



Bergen Raises

IN THIS issue I will be answering a request from reader Laurie Chandler, who is keen to develop his methods when responding to an opening bid of one of a major and has asked for an article on 'Bergen Raises'.

First, it must be stressed that the Bergen Raise scheme, developed in the US by Marty Bergen, is best used in conjunction with five-card majors. This is because it has a greater frequency for guaranteeing a nine-card fit – an integral part of the 'Level of the Fit' concept which is vital within these methods. The Level of the Fit essentially states that the more trumps you have between you and your partner, then the higher you should bid, i.e.

With eight combined trumps:

bid to the two level.

With nine combined trumps:

bid to the three level.

With ten combined trumps:

bid to at least the four level.

These are, of course, only guidelines; point-count, distribution and vulnerability clearly must be factored in as well.

Bergen Raises use this idea when responding to an opening bid of $1\heartsuit/1\spadesuit$ (playing five-card majors, remember). Thus:

After an opening bid of $1\heartsuit/1\spadesuit$:

$3\clubsuit$ = Invitational, with 3 trumps

$3\diamondsuit$ = Invitational, with 4+ trumps

Another important part of the system is to use the full value of pre-emptive raises. Thus:

After an opening bid of $1\heartsuit/1\spadesuit$:

$3\heartsuit/3\spadesuit$ = weakish (typically 4 trumps,

4-6 HCPs approx.)

$4\heartsuit/4\spadesuit$ = Shapely raise. Often 5 trumps or 4 trumps with decent shape (fewer than 10 HCPs is normal for these actions)

The $3\clubsuit$ Response

A full understanding of five-card majors (usually played in conjunction with a strong no-trump) is needed here.

Since partner, if balanced, has either 12-14 HCPs or 18-19 when he opens one of a major (assuming 5-3-3-2 with a major will automatically open a strong no-trump not one of a major) then a simple raise can and should be up to a flat 10-count as a matter of course, e.g.

\spadesuit	K 7 4
\heartsuit	6 2
\diamondsuit	K J 8 3
\clubsuit	K 7 6 2

This hand should respond a simple $2\spadesuit$ if partner were to open $1\spadesuit$.

Therefore the $3\clubsuit$ bid is used to show 9/10 HCPs with shape (a five-card suit or a singleton, typically), or 11-12 if balanced.

Please note that a useful memory aid to help distinguish between the $3\clubsuit$ and $3\diamondsuit$ bids is that a club has *three* leaves and a diamond *four* points in its design.

The $3\diamondsuit$ Response

This basically shows a limit raise (with at

least four trumps, remember). You continue the auction in whatever way you do currently after an invitational raise.

However, you gain some space in this specific auction:

Partner	You
$1\spadesuit$	$3\diamondsuit$
$3\heartsuit$	

This $3\heartsuit$ bid is now available (not available if playing standard raises) to announce a hand that is undecided whether to accept the invitation to four or not. It should not be related to hearts in any way. This concept is sometimes referred to as 'Last Train'.

The Mixed Raise

A final piece of the Bergen Raise jigsaw is to use 'Mixed Raises'.

Partner	You
$1\heartsuit$	$2\clubsuit$

Partner	You
$1\spadesuit$	$3\heartsuit$

The method uses a jump in the other major as an entirely artificial bid denoting at least four trumps with less than a limit raise (7-9 HCPs approx.).

This is in keeping with the principle that with nine trumps between the partnership you usually try to raise quickly to the three level to apply maximum pressure on the opposition, while simultaneously describing your hand pretty efficiently. These raises are generally best used with a bit of shape. With a stodgy 7-9 you can make a simple raise to two of the major.

Bidding as a Passed Hand

Bergen Raises should *not* apply. Fit jumps are much more useful! (Did you read my article on pages 20-21 of the August 2013 issue?)



2012-2013 Seniors Knockout for the Gerard Faulkner Salver

Clive Owen, John Holland, Jeff Morris and John Hassett beat Jeffrey Alper, Malcolm Harris, Ivor Miller and Richard Spencer by 13 IMPs in the final, in what the winning captain described as 'a close, hard-fought match played in great spirit'.

Alternatively, many choose to use some sort of Drury and 2NT.

I personally recommend that as a passed hand a jump to 2NT should be used to show a sound raise to three of whichever suit partner has opened. This should apply in all four suits and is very similar in concept to bidding after the opponents have made a take-out double.

Bergen Raises also do *not* apply in competition.

Example

Here is an example of a Bergen Raise auction:

♠ A Q 7 4 3		♠ K 10 6
♥ 6 2		♥ A 3
♦ K 5 4 2		♦ Q J 10 8 6
♣ A 8		♣ 7 5 2

West	East
1♠	3♣
3♦	4♣
Pass	

East can stretch to show an invitational three-card raise due to the decent five-card side-suit. West issues an invitation which East will happily accept due to the double-fit (*key principle*).

Note the 3♦ bid: when there is room in the auction, then you make natural-ish long-suit game tries; if there is no room (e.g. 1♠ – 3♦) then 3♥ just acts as a random game try – too good to sign off in 3♣ but not quite good enough to jump to 4♣.

Defending against Bergen Raises

If the auction starts:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♣/3♦	?

Your call as South . . . ?

It is most important to discuss what a double would be now. Would it:

- Show the suit bid (since you are doubling an artificial bid)?
- Be take-out of the major being bid and supported?

Obviously it is a matter for partnership agreement, with a default to a) above with no discussion. My preference is for b), however, since essentially the opponents have opened and raised a major.

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