

THE OVERCALL STRUCTURE

REVISED AND UPDATED**

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THE OVERCALL STRUCTURE

Version 1.1

Why the Structure?

When the opponents open the bidding, they have already garnered an advantage. Standard defensive bidding methods generally allow you to compete, but this requires holding a good hand. We never have good hands¹; we want to compete anyway. The only problem presented to us is that our partner can never take a joke if we're bidding on a distributional hand. The Structure, thus, has been created so that partner will not hang you.

The questions arise: why do we want to compete on these "bad" hands, and isn't that dangerous? We believe that competing at the one and the two level is superior to balancing at the three level which can be very dangerous as both opponents have already communicated their values. One note about our style before we go on: all of our bids are made according to relative vulnerability as it relates to sanity. We aren't insane; we just like to compete. This is what advancer (partner of overcaller) must keep in mind because 90% of the time it will be advancer's job to make the decision about how high to compete on the combined offensive values of the partnership. Advancer should definitely remember that many calls are limited in values, and more importantly do not promise defensive values!

In order to understand this competitive style properly, we encounter several theoretical considerations. The Law of Total Tricks best explains why and how to compete. On most hands we possess at least an eight card fit which usually will allow us to compete successfully at the two level; sometimes we will have two eight card fits which will allow us to compete at the three level. If we have a nine card fit, the three level should be safe, etc. The opponents of course attempt to do the same depending on how big their trump fits are, but there exists a limited number of tricks available because of a limited number of trumps and a limited number of values or working high cards. In essence, on every hand everyone aims to compete to the par spot.

But not everyone truly comprehends the idea of the par spot. People think of it as being a plus position. This is not always the case. Frequently, the par spot translates to outcompeting the opponents, and actually going minus; for example, we go to three spades over the opponents' three hearts, down one. The opponents can make three hearts. We win. Many times we only have a minus score available, and strive to reduce that minus. It certainly can be difficult to decide how much to bid at certain vulnerabilities in conjunction to reaching the par spot. But having this understanding of the par spot and competing on a greater number of hands, however, over time will lead to better hand evaluation, better judgment and better results.

How are we going to compete more effectively? Using these tools: Simple Overcalls, No Trump for Takeout, Power Double, Roman Jump Overcalls, the two suited cue bid, Intermediate Jump Overcalls, NAMYATS, and a few other gadget bids. Using this structure, it will become apparent that we have found the easiest way to enter effectively into the auction.

The Simple Overcall at the One Level

The simple overcall (SO) occurs the most frequently, and the inferences drawn from a SO or a pass are many. Because the overcaller has several available bids, making a SO denies possession of the other possible hands, and remember that partner will always take inference. Let's see what this means.

We make a SO for several reasons. We have a suit that we want led; we have too many values to pass, e.g. a good 10-14 hcp; we want to find out which of our suits to lead; we want to preempt at a low level; we have a hand that seems conducive to competition. So what are we overcalling on? Many times one level overcalls only have four card suits, and tend to show length in opener's suit. It denies holding a side five card suit or probably even a four card suit unless you're 4-4, 5-4 or 6-4, and no other available systemic bid

describes your hand. As these overcalls are so aggressive, we cautiously raise partner. We thus employ support doubles and redoubles² after an overcall and interference. Occasionally, we must conceal three card support on hands people might commonly raise with in standard. Be more conservative especially when holding three small, Jxx or Qxx of LHO's suit which is known as the "Death Holding " or a 4333 hand with a bad six or seven count.

What about suit quality? There exists no specific requirements here except that you hold four cards in that suit. For example, if holding S KQx H T9xx D xx C AKxx, and RHO opens 1 club, we would not pass but rather overcall 1 heart. The average suit quality with which someone would overcall on approximates to KJ9x. Again, these bids are all relative to vulnerability or the ability to get to another spot if necessary.

