8 – Higher-Level openings and Jump-suit overcalls - commentary

Hand 1

North holds 8 points and a 6-card spade suit headed by 2 honours. Open 2♠.

South should not get excited with a maximum 21(22) points between the 2 hands. A spade contract will lose ♠A, ♥A, 2 clubs and the 3rd diamond - a no-trump contract should lose ♠A, ♥A, and 5 clubs – so no game available. 2♠ is plenty for a score of 110. Meanwhile EW might just make 9 tricks in clubs (score 110).

Hand 2

East has the perfect hand for a weak 2♥ opener.

South should double – opening values and the right shape. West must not get excited facing the weak opener, and North will bid 2♠.

Against 2♠ by North East will lead the ♥K which West should overtake and return. The defence will come to 1 club, 2 hearts and 1 spade. If West can get the trumps out then the defence must make a further trick in a side-suit. 2♠ making 8 scores 110.

EW can make 8 tricks in hearts for a score of -50 or -100 if doubled.

Hand 3

With a probable 10 tricks in hand South must open with 2♣. North will relay with 2♦ and South will rebid 2♥ provided that you play this as forcing (recommended in this system). North can do no better than 2♠, after which South will bid 4♥. EW can take the first 2 spades.

If not, declarer will clear trumps, and then make 4 club tricks by overtaking the Jack on the third round for 12 altogether.

4♥ making 11 scores 450.

Hand 4

West opens 1♦ (planning either a 2♣ or a 1NT rebid). North's hand is ideal for a weak jump overcall of 2♥. East has just about enough to double (or bid 2♠) although pass would not be unreasonable.

South should raise to 3♥ (based on the 3-card support rather than on the 11 points – and we haven't done the unassuming cue-bid yet) but with some reservations on account of the vulnerability.

West should pass (assuming that 4♣ is played as forcing - East will get a further opportunity) and here the auction will end.

In 3♥ NS can make 8 tricks, losing 3 spades and 2 clubs. Meanwhile EW can make 3♦ losing just two hearts and two Diamonds, but only 8 tricks in clubs when they also lose the ♣Q.

3♦ by EW scores 110 to EW. 2♥ by NS scores 110 to NS. 3♥ by NS scores 100 to EW, but 200 if doubled.

Hand 5

North has the perfect hand for a **weak** 2♣ opening, only such a bid does not exist – he will just have to pass.

East has a balanced 15 points and will open 1♠.

South will pass, and with 4-card major suit support West will raise spades. 3♠ is tempting, which East would raise to 4♠, but he is just a point short and the auction should end in 2♠.

South will lead his singleton club, declarer must take the Ace, and will probably run the ♠J. Provided that South can fin find the switch to ♦A and another diamond for partner to ruff the defence will come to 1 club, 1 top spade, 1 Diamond and a ruff to hold declarer to 9 tricks and a score of 140.

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Hand 6

With a 7-card suit headed by a solid honours holding in a weak hand East will start with 3♦.
South and West should pass. North has just about enough for a take-out double and South should bid 4♠.
With 4 Spade tricks, 4 Club tricks and the ♥A declarer needs only 1 ruff in a red suit to make his contract. He might just get 2 ruffs in the same hand for 11 tricks, but care will be needed.
4♠ making 10 will score 420.

Hand 7

South has a routine 1♣ opener with a planned rebid of 1♠.
West will make a weak jump overcall of 3♦. North should double as he searches for a fit. East will be tempted to bid 4♦ on a 10-card fit but vulnerable and with poor shape it is probably better to pass.
South can do no more than 3♠ (4♠), which North will raise to game.
With the ♥Q on the right side declarer should make his game losing just one Spade, one Diamond and one Club – score 620.
Meanwhile EW can take 8 top tricks in diamonds – 3 off doubled would be 'bridge' too far (800 to NS).

Hand 8

West has a natural weak 2♥ opener. And North a routine take-out double. East does best to remain silent. South can only bid 2♠, which will probably end the auction.
Declarer has 7 easy tricks with 4 Spades, 2 Clubs thanks to a well-placed Queen, and a Heart ruff but will have to work hard to conjure up an eighth trick from the diamond suit.
Meanwhile EW can take 8 tricks off the top in hearts, and should come eventually to a ninth trick in clubs.
2♠ by NS making 7 tricks scores 50 to EW, 100 if doubled.
2♥ or 3♥ by EW making 9 scores 140 to EW.

Hand 9

I this North hand, the hand is too strong and the suit is too weak for a weak two opening bid.
North opens 1♥ with a planned rebid of 2♣. East passes and South raises invitationally to 3♥. North should raise to game.
East's safest lead is ♦J. After clearing trumps declarer can then take 11 tricks off the top losing just the two major suit aces.
4♥ making 11 scores 450 - 3♥ making 11 scores 200.

Hand 10

East has a text-book 2NT opener, which West should raise to 3NT N and S remaining silent.
South should not have to think too hard before leading ♠K.
If declarer takes the first or second round of spades then North will get in with the ♥A and then return a spade for South to take the rest of the suit holding declarer to nine tricks.
If he ducks twice he can then take 4 Clubs and 4 Diamonds (K first then A in case the ♦J has to be caught) before exiting with a Heart. North will have no choice but to put him back in with a Heart for a tenth trick.
3NT making 9 scores 600 - 3NT making 10 scores 630.
In fact, 6♦ by EW makes 12 tricks as 2 spade losers go away on the clubs, for a score of 1370.

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Hand 11

South opens a weak 2♦ and West doubles for take-out.

North should raise to 3♦ based on the 9-card fit, and East should bid at least 3♠, facing which North will raise to 4♠.

South leads his singleton Club.

