



Play & Learn

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Borrowing from partner

Last month, we discussed balancing after your left-hand opponent's opening bid of one of a suit is followed by two passes to you in the passout seat. Rather than sell out at such a low level, players overcall or make a takeout double with about 3 fewer points than usual. Let's look at some examples.

LHO deals and opens 1♠, which passes around to you in the balancing seat, and you hold:

♠9 4 2 ♥K Q 10 3 2 ♦A 9 4 ♣6 3.

This 10-point hand is too weak for a direct overcall of 2♥, which shows a hand worth opening. When the opening bid is followed by two passes, you expect partner to have some strength, and you can "borrow" about 3 of partner's points to scrape up enough strength to balance. Those 3 extra points give you 13 points (including distribution) and enough strength to overcall 2♥ in the balancing seat.

Duplicate players don't require opening strength for one-level overcalls. Whatever your minimum strength for a one-level overcall, you can still "cheat" and add an extra 3 points to come up with enough strength to overcall.

Suppose you hold:

♠9 4 ♥K 10 7 3 ♦A 9 4 3 ♣Q 6 3.

Your balancing action when LHO's 1♠ opening bid is followed by two passes is to make a takeout double to let partner choose the best trump suit.

To make a takeout double immediately over your opponent's opening

bid, your hand should meet the SOS requirements: **S**hort in opener's suit, **O**pening strength (including distribution points for shortness in the opponent's suit) and **S**upport for all unbid suits.

A balancing double shows the same thing after borrowing 3 points from partner. Those 3 points make this hand strong enough to double.

Even a 1NT overcall can be made with less strength in the balancing seat. Directly over the opponent's one-level opening bid, a 1NT overcall shows a good 15–18 points, balanced distribution, and at least one stopper in the opponent's bid suit. Suppose you hold this hand:

♠K Q 6 ♥K 6 ♦A 7 5 2 ♣Q 7 6 4.

Again, LHO's 1♠ opening bid is passed around to you. You have balanced distribution and you have a spade stopper, but you are a point shy of the suggested strength for a 1NT overcall. Once you add the 3 points borrowed from partner any time you are in the balancing seat, you do have enough strength to bid 1NT!

The fact that you are bidding in the balancing seat doesn't mean you can magically make a contract with fewer points. To avoid getting too high, partner must compensate by deducting those same 3 points before advancing your overcall or double. Once that adjustment is made, continue the auction using your agreed competitive bidding methods. Subsequent bids by both players are made in context of the

adjusted range.

Pay careful attention to the auction, including all passes, so you are able to recognize a balancing bid. A balancing bid occurs in the do-or-die position in the auction: Your pass would be the final, auction-ending pass. If partner still has another bid coming, you don't have to be a hero. ■

King/Queen of Bridge



If you are a graduating high school senior and an ACBL member who plays and promotes bridge, you could become the 2017 King/Queen of Bridge. Recent winners have been cited for outstanding tournament performances plus administrative and recreational activities related to bridge. The ACBL Educational Foundation will present a \$2000 scholarship to the King/Queen of Bridge.

This competition was established in 1973 by Homer Shoop, an Indiana banker, and is administered today by the ACBL Educational Foundation. A list of previous winners reads like a who's who of bridge: Jeff Meckstroth, Bobby Levin, Steve Weinstein, Joel Wooldridge, Martha (Benson) Katz, Eric Greco, Gavin Wolpert and John Kranyak.

For more information, please visit acbl.org/kingofbridge.