How to Respond to a SO -- Uncontested Auction

The aggressive nature of our overcalls require a delicate response structure to handle various possibilities:

- 1) a 1 over 1 response is not constructive merely suggesting an alternative spot. This strongly suggests 2 or fewer cards in overcaller's suit (check LHO's pulse to find out how few partner has!).
- 2) 1 No Trump is not natural! It is Lebensohl with three distinct purposes:
 - a) run out to another five card or longer suit³.
 - b) invitational in a new suit that could not have been bid previously as invitational, or invitational in no trump.
 - c) a flower bid in opener's suit (see 3 below); shown by rebidding partner's suit.
- 3) non-jumps at the 2 level are flower bids; fit showing with 3+ card trump support, 4+ cards in the bid suit, limit raise values, but non-forcing.
- 4) cue-bid of opener's suit is a strong no-fit game try; advancer looks for game either in no trump or in his own suit.
- 5) single jumps in suits, even jump cue-bids, are mini-splinters; generally 4+ trumps and around limit raise values (more if subsequent action is taken).
- 6) 2 No Trump is jacoby style; an opening hand with 4+ trumps ; not forcing to game if overcaller responds with a minimum.

Responses to SO -- Contested Auction

The responses are similar but modified. A 1 over 1 tends to be more constructive. A new suit at the two level is a flower bid in that suit or length with that suit and enough values to force a level higher. Cue-bids are a limit raise or better for partner's suit while single jumps are still mini-splinters. Remember that support doubles and redoubles apply and come up quite frequently.

The inferences from partner passing in an auction like this: 1C - P - 1S, are very revealing. It's known that partner could not even compete at the one level. Partner almost surely denies possession of all the hands mentioned in the second paragraph on the SO, and denies also the three-suited takeouts, two-suited hands, etc., as will be described ahead. The hands most likely to be passed are 4x3 hands with length in opener's suit or any hand with opener's suit, very weak hands, and hands with a bad suit and only average values, i.e. Jxxx or worse and 6-9 HCP, depending on the hand.

One No Trump for Takeout (NTO)

The bid all other bids have been centered around. The NTO comes up frequently and creates havoc in the opponents auction while letting us know in what suits we should be competing. The NTO can be described as a light three suited takeout, showing three cards in all the unbid suits, and generally 6-15 HCP at equal vulnerability. The minimum shape here is 4-4-3-2 up to as shapely as 7-3-3-0. People always ask, would you really overcall a NTO with six spades and a stiff club, 6-3-3-1 shape over a one club opening? We say YES, and tell them about the number of times we have buried the opponents' heart fits. Furthermore, you must bid a NTO on these hands; otherwise, partner gets confused about your shape and will be unable to accurately place or accurately defend the hand.

Responses to a NTO -- Uncontested Auction

- 1) Any response in a new suit at the two level is to play. If the NTO bidder raises, expect a shapely max with four card support (in some cases it could be blocking with 5+ card support).
- 2) Cue-bidding opener's suit first asks partner for a four card major, but if advancer later bids a new suit, then this reveals an invitational sequence for a major but not necessarily invitational for a minor. A follow-up cue-bid by advancer demonstrates a strong interest in game - probably in the suit you've bid - opposite any hand with reasonable cover cards⁴.
- 3) Jumping in a suit at the three level is preemptive even if opposite a maximum, unless bid red versus white. This shows any six card suit or a good five card suit with a little shape.
- 4) Bidding 2 No Trump over 1 NT tends to show minors, but could be a hand with a minor and a major. This depends on the auction.