The defence will take 2 tricks in the red suits, but that's their lot as declarer makes 11 tricks for a score of 450. (4♥ also makes 11 tricks, but it is an inferior contract based on a 4-3 trump fit and relying on a 3-3 trump split.)

Board 12

West 's spade suit is a bit iffy, but at favourable vulnerability it is worth a 3♠ opener note that (the ♠9 is worth its weight in gold).

Most Norths will find a take-out double, East will remain silent and South pretty much has to bid 4♥ – the final contract.

West's lead is not enviable – a trump through the doubler's assumed holding is perhaps as good as anything. However, the contract is doomed with everything lying wrong, and declarer might make no more than 8 tricks. EW make at least 8 tricks in Spades.

4♥ by NS making 8 scores 200 to EW – 500 if doubled.

3♠ by EW scores 50 to NS – 100 if doubled.

Should North double, that's for you to decide, but the power of a pre-empt in spades is there for all to see.

Board 13

North opens 2♦ (weak), East and South pass, and West must decide. I bid 3NT on this hand, albeit with some misgivings. If I bid no more than 2NT then partner should raise to game.

South will lead ♦Q, but JT98 guarantees a stop in the suit. If the defence takes the first 3 tricks in Diamonds then declarer can take the remaining 10 tricks off the top. If the defence tries something else then declarer can still take 10 tricks as the fourth Spade establishes.

3NT making 10 scores 630. In fact 4♠ makes 11 for 650, but it is not a good contract on the 4-3 fit.

4♦ is a good sacrifice by NS making 8 tricks for -200 or -500 if doubled, but 5♦ going 3 off for -800 when doubled would be a step too far.

Board 14

East has the requisite 6-card suit and point range for a weak two, but I pass – I want some sort of suit quality.

With 17 points in a balanced hand South opens 1♠, North responds 2♦, and South rebids 2NT (forcing facing the 2-level response and leaving room for partner to show 3-card spade support, which North raises to 3NT.

Declarer can easily count 9 potential tricks, but surely West will find the ♦Q lead, East must overtake and return a diamond, and provided that he can find the club switch when he gets in with the ♥A the defence will hold declarer to 8 tricks - 50 to EW.

Note that a 2♠ opener by East gets doubled by North (for take-out) which is passed by South for a grisly result.

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Board 15

South opens 1♦ with a planned rebid of 1♠.
West is too strong for a weak jump overcall and so bids just 1♥ in the first instance. I like 2♣ (rule of 14) for North's response if only to guide the defence but both 2♦ and 3♦ will have their advocates.
East bids 2♥ (assumed 8-card fit) and south doubles for take-out suggesting four spades.
West bids 3♥ on the 9-card fit and North must choose between pass and 4♦.
EW will take at least 8 tricks in 3♥.
3♥ – 1 scores 50 to NS if not doubled.
In 4♦ EW can hold declarer to 9 tricks if they find the singleton club lead and then take ♦A, 2 hearts and a club ruff – score 100 to EW (200 if doubled), but on any other defence declarer will make 10 tricks, as also in 4♣.
4♣ or 4♦ making 10 scores 130.

Board 16

West has a routine 1♥ opener with a planned rebid in Clubs, and North will hardly hesitate to overcall 2♠.
East has a difficult choice – double is the most versatile option available.
South raises to 3♠ which may well end the auction.
4♥ by EW makes 11 tricks when the minor suits split and the ♥J is caught for 650 to EW.
3♠ by NS makes the obvious 7 tricks for 100 to EW or 300 if doubled.
What better illustration of the havoc which can be caused by a pre-emptive bid in spades?

Board 17

With 23 points in a balanced hand South will open 2♣, North will relay with 2♦ and South will rebid 2NT promising 23 or 24 points.
Holding 10 points in a balanced hand North can see a total of 33 (34) and should jump straight to 6NT.
West will lead a small heart which South must take.
Declarer can now see 11 tricks with threats in Spades and Diamonds, but he cannot afford to lose a trick early to 'correct the count'.
He must lead off the 3 top Diamonds and 4 Clubs.
East must discard all his hearts to keep the diamonds and spades protected. If declarer now crosses to a top spade on table and exits with a diamond East will not be able to get to partner's heart and will have to put declarer back on table to make the long diamond and the top spades.
That's a double dummy play which I almost certainly wouldn't find at the table, but it is the correct contract.
6NT making 12 scores 990.
6NT making 11 scores 50 to EW.
5♠ also makes 11 for 450 to NS.

Board 18

With 25 points in an unbalanced hand and a likely 11 tricks East must open with 2♣ and subsequently force to game. West should make the relay response of 2♦ and East will rebid 2♥ provided that this is played as forcing. West can do no better than 2♠ (or 3♥) and East will next bid 3♦ – game-forcing and promising at least 5-4 shape. West now has an easy 3♥ in the game-forcing scenario and East will probably ask for Aces. 4NT will elicit a 5♦ response (for 1 ace, playing 4-Ace Blackwood at this point

in our course). East can now be all but certain of the small slam, but the Diamond suit may well tempt him to 7♥ or even 7NT.
A non-committal Club lead from South gives nothing away.
Declarer can count 12 tricks provided that he can bring home the Club suit for 2 Diamond discards.
Failing this there are all sorts of ways of creating the twelfth trick – a diamond ruff in dummy or a repeated Diamond finesse.
However, in a trump contract declarer cannot set up these extra minor suit tricks without leaving a trump in the South hand and he will be held to 12 tricks.
7NT though makes 13 when the diamond finesse works.
7NT making 13 scores 1520, but it's not a great contract depending as it does on a finesse.
6NT making 13 scores 1020;
6♥ makes 12 tricks scoring 980;
6♦ and 6♣ each make 12 tricks for 920.