

When can you be optimistic?

On sequences where LHO has passed, raised opener, or introduced a new suit at the one level, you can feel that your side has a vested interest in the hand. This doesn't mean that the hand belongs to you, but it means that the possibility exists. What is happening is that LHO's bid does not show many points. This means there are more points unaccounted for which may be in the form of a better than average overcall in your hand or a maximum raise in partner's hand.

1. Do you have a sure game?

No one vul.

You

1♣ - 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♠

Pass - ?

♠ A Q 8 7 6
♥ A Q 5
♦ K J 7 2
♣ 3

Bid four spades. Quite routine. This hand will make game easily. If the opponents save, you may have to decide what to do, but that is a later problem. If you play it in four spades, you will have the benefit of having heard descriptive bids from both opponents, in particular LHO. This should make it easy for you to decide which high cards are where.

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Vul. vs. not.

You

1♣ - 1♠ - Pass - 2♠

3♣ - ?

♠ A J 8 7 6 5
♥ K 8
♦ K 10 8 7
♣ 7

The auction by definition is one where game for you is possible. Here, you have the additional knowledge that your finesses will work. I would just bid four spades here and not even bother with a game try. Curiously, if I had opened one spade and partner raised to two spades,

I would probably pass. But on the example auction, you know the cards are well placed for you. It's almost as if you had another ace. Note also that the auction has suggested that partner's cards will be found outside of clubs. The chances of his putting down K Q 10 8 2 of clubs is rather slight.

No one vul.

You

1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♦

Pass - ?

♠ 4 2
♥ A K 3
♦ A Q 6 5 4 2
♣ K 3

Three notrump. When your major suit overcall is raised, you usually do not march out into notrump. But when your overcall is in a minor suit, you may well make the switch. This hand looks like it should produce at least nine notrump tricks while offering no such as-

surances about five diamonds. Note that the spade suit is not a threat. Neither opponent has five spades. Partner therefore has three and probably more.

If LHO had not bid 1♥, but had passed instead, then he might indeed have five spades but without the values to bid them. It is actually a bit more dangerous to bid three notrump with LHO passing throughout than with him bidding 1♥.