Improvers 2 – Raising partner's Overcall - Commentary

Hand 1

North opens 1♦ and East overcalls 1♥.

South has a classic negative double, seeking a spade fit but with tolerance for clubs. West raises to 2♥ reading partner for a 5-card suit for his 1-level overcall. North bids 3♣ and East competes to 3♥ with his extra Heart. South might be tempted to lead a diamond, but a club works better before any winners get away.

Declarer will make 9 tricks provided he can take the diamond finesse and a diamond ruff before dummy's trumps disappear.

Meanwhile NS can take 7 tricks in clubs.

Hand 2

East opens 1♣. I overcall a weak 2♦ on this South hand, but many partnerships (and teachers) might require more high-card strength before making any sort of vulnerable overcall at the two-level.

West can now choose between a double in search of a spade fit and some sort of flea-like jump in clubs. (3♦ showing a good raise is for the future.)

North must compete in diamonds, but with the vulnerability as it is and the risk of driving EW into a game or even a slam he may well settle for just 3♦ or 4♦.

West cannot do less than 5♣, but the slam is something of a shot in the dark over the opposition's bidding.

EW can make 12 tricks in clubs losing jus the ♥A. Meanwhile NS can make 8 tricks in diamonds. 2 or 3 off is a good sacrifice against the slam even if doubled but looks expensive if the slam is not bid.

Hand 3

South opens 1♥ and West overcalls 1♠ (too good for 2♠). North has the shape for a double, but 2♥ looks more realistic.

Opposite 1♠ (relatively unlimited) East should bid 3♥ (UCB) showing a good raise to at least the 3-level.

Opposite 2♠ a jump to 4♠ on the presumed 10-card fit looks right, even though vulnerable.

In either case the auction will probably finish in 4♠. With both the missing minor suit honours well-placed EW can actually make 12 tricks in spades, but it doesn't look like a great contract.

Hand 4

West opens 1♥ and North overcalls 2♦.

East must choose between double in search of a spade fit and 2♥ and South will raise to 3♦ on the presumed 9-card fit. West will probably compete with 3♥ and this should end the auction.

3♦ makes 9 tricks. Hearts make 8 tricks, no thanks to the lie of the trumps, so 3♥ is a good sacrifice if not doubled.

Hand 5

North opens 1♥ and East overcalls 2♦.

South needs a way of showing a good raise to 3♥. 3♦ is recommended, but a poorly defined 3♥ might have to suffice for now.

West may or may not contest with 4♦ at the prevailing vulnerability, but North will surely go to 4♥.

5♦ by East is a good sacrifice as 4♥ by North makes, but it is a brave call.

Against 4♥ ♦A lead works best before the trick goes away on a club, followed by a small spade. If declarer fails to go up with the ♠A then ♣A and a club ruff will defeat the contract. After going up with ♠A declarer must clear trumps before setting up the clubs.

In 5♦ declarer will lose only the 2 major suit aces once the ♦K falls.

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Hand 6

East opens 1♣.

In the absence of 2-suited overcalls South will overcall either 1♠ or 1♦. With a weaker hand I would call 1♦ in search of a defensive lead, but with sufficient strength to have hopes of a contract my way I overcall 1♠ first.

West should be tempted with the thought of 5♣ but whether this is correct when vulnerable against not is debateable.

If South overcalled in Diamonds then South must compete to at least 5♦, but will do so by way of a cue-raise (Clubs) if available and in the repertoire. If South bid 1♠ then North will bid some number of Hearts which South will raise to at least game.

Very difficult, but NS can make 12 tricks in either red suit. Meanwhile EW can make 9 tricks in clubs.

Hand 7

South opens 1♠. I pass with this West hand – 2♣ vulnerable on a 5-card suit does not appeal to me, but some will.

In either case North should jump make a weak jump to 4♠, and East will probably pass.

4♠ is a trick too far. Spades makes just 9 tricks while EW can make no more than 10 in either minor.

