



Play & Learn

BY PAT HARRINGTON ✉ mrsbridge@embarqmail.com

Weak raises after one-level overcalls

After partner makes an overcall, give high priority to raising his suit with a fit. Raising immediately, even with a weak hand, puts your side in a good position to compete for the contract, one of the objectives of overcalling.

When deciding how high to compete in your fit, use the law of total tricks (the law) as a guide. In its simplest form, the law advises you to be willing to compete for as many tricks as your side has trumps. With distribution, you may bid higher than your point count suggests as a blocking tactic against your opponents. The law helps you know when to push and when to quit.

In this column, we will focus on raises of partner's one-level overcall. The majority of today's bridge literature agrees that *all direct raises of overcaller's suit are weak*, showing up to a bad 10 points. Assuming there is room after a one-level overcall, advancer:

- Raises to the two level with 6 to a bad 10 points and often only three trumps. As always in my articles, "points" equals high-card points plus distribution.
- Makes a preemptive jump raise based on the law, although vulnerability can be a factor. A jump raise to the three level is weak and shows at least four trumps. Advancer may preempt higher with greater trump length. The exact strength shown by a preemptive raise is a partnership decision.

How would you bid the following hands for South, the advancer, after

this auction with none vulnerable?

	West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♠	Pass	?
1)	♠K 9 3	♥9 5 2	♦K 8 6 3	♣8 7 5
2)	♠K 9 3 2	♥5 2	♦Q 8 6 3 2	♣10 5
3)	♠10 9 3 2	♥5 2	♦Q 8 6 3 2	♣10 5
4)	♠K 9 3 2	♥5 2	♦A J 6 2	♣10 5 3
5)	♠10 9 5 3 2	♥5 2	♦Q 8 6 3 2	♣5
6)	♠10 9 3	♥5 2	♦K 8 6 3 2	♣9 5 3
7)	♠K 9 3	♥A 2	♦K 8 6 3 2	♣7 5 3

Answers

- 1 With 6 points and three trumps, raise to 2♠. Game is unlikely, but it's worth raising to make it harder for the opponents to find their best contract. Support with support.
- 2 The doubletons bring South up to 7 points, so you could bid 2♠, but a preemptive jump raise to 3♠ is more effective. Our auction shows East passing, but that need not be the case. As long as there is still room to bid your suit at the two level, advancer's raise means the same thing over a bid by responder as it does over responder's pass.
- 3 How low can you go for a jump raise? Depending on your agreements, you might raise to 3♠. Note that when applying the law with a weak hand, caution is advised at unfavorable vulnerability, especially if you know that your opponents are quick to make penalty doubles of partscores.

4 Bid 2♠. You could raise to 3♠ with four trumps, but I think this 9-point hand is too strong to preempt. While some suggest jump raising to the three level with as many as 9 points, I prefer limiting this type of preempt to a maximum of a bad 8 points. You are free to experiment, but a preemptive jump raise is likely to discourage partner from looking for game, even with a good overcall.

5 Follow the law and make a preemptive raise to 4♠. You may be doubled for penalty, so pay attention to the vulnerability. You wouldn't do this vulnerable against not.

6 Pass. Remember that you need a distributional reason to bid higher than your strength suggests. You have a fit, but you aren't strong enough to raise to 2♠ and don't have enough trumps to preempt.

7 With 11 points, you are too strong for a weak raise to 2♠ or 3♠, and you don't want to insist on game unless partner has a good overcall. Cuebid 2♣ to show limit-raise strength or better.

Postmortem

Notice that all of the preemptive jump-raise hands are somewhat distributional. You might pull in your horns with a balanced hand. A fourth trump is less valuable when advancer's shape is 4-3-3-3. Also be wary of lower honors in suits bid by your opponents. Those cards might be tricks on defense but useless for offense. ■