

Overcaller's reverse

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If partner opens 1C, you respond 1S and partner rebids 2H, what is she showing?

The answer is that for partner to bid in this way (i.e. to rebid at a level beyond 2 of the suit that she initially opened, thus forcing you to give preference at the 3-level) she must have both extra distribution and extra values. Typically this means a hand with 5+ cards in the first suit and 4 cards in the second suit, as well as 16+ high card points. True, partner may have a 6-5 hand in which case she can bid like this with fewer hcp, but your initial expectation should be that she holds a hand such as e.g. ♠A6-♥KJ82-♦J7-♣AKJ95. It follows that if you hold ♠106-♥AK102-♦J107-♣KJ75 you cannot – *must* not – rebid 2H no matter how much you like your heart suit, because you will be promising shape and values you simply haven't got.

This type of bid is called a reverse, because it is the opposite of the "normal" order of showing suits viz. first the higher-ranking, then the lower-ranking. A reverse is absolutely forcing for one round.

While it's not that uncommon for opener to have a hand suitable for a reverse, it's rare for an overcaller to have a hand worthy of bidding in this manner. However, just such a hand turned up with North on this deal from Wednesday 15 July:

BD: 4	♠K875	Dlr: W
	♥AK764	Vul: ALL
	♦AK7	
	♣T	
♠AQ		♠J3
♥J3		♥QT5
♦J832		♦QT654
♣AQJ43		♣862
	♠T9642	
	♥982	
	♦9	
	♣K975	
		N
	♣♦♥♠	T
N	4 5	17
S 1	4 5	15 5
E 2		3
W 3		

West opened 1C and North overcalled 1H. East passed, as did South. West rebid 2C and now North bid 2S, showing values sufficient for a reverse and at least 5/4 shape. What should South do after East's pass?

It's true that South has a hand with just 3 hcp that are quite possibly worthless after clubs have twice been bid over her, but in this auction her hand has suddenly blossomed. Why? Because she has a double fit with partner: not only has she got 3-card support for his first-bid suit, she has 5-card support (!) for his second suit *and* she has an outside singleton (!!*)).

The reverse is forcing and the very least she can do at this point is bid 3S, but I wouldn't argue with a jump to 4S (given that she passed on the first round, this can only mean an excellent fit and ruffing values in a spade contract). Anyway, even if South bids just 3S, North has an automatic raise to game.

As it turns out, the contract is cold for an overtrick – on a club lead West wins ♣J but dare not continue the suit, so say she switches to a diamond. Declarer wins, ruffs his low diamond and leads a trump towards the king. West rises with ♠A and perhaps returns a heart now, but again declarer wins, then cashes ♠K drawing trumps and plays his other top diamond to discard a heart from dummy. Now declarer cashes the other top heart and ruffs a heart, to establish that suit for 11 tricks.

The deal is quite a nice demonstration of the notion that shape, a good fit and a couple of aces and kings can allow you to successfully bid and make a thin game.



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