Against a spade contract a Diamond lead by West is safest and works well when ♦Q appears in the North hand.

Hand 8

There is much to be said for an opening bid of 4♥ from West, which will end the auction.

Failing that an opening 1♥ may or may not elicit 2♦ from North.

If North bids then East has an easy double, South will raise to 3♦ or 4♦ and West will bid 4♥.

If North passes then East bids 1♠, and West should then jump to 4♥.

Against 4♥ North may well lead ♦Q and away goes the Club loser. ♣A or a Spade work better, but even so declarer will come to 10 tricks.

Hand 9

North opens 1♣. It is a matter of partnership style whether or not East overcalls 1♦. Many will demand greater strength, but there is an argument to show the defensive lead at the earliest opportunity.

Either way South bids 5♣ and that ends the auction. Clubs make 11 tricks losing just a Diamond and a Spade.

Hand 10

East has to have the worst 11 points you have ever seen, and pass is recommended, but open 1♦ if you must.

South will either open or overcall in Clubs.

If East opened the West must raise to 2♦ even on just 4 points – otherwise he will have nothing to say.

If EW remain silent then North will respond 1♠ to 1♣, and over the no trump rebid will produce some number of clubs, hopefully leading to a contract of 5♣.

5♣, 4♥, 4NT and 4♠ all make when the Hearts split. Diamonds make only 7 tricks and so competition beyond the 2-level will be ill-advised.

Improvers 2 – Raising partner's Overcall - Commentary

Hand 11

South opens 1♦ and East overcalls 1♠.

For me North is good enough for 2♣ and East either raises to 2♠ or offers 2♥.

Over 2♥ South passes. Over 2♠ South either doubles in search of a Heart fit or passes. West will pass and North will probably compete with 3♦.

Against Diamonds EW can take 2 top Spades, but NS can then clean up 11 tricks, provided that he sets up the Club suit with repeated finesses whilst still retaining an entry to dummy via a Heart ruff.

Clubs make 10 tricks

Meanwhile East can make 9 tricks in Hearts or 8 tricks in spades, but even so 5♥x – 2 by East is a good sacrifice against a making 5♦.

Hand 12

West opens 1♣, North overcalls 1♥ and 2♣ possibly describes the East hand best despite its excellent offensive strength. South should raise to 3♥, West is worth 4♣, and if NS bid on to 4♥ then EW must find 5♣ at this vulnerability.

4♥ makes 10 tricks with the King lying right. 5♣ also makes 10 tricks but is an excellent sacrifice.

Hand 13

I open 1♠ on this North hand planning to rebid a game-forcing 3♥. Some would prefer 2NT, but it isn't going to make a game without something from partner so why distort the shape? East's is a borderline overcall, vulnerable on a 5-card suit but some will be tempted by the ♦QJT.

With or without the overcall South bids 2♠ (some might prefer 1NT if no intervention). If East overcalled then West must raise, but vulnerable and with minimum defence there is something to be said for bidding no more than 3♦. If South bid 2♠ then North will bid 4♠. If South bid 1NT then North will bid 3♥ and the final contract should be 4♥.

NS make 10 tricks in Spades, 9 tricks in no trumps, 10 tricks in Hearts from the South hand but 11 tricks in Hearts from the north hand.

EW make just 7 tricks in Diamonds, meaning that anything higher than 3♦ if doubled (unlikely) would be a poor score.

Hand 14

East opens 1♠ and in the absence of a 2-suited overcall South will overcall 2♦ (or 2♣). West raises to 2♠ and North passes facing 2♣ but bids at least 4♦ facing 2♦. East will do well to find 4♠ (with good defensive values) after which NS must compete to 5♦.

EW make 4♠ with the help of a trump finesse and a Diamond ruff, losing just 3 tricks in clubs.

NS make 9 tricks in Diamonds, making 5♦ an excellent sacrifice.