All other game or 4 of a minor bids are to play. Here's an interesting example; atimps both vulnerable, you hold: S Jx H AKTxxx D J9xx C x. Over a one diamond opening by LHO, partner bids a NTO while RHO follows with 2 clubs. You gamble out a 4 heart bid. It goes down one - barely - when partner holds a mere six count, but the opponents are gin for 5 clubs, win 10imps. Here's another interesting hand from a matchpoint session: S QJxx H Qxxx D -- C QJxxx. Your RHO opens 1 diamond; you bid a NTO. Your LHO doubles, and partner leaps to 5 clubs! What does partner have? You pass, happy for now until your LHO chimes in with 5 hearts while partner and RHO pass it around to you. What does partner have? Well, work it out; with any six card suit partner should bid 3 clubs; with a little shape and a good six card suit that would constitute a 4 club bid. So, partner must have 7 clubs and it seems likely partner has one or fewer hearts. Since partner couldn't hammer five hearts, you're going to have to follow the LTT and bid six clubs with a 12 card fit. Score it up. Partner held: S Kxx H -- D Jxx C AKTxxxx; the kind of hand you would expect. It's unlikely standard bidders could possibly draw these inferences from such a short auction, and find a way to preempt the opponents out of their cheap six diamond save.

Responding to a NTO - Contested Auction

- 1) The opponents double. We play a runout system that helps us find our eight card fits. Over the double, a direct suit bid by advancer promises a five card suit; a redouble shows exactly four cards in the highest unbid suit. A pass denies either of the above, but advancer could still have a lower four card suit. After advancer's pass, a redouble by overcaller shows possession of a five card or longer suit. Advancer then responds in the lowest suit that would be reasonable to play in opposite a five card suit. If overcaller doesn't redouble, bidding a suit starts a runout looking for 4-4 fits⁵.
- 2) The opponents bid a new suit or raise opener's suit. A double is responsive style showing at least one of the unbid suits - usually the other major - but not promising both. 2 No Trump in these sequences is minors, or the unbid suits with a weaker hand. It's hard to imagine a hand where bidding 2 NT as natural would be

right. Bidding a new suit is non-forcing and usually lead directing. While cue-bidding, then, bidding a new suit shows a good hand.

There will be times when a certain hand will force you to bid a NTO with extra values and the wrong shape to make a Power Double (PD). The PD tends to show a doubleton or greater length in opener's suit because responder will more often convert a PD for penalties. So for example, if holding S AJT9 H AQTx D -- C KQxxx, and your RHO opened 1 Diamond, bid a NTO. Even though you hold considerable extra values, a double on your second turn would communicate these greater values.

The Power Double

This bid is the easiest to understand and the simplest to use. Essentially, it shows a good 15+ HCP that tends to be balanced like a strong no trump overcall, but doesn't guarantee a stopper. Certain hands have been eliminated from the PD as alluded to above, and come up as either an Intermediate Jump Overcall or some of the strong two suited bids.

Responding to the PD is very similar to a standard takeout double except that opener always has a good hand which makes bidding easier for responder. Free bids tend to limit hands in that they contain less than invitational values; any jump would show invitational values as in standard although we invite more frequently with distributional hands. A cue-bid is forcing. Both responder and the PDer follow up with natural bids allowing room to find the best spot. We play South African Transfers: a transfer to four of a major by bidding the corresponding minor, C => H & D => S, and this allows the PDer to super accept by bidding the step in between. The ranges for responding in no trump are slightly adjusted as compared to standard: 1 NT = a good 4 to a bad 7, 2 NT = a good 7 to a bad 9, 3 NT = 10-14, etc. This works out well because many times we right side the no trump, forcing the strong hand to be on lead, resulting in an overtrick. Notice that we also avoid the danger of overcalling a no trump and getting doubled off for penalties.

A definite advantage to the PD comes from the ability to penalize the opponents at a low level, especially if we're white and they're RED. For example, if holding S Kxx H Axx D QJ9x C xxx and partner made a PD over LHO's 1 diamond opening, we would float the double. We'll make 3 NT, but LHO won't enjoy playing this one out of his hand. Floating the double is probably right on two types of hands. The type of hand given in the example that's all primed, balanced with a couple trump tricks or a hand with just LHO's suit and no side suit precluding your side from having a big fit. These aggressive passes have been successful; a further benefit develops from passing these doubles. If opener runs from the double, it's a reasonable possibility that their bid was psychic and partner would now play any of your bids in that suit as natural. It becomes very difficult for the opponents to dink around as we can draw so many more inferences from an auction than in standard.

