

The Foundation System

Part II. System Practice: Overcalls

INTRODUCTION

Making correct decisions is the essence of good bidding. In non-competitive auctions, those decisions are relatively simple: partscore, game, or slam; and major, minor, or notrump. When the auction becomes competitive those decisions become more difficult. To begin with, you need to know the opponents' bidding system as well as your own in order to interpret the auction as it evolves, and your system needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the obstructive effects of the opponents' bidding. The partscore, game, or slam decision now includes two new options: double the opponents, or bid on and risk being doubled by them. The major, minor, or notrump decision is now often influenced by whether your suit is higher-ranking or lower-ranking than theirs.

In the first two quizzes in this chapter, your first decision will be whether to bid or to pass. Then if that decision is to bid, you must decide whether to double or to overcall or jump-overcall, and if you overcall, sometimes you may have to choose which of two suits to bid. In the final two quizzes, partner has elected to overcall, and you must decide whether to pass, raise, jump raise, bid a new suit, cue-bid the Opener's suit, or bid some number of notrump. As the auction evolves, good bidders are continually revising their estimate of how many tricks each side can take in their respective potential contracts and using that as the basis of their bid vs pass vs double decisions. This is the area where the Law of Total Tricks has had a major influence on modern bidding. Remember that holding the spade suit is a big advantage in competitive auctions; if you have the spades, then they have to bid one level higher in order to compete. Let's get some practice. It's decision time.

QUIZ 1: Competing After a Minor Suit Opening

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(1) ♠ J6 ♥ A8762 ♦ KQ109 ♣ K9	___/___	1D/?	___
(2) ♠ KQ7 ♥ AK6 ♦ 107 ♣ K10743	___/___	1D/?	___
(3) ♠ AQ10986 ♥ K4 ♦ 2 ♣ K1064	___/___	1D/?	___
(4) ♠ AK10 ♥ Q8643 ♦ K95 ♣ 96	___/___	1D/?	___
(5) ♠ AKJ7 ♥ 52 ♦ J72 ♣ K764	___/___	1D/?	___
(6) ♠ KQ2 ♥ J9543 ♦ J ♣ AQJ8	___/___	1D/?	___
(7) ♠ Q8 ♥ J942 ♦ 8 ♣ AJ9873	___/___	1D/?	___
(8) ♠ AKJ862 ♥ 108 ♦ AJ8 ♣ AQ	___/___	1D/?	___
(9) ♠ J10832 ♥ A ♦ A107 ♣ A943	___/___	1D/?	___
(10) ♠ A53 ♥ KQ7 ♦ - ♣ AJ109852	___/___	1D/?	___

QUIZ 1: Discussion

- (1) (13/6) Where are the spades? If pard has them, 1H would discourage a spade lead vs NT. If they have them, they may get too high if you pass, so pass is best.
- (2) (15/6) Double is clearly better than a 2C overcall here.
- (3) (12/5) 1S seems obvious, but this hand has so much playing strength that a double followed by a minimum spade bid could lead to a good game an overcall would miss.
- (4) (12/7) When I pass hands like this, it's amazing how often LHO bids the suit I wanted to bid. A 1H overcall would just help their declarer play the hand.
- (5) (12/8) 1S is tempting, but you're a king light for an overcall in a 4-card suit, so pass.
- (6) (14/6) We usually overcall with 53 in the majors, but treat these hearts as a 4-card suit and double. You don't want pard to lead a heart.
- (7) (8/8) If not vul, a 3C jump overcall is reasonable here. If they have a spade game, this leaves them no room for an invitational bid. Make them guess whether to play 3S or 4S.
- (8) (19/6) This is a clear-cut double, to be followed by a spade bid, and then by a NT bid unless your spade bid is passed out.
- (9) (13/7) Do you want a spade lead against a heart contract? I thought not. Just pass, and if they stop at the 2-level you can try 2S then.
- (10) (14/5) Double, followed by a jump in clubs is the best way to show such a strong distributional hand.

