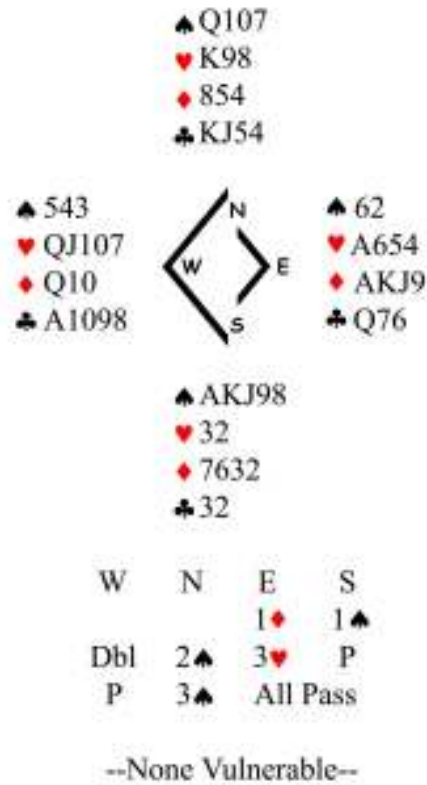


170. Bidding in Competition-The Overcall

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The Overcall:

To make a one-level not-vulnerable overcall, one needs eight points. To make a one-level vulnerable overcall, one needs a good ten points. However, to make a two-level overcall, one is sticking one's neck out, so one needs a good six-card suit and opening points.

For all one-level overcalls, hands that are less than opening should have a really good suit. If one is weaker than opening points, the opponents may get the contract, and partner will know what to lead.

The bidding:

East, with 14 points, opens his better or longer minor, diamonds. South has a good one spade overcall. It serves to take the one-level away from the opponents and at the same time give partner lead direction.

Negative Double:

West cannot bid a new suit at the two-level because he does not have ten points or five hearts. Instead, he doubles which shows the unbid suits and an inability to bid a new suit at the two level. His next bid will clarify.

If he doubles and then bids a new suit, he is showing a weaker hand with a six-card or longer suit than if he had bid the suit at the two-level directly. Here he doubles with the intention of passing whatever partner bids.

East has 15 points with hearts as trump and therefore can bid three hearts. South made an overcall with less than opening points so his next bid is a pass. North, looks at the vulnerability and his nine points, and pushes partner to three spades.

The Lead: West has a natural lead, a three-card sequence. He leads the queen of hearts.

The play:

Declarer ruffs the third round of hearts and loses a diamond. He needs to ruff a diamond in dummy because diamonds will split three-three (diamond bid notwithstanding) only 36% of the time. The opponents can see what declarer is trying to do, so they win a diamond and lead trump. Declarer wins the trick and loses another diamond. A trump is returned.

Declarer thinks ahead. If he loses a third diamond, East will let him ruff a diamond and now declarer is trapped to play clubs from the dummy. Therefore declarer plays a club to the king which wins. He plays the jack of clubs which East wins with the queen.

East exits a club. Declarer ruffs and then ruffs a diamond with the queen of spades. He ruffs another club and wins six trump, zero hearts, zero diamonds and one club for down two.

Result:

Three spades down two for -100 of three hearts making four for +170.

Notes:

-Three spades should never be bid, in this case, because it could have pushed braver opponents to a makeable game.

-All the bridge columns may be viewed at <http://watsongallery.ca>.