The Two Level Overcall

The TLO is kind of a tweener bid. Sometimes it fits right into our system while other times it resembles more closely a standard TLO. If an Intermediate overcall is available, then a TLO is either a more or less standard overcall - with only a five card suit - or it is a preemptive bid^o. If there's no Intermediate available, then it's more difficult to tell exactly what the overcaller has - especially when the hand appears to be inappropriate for a PD or other action - which could be anywhere from a preempt to an ok intermediate.

The best way to respond to this bid is to treat the TLO as a standard overcall, but try not to hang partner. Maybe have a little extra for a natural 2 NT, and try not to raise on a bad hand with honor doubleton for support. Two level bids in a new suit aren't forcing, which is different from standard, but partner will strive to raise you with a good hand and support. In competition, we play that a double or a redouble by advancer shows a good raise to three of partner's suit while the direct raise is merely blocking, not guaranteeing values. A cue-bid in these sequences just promises a good hand either in support of partner or in another suit.

The Roman Jump Overcall

The two cheapest jump overcalls over a one level bid by opener show the suit bid and the higher touching suit with generally 6-15 HCP. There will always be at least nine cards in the two suits. If there are only 9 cards, the lower ranking will always have five cards and the higher ranking will have four. The bids are as follows with minimum holdings and tendencies:

- 2D/1C: 5 diamonds and often 4 hearts
- 2H/1C: 5 hearts and often 4 spades
- 2H/1D: 5 hearts and often 4 spades
- 2S/1D: 5 clubs and 4 spades; 5-5 if vulnerable
- 2S/1H: 5 clubs and 4 spades; 5-5 if vulnerable
- 3C/1H: 5 clubs and 4 diamonds; tends to be 5-5
- 3C/1S: 5 clubs and 4 diamonds; tends to be 5-5
- 3D/1S: 5 diamonds and 4 hearts; tends to be 5-5

The point ranges and limitations are very sensitive to relative vulnerability. Non-vulnerable vs. vulnerable opponents, 2H/1C with S Jxxxx H Txxxx D x C --, would be acceptable. Vulnerable vs. non-vulnerable opponents, 2H/1C with S KJxx H AJxxx D Qx C KQ, would be reasonable, as opposed to a double, especially opposite a passed partner. One hand that you will never have is 4-5-3-1 shape with shortness in opener's suit because that is a NTO.

Responding to a RJOC - Uncontested Auction

- 1) Cue-bid shows the best possible hand; either interested in one of overcaller's suits or the fourth suit. Responding in the cheapest possible fashion shows the worst hand by overcaller. Certain responses are logical. For example, if the auction proceeded 1D - 2H - P - 3D; P - ?, then a 3H response shows any minimum, 3S shows a 5-5 relative minimum, 3 NT shows relative extras with a diamond stopper (probably 4-5-3-1 shape), 4C/D both show relative maximums with shortness in that suit, and 4H shows 6 hearts and 4 spades with a little extra.
- 2) 2NT response promises at least invitational values, and leaves more room to investigate. It also tends to show interest in the higher ranking suit. Again, follow the maxim that the cheaper the response, the worse the hand overcaller has. Jumps are still like in the cue-bid above, showing shortness and extras.
- 3) Any raise of either the higher ranking or the lower ranking suit is blocking whether a single or double raise. A double jump of the higher ranking suit is mildly invitational red v. white.
- 4) Bidding the fourth suit as a non-jump is non-forward going but a single jump in the fourth suit would be a splinter while a game bid in the fourth suit would be to play. This can be a little confusing, but doesn't come up very often.

Responding to a RJOC - Contested Auction

- 1) If the opponents double, redouble is equivalent to a cue-bid above. Pass is to play. Any other bid is essentially as above.
- 2) If the opponents raise or bid the 4th suit, a double replaces the cue bid. A double at a very high level just shows values. Any raises of the higher ranking suit aren't necessarily invitational, but remember advancer is under pressure. We would probably re-raise to game with a maximum.

