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LARRY COHEN SEMINARS      SPLINTER BIDS.

Last week I talked about Drury. A convention that is very useful but isn't used by the number of players it deserves. One of the values of Drury is that it has a decent frequency rate. In other words, you get to use Drury bids more than once a month.

This week I am covering splinter bids. Splinter bids are widespread but few have experienced their range of possibilities.

A splinter bid is one that:

Is a jump bid.

Is a jump bid that will cause your partner to immediately wonder what it means.

Is a bid that can't possibly be anything but a splinter.

Is a bid that, depending on the auction, can be made with as few as three high-card points or as many as twenty-three.  
Could be more.

Today, I will discuss many splinter situations. I will focus on them one at a time and will give examples showing that splinter situation at work. I will start with the more common splinters and move from there into some unusual splinters. You may be surprised at their extent.

Note that in these discussions, the term ‘support points’ refers to how much a hand is worth once a fit has been found.

#### PARTNER OPENS AND RESPONDER MAKES A SPLINTER RAISE

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	4C

Opener bids a suit (usually a major suit) and responder jumps to 3S, 4C, or 4D, bids that do not have much use for standard bidders. If the opening bid is 1S, I can jump to 4C, 4D, or 4H to show that singleton. I’m using the auction above as my example.

Many players use these bids as a splinter bids, showing game points, four or more trumps, and a singleton in the suit they bid. The typical hand has 13 or more support points. It could have much more.

The next three hands show examples of what is right for a splinter bid, and what is wrong for a splinter bid.

HAND ONE	HAND TWO	HAND THREE
K43	KQ96	A1032
AJ874	AJ43	KQ9
6542	K764	KJ875
9	2	6

Hand One has the right idea but it is too weak. A splinter bid, no matter what the bidding sequence, says that your side has enough points for game. This hand needs at least another king. Note that a splinter bid is forcing to game. You may have more points than your bid promises. You will never have fewer points than your bid promises.

Hand Two is just right for 4C. It shows a full opening bid, four or more trumps, and a singleton. Note that bidding 1S or 2D would be very wrong. This is the one time you will be able to tell partner about your hand. The splinter bid does everything with just one bid.

Hand Three is wrong for a splinter bid. You have game values and you have a singleton. But you don't have four-card support. If you bid 4C, your partner will expect four or more trumps. Bid 2D (not 1S) and expect to show heart support soon. Your partner will realize that if you had four hearts, you would have found a bid that showed them earlier.

This raises an interesting thought. These next three hands show the problem.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	?

HAND ONE

KQ3 AJ43 Q874 J8

HAND TWO

A74 KJ76 K9 A976

HAND THREE

74 AQ1083 AKJ K64

HAND ONE Do you have a way to show these values?

HAND TWO Do you have a way to show these values?

HAND THREE Do you have a way to show these values?

I'm assuming that you are using the Jacoby 2NT. I'll discuss it next week.

For the purpose of these splinter notes, I'll assume that you have some bid that shows the three hands here.

## TWO EXAMPLES SHOWING ONE OF THE VALUES OF SPLINTER BIDS

HAND ONE I'm showing both hands here.

K43

QJ76

AQ543

4

QJ

AK853

962

KJ9

W	N	E	S
---	---	---	---

			1H
--	--	--	----

P	4C	P	?
---	----	---	---

South should bid 4H. He started with a modest 1H bid. Just a little over a minimum.

North's 4C bid was good and bad news. The good news is that North has enough values to make game. The bad news is that South has the KJ9 of clubs. These values are not good. They may be worthless. South is essentially looking at a hand with ten high-card points. South should bid 4H. Game will make most of the time but anything higher than 4H is in danger.

HAND TWO I'm showing both hands here.

A43

Q976

AQ543

4

K7

AK853

KJ2

1083

W    N    E    S

1H

P    4C    P    ?

On this auction, North shows his singleton and South, with a different fourteen points, can see that his three small clubs are not a problem, hence he knows that all of the high cards he has are working. In fact, on this layout South is almost cold for 6H. Getting there will require inspired bidding (I think 4D here) but the lesson of the hand is that North's splinter bid told South something that caused South to like his hand way more than on the previous hand.

