

Dealing with Overcalls: Part 4

Two-Suited Overcalls

Mike@Wavada.org

1 The Situation: Partner opens 1 of a suit. RHO makes a two-suited bid.

1.1 The two most common such bids:

1.1.1 The Unusual 2NT overcall usually shows at least five cards in the two lowest unbid suits, but it may mean something else.

1.1.2 A Michaels cue bid of opener's minor usually shows at least five cards in each major, but it may mean something else.

1.2 If you are uncertain of the meaning, look at the opponent's convention card or ask.

1.3 The amount of strength shown varies. "Mini-maxi" means that the bid shows more than a minimum opener (15+) or less (11-). Look on the convention card or ask.

1.4 As always, try to count the likely number of trumps and gauge the relative strengths of the two sides.

1.5 A lot of bidding room has been consumed, but some very useful information and two cue bids and a double have been gained.

2 The "Unusual over Unusual" convention makes use of all three new bids.

2.1 This is my favorite convention because it gives up nothing useful.

2.2 A better name would have been "Two v. Two." Identify the overcaller's two suits. Cue bidding either of these suits shows at least invitational strength. The "other suit" is the one not yet claimed by anyone.

2.3 The cue bids:

2.3.1 Some play that cue bidding the lower of the opponent's suits always shows support for partner's suit. Example: Partner opens 1♠; opponents bid 2NT to show ♦ and ♣. Cue bid 3♣ to show support for ♠.

2.3.2 Some map the lower of the two remaining suits to the lower suit indicated by the opponents and therefore the higher to the higher. Example: Partner opens 1♠; opponents bid 2NT to show ♦ and ♣. Cue bid 3♦ to show support for ♠ because spades is the higher of "our suits" and diamonds is the higher of theirs. The mnemonic phrase is "Lower-lower; higher-higher" or "cheap-cheap."

2.3.3 Cue bidding the opponent's suit that is mapped to the "other suit" guarantees at least five pieces.

2.4 Double is always penalty-oriented. It indicates that your side is stronger and that your hand has significant values in at least one of overcaller's suits.

2.5 Bidding partner's suit directly shows support but denies invitational values.

2.6 Bidding the other suit directly is rarely done. It denies invitational values and tolerance for partner's suit. It is an invitation to play.

3 The convention only applies if both of overcaller's suits are specified.

Next week: Dealing with preemptive overcalls.