

18) GAstem 2 suited overcall on opponents opening of 1 in a suit and responses at 3 level.

Up to now we have emphasised, and rightly so, the importance of being always able to have a choosing response at 2 level. Such technique allows a higher frequency of use as well as a good defensibility.

There are however cases where a choosing response at 3 level is not to be avoided but is instead desirable.

Supposing that the over caller partner has a weak hand but a 5 cards fit in one of the over caller two suits, then the Law of Total Tricks tells us that a 3 level choosing response would be more than appropriate.

Let us look at the following example:

W	N	E	S	South hand
1♣	2♦	X	?	♠ Q J 9 7 6
				♥ 2
				♦ 10 8 6 7 3
				♣ A 5

North overcall shows 6-11 HCP and minimum 4-4 in majors. South hand does not have a high HCP count but can rely on a violent shape.

With a 5 cards support in♠, singleton in♥, Ace doubleton in♣ and 5♦, where North is probably short, South hand should play well in 3♠. In this case it does not make much sense to bid 2♠ but it is much better for South to jump to 3♠. Now West will be forced to bid at 4 level if he wants to bid at all, while the N-S side will comfortably sit at 3 level with a minimum 9 cards fit in♠, protected by the Law.

These choosing responses at 3 or 4 level should always be played, whether in 2nd or in 4th seat, whenever over caller partner is weak with a long fit.

These raises are never inviting but always competitive.

An additional situation where the 3 level response is to be privileged versus a 2 level response, is when over caller has a weak hand but a very violent shape such as in the following example:

W	N	E	S	North hand
1♥	?			♠ Q J 9 7 6 5
				♥ A
				♦ 10 8 6 7 3
				♣ 2

If North overcalls with 2♦ he would show a minimum 4-4 in ♦-♠ with 6-11 HCP. The description given to partner would not show the main features of his hand that is a 6511 shape. Despite the low HCP count, such hand would not need much to make a miracle contract.

In cases like this one, the choosing response should be forced to the 3 level to communicate to partner the correct shape and to build a sizable pre-emptive bid against opponents.

When we have little point count but a violent 2 suiter the overcall should then be:

W	N	E	S
1♣	3♣ = 6-5 in ♦-♥ and 5-11 HCP		
	3♦ = 6-5 in ♥-♠ and 5-11 HCP		
	2NT = 6-5 in ♦-♠ and 5-11 HCP.		

W	N	E	S
1♦	3♣ = 6-5 in ♣-♥ and 5-11 HCP		
	3♦ = 6-5 in ♥-♠ and 5-11 HCP		
	2NT = 6-5 in ♣-♠ and 5-11 HCP.		

W	N	E	S
1♥	3♣ = 6-5 in ♣-♦ and 5-11 HCP		
	3♦ = 6-5 in ♦-♠ and 5-11 HCP		
	2NT = 6-5 in ♣-♠ and 5-11 HCP.		

W	N	E	S
1♠	3♣ = 6-5 in ♣-♦ and 5-11 HCP		
	3♦ = 6-5 in ♦-♥ and 5-11 HCP		
	2NT = 6-5 in ♣-♥ and 5-11 HCP		

The choosing response at 3 level, has a strong pre-emptive power and it is meant to create difficulties to opponents communication.

Such bids, have to be absolutely avoided in case over caller has a very violent shape as well as an inviting HCP count.

In such a case over caller will first make a normal GAstem overcall and then, if he has the opportunity, he will bid a suit outside of his 2 suiter where he has a S/V in order to invite partner to game as in the following example:

W	N	E	S	Nord	
1♥	2♦	p	2♠	♠	Q J 9 7 6 5.
p	3♣	p	?	♥	A
				♦	K J 6 7 3
				♣	2.

North is not only maximum for his bid but he also has a 6-5 two suiter. North rightly avoids to bid 3♦ that would show his shape with a much weaker hand, but he bids 2♦. South chooses ♠ and North bids a suit outside of his two suiter showing a maximum hand, minimum 5-5 in ♦-♠ with S/V in ♣. Now South with a minimum hand will settle for 3♠ while with a better hand will conclude at 4♠.