You noticed that I commented on the fact that you need four trumps to make one of these splinter bids.

HERE'S HOW IMPORTANT THAT FOURTH TRUMP IS:

A63

K9842

When this is the trump suit, eight cards, there is one certain loser, and perhaps two.

A653

K9842

When this is the trump suit, nine cards, declarer is better off. There may be a trump loser (two would be testing the limits of bad luck) but that fourth trump will still help in many ways.

AN UNBREAKABLE RULE: Do not make bids that promise four trumps when you don't have them. This is one of the most important rules in bidding. Your partner, knowing you have four trumps, can be quicker to be aggressive than when he knows you have three trumps. This is important in all cases.

RESPONDER BIDS A NEW SUIT AT THE ONE LEVEL AND OPENER MAKES A SPLINTER RAISE

This splinter situation is another common one. I bet you haven't used it that often, and that's because it hasn't gotten much press. It is often an opportunity missed.

W	N	E	S
			1D
P	1H	P	4C

2C would be a normal rebid showing four or more clubs and normal opening bid strength up to perhaps four points more than a minimum hand.

3C would be a game-forcing jump shift showing 19 or so points with diamonds and clubs.

4C shows heart support and a singleton (possibly a void) in clubs. South needs about 20 support points here because North can have as few as six points.

One way of thinking about the 4C bid is that it is *one level higher than a strong jump shift*. Jump bids that are one level higher than a jump shift are almost always splinter bids.

Here are four hands South might have. Which hand is correct for a splinter bid? Remember, North may have only six points for his 1H bid.

W	N	E	S
			1D
P	1H	P	?



HAND ONE	HAND TWO	HAND THREE	HAND FOUR
A8	A84	QJ76	A106
2	KQ87	AQ104	AKQ7
AK1086	AKJ76	A1086	KQ86
AKJ108	3	4	96

Hand One is a 3C bid. This is a strong jump shift and is forcing to game. South is showing game points with great diamonds and clubs.

Hand Two has the right values for a splinter bid. Game points, four-card heart support, and a singleton club. Counting distribution, this hand is worth at least 20 support points. Note that 4C is one level higher than a strong jump shift. Hence the rule that *a bid one higher than a jump shift is a splinter*.

Hand Three has four-card heart support and a singleton club, but as good as this hand is, it is not good enough to make a game-forcing bid of 4C. South should rebid 3H, showing invitational values in the range of 16-18 support points.

Hand Four has four-card heart support and a balanced hand. He does not have a splinter bid available. His bid here is 4H. It shows game points with trump support *with a balanced hand*. This news is important. Dummy won't have a singleton or void.

SPLINTER BIDS CAN SOMETIME BE MADE AT THE THREE LEVEL.

These splinter moments are often overlooked.

W	N	E	S
			1C
P	1S	P	3D

This auction shows a splinter raise. Some splinter bids require a four-level bid. Some splinter bids can be made at the three level. They all show game points.

Here's the key.

It's important.

If opener had rebid 2D, that would be a reverse. A reverse is forcing for one round. There's no reason for opener to jump to 3D to show a good hand. If 2D will do that, jumping to 3D is a waste of bidding room.

The rule that says *one more than a jump shift is a splinter bid* now has a companion rule.

ONE MORE THAN A REVERSE is a splinter bid.

Here's a shortcut rule for this.

If you bid a suit and partner bids a suit at the one level, there are two unbid suits. If you want to make a splinter bid in one of these suits, you will make your splinter bid at the four level if your singleton suit is lower ranking than the suit you opened.

If you bid a suit and partner bids a suit at the one level, there are two unbid suits. If you want to make a splinter bid in one of these suits, you will make your splinter bid at the three level if your singleton suit is higher-ranking than the suit you opened.

### THREE-LEVEL SPLINTER REBIDS

This situation is one where splinter bids are frequently forgotten.

W	N	E	S
			1C

P	1S	P	2D
---	----	---	----

Here, opener is showing a big hand by reversing. His 2D bid is forcing. There is no need to jump to 3D to show a big hand with diamonds. A 2D reverse does that.