QUIZ 2: Competing After a Major Suit Opening

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(11) ♠ AK94 ♥ A2 ♦ Q10832 ♣ 86	___/___	1H/?	___
(12) ♠ AQJ7 ♥ K107 ♦ 874 ♣ A65	___/___	1H/?	___
(13) ♠ AQ764 ♥ A105 ♦ Q105 ♣ 73	___/___	1H/?	___
(14) ♠ Q74 ♥ Q ♦ A87432 ♣ A73	___/___	1H/?	___
(15) ♠ AJ94 ♥ A83 ♦ KQ1084 ♣ 8	___/___	1H/?	___
(16) ♠ J10 ♥ K8 ♦ A104 ♣ AQJ542	___/___	1H/?	___
(17) ♠ J10854 ♥ Q97 ♦ 87 ♣ AKJ	___/___	1H/?	___
(18) ♠ 98763 ♥ 9 ♦ KQ3 ♣ AK108	___/___	1H/?	___
(19) ♠ QJ864 ♥ J6 ♦ KQ752 ♣ 5	___/___	1H/?	___
(20) ♠ AKQ1094 ♥ 10 ♦ K954 ♣ A8	___/___	1H/?	___

QUIZ 2: Discussion

(11) (13/6) If you decide to bid, and I would, 2D is best here. It consumes bidding space and you want a diamond lead vs 3NT or 4H, since your spade tricks aren't going away.

(12) (14/8) A discreet pass could be the winner here. If you choose to bid, double is better than 1S since it gets the minors into the picture if pard has a 5-card minor.

(13) (12/7) 1S is obvious here, but you won't want to venture beyond 2S unless pard has 4-card support or a diamond fit (which you won't be able to find out about).

(14) (12/7) They could have game in either major, so I like a double better than 2D, since it might keep them out of their spade game or partscore when they lack a heart fit.

(15) (14/6) Unlike #11, we might have a game in spades if pard has a 4-card fit, so I like 1S here better than 2D. We're thinking mainly offense here, but defense in #11.

(16) (15/6) You'll start with 2C, of course, but if pard raises to 3C I'd be willing to gamble that 3NT will make.

(17) (11/8) 1S consumes no space, and you don't want a spade lead, so pass and consider bidding 2S if they seem ready to stop in 2H.

(18) (12/6) With a 5-card major you usually want to overcall rather than double, but this looks more like a 4-card spade suit, so just double this time.

(19) (9/6) With the boss suit and a useful side suit, bid 1S happily here. If pard raises be willing to go to the 3-level, but don't bid again unless he raises.

(20) (16/4) This hand is good enough to double first, and then jump in spades on the next round. If pard dislikes spades, he'll bid a welcome 3NT when he has a heart stopper.

QUIZ 3: Responding to Partner's Overcall of a Minor Suit Opening

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(21) ♠ AKQ853 ♥ Q109 ♦ 83 ♣ 62	___/___	1D/1H/P/?	___
(22) ♠ 8 ♥ K7652 ♦ Q874 ♣ K75	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___
(23) ♠ J102 ♥ J1072 ♦ QJ32 ♣ QJ	___/___	1D/1H/P/?	___
(24) ♠ 10732 ♥ K9542 ♦ Q87 ♣ A	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___
(25) ♠ K54 ♥ J6 ♦ A108753 ♣ Q9	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___
(26) ♠ 10863 ♥ AJ72 ♦ J643 ♣ J	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___
(27) ♠ 6 ♥ K93 ♦ AQ764 ♣ 9642	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___
(28) ♠ 4 ♥ K86543 ♦ 92 ♣ A932	___/___	1D/1H/P/?	___
(29) ♠ KQ42 ♥ AQ10762 ♦ 65 ♣ 10	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___
(30) ♠ AK5 ♥ J42 ♦ J982 ♣ Q82	___/___	1D/1S/P/?	___

