# Overcalling commentary

*I am not presently concerned with the best final contract. For the moment I have only a limited interest in showing extra strength and bidding to the best making contract.*

*Opener should start with a bid and a planned rebid as when opening unbalanced hands - overcaller should choose his bid as outlined in the present topic - responder should bid as in responder's first bid if that bid is still available - opener should rebid as planned if possible - and both responder and advancer can subsequently raise partner's suit 'to the level of the fit'.*

**Hand 1**

North opens 1♣ planning to rebid 1♥.
With opening values and a decent 5-card suit East overcalls 1♥.
South makes his natural response of 1♠, and West has nothing to add.
I now rebid 2♠ on this North hand with 3-card support for the major and a singleton, but some would prefer 2♣.
South may or may not invite with 3♠ but that should be enough.
West will lead ♥T (partner's suit) and declarer will always lose 2 trumps, a heart and a diamond for 9 tricks and a score of 140.
3NT makes from the North hand for 400, but it is doomed from the South hand on a heart lead.

**Hand 2**

East opens 1♣ planning to rebid 1♠.
South's opening values are a positive, but with a 5-card suit of this quality he will in any case overcall 1♦.
West can make his natural response of 1♥.
North might raise to 2♦ based on no more than his 3-card support, and East now has a problem.
In due course we will solve this problem with a take-out double probably leading to a final contract of 2♠ – otherwise he has an unenviable choice – none of 2♥, 2♠ or 3♣ appeal, and pass may well be the best alternative.
If North declines to raise then East has a natural rebid of 1♠, and West will probably revert to 2♣.
Against 2♦ by South West will lead a club. He has an immediate 5 losers in clubs and hearts, and with only the ♠A as an entry to the North hand he will also lose a spade.
Against 2♥ or 2♠ by EW NS will lead a diamond and should take a minimum of 2 diamonds, a heart and a spade. Both 2♠ and 2♥ make 8 tricks for 110 and 2♣ makes 8 for 90.
NS can make 7 tricks in diamonds so 2♦-1 scores 100 to EW – 2♦x-1 scores 200 to EW, their optimal score.

**Hand 3**

South opens 1♥ planning to rebid 2♦.
West will overcall 1♠ based on a good 5-card suit, and with 4-card support for partner's major North will raise to 2♥ suggesting about 5-9 points.
East can see an 8-card fit and so competes with 2♠.
With an extra heart and excellent shape South will compete with 3♥. Whether either N or S can find the extra to raise to 4♥ is debateable.
West will lead ♠K, but declarer can then clear trumps and discard a club on a diamond, provided that he finds the play of dropping the ♦J (not necessarily the percentage play).
3♥ making 9 scores 140, 3♥ making 10 scores 170, 4♥ making 9 scores -50, 4♥ making 10 scores 420.

**Hand 4**

West opens 1♦ planning to rebid 2♣.
North overcalls 1♥ based on his solid 5-card suit.
East is more than strong enough to force with 1♠.
South should bid either 2♥ or 3♥ based on the 9-card fit, West and North will pass and East will bid 4♠.
South will lead a heart but declarer will go up with the ace, take out trumps then finesse the diamond to set up 13 tricks. Indeed, the only way that the defence can hold the contract to 12 tricks is to take the ♣A on the first round.
7♠ is not a sound contract relying as it does on the diamond finesse, but 6♠ + 1 is solid for a score of 1460.
In fact, NW do best to sacrifice in 7♥, which goes 4 down for just 1100 when doubled.

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**Hand 5**

North opens 1♦ planning to rebid in clubs.

Here I introduce a new idea – the take-out double. With opening values or thereabouts, shortage in the opponents' suit, and at least 3 cards in each of the other suits, but no good 5-card suit for a natural overcall, East doubles, inviting partner to bid any one of the other suits.

South is good enough to change suit with 1♠, West will bid 2♥, and North will bid either 3♣ or some number of diamonds.

The final contract should be either 3NT or 5♦ – at this stage 4♦ would be forgivable

In either contract played by North, East will lead the ♥K. Declarer will lose just a Heart and a Club in diamonds for 11 tricks. In no trumps he must take his 9 tricks as soon as he gets in.

Score 600 in either case.