South would rebid 2D with this hand:

3 KQ2 AQJ8 AQ1098

If South had bid 3D, that would be one more than a reverse. As long as you agree that 2D is a reverse and shows a good hand, you can use the 3D bid to show a splinter for partner's spades.

### EXAMPLES OF THREE-LEVEL SPLINTER BIDS

W	N	E	S
			1C

P	1S	P	?
---	----	---	---

HAND ONE

KQJ4

63

4

AKQ1096

South bids 3D, a splinter raise for spades. Note that being able to show your splinter raise at the three level leaves room for partner to continue bidding.

HAND TWO

KQJ4

63

- - -

AKQ10962

This is an exceptional hand that gives you an option. On this auction, a 3D bid shows a singleton. You can bid 4D on this hand to show a void. As long as your partnership knows that 3D is the singleton-showing bid, a 4D bid won't be misunderstood.

You won't see this hand type for a while. But it is in the waiting room, and it's nice when you have it.

Note that if North has the ace of spades and the ace of hearts and nothing else, 7S rates to be cold. The 4D bid does the trick.

This auction will also tell the opponents of your void, and that may cause them to lead a heart.

**IMPORTANT:** You can only distinguish between a singleton and a void on auctions where you use a jump to the three level to show a singleton.

## HAND THREE

W	N	E	S
			1C

P	1H	P	?
---	----	---	---

3

KQJ7

AQ6

KJ1098

South wants to bid game in hearts. The way to show this hand is to bid 3S. This is in keeping with the rule that says 2S would be your strong spade bid.

Hence 3S is your splinter bid. It's *one more than a strong jump shift* to 2S.

HAND FOUR I'm showing both hands here.

W    N    E    S

      1C   P    1S

P    ?

AKJ4

A76

10

AJ1054

Q98732

K

9874

K3

3D. This is a splinter showing spade support, game points, and a singleton diamond. The only thing that can go wrong is if partner misconstrues what 3D means.

After this start, South can imagine a slam. North is showing 20 support points with four spades and a singleton diamond. South is charmed since he has eight golden high-card points and the valuable fifth and sixth spades. South is entitled to use Blackwood. He will discover that North has four keycards. South uses good judgment to reach a cold slam. In fact, slam would be almost cold if South did not have the king of hearts.



## HAND FIVE

W	N	E	S
			1C

P	1S	P	?
---	----	---	---

Q764

K

Q1083

AKQJ

Some would open 1C. Some would open 1D. In either case, North bids 1S. What should South bid?

I suggest you bid 3S. South's singleton king of hearts is an uncertain value. If you had the KQ76 of spades and a small heart, this would be worth a 3H splinter bid.

When you make decisions like this one, you should not use HCP as your only guide. You need to consider many things. If, for instance, you form a friendship with someone, you do not do this because they have a twinkle in their eyes and a fast smile. Those things count but so to a dozen other things.

I will agree with anyone who says all this is not trivial. I hope you will agree that it is worth the effort. Bidding space is valuable. These three-level splinters are not as common as others so they earned an extra example.

## A PROBLEM IF YOU DO NOT USE SPLINTERS

This next discussion shows the value of making a splinter raise instead of raising to four of partner's major. Assume for this discussion that your partnership does not play splinters. Here's the bidding:

W	N	E	S
	1D	P	1S
P	4S	P	?

South knows that North has something that looks like 20 support points, but that's all South knows.

Here are two possible South hands:

HAND ONE	HAND TWO
KJ43	K97532
Q103	K4
874	2
843	8742

Hand One is of little interest to South. No matter what North has, South will be content to play in 4S. He has four decent spades and he has a kernel of value in hearts.

Hand Two is a different matter. South is sure 4S will make, but will it make more than that?

If North had made a splinter bid of 4C, South has enough to use Blackwood. I'd rate the South had at around thirteen points in support of spades.

But if North and South don't use splinter bids, South will have to guess. Uninformed guesses are harder to get right than informed decisions.