We have auctions where responder quickly leaps to game following a RJOC. What frequently happens on these hands is that no one knows who can make what, nor do the opponents have the courage to double us,

fearing that it will be a lucky make. Many times we go down two, maybe even vulnerable. Even so, most times the opponents have a game in a side suit, and can't find it because responder is forced to pass on certain hands over a RJOC while opener can't take action at the four or five level. We thus have an effective tool for finding good sacrifices; sometimes even good sacrifices versus their partscores. Try to utilize this preemption whenever possible.

The Two Suited Cue Bid (QB)

This bid shows the two suits left out by the RJOC, or the suits above and below the cue bid suit. The only difference between the QB and the RJOC is that the upper range to the QB remains unlimited. Here's a list of the suits shown:

- 2C/1C: 5 diamonds and 4 spades
- 2D/1D: 5 clubs and 4 hearts
- 2H/1H: 5 diamonds and 4 spades
- 2S/1S: 5 clubs and 4 hearts, tends to be 5-5

The responses for these are exactly the same as for the RJOC, but overcaller, here, has to remember his hand is unlimited unlike the RJOC. If advancer makes any forward going motion, make sure you keep bidding with a rock crusher.

The 2 No Trump Overcall

The 2NT bid shows a strong two suited hand. One suit is always known, which is the non-touching suit, over 1 club it's hearts and over 1 diamond it's spades and vice versa. What do we mean by strong? Any hand that has fewer than 4 1/2 AKQ losers (according to the Losing Trick Count - LTC8). Here's an example 2NT bid over a 1 heart opening: S A H x D AK9x C KQT9xxx. This is a pretty good three loser hand; the hand has a loser in every suit outside of spades. Slams would be a pretty good bargain opposite an ace and queen fourth or fifth in either minor. As it turned out, we were in slam opposite the ace of hearts, JTxx of diamonds and a stiff club, which worked when the diamond hook was on through the opening bidder. Although the 2NT can be off-shape as in the example, the normal would be 5-5 or a good 6-4, like S x H QJTxx D AKQxxx C x. The advantage we have comes from quickly describing our hand, allowing advancer to make a good decision even with a modicum of values. It's never this easy in standard.

Responding to 2NT - Uncontested Auction

- 1) Bid of known suit is to play with a very weak hand.
- 2) Bidding the cheapest non-cuebid suit also shows a weak hand looking to play in the back suit.
- 3) Bypassing the cheaper non-cuebid suit implies an ok hand for the higher suit and a tolerance to play in the anchor suit, but essentially it's still weak.
- 4) Cue-bid asks for further description; tends to be a good invitation or better. Doesn't promise more than 1 trick, since 2NT has 4 1/2 losers or fewer.
- 5) Jump in known suit either to play in game or invitational if not already game.
- 6) Jump in unknown suit or opener's suit is a splinter for overcaller's known suit.

Responding to 2NT - Contested Auction

1) If the opponents bid a suit:

- a) bid of anchor suit is to play -- weak.
- b) double is the same as cue bid if anchor suit could be bid at 3 level. Value showing if anchor suit cannot be bid at 3 level, and tends to deny fit for anchor suit.

2) If the opponents double:

- a) bidding anchor suit is to play; redouble is the same as cue bid above.
- b) pass forces a redouble or bid of second suit if lower than anchor.

These auctions come up quite infrequently, but are awesome when they do. Just be familiar with the general process involved and go from there. When these auctions come up, remember to look at the potential cover cards in your hand because many of these positional games and slams roll home as the points have already been located.

The Intermediate Jump Overcall

Bids at the 3 level when higher than the two cheapest jump shifts show a single suited hand with the values to bid to the 3 level in competition. The hands generally range from 12 HCP and a 7 card suit to a bad 17 HCP with a six card suit. Suit quality is generally about a 1 loser maximum. The available bids are: 3D-3H-3S/1C, 3C-3H-3S/1D, 3D-3S/3H and 3H/1S. Treat with respect to vulnerability. In a major, one top trick and a fit by responder is usually sufficient to bid game vul. vs. nonvul, but nonvul vs. vul even 1 & 1/2 tricks with a fit would probably be insufficient (overcaller has a NAMYATS bid available showing 8 to 8 1/2 tricks). All game bids are to play, and 4 level bids below game are usually slam tries for overcaller's suit.