In fact, EW can make 8 tricks in hearts, and at this vulnerability 5♥x-3 for -500 is a good sacrifice.

**Hand 6**

East opens 1♠ planning to rebid in hearts.

South could overcall 2♣, but I prefer to double for take-out, thus bringing the possibility of a heart fit into play.

Personally, I would raise to 2♠ on this West hand following the intervention, taking the singleton into account, but pass would be forgivable, and North will surely find 3♦ facing his partner's double.

East and South will pass, and West might find a raise to 3♠ based on the 9-card fit, but if so North must bid 4♣ leaving partner with a choice in the minors.

East will lead a top spade, and might then switch to the non-trump minor.

In fact the defence will take no more as declarer reels off 12 tricks.

Both 5 of a minor and 6 of a minor are difficult to bid, but 4♣+2 and 4♦+2 each score 170, 5♣+1 and 5♦+1 each score 420, and 6♣ and 6♦ each score 920.

EW do well not to compete any higher.

**Hand 7**

South opens 1♣ planning to rebid in hearts.

West overcalls 1♠ and North doubles showing values and looking for a red-suit fit (all low-level doubles of a natural suit bid are for take-out).

East should bid 4♠ (a jump-raise of an overcall promises no more than a big fit and an attempt to get in the way). South must choose between 5♥ and pass, and there the auction will end.

If West plays the contract in 4♠ then the defence will start with 2 clubs and then take a further 2 hearts and a diamond to hold declarer to 8 tricks.

2 down scores -22, or -500 if doubled.

If South plays the contract in 5♥ then the defence will take a spade and will subsequently come by a heart but declarer can take the rest for +650.

The overcall and quick raise were excellent. 4♠ is an excellent sacrifice. Also, if given time, NS might find their small slam in either minor for 1370. Even 6♠x – 4 scores better for EW for a score of -1100.

**Hand 8**

West opens 1♥ planning to rebid some number of hearts.

North has no 5-card suit for a natural suit overcall, nor the necessary heart shortage for a take-out double, but he does have a balanced hand with an excellent heart stop and 16 points (in the 15-18 range), so overcalls a natural 1NT.

East and South both pass and West rebids – probably 2♥ - to end the auction.

North's best lead is ♦9 or ♦8, though he may well be tempted by the ♣K.

Declarer cannot avoid 2 trump losers, but with the ♠K lying right he should come to 9 tricks for 140.

In no trumps North must lead out ♠A and another whenever he gets in. On a heart lead he will not have time to set up his club but he should come to 5 tricks for a good score of -100 if not doubled.

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**Hand 9**
North opens 1♣ planning to rebid in hearts, and East overcalls 1♠ (borderline when vulnerable and on a poor suit, but the sixth card and the pre-emptive effect of spades over clubs sways the decision.
South doubles looking for a red-suit fit and West jumps to 4♠ on the 10-card fit. I bid 5♥ at this point on this North hand (non-vulnerable) but pass would be forgivable.
The auction may well end at this point.
5♠ by East makes 11 for 650.
5♥ by North makes 9 for -100, or -300 if doubled – an excellent sacrifice over 4♠, but might it force the opponents into 5♠?
In fact, 6♦ makes 10 tricks for NS scoring -300 if doubled for the best score on the board, but it is a difficult contract to find against vigorous competitive bidding.

**Hand 10**
East opens 1♠ planning to rebid 2♠.
With no 5-card suit, 15 points, and an excellent spade stop South overcalls 1NT. The fact that he is balanced is coincidental – he would do the same with 4-4-4-1 shape.
West passes and with 10 points facing a minimum of 15 North must take some action. 2♣ and 2♦ would be weak rescues. Both 3♣ and 3♦ would be reasonable. Alternatively pray for a heart stop and go for 3NT.
Against a no-trump contract by South West will probably lead ♠8 though there is something to be said for ♣9 or ♣8. The defence can stymie declarer's search for entries to establish the diamond suit, but in the process they will find themselves endplayed – declarer can come to 11 tricks for a score of 660.
In Clubs or Diamonds played from the North hand a heart would be the inspired lead.
Declarer can again make 11 tricks.
3♣+2, 3♦ + 2, 4♣+1, and 4♦+1 score150. 5♣ and 5♦ score 600.

