



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(148) After Partner's Responsive Double

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Level: 2

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

When Advancer makes a double that forces us as the Overcaller to bid, we usually focus on showing our shape to partner - our longest suit - but we also must attempt to describe the strength of our hand to partner.

When we have made a simple overcall, our strength is very wide ranging (7-18 points for a 1-level overcall). We will see that in situations when we make an overcall and partner makes a responsive double (that means the opponents have bid and raised a suit in between), our first priority is to let partner know the strength of our overcall before we try to show more information about the shape of our hand.

Overcall Buckets

Simple overcalls at the 1-level can be classified as follows:

- Subminimum: 7 to 10- points
- Minimum: 10+ to 12- points
- Sound: 12+ to 14 points
- Strong: 15 to 18- points

This leaves a variety of strengths for us to communicate to Advancer on the second round of the bidding. The general approach is to ignore the possibility of having a subminimum hand. partner will treat our overcall as having at least 10 points, at least a minimum hand, and bid accordingly. If we have a subminimum hand that is "our problem", and we must play the hand well!

Overcaller will generally have:

- Bad Hand = Minimum Overcall (or Subminimum)
- Average Hand = Sound Overcall
- Good Hand = Strong Overcall

Rebids with Minimum Overcalls

When Advancer makes a responsive double, it is important for Overcaller to know what is promised. The higher the responsive double is made, the more values partner promises. At the 2-level partner generally promises at least 8 points.

Example

1♣ 1♠ 2♣ X

With a minimum hand (or subminimum) for an overcall, Overcaller needs to make a cheap (low-level) action on the second round of the bidding. This is usually done by rebidding their suit or by bidding a suit lower-ranking (below) than their suit.

Example

1♣ 1♠ 2♣ X

P ___?

- 2♦/2♥ shows 4+cards and no extra values, minimum hand.
- 2♠ shows a minimum hand and could still be only a 5-card suit if no better rebid available.

♠ KQ954

♥ A54

♦ 76

♣ J43

With this hand rebid 2♠ to keep the auction low and let partner know you do not have a good hand.

Rebids with Sound Overcalls

With a sound overcall, we have game interest after partner makes a responsive double. Overcaller shows this by:

- Bidding as suit above our overcall suit at the 2-level,
- Bidding 2NT,
- Bidding a new suit at the 3-level,
- Making a jump rebid of our own suit.

Example

1♣ 1♥ 2♣ X

P ___?

- 2♠ shows 4-card ♠ and a sound overcall.
- 2NT shows a sound overcall or a little more and a stopper in the opponents' suit - about 13 to 15 points, a hand that wants to be game if Advancer has a little extra, about 10+ points.

- 3-level new suits also show a sound overcall and are natural.

All of these bids are forward-going towards game if Advancer has extra values for the responsive double.

Rebids with Strong Overcalls

With a maximum hand for an overcall, we need to reach game when partner shows at least a decent 8 points with a responsive double.

These values are shown by:

- Jumping in a new suit,
- Bidding 3NT,
- Cuebidding the opponents' suit, or
- Jumping to game.

Examples

1♦ 1♠ 2♦ X
P __?

♠ KQ954

♥ 743

♦ 3

♣ AJ74

With this hand, do not bid 3♣. You do not have enough values. Instead, rebid 2♠, trying to put the brakes on the auction.

♠ KQ954

♥ K74

♦ 3

♣ AJ74

With this hand, bid 3♣. You have enough values to show your shape and bid your second suit at the 3-level.

Conclusion

When you are forced to make a bid because your partner has made a double, do not just bid your suits without thinking. It is a natural tendency to just show your shape, but you must restrain yourself if you have a poor hand. With a bad overcall, try to slow the auction down by keeping the auction low. Only bid higher with a decent hand - you will be encouraging partner to explore game.