

§25. The Contested Auction. Overcalls

Notes on the basic principles to be taught in this section.

- This is the first lesson on overcalls and is likely to prove tricky. Many beginners will want to apply the “rules” for opening the bidding to overcalls (i.e. bid with 12+ points, Pass with less).
- It is crucially important to dot the *is* and cross the *ts*. Teachers may say that, “an overcall doesn’t promise an opening bid” but many learners hear, “an overcall shows less than an opening bid”. Some experienced players actually believe that (“It was only an overcall, partner!”), and think that all opening bids start by contesting the auction with a Double. Ghastly!
- The Quizzes introduce the idea of how high to compete by referring to the combined number of trumps. This is also mentioned in the VuBridge hands, although the *Law of Total Tricks* comes later in the course.
- The dangers inherent by being Doubled in a low-level part-score need to be shown. The hands on VuBridge illustrate one such example (a full deal based on Example 7). Incidentally, it is in this section that VuBridge first mentions vulnerability as an important part of the game. Hitherto in the course, with all bidding purely constructive, vulnerability has been irrelevant.
- With respect to the last comment, the eight played deals now show the vulnerability.
- In the eight played deals (Hands 1-8), four are makeable contracts, four are set to fail as the overcall indicates the killing lead.

Four hands need setting up (overleaf); none is a full deal. Three of the West hands (in “Hands” 1, 2 and 3) are irrelevant and have been greyed out.

“**Hand**” 1 contains three examples of potential one-level overcalls (North, East and South).

Over an opening bid of 1♣ North (Example 2 in the student notes) would overcall 1♥, East (Example 3 in the notes) would Pass and South (Example 4 in the notes) would overcall 1♠.

“**Hand**” 2 contains three examples of potential overcalls, one at the one-level (North) and two at the two two-level (East and South).

Over an opening bid of 1♣ North (Example 5 in the student notes) would Pass. Over an opening bid of 1♠ East (Example 6 in the student notes) would overcall 2♣ but South (Example 7 in the student notes) should Pass. Many students will want to bid, “because I have 14 points”. **Note the lack of playing tricks.**

“**Hand**” 3 contains three examples of potential two-level overcalls (North, East and South).

Over an opening bid of 1♠ North (Example 8 in the student notes) would just about overcall 2♥ but East (Example 9 in the student notes) should not bother overcalling 2♣. Note that overcalling Clubs over Spades is usually pointless as the opposition will usually outbid you with a higher-ranking suit. Further, there is no pre-emptive effect and, in any case, you shouldn’t overcall when holding x x x in the suit bid on your right. Subtle, but important. The contrast between Examples 8 and 9 is a useful one.

The South hand does not appear in the student notes but provides a useful contrast in that this hand, with a good six-card suit, **is** a sound two-level overcall of 2♦ over 1♠. **Points are not as important as playing tricks.**

“**Hand**” 4 contains four examples of responses to overcalls (all four compass-point hands).

All four hands appear in the Quiz towards the end of the student notes. North is Example 10, East is Example 11, South is Example 12 and West is Example 13. They illustrate players’ actions after partner has overcalled.

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<p style="text-align: center;">“Hand” 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ J 7 5 2 ♥ A K 10 9 5 ♦ Q 9 8 ♣ 3</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> ♠ None ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ J 6 4 2 ♣ Q 8 7 6 5 2 </td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> N W E S </td> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;"> ♠ A K 10 6 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ 7 5 ♣ K 10 9 4 </td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ Q 9 8 4 3 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A K 10 3 ♣ A J</p>	♠ None ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ J 6 4 2 ♣ Q 8 7 6 5 2	N W E S	♠ A K 10 6 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ 7 5 ♣ K 10 9 4	<p style="text-align: center;">“Hand” 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ K Q 10 ♥ K 9 ♦ K Q 8 3 ♣ 6 4 3 2</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> ♠ J 8 5 4 2 ♥ 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ 6 ♣ 7 </td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> N W E S </td> <td style="width: 25%; padding: 5px;"> ♠ A 7 ♥ A 10 ♦ 10 4 2 ♣ K J 10 9 8 5 </td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ 9 6 3 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ A J 9 7 5 ♣ A Q</p>	♠ J 8 5 4 2 ♥ 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ 6 ♣ 7	N W E S	♠ A 7 ♥ A 10 ♦ 10 4 2 ♣ K J 10 9 8 5
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