

Bidding over an overcall by *Derrick Browne*

Today, another in our occasional series featuring material from US expert Larry Cohen. Partner makes a 1-suit opening, and next player makes a suit overcall. How does this affect your auctions?

Single raises are unchanged in meaning:

1H (1S), 2H = normal meaning, 6-10 and support.

If they jump overcall, no special agreements are needed:

1H (2S), 3H = just a raise, but points can be shaded, perhaps to as little as 7 TP. A cue bid of 3S would show a much better raise (in this case, enough for game).

New suits are natural and one round forces:

1H (1S) 2C = natural, forcing (but not to game – even for those who play the 2-over-1 game forcing system).

What about a *jump* raise in competition?

1H (1S) 3H in “Standard” would be a limit raise. The modern (better) treatment is to use this jump as weak with four trumps. Cohen would make this bid with:

S 52  
H KJ65  
D 98  
C 76432

What do you do if you really have a limit raise?

S A2  
H KJ65  
D 98  
C Q6532

Cue bid the opponent’s suit e.g. 1H (1S), 2S to show a limit raise or better (10+ points) in support (promising a fit, hence 3+ hearts in this auction). This bid says nothing about spades – it is just a coincidence that you have the ace in this example. Opener can attempt to sign off in 3-of-the-major with a minimum.

Enough of Cohen’s ideas for now; consider this deal, covering the East-West cards:

|          |       |          |       |
|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| NORTH    |       |          |       |
| S QT2    |       |          |       |
| H K73    |       |          |       |
| D KT     |       |          |       |
| C Q6532  |       |          |       |
| WEST     |       | EAST     |       |
| S 53     |       | S 764    |       |
| H QJT954 |       | H 6      |       |
| D A62    |       | D 987543 |       |
| C AJ     |       | C T84    |       |
| SOUTH    |       |          |       |
| S AKJ98  |       |          |       |
| H A82    |       |          |       |
| D QJ     |       |          |       |
| C K97    |       |          |       |
| WEST     | NORTH | EAST     | SOUTH |
|          |       |          | 1S    |
| 2H       | 3H    | Pass     | 4H    |
| Pass     | 4S    | All pass |       |

South opens 1S. West overcalls 2H, and North bids 3H to show a good raise in spades. South has more than enough for game and bids 4H, control bid, as an expression of interest in slam, but North signs off in 4S.

Declarer wins the heart lead then draws trumps in three rounds. There are two aces missing and a deep loser in hearts, so a second club trick must not be lost.

When tackling clubs, South leads a club to dummy’s CQ, through West who is likely to have the CA. Sure enough, the CQ wins, but declarer is not out of trouble – you need West to have started with the doubleton ace of clubs. Duck the second round of clubs; luckily the ace does indeed fall. West leads a second round of hearts to knock out dummy’s king, but ten tricks are made.