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This Week in Bridge

(238) High Level Jump Overcalls

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Levels: 1

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General

Jump Overcalls at the 2-level are effective destructive bidding tools. They take away the opponents' valuable bidding space and force them to bid under duress. But jump overcalls to the 3-level and 4-level (or even higher) are even more destructive. When we have the right hand for making them, we want to attack as aggressively as we can.

3-Level Jump Overcalls

Jump overcalls to the 3-level are preemptive bids, showing about 5 to 10 HCP, and a decent long suit. These bids usually show a decent 7-card suit and the appropriate suit quality and playing strength to fit the situation (position, vulnerability, etc.). Occasionally, with some extra shape, we may choose to make a 3-level jump overcall with a 6-card suit. This is usually done with either an extraordinary suit or with some additional shape, like a hand with 6-4 distribution.

Example

1♣ __?

♠ 4

♥ KQT954

♦ KT73

♣ 64

When non-vulnerable, jumping to 2♥ with this hand is not enough. We should bid 3♥ with this excellent suit and 6-4 distribution.

These 3-level jump overcalls are preemptive if they are single jumps or double jumps. All that matters for making them preemptive is that they are jump overcalls.



Examples

1♠ 3♦

1♣ 3♦

Both of these 3♦ bids are preemptive, showing a long suit and preemptive values. The second example is more certain to be a classic 3-level preemptive hand since we have a 1♦ simple overcall and two weak jump overcalls, 2♦ and 3♦, available. The first example is the “cheapest” preemptive jump overcall and thus may need to be made on a 6-card suit with some shape more often.

4-Level and Higher Jump Overcalls

Jump overcalls all the way to the 4-level, or even higher, are similar to 3-level jump overcalls. These bids are preemptive and usually show about 5-11 HCP, possibly a bit more when bidding game, and a good 8-card suit. Just like jump overcalls at the 3-level, these bids can be made with a shorter suit if the hand contains some extra distribution. With a hand that has 7-4 distribution we should treat it like an 8-card suit and jump to the 4-level. With a hand that has 8-4 distribution, we may even jump to the 5-level, especially if it is a minor suit and we wish to preempt the opponents out of their Major suit game.

Example

1♣ __?

♠ -

♥ KQT9543

♦ KT73

♣ 64

Here we should not just bid 3♥. With this powerful suit and good shape, bidding 4♥ is clearly more destructive and an action we can afford to take

Conclusion

When our RHO opponent opens the bidding and we are dealt a hand with a good quality suit but not many HCP (4-11 depending on vulnerability), we should try to eat up as much of the opponents’ bidding space as we can - that means jumping into the auction at as high a level as possible. This is true when our LHO opens the bidding, partner passes, and RHO responds as well. In this case, we may attack with a jump overcall, but we must be a bit more careful because both opponents are bidding, and the opening bidder is behind us. The key things to take away from this discussion is that we can still attack the opponents and attempt to take away their bidding space even after they open the bidding. With undervalued hands that have good suits and possibly some decent shape, do not be afraid to attack and see if you can cause the opponents to make mistakes.