STRONG JUMP OVERCALLS

What is a strong jump overcall? As described by Culbertson, a single jump overcall shows a good strong suit in a hand with about eight playing tricks, whether made at the two or three level. It should have at least three and one-half defensive tricks ("honor count," to use Culbertson's term). For instance, this is a 2♠ jump overcall of a lower suit opening: ♠AQ109653 ♥AK5 ♦32 ♣6. The jump says, "I can just about make this bid in my own hand."

A jump to three of a minor suit is an invitation to three notrump, so it implies a solid suit plus a few high cards outside. This is a 3♣ overcall of a 1♠ opening: ♠54 ♥A7 ♦A76 ♣AKQ1096. Partner can bid 3NT with a spade stopper and little outside (nothing outside, if the stopper is the ace). A jump to two of a minor (i.e., 2♦ over a 1♣ opening) does not require a solid suit. If partner bids 2NT, showing a stopper in opener's suit, overcaller rebids 3♦ if his suit is not solid (unless he too has a stopper).

The jump to three of a minor is permissible with a semi-solid suit if the jump bidder has a stopper in the opposing suit. Partner will recognize the situation if she has a high card in the jump suit, and will bid 3NT with no stopper herself. With a partial stopper she can cue bid:

South	West	North	East
1♠	3♦	Pass	3♠ - partial spade stopper

West can now bid notrump with Jxx, Qx, or better in spades.

The jump overcall can be made with a two-suited hand, if the higher suit (in which the jump is made) is quite strong: ♠AKJ95 ♥AQ1087 ♦65 ♣6. Hearing a jump to 2♠ over a 1♣ opening, partner will raise to 3♠ with ♠Q3 ♥K95 ♦J853 ♣10654, and will pass a subsequent 4♥ bid.

As in the previous example, partner can respond to a strong jump overcall with little in high cards. Takeouts to 2NT or a new suit are forcing for one round. A raise of the jump suit is invitational but seldom passed.

One trouble with strong jump overcalls is that they don't come up very often. You can up the frequency a little by reducing the high card requirement (but not the playing trick requirement) for a one-suited jump at the two level. The jump should never be weaker in high cards than an opening bid, but a non-vulnerable jump to 2♠ may be chanced with a hand as weak as ♠AKQJ87 ♥92 ♦Q1097 ♣6. Optimistically counting only two losers in diamonds, this hand has eight playing tricks. There is a danger that partner will misjudge the auction in some way, counting you for more in high cards. That is why the bid should perhaps be just 1♠ when vulnerable--a good normal vulnerable overcall.

Not all jump overcalls are this strong. See section 8-7, Reopening the Bidding.