Miscellany

NAMYATS

Bids at the 4 level are NAMYATS style showing 8 to 8-1/2 playing tricks. Bid 4 of the corresponding minor to show the strong hand while bidding 4 of the major shows the more preemptive hand: 4C => 4H and 4D => 4S. Over 1H and 1S, 4C and 4D are normal 4 minor preempts.

Responding to NAMYATS

- 1) Accepting the transfer denies interest in slam.
- 2) Bidding the step in between, shows a mild interest in slam.
- 3) Bidding a new suit asks for a control in that suit; 4 NT would be RKC.

2 Spade Jump Over 1 Club

This is the only existing jump preempt available below the 4 level; treat this as you would in standard. A 1 spade overcall of 1 club thus tends to deny the preemptive style hand.

3 Level Jump Cue Bid

One of the easiest bids in the system, asks advancer for a stopper in the bid suit and tends to show a long minor with a couple outside cards.

Alerts in the Structure

Clearly, many calls in the structure are alertable as they differ greatly from standard practices, such as a NTO. An alert "problem" materializes from our natural overcalls. Even though they are natural, they still diverge from standard whether or not you happen to hold an unusual hand systemic for us). We believe it's only fair to alert these calls; generally, we are only alerting the opponents to the negative inferences from the call. This unfortunately elicits confusion. The best way to avoid this is to try and pre-alert the opponents to our unusual methods. When the opponents ask for explanation, give them just a general understanding of the bid while letting them know there's more information available if they are interested.

Putting it All Together

The hardest thing to remember at first is to bid with a "bad" hand. You must be relentless. Partner expects this from you, and will definitely blame you for not bidding or misbidding a hand¹⁰. Other keys, responder normally maintains control of the auction which means getting in and out after having bid the limit of the partnership's offensive values without leaving any burn marks around partner's neck! Something to be aware of is balancing - especially over a 1 of minor opening - because partner would have already pre-balanced by overcalling. Pay attention to vulnerability. Down two undoubled is a great score non-vulnerable at matchpoints, but vulnerable it's definitely bad news.

We aim at certain strategic targets when playing against standard bidders using five card majors. If the opponents open 1 of a minor in standard, we want to use whatever means we can to preempt the auction, making it difficult for them to locate their fits. For example, utilizing the preemptiveness of the Intermediate Jump Overcalls, the RJOC are also very preemptive as is bidding a NTO and having advancer preempt at the 3 level. Whenever you eat up a level of bidding, the opponents will be forced to guess at a final contract. It's been our experience that they guess wrong.

The basis for our system is that we trade off ease in handling a few relatively infrequent strong hands to increase our use of lighter and more frequent hands. We, furthermore, try to increase our percentage of success with these more common hands. We use specific description to reduce the strength necessary to compete successfully in an auction. The tradeoff is that less strength is required when less time is needed in the auction to find your proper position. You may be weaker, but if your exposure to danger is shorter, you do not need as much raw power to be relatively secure.

Glossary

Advancer: the fourth person at the table who happens to be the partner of an overcaller.

Balancing: any time someone is in the passout seat and has to decide to take action.

Cover Cards: a corollary of the Losing Trick Count that says to evaluate the number of losers you can reasonably cover in partner's hand with your cards in conjunction with the LTC (not always easy to do).

Flower Bids: bids that show a suit in addition to a fit for partner in other words fit showing.

Intermediate Jump Overcall: single suited hand with the values to bid to the 3 level in competition characterized by a good suit with generally about a six loser hand.

Jacoby Raise: a conventional raise showing a forcing hand with 4 or more card trump support for partner asking for greater description.