QUIZ 3: Discussion

- (21) (11/6) Bid 1S and then raise hearts unless pard raises to 4S. 4H will probably play better than 4S, to protect partner's holding in the minors.
- (22) (8/7) Do not bid 1NT. Just pass and hope they compete. You'd rather play defense.
- (23) (8/10) Bid 1NT first to slow partner down. Then show grudging heart support on the next round. Maybe they won't find their spade fit.
- (24) (9/7) 3S is about right here. If they think you're trying to talk them out of finding a heart fit, they'll be in for a rude surprise; their fit is in clubs.
- (25) (10/8) 2S is plenty here. This feels like a 3-card limit raise, but you can't produce enough winners for pard to make 4S.
- (26) (7/9) This is worth 3S, just for its preemptive value. If you had some defense, too, you'd start with a cue-bid to show limit raise strength.
- (27) (9/7) With good diamond stoppers and no support, you have to bid 1NT here, but don't be surprised if you go down.
- (28) (7/7) Surely they can make 4S, so bid 5H now and let them guess at the 5-level.
- (29) (11/5) Bid 2H now and 4S on the next round, so pard will know whether to go to 5S or double after they sacrifice at the 5-level.
- (30) (11/9) With poor playing strength, 1NT is plenty now, but compete to 2S if they bid on. Pard will then know what to do.

QUIZ 4: Responding to Partner's Overcall of a Major Suit Opening

Your Hand	HCP/LTC	Auction	Your Call
(31) ♠ KQJ96 ♥ 109 ♦ K3 ♣ Q875	___/___	1H/2C/P/?	___
(32) ♠ 9 ♥ J7 ♦ AQ876 ♣ J10962	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___
(33) ♠ Q10654 ♥ J32 ♦ Q87 ♣ AQ	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___
(34) ♠ AQ853 ♥ 542 ♦ 862 ♣ A9	___/___	1H/2C/P/?	___
(35) ♠ - ♥ Q854 ♦ K10972 ♣ AJ72	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___
(36) ♠ QJ109643 ♥ 875 ♦ 2 ♣ K8	___/___	1H/2C/P/?	___
(37) ♠ KJ ♥ 86542 ♦ K105 ♣ K52	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___
(38) ♠ 1073 ♥ 3 ♦ 1062 ♣ AK8754	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___
(39) ♠ J1087 ♥ A ♦ 1087542 ♣ 109	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___
(40) ♠ J52 ♥ K2 ♦ KJ105 ♣ A1076	___/___	1H/1S/P/?	___

QUIZ 4: Discussion

(31) (11/6) This is worth a 2S bid, since if pard can't raise, you're willing to bid 3C.

(32) (8/7) Pass. Make it easy for the opponents to compete, since you'd rather play defense. Don't consider a minor suit unless pard is doubled.

(33) (11/8) Too many soft values for a jump to 4S. Just bid 2H to show limit raise strength.

(34) (10/8) This is worth 2S, since we might have a game if pard has support. But pass a 3C rebid, and hope pard can make it.

(35) (10/6) As with #32, pass is probably best. If you can't stand passing with a void, don't bid 1NT, but bid 2C instead, which wins if pard has either clubs or diamonds.

(36) (6/7) I like 3S here. Make them guess whether they can make 4H, and let pard decide whether to sacrifice if they bid it.

(37) (10/8) I like 1NT here, since you can stand playing in 2S, and if pard jumps to 3S you'll be happy to raise to 4S.

(38) (7/8) When I'm feeling frisky I've been known to jump to 4S with this sort of hand. But I suggest 2C here, to be followed by a raise of spades on the next round.

(39) (5/8) They can probably make 4H, so a preemptive 3S is indicated here. If not vul, I'd even recommend a 4S bid.

(40) (12/8) Since the heart king is probably worthless, I'd just bid 2S here, and if they go to 3H I'd let them play there and hope to beat it.