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This Week in Bridge

(263) They Overcall After Partner's Stayman Bid

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Level: 2

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General

When we open the bidding 1NT and partner uses Stayman by bidding 2♣, we know how to continue the bidding. But when our right-hand opponent (RHO) makes an overcall after Responder's Stayman bid, things get much more complicated. Now we need to know how the meaning of our bids change and how to use new options like pass and double. Let's look at how both Opener and Responder handle this situation.

Opener's Rebid After RHO Interferes

Before we define the meaning of Opener's bids over interference, let's discuss what we know about Responder's hand for bidding Stayman. When Responder bids Stayman we expect them to have invitational or better values (8+ points) unless they have a bust hand with length in both Majors (a *Garbage Stayman* or *Drop Dead Stayman* hand). Now let's look at some examples.

Example 1

1NT P 2♣ 2♦

—?

- Pass Minimum values, no 4-card Major
- X Penalty, usually 4+card ♦ (If partner has a bust with both Majors, they pull to 2♥).
- 2♥ Natural, 4-5 card ♥, min or max
- 2♠ Natural, 4-5 card ♠, min or max
- 2NT Maximum, no 4-card Major, ♦ stopper (rare)
- 3♣ Natural, minimum, good 5-card or 6-card ♣ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♦ Western Cuebid (Asks for a stopper)
- 3♥ Natural, 5-card ♥, maximum
- 3♠ Natural, 5-card ♠, maximum
- 3NT Natural, maximum, ♦ stopper (very rare)

Example 2

1NT P 2♣ 2♥

—?

- Pass Minimum values, no 4-card ♠
- X Penalty, usually 4+card ♥
- 2♠ Natural, 4-5 card ♠, min or max
- 2NT Max, no 4-card Major, ♥ stopper (rare)
- 3♣ Natural, minimum, good 5-card or 6-card ♣ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♦ Natural, minimum, good 5-card or 6-card ♦ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♥ Western Cuebid (Asks for a stopper)
- 3♠ Natural, 5-card ♠, maximum
- 3NT Natural, maximum, ♥ stopper (very rare)

Example 3

1NT P 2♣ 2♠

—?

- Pass Minimum values
- X Penalty, usually 4+card ♠
- 2NT Max, no 4-card Major, ♠ stopper (rare)
- 3♣ Natural, minimum, good 5-card or 6-card ♣ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♦ Natural, minimum, good 5-card or 6-card ♦ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♥ Natural, 4-5 card ♥, maximum
- 3♠ Western Cuebid (Asks for a stopper)
- 3NT Natural, maximum, ♠ stopper (very rare)

Example 4

1NT P 2♣ 3♣

—?

- Pass Minimum values
- X Penalty, usually 4+card ♣
- 3♦ Natural, minimum, good 5-card or 6-card ♦ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♥ Natural, 4-5 card ♥, maximum
- 3♠ Natural, 4-5 card ♠, maximum
- 3NT Natural, ♣ stopper, maximum

If RHO makes another overcall at the 3-level (3♦, 3♥, 3♠), then bids by the Opener are natural and show a maximum.

Responder's Rebid After RHO Interferes - Opener Bids Naturally

If the Opener bids a suit (natural) over RHO's interference, then Responder generally continues bidding naturally after that. Responder can bid NT with a stopper in the opponent's suit or make a Western Cuebid (asking for a stopper) if they do not have a Major suit fit or a stopper in the opponent's suit.

If the Opener passes the auction around to Responder, then it is important for both Opener and Responder to be on the same page for what Responder's bid means.

Example 5

1NT P 2♣ 2♥

P P _?

- X Penalty!! Usually 4-card ♥
- 2♠ Natural, 4-card ♠, min, usually extremely shapely (long minor as well), NF
- 2NT Natural, Invitational, 8-9 points (may or may not have a ♥ stopper)
 - *Note: In this auction some play "Delayed Lebensohl"*
- 3♣ Natural, invitational, good 5-card or 6-card ♣ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♦ Natural, invitational, good 5-card or 6-card ♦ suit (non-forcing)
- 3♥ Western Cuebid, asks for a stopper (game-forcing)
- 3NT To Play (hand and/or vulnerability seems better for offense), ♥ stopper

Conclusion

Going over the details of the meaning of each bid in an auction like this can be somewhat technical and even boring, but it is important for us to have good agreements with partner about the meaning of follow-up bids when the opponents come in to our action. Many partnerships have agreements about how to deal with a lead-directing double from the opponents, but they often do not continue the discussion of how to deal with an overcall in this auction. Going over these specific details can save you and partner from expensive disasters when the opponents interfere in your auction.