THE GOLDEN RULES OF OVERCALLS - Chris Gurney

1/ Overcalls DO NOT NEED TO BE RESPONDED TO (see 7) and most are not.

2/ If the overcall is in a suit, it promises at least five cards.

3/ An overcall can be either a good suit or have good HCP - or both!

4/ If the overcall is vulnerable it definitely has good HCP (12 HCP or more).

5/ DOES NOT have more than 16 HCP. If you do have more -. double first.

6/ If an opponent's opening bid can be overcalled 1NT, it MUST be. A 1NT overcall is stronger than a 1NT opening (15 16 HCP), is balanced and has TWO stoppers in the suit bid. Bidding beyond this? Just use your normal system.

7/ We only reply to partner's overcall if one or both of two conditions are met.

a) we have support for partner's suit (remember, we need only three cards - partner has promised a iive card suit).

b) we have too many HCP to ignore partner's bid (12 HCP or more). IF we don't have at least one of these conditions - just pass - even if void in partner's suit.

8/If the opening bid can be ignored, (i.c. you were going to make your bid as an opening bid anyway), do so -- BUT it also has to fit into the overcall rules.

THE GOLDEN RULES OF COPING WITH OVERCALLS

1/ If at all possible, ignore the overcall - but we do have to follow certain rules.

2/ if we bid a new suit after an opponent overcalls WE ARE PROMISING A FIVE CARD SUIT and enough HCP for the bid we are making (This can be remembered by the phrase " overcalling an overcall").

3/ If we were originally going to reply to partner's opening bid but we can no longer do so because of an overcall (maybe we don't have enough cards lo support partner's suit, don't have a five card suit of our own or enough HCP to respond at the level the bidding has reached) - just double. Hopefully things will become clearer on the next round of bidding.

4/ If partner's opening bid of one of a major is overcalled IT IS PERFECTLY REASONABLE TO SUPPORT WITH ONLY THREF CARDS. (MAJOR ONLY!).

5/ A bid of the opponent's suit is never natural and is generally looking for a stopper for no trump purposes.