7 - Overcalling - Teacher's notes

This is a substantial topic.

I have included various categories of overcall - lowest-level overcalls - jump overcalls - and take-out doubles - to emphasise how the various options work alongside each other.

Note that I have not yet covered raising partner's suit by responder and in this topic I am not covering the good raise of overcaller's suit (unassuming cue-bid). Quite simply bid 'to the level of the fit' in both cases.

The final contract might well not be the best-scoring but it should at least emphasise the overcalling decisions and the value of a preemptive raise.

Emphasis

An overcall is not the same as an opening bid.
for a lowest-level suit overcall emphasis should be on:-

- suit quality;
- length - 5-card suit at the one-level - ideally a six-card suit at the two-level;
- the take-out double;
- strength of a 1NT overcall.

Notes on the method

The take-out double and the suit overcall work together to identify the hand-type.
In particular the suit overcall is wide-ranging and can be anywhere from quite weak to quite strong (8 - 16 say).

The mantra still passed down in casual bridge circles that a hand of opening strength will double and any suit overcall will therefore be of less than opening strength belongs to an earlier age - it throws far too heavy a load onto the take-out double.

Note that a negative double (same as a take-out double in principle) can be used by any player once an opponent has bid before him in search of the best contract.

Bidding in the protective seat is not discussed in the present topic.

Responder

Responder's change of suit is still natural and forcing;
a suit raise raise to the two-level might be quite weak - higher raises are temporarily 'to the level of the fit'.
Good raises of opener's suit will be the subject of the next topic;
bids in no trumps are not the same as an opening bid in no trumps - I am playing them at 15-18 and promising a stop - ideally a double stop;
it's OK to pass with some values - partner will get another chance.

Advancer

will frequently pass - partner's hand might be quite weak - a change of suit will suggest a long suit and nine (say) or more points.
Raises of partner's suit can be very weak and should be based on 'level of fit' playing partner for five cards at the one-level or six cards at the two-level.
(The good raise can wait for another day).