Hand 15

South opens 1♠.

I overcall 4♥ at this vulnerability, but 1♥ is fine – it's a bit strong for 3♥. North makes a lowest-level change of suit in Diamonds over any one of these. East should raise Hearts and South should compete in Diamonds. West will rebid Hearts to at least game level, and NS will do well to find the sacrifice in 6♥ if EW bid to 6♦.

NS make 12 tricks in Diamonds thanks to a well-placed ♣K. EW make 10 tricks in Hearts for an excellent sacrifice in 6♥.

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Hand 16

I open 1♣ on this West hand and North overcalls 1♥. East bids 1♠ and South should jump to 4♥. West does best to pass and North might bid 5♥ but 5♦ is better. East bids 5♠ and South might pass opposite 5♥ but opposite 5♦ should bid 6♥ based on the double fit.
Spades makes 11 tricks but either 6♦ or 6♥ making 10 tricks is a good sacrifice.

Hand 17

Some would open 2NT on this hand. I open 1♥ – it isn't making game without some help from partner. East may or may not overcall 2♣. South competes with 2♥, West bids at least 3♣ and North jumps to 4♥. Can EW bid on in Clubs with no knowledge of the Spade fit?
NS can make 10 tricks in Diamonds and North can make 9 tricks in Hearts while EW can make 12 tricks in either black suit. Believe it or not the optimum score is 7♥x -3 by NS.

Hand 18

East opens 1♣. South might offer 1♦ (surely not good enough to double) but I don't love it vulnerable. In either case West will bid some number of Hearts and North will offer some number of Spades. East should raise to 4♥ taking shape into account, South will bid 4♠, and West will probably bid one more for a final contract of 5♥ or 5♥x.
Both Hearts and Spades make 10 tricks, making 5♥ a good bid.

Hand 19

South opens 1♦, West overcalls 1♥. North might offer 2♦ – 1♠ would require another Spade and not good enough to double. East bids 2♥, and there the auction will probably end.
EW actually make 4♥ when the Hearts split, ruffing 1 Diamond in dummy and throwing another on a Club. Care must be taken with sequence and entries.

Hand 20

West starts with 1♦. I pass with this North hand – North's Club suit does not warrant a vulnerable overcall at the 2-level, and a bit light for a double though some might be tempted. East passes. And what can South do – probably pass?
EW can make 2♠ or 1♥. NS can make 2NT, 2♦ or 4♣. 10 tricks in Clubs by NS will produce the best score, but 1♦ – 2 by West will not be too bad a NS score.

Hand 21

North opens 1♠ and East overcalls 2♥. South passes and West raises to 3♥. NS will then remain politely silent and East will do well to find 4♥.
EW can make 11 tricks in Hearts or Clubs. NS can make just 7 tricks in Diamonds.

Hand 22

East opens 1♣ and South overcalls 1♠. West might compete with 2♣ and North should make a lowest-level bid in Clubs to show his good raise of Spades. East may or may not make a further bid in Clubs but NS should not stop short of 4♠ (or 4♥).
NS make 10 tricks in either major. EW make just 8 tricks in Clubs.

Improvers 2 – Raising partner's Overcall - Commentary

Hand 23

South opens 1♥ and West probably overcalls 1♠. I bid 2♦ on this North hand, though 2♣ may be the more popular choice. East should bid 4♠. South might produce 5♦ facing a Diamond overcall but will probably pass opposite a Club bid.

EW make 10 tricks in Spades. NS make 11 tricks in Diamonds, or in Clubs when played by North.

5♠ is a good sacrifice for EW but it's a brave call vulnerable.

Hand 24

West will open either 1♥ or 2♥, and North passes.

Facing 2♥ East will ask with 2NT before bidding 4♥. Facing 1♥ East will start with1♠ but will then raise 2♥ to 4♥.

Hearts makes 11 tricks with most of the defence's cards lying right for declarer.