

Lebensohl over Two-Suited and Artificial Overcalls

Some of the defense mechanisms employed by the opponents after a 1 No Trump opening are natural and some defense mechanisms are artificial. It is important for the partnership to recognize which overcall is natural and which is artificial, which defense shows a two-suited holding and identifies both suits, which defense shows a two-suited holding and only one identified suit, which defense shows a two-suited holding and both suits are unknown, and which defense uses a double to show a one-suited holding.

The problem faced by the responder is the fact that the responder does not know which suit to cuebid, because the suit is not yet known. The introduction to Stayman and Jacoby Transfers becomes difficult when no suit is identified. A penalty double becomes ambiguous when neither partner knows the two suits intended by the opponents. Following are several guidelines which the partnership can adopt to confront these defense mechanisms, but they are only suggestions for the partnership agreement. It is important, especially in competition, that the partnership have an understanding of several defense methods employed against artificial overcalls by the opponents. Below are several suggested guidelines.

1. In the case that the artificial overcall shows two identifiable suits, then the cheaper cuebid is game invitational. The higher cuebid is then game-forcing. After this bidding sequence, all Lebensohl guidelines are system on.
2. In the case that the artificial overcall shows only one identifiable suit, then the known suit can be used for the cuebid. After this bidding sequence, all Lebensohl guidelines are system on.
3. Unless the artificial overcall shows both Major suits, then cuebids are used as Stayman and all Lebensohl guidelines are system on.
4. If the partnership can apply the 2 No Trump response, then all delayed cuebids either show or deny stoppers in the suit(s) of the opponent by partnership agreement.
5. The Four Level jumps by the responder are normal and all Lebensohl guidelines are system on. However, Four Level non-jumps are natural game-forces and/or cuebids.
6. Any double after an artificial overcall are considered to be natural and indicates defensive values in one or both of the suits indicated by the overcaller. A redouble after an artificial double by the opponent promises a moderate to good holding.
7. After an artificial overcall and a pass by the responder, any Delayed Double is for penalty. Any Delayed Suit Bid is considered competitive and is either a sign-off or lead directing for the partner.
8. In general, any artificial double by the overcaller should not interfere with the employment of the Lebensohl convention and is treated as if there had been no double.
9. After an artificial 2 Clubs overcall, a double is Stayman, and otherwise the overcall is treated as if there had been no double.
10. If the responder initially passes the artificial overcall, then this pass becomes a Forcing Pass, and the partner is forced to find a rebid, double and/or redouble, or bid a 5-card suit if possible.

These are general guidelines and should be considered in this context. The partnership must become acquainted with the different defense mechanisms of the opponents and adjust their partnership agreement accordingly. The defense against Landy, for instance, may not work against Brozel.