

Tip of the month

This month's tip concerns the **unassuming cue bid** and how it can be used alongside direct raises to enable the partnership to determine the balance of power in a competitive hand and whether to sacrifice by bidding on, opt out by passing, or double the opponents' contract.

The unassuming cue bid (UCB) is a bid of an opponent's suit, normally in response to an overcall by your partner, eg

N	E	S	W
1D	1S	NB	2D* *Unassuming cue bid.

The traditional approach is that this will show opening hand values and interest in game if the overcall is better than minimum, ie 11+ points and a 5+ card suit. Used in this way, the UCB allows immediate raises to be used in obstructive or competitive ways, eg

N	E	S	W
1D	1S	NB	2S (or 3S/4S) ** **Obstructive raise(s) based on distribution

rather than points.

Some hands may sit between the two types. If West held the following hand after North has opened 1C and East has overcalled 1S:

S A743
H KQ84
D J95
C 85

it is still reasonable to use the UCB. The hand has 8 losers, 7 if you play adjusted loser count for a known trump fit. If East now bids just 2S, West will pass, but if East had, say:

S KQ952
H A5
D A84
C 962

this is full value for an overcall and East would jump to 3S and West would raise to 4S.

Even if both opponents bid, the UCB can still be used to show a good raise of an overcall, eg

N	E	S	W
1H	1S	2H	3H* *Unassuming cue bid.

when West holds:

S K952
H A8
D J94
C A1064

This might be a hand for defending if the opponents bid on and partner doesn't think it advisable to bid 4S. Contrast that situation with the sequence:

N	E	S	W
1H	1S	2H	3S ** **Obstructive raise based on distribution rather than points.

when West holds:

S K864
H 3
D 964
C KJ1072

Here partner would need a very good hand to bid on over 4H unless a sacrifice was in order.

Hopefully these examples help you to see the advantages of clearly differentiating between those hands responding to an overcall which have the values to suggest your side has the potential for game and those with which you would merely wish to be as obstructive as possible.

Dick Wheeler
July 2020