Law of Total Tricks: a bidding theory that attempts to explain how many tricks are available to be taken on any given hand depending on the number of available trumps. For general purposes, assume that you can compete to an equal level to the number of trumps held between two hands.

Lebensohl: a conventional understanding that characterizes the use of a no trump bid as a puppet rather than natural in order to delineate certain hand strengths.

Losing Trick Count: a hand evaluation theory or formula that states when a trump fit has been located to add the number of losers of your hand and your partners hand together and subtract that number from 24 to find the number of tricks available ([your losers + partner's losers] - 24 = number of tricks).

Mini-Splinter: a bid showing shortness in a suit with support for partner that gives your hand limit raise values.

NAMYATS: a conventional bid showing a major suit preempt with about 8 to 8.5 tricks made by bidding four of corresponding minor while a direct bid shows less than that.

No Trump for Takeout: a conventional call that shows a three suited takeout at the one level rather than making a takeout double.

Par Spot: a theoretical spot to be reached on a given hand assuming that both sides take proper action and that the par spot thereby will be reached.

Power Double: a defensive double that shows 15+ HCP and tends to be balanced like a strong no trump overcall and tends to show two or more cards of the bid suit.

Psychic bid: any bid made that is deceptive in nature and does not describe the hand actually held.

Roman Jump Overcall: a jump overcall that shows the suit bid and the higher touching suit.

Simple Overcall: a natural overcall made at the cheapest possible level without jumping.

South African Transfer: a jump transfer that allows partner to super accept or not super accept.

Support Doubles and Redoubles: a conventional bid that allows one to make a raise showing an exact number of cards, usually three while a direct raise shows four or more.

Notes

1. When your RHO opens, the frequency of high card points you will hold is as follows: 0-5 HCP => 18.18%, 6-8 HCP => 27.65%, 9-11 HCP => 28.55%, 12-14 HCP => 19.02 %, 15+ HCP => 6.60%, 38+ HCP => 00.00%. Notice, the great majority are the weaker hands.
2. Support doubles and redoubles are conventional calls allowing one to show exactly three card trump support with unlimited strength. A direct raise shows four or more trumps. The exchange of information about the number of trumps we hold eases three level decisions.
3. Direct action has proven to be tactically superior to passing and pulling a double. Even if you run from one 5-1 to another 5-1, unless the direct seat can hammer it without knowing about the strength of their partner's hand, then the person in the passout seat many times is stuck and cannot take a call.
4. Cover cards is a theory expounded by George Rosenkranz, and is a corollary to the Law of Total Tricks. Cover cards cover losers in partner's hand, allowing for hands to fit better. For example, if you have AKQ opposite partner's void, you don't have any cover cards, but if you have only an A opposite partner's stiff you have a cover card. We usually assume any fitters in partner's suits are cover cards, and potentially A's and K's in side suits where it's known partner probably does not have shortness.
5. This is one area where many people believe the Overcall Structure gets nailed when trying to runout. Sometimes we do get nailed. But the number of times we've gotten nailed here versus the number of times you get nailed balancing at the three level is still fewer. Many times when the opponents think they have nailed us, it's because they're cold for game or slam their way.
6. Remember that there are no preempts below the four level; it's just possible that partner has a preempt. Of course, the opponents will let you know by having a strong auction.
7. Decisions about whether to show extras depend upon vulnerability and what partner would expect at a given vulnerability
8. Count a loser for every AKQ missing in a suit. Distributionally count none for a void, one for a singleton, and two for any Qx doubleton or worse. Some suits have only half losers whenever a finessing position can be assumed, e.g. AQJ, AKJ, AJT, KJT, etc. The number of losers calculated assumes that we will have an eight card or better trump fit.
9. We have no requirements set in stone. The basic idea is to make a descriptive bid showing a single suited hand that doesn't require very much to make game.
10. Under certain circumstances, it's acceptable to make a simple overcall instead of bidding a NTO or a two suited bid. This only happens when you're red v. white with a suit that's more important to overcall for a lead director, and you don't want to risk going for 500.