



Play & Learn

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Raising opener's major after an overcall

Last month, we discussed how responder (opener's partner) bids after a simple overcall and suggested giving high priority to showing a fit for opener's major. Knowing about a fit enables both partners to make better decisions.

When your partnership doesn't have enough strength for game, you can apply The Law of Total Tricks (The Law) to decide whether to sell out to the opponents' contract or bid higher, generally competing for as many tricks as their side has trumps. Raising immediately also makes it harder for the opponents to jam your communications.

Responder's raises of opener's suit always shows a fit and a specific point range. Responder will clarify whether his hand is minimum (6 to a mediocre 10 points), medium (a good 10 to 12 points) or maximum (13 or more points).

A simple overcall doesn't affect some of responder's raises. A single raise still shows 6 to about 10 points. The "weak-freak" raise directly to game is still used to show a weak hand with five trumps and usually a singleton or void.

Holding:

♠A 7 2 ♥7 3 ♦7 5 4 ♣Q 6 5 3 2,

raise partner's 1♠ opening bid to 2♠ whether or not right-hand opponent overcalls.

Holding:

♠7 ♥Q 10 7 5 3 ♦7 5 ♣J 10 6 5 2,

you could count shortness to scrape up a raise of partner's 1♥ opening bid to 2♥ but a "weak-freak" raise to 4♥ is a better choice whether or not RHO makes a simple overcall. Your bid serves two purposes. Your big fit and distributional hand could let partner make game without the usual strength. If you go down, it's likely your opponents could have made a contract of their own. By following The Law, you might prevent the opponents from finding a good contract.

We've already seen how overcaller's partner (advancer) can use a preemptive jump raise to try to block the opponents' communications. Opener's side can give those interfering opponents a taste of their own medicine. While responder's jump raise to the three level could be used to show an invitational limit raise, a cuebid of the opponent's suit is available to show stronger raises, so most modern players use preemptive jump raises in competition by both responder and advancer. As with any preempt, be less aggressive when vulnerable against non-vulnerable opponents, where the danger of being doubled for penalty is greatest.

Suppose you hold:

♠7 2 ♥Q 10 7 5 ♦7 5 3 ♣J 6 5 2.

If your partnership has agreed to use preemptive jump raises in competition, you could raise partner's 1♥ opening to 3♥ after RHO makes a simple overcall if you're not vulnerable.

You would pass if RHO passed. Preemptive jump raises in competition are not Alertable. While not suggested for newer players, some pairs use preemptive jump raises even without competition. Don't worry about these for now. If your opponents use them, they must Alert.

Change your hand to:

♠7 2 ♥Q 10 7 5 ♦7 5 3 ♣A J 6 5.

Now you are too strong for a preemptive jump raise in competition. Raise to 2♥ with or without an overcall. These raises are intended to foul up the opponents' bidding, not to cause your partnership to miss a game. The upper limit for a preemptive jump raise is about 6 points.

While the focus here is raising opener's major, preemptive jump raises in competition can also be used after a minor-suit opening bid. Responder will need more trump support, however. Remember, preemptive raises are based on the total number of cards you and partner hold together in your trump suit. With:

♠7 2 ♥7 5 ♦9 7 5 3 ♣K 9 6 5 2,

you could raise partner's 1♣ opening bid to 3♣ after RHO makes a simple overcall. Assume you have a nine-card fit, even though there is a possibility that opener has only three clubs. A reasonable assumption in a competitive auction is that a minor-suit opener has four cards in that suit. ■