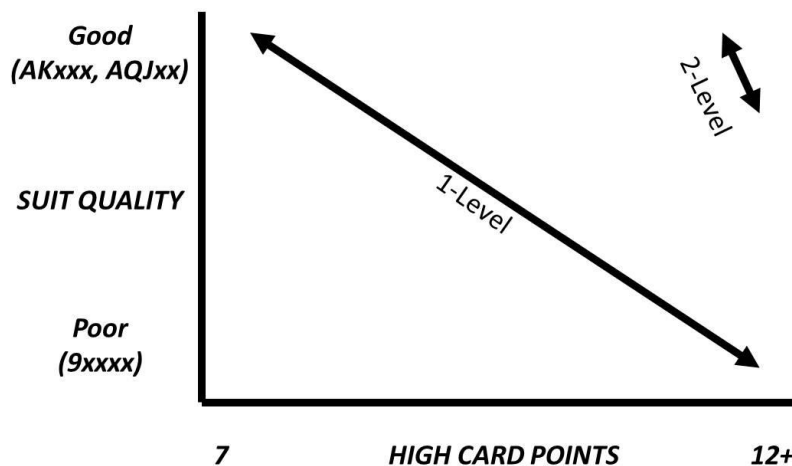
PROBLEM: Flight C players miss a disproportionate number of games for two reasons: 1) as opener and overcaller, they often do not adhere to normal standards, and 2) as responder and advancer, they often focus too much on high-card points (HCP) rather than visualizing how the two hands fit together.

This week we'll focus on being a reliable partner by going over standards for direct overcalls of one or two of a suit. Next week, we'll wrap up this series by adding responder to the mix.

Strong NT overcalls, weak jump overcalls, two-suited overcalls, and balancing are special cases. We'll save them for other days.

STANDARDS:

- **It is important to be a reliable partner when opening, but even more so when overcalling**
- **Key point:** You will overcall hands you won't open, and you will open hands you won't overcall—the requirements are different
- What do you need to overcall? This is very much a matter of taste
 - Old style is always to have a good suit of five or more cards
 - Modern style is flexible and allows strength to compensate for deficiency in the suit:



- This compensatory relationship between suit and strength only exists at the 1-level; a 2-level overcall always requires a decent suit and a minimum of about 12 HCP, esp. when vulnerable
- What is the upper strength of an overcall? Again, a matter of taste
 - Old style is to double and bid with 16+ HCP, so an overcall is limited to 15 HCP
 - Modern players bid; a plan of two calls to show your hand is vulnerable to preemption
 - Place the firm requirement on doubling and bidding; you should have a strong hand and excellent suit, i.e., can play at the 3-level opposite a stiff in dummy
 - If your hand is not that good, you should consider an overcall

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- Should a direct overcall be made on a 4-card suit? This is more than a matter of taste
 - Most experts say “no,” at least for non-experts
 - My favorites (Miles, Lawrence) say “yes” with restrictions:
 - Only at the 1-level, never at the 2-level
 - Suit must be headed by at least AKJ
 - Hand strength must be that of a full opening bid (12+ HCP)
 - Partner is entitled to respond as if you overcalled the usual 5-card suit
 - 4-3 (“Moysean”) fits require special attention to retaining control of the hand, hence the requirement for added strength. If 4-3 fits scare you, do not overcall 4-card suits
- When both opponents bid and your partner passed, the hand probably belongs to the opponents, so your goals are to be safe and to give useful info to partner
 - If you can overcall at the 1-level, don’t do it with a poor suit
 - 2-level overcalls are best when made with a decent, long suit and distributional values
 - Of particular interest are your cards in enemy suits
 - Two or three low cards in suits not raised equal losers
 - Three or four cards in a raised suit mean partner is probably short
 - Holdings like AQ or Kx are pluses in RHO’s suit, but not in LHO’s
 - Exercise caution when vulnerable—have your values (and then some)

Questions? E-mail me at bobbyd72@aol.com

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OPEN?

♠KJ42
♥K85
♦AJ52
♣73

Yes

1

OVERCALL?

♠KJ42
♥K85
♦AJ52
♣73

No

2

OPEN?

♠KQT42
♥K85
♦8652
♣73

No

3

OVERCALL?

♠KQT42
♥K85
♦8652
♣73

Yes

4

OVERCALL?

♠AQJ42
♥985
♦8652
♣73

Yes

5

OVERCALL?

♠73
♥985
♦8652
♣AQJ42

No

6

OVERCALL?

♠QT432
♥985
♦AK2
♣73

Yes

7

OVERCALL?

♠JT432
♥985
♦AQ2
♣K3

Yes

8

OVERCALL?

♠98432
♥K85
♦AQ2 *Yes,*
♣K3 *But...*

9

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OVERCALL?

♠K3
♥985
♦AQ2
♣JT432 *No*

10

OVERCALL?

♠K3
♥K85
♦AQ2
♣98432 *No*

11

OVERCALL?

♠A3
♥K8
♦AQ2 *No*
♣985432

12

WHAT DOES
IT TAKE?

♠A3
♥K8
♦AQ2
♣?85432

13

X of 1♦
and Bid

♠AKQ853
♥A4
♦32
♣KQ2 *Yes*

14

X of 1♦
and Bid

♠A4
♥AKQ853
♦32
♣KQ2 *???*

15

X of 1♦
and Bid

♠KQ2
♥AKQ853
♦32
♣A4 *OK*

16

OVERCALL?

♠AKJT
♥KQ5
♦8652 *Ask*
♣73 *First*

17

OVERCALL?

♠73
♥KQ5
♦8652
♣AKJT *No*

18