

Hi Class,

I was thrilled with the turnout for the Tuesday class. There is a lot of room for improvement on my part, but I enjoyed the class, and I hope that you did also.

Feel free to email me any bridge questions, comments or whatever.

I hope I have everyone's email now, but if you know of a class member that didn't get it, please let me know.

Our next class will cover some competitive bidding situations when the opponents have opened the bidding. This is important stuff that you face several times every time you play in a duplicate game. We are going to concentrate on our strategy when playing matchpoints (duplicate) rather than imps - mostly bridge is bridge, but there are some differences.

I'm going to send out some material before our next class. Hopefully, you will incorporate some of these ideas and strategies into your play of these hands.

The subject of the first effort is OVERCALLS. I've attached a Word file and also copied it below. If you have trouble with the suit symbols or whatever let me know. Maybe I can fix it.

I'm sending this out to everyone on my distribution list. Some of you don't come to the classes or can't make certain ones. That's ok with me; there isn't any obligation, and besides the classes all come with a MONEY BACK (that's MONEYBACK) guarantee.

But if you don't want this gibberish cluttering up your emails let me know. You won't hurt my feelings, well maybe a little.

Spike



In our next class we are going to discuss

“Competitive Bidding When the Opponents Have Opened the Bidding”

Let’s get some basic stuff out of the way. First, what do we need to overcall their opening bid? Well, it depends on several things:

- (1) Are we overcalling at the one or 2 level?
- (2) Are we vulnerable?
- (3) Is partner a passed hand?
- (4) Are we playing Matchpoints or IMPs?
- (5) Who are we playing against?

Let’s say we are playing Matchpoints, i.e. Duplicate, where every trick matters and our score depends on HOW MANY PAIRS WE BEAT not HOW MUCH WE BEAT THEM BY. After all, that is what most of us play most of the time. When we play the occasional Swiss Team game or in a Knockout match we can adjust.

Is our overcall at the 1 or 2 level? There is a big difference in the requirements here. For a 1-level overcall we need a good suit and a willing spirit – not much more. For example, with AQ109x xxx xx xxx. I would overcall 1♠ if my RHO (right-hand-opponent) opened 1X (1 anything). I would like to have a little more, and I probably would not overcall if VULNERABLE, but if I pass and the auction goes ...

	(Me)		
N	E	S	W
1♣	P	1NT	P
3NT	ALL PASS		

and Partner starts thinking about his opening lead, I’m wishing I had overcalled. My partners rarely lead a spade here; they usually blow a trick on the opening lead. I like to help them with their leads when possible.

Of course, the danger with these light overcalls is that Partner can’t take a joke. His face brightens and her starts looking in his bidding box for cuebids, etc. and can never seem to find his pass card, but it is worth the risk to keep him from making those lousy leads. If we are vulnerable the danger of minus 200 (known as “the kiss of death” at matchpoints) is too great to take a lot of chances. And you are taking a slight risk with light overcalls. So if vulnerable I tone it down a little bit and would need another card to overcall, maybe AQ109x Kxx xx xxx.

The 2-LEVEL OVERCALL is a different animal. It is a constructive bid (meaning you really have something and this could be “our” hand not “theirs.”) So you need (1) a good suit and (2) something approaching an opening hand. The better your suit, the more you can fudge with the “something approaching an opening hand” requirement. Once again, the VULNERABILITY is a factor to keep in mind. We keep harping on this VULNERABILITY thing because there are so many more ways to get a bad board when you are VULNERABLE than if NONVUL. For example, you might go down 1 for -100, and see on the traveler that several pairs the other way were making +90 for making 1NT or 2 of a minor, and, of course, there is that -200 thing. Don’t be terrified of being vul, but show a healthy respect.

And make sure you have a good suit when overcalling at the 2 level. You are much more likely to play there than you are at the 1 level. Auctions that look like ...

N	E	S	W
1♠	2♣	P	P
P			

are much more common than ...

N	E	S	W
1♣	1♠	P	P
P			

So if your suit isn't 6-cards long it should look like AQ9xx or KQ10xx not K8654 or Q9xxx. You should almost never overcall at the 2 level on a suit that bad.

Now what about partner being a passed hand? Well, now you know more about whose hand it is. So if you hold xx AKJxxx Qxx xxx and the bidding goes ...

N	E	S	W
P	P	1♣	??

you should bid 2♥ not 1♥ like you would if your RHO was dealer and opened 1♣. Now you suspect that the opponents own the hand, and your objective is to disrupt their bidding as much as you can without being silly. Similarly, if you hold xx xx AQJxxx Axx you would overcall 2♦ if your RHO opened 1♥ or 1♠, but if your partner is a passed hand, bid 3♦.

Finally, why does it matter who you are playing against? Well, let's say you are playing against Bruce and Linda. They are very experienced and very good players. They aren't going to make too many mistakes, and your chances of getting a good board are less than if you are playing against Yaga the Dog and his partner. So if you have a chance to make an aggressive preempt go for it. You aren't risking as much as usual because you probably weren't going to get a great board anyway if Bruce was declarer in a game or partscore. Try and disrupt their bidding if possible – within reason, of course. So if you hold K108xxx xx Qxx xx and Linda opens 1anything jump to 2S and see what happens. This isn't a sound preempt and probably won't work out in the long run, but it is a good shot against a strong pair. Nobody does the right thing all the time when the opponents preempt.