

45. Failing to overcall

Say the opponents have opened 1♣. There are several tactical reasons for bidding 1♠ — an overcall. You are robbing the opponents of bidding space. You are giving your partner useful information that may enable them to support you. Even if you end up defending, you have given your partner an opening lead. Make sure your suit is good. Overcall on a poor five-card suit, especially at the Two-level, and bad things may happen (like last week).

Would you bid 1♠ over right-hand opponent's 1♣ opener with these?

♠Q6432	♠AQ42	♠KQJ97
♥K97	♥J2	♥2
♦QJ	♦Q932	♦932
♣J62	♣A82	♣J982

You should pass with the first — a trickless collection with five poor spades. You should also pass with the second, lacking the obligatory fifth spade for the overcall (and you can't double for take-out for the lack of a third heart, nor can you overcall INT, which shows 15-19).

Bidding 1♠ with the third, however, is winning bridge: a robust five-card spade suit, a bit of shape, and very likely stopping a 1♥ response by left-hand opponent.

What Happened

With South passing, "I had only seven points, partner", East-West sailed into 4♥. The defence led out three rounds of spades, declarer (East) ruffing and leading ♦Q. North won ♦A and led ♥3. Winning ♥8, declarer cashed ♦K, ruffed ♦8 with ♥A then overtook ♥Q to enjoy ♥KJ10 drawing North's trumps. ♠AKQ scored the last three tricks — ten tricks and game made.

Dealer: East, Vulnerability: Neither

	♠ A102	
	♥ 9753	
	♦ AJ64	
	♣ 103	
♠ 853		♠ 64
♥ KJ108		♥ AQ64
♦ K1087		♦ Q5
♣ 76		♣ AKQ54
	♠ KQJ97	
	♥ 2	
	♦ 932	
	♣ J982	

What Happened

S	W	N	E
			1♣
Pass(1)	1♦(2)	Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥(end)

- (1) Err, did South miss an opportunity here?
 (2) Cheaper of fours as responder.

Contract: 4♥ (by E), Opening Lead: ♠K

What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
			1♣
1♠	Pass(1)	2♠(2)	end(3)

- (1) East-West were not playing Negative Doubles (here, showing hearts) so West is completely stymied.
 (2) Known eight-card fit.
 (3) Admittedly a tad cautious of East.

Contract: 2♠ (by S), Opening Lead: ♣10

What Should Have Happened

If South had overcalled 1♠, West should probably make a negative double, showing hearts. But not every East-West plays Negative Doubles, without which East-West may sell out to 2♠. If the defence lead or switch to spades, this will go one down. Otherwise 2♠ will make. Either way — it's far better than conceding 4♥.

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