**Hand 11**
South opens 1♠, planning to rebid in diamonds, and West doubles – opening values, short spades, and able to stand a response in any other suit. North should pass and East will rebid in hearts.
South will probably pass and West has no more to show.
Playing in a heart contract by East South will lead ♦A or ♠K
The defence can muster 5 tricks if they find the diamond ruff in time, holding declarer to 8 tricks.
2♥= scores 110 and 3♥-1 scores -50, or -100 if doubled.
If South finds himself in a spade contract then he can make 8 tricks.
2♠ scores 110. 3♥-1 by EW is a good sacrifice.

**Hand 12**
West opens 1♣ planning to rebid in Hearts, and North should not hesitate to double.
East could bid 1♦ but a raise in clubs is more helpful.
Over 2♣ South should bid 2♠, and West will end the auction with 3♣.
The defence will do well to find 3 tricks to hold declarer to 10 tricks and a score of 130.
NS can make 7 tricks in spades, but they cannot afford to go even 1 down vulnerable if doubled – they did well to stop when they did.

**Hand 13**
North opens 1♠ planning to rebid in hearts and East has a natural 1NT overcall.
South will pass and West has a decision to make. Personally I jump straight to 3NT but both 3♣ and 5♣ can be justified. Neither option should stop short of game.
In no trumps South will lead a spade, declarer will have little difficulty in counting 10 tricks and in practice should make 11 – score 660.
In clubs North has a difficult choice of lead, but declarer should again come to 11 tricks for a score of 600.

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**Hand 14**
East opens 1♣ planning to rebid in clubs.
South overcalls 1♠ based on both suit quality and pre-emptive effect.
West can just about justify a double in search of a red-suit fit, and North will raise the overcall to 2♠.
It would be a brave East who bid 2NT at this point with the ♠K protected on lead, but he must give 3♣ a try.
This is likely to end the auction.
2♠ makes 8 tricks - 110 to NS.
3♣ makes 9 tricks for 110 to EW.
3♦ makes 8 tricks for -50, or -100 if doubled – a good sacrifice but difficult to find.
The best score is 3NT by East with the major suits protected on lead. Note that on a heart lead declarer must run the spade return to the T, and South is unable to return to partner's hand. A rather lucky make scoring 400.
Against this contract it pays NS to go 2 down in either spades or diamonds at a cost of 300 if doubled.

**Hand 15**
South opens 1♣ planning to rebid in clubs, and West bids 1NT.
North passes – East invites with 2NT, and with a couple of points to spare West will raise to 3NT.
When the repeated diamond finesse works declarer will only have to lose 2 clubs and 1 spade to make 10 tricks – score 430 to EW.

**Hand 16**
West opens 1♦, planning to rebid in spades.
North is just good enough for a 1♥ overcall and East should pass.
South is worth a raise to 2♥ and West should double in search of the spade fit (the critical bid).
This time East should gamble with 4♠, and this will usually end the auction.
South leads a heart to partner's ace who may well return a club, but a heart and a club is as good as it gets for the defence as declarer comes to 11 tricks for 650.
NS can make 8 tricks in hearts and 5♥ is a good sacrifice over 4♠, but 6♥ over 5♠ is 1 too many when doubled.

**Hand 17**
North opens 1♥ (the higher of two 5-card suits) planning to rebid 2♦, and East overcalls 1♠.
With a likely 10-card fit South raises to 4♥. It will be a brave EW pair who bid on.
East leads out the ♣A and the 2 top spades, but that is as good as it gets. A trump is the most likely next play for the defence
Declarer must avoid leading out trumps. The ♦A and a cross-ruff in ♦ and ♣ will yield 10 tricks.
4♥ scores 420.
EW can make 9 tricks in spades, and so 4♠ -1 scoring -100 when doubled is the optimum score on the board.

**Hand 18**
East opens 1♥, hoping to rebid 2♣, and South doubles for take-out.
West encourages with a jump to 2♦ and North will do well to find 2♠.
East should be confident enough to find 3♣ facing partner's jump and West should end the auction with 3NT.
With the heart finesse establishing the suit declarer can always come to 10 tricks for a score of 430.
4♥ also makes 10 tricks for 420.