Here are four examples of hands North might have for a 4S raise if not using splinter bids. These four hands have little in common other than four spades and a lot of points.

W	N	E	S
	1C	P	1S
P	4S		

We'll look at these one at a time.

HAND ONE	HAND TWO	HAND THREE	HAND FOUR
KQ105	AQ87	QJ87	Q1098
AK63	2	AK	Q73
63	KQ2	2	AKJ
AQJ	AQ764	AK10865	AK10

On Hand One, South will need ten or eleven points to make a slam.

On Hand Two, slam might make if South has an exceptional seven points.

On Hand Three, slam will be very good if South has the ace and king of spades and nothing else. If partner has the ace and king of spades and the ace of diamonds, making 7S will be possible.

On Hand Four, one can imagine going down in four spades if he has six or seven points. It will require partner to have around 13 points to give slam a chance.

Balanced hands aren't always worth their point count.

How can South hope to make a good decision when partner can bid 4S with such a wide range of hands? The answer: Use splinter bids.

**It's a fact** that if you and partner are both balanced, you need more high-card points than when one (or both) of you has some shape. If your partner bids 4S, denying a singleton, you will need at least at least twelve boring points to make a slam worth bidding.

If your partner makes a splinter bid, that information tells you something important about his hand and you can use that information to decide if your hand is worth looking for slam.

If North and South are not using splinter bids, South will have to guess what to do after North's raise to 4S.

Splinter bids rock.

But only if you and partner are in agreement.

## TWO COMMON QUESTIONS

Here are two questions I expect someone will want to ask. This feels like a good time to anticipate them.

Is it OK to make a splinter bid with a singleton king?

With discretion. I'd count that king as being worth a courtesy point plus something for its value as a singleton. I would not count it as three points plus something for being a singleton. If my hand is still worth a game forcing bid, I would bid 2NT.

Is it OK to make a splinter bid with a singleton ace?

This is a harder question with a fuzzy answer.

I suggest that if you have a sound maximum for your splinter bid, go ahead and do it.

If your hand is minimum for your splinter bid, raise to game instead. Singleton aces are hugely overrated. Almost any time you have a singleton ace, it would have been more useful elsewhere. Here's an example of this:

HAND ONE	HAND TWO
A	2
Q654	AQ109
10432	7432
9532	6532

The second hand is much better than the first. In the first hand, that queen of hearts is all by itself. In the second hand the queen of hearts is surrounded by an ace, a ten, and a nine. The second hand offers up to four tricks in this suit.

Here's my last hand that shows the value of splinter raises. I'll show you both hands for this one.

NO ONE VULNERABLE

NORTH DEALS

A94

KQJ8

8

AQJ107

86

A109762

Q76

K3

Suggested bidding:

W	N	E	S
	1C	P	1H
P	3D	P	4C
P	4NT	P	5D
P	6H	P	P
P			



North     1C   Nice hand. Easy bid.

South     1H   South also has a comfortable bid. If North raises hearts, South will be happy.

North     3D   This is a splinter bid. Often there is confusion about this. I discussed this earlier. 2D is a reverse, hence 3D can be a splinter bid.

South     4C   South has just gotten interested in slam. His values are improved and his worries about diamonds are put to rest. South's 4C bid is a cuebid. Usually you have an ace when you cuebid. Here, however, North opened 1C so the king of clubs is a known good card.

North     4NT   North, knowing South has the king of clubs and a hand worth a slam, try can bid 4S, a cuebid, or 4NT. I'll assume 4NT. He learns of an ace and so bids 6H.

NOTE: If North had raised 1H to 4H, South would not be sure what to do. This could be the layout:

KJ32

KQJ4

K4

AQ8

86

A109762

Q76

K3

You will make a game facing this North hand but that's high enough. Higher is dangerous.

## HANDS REINFORCING EARLIER DISCUSSIONS

### EXAMPLES OF OPENER'S REBIDS

Note that the opening bid for the next two hands is 1C.

W	N	E	S
			1C
P	1H	P	?

### HAND ONE

KQ83    AK108    2    AQJ2

Hand One has the shape and values to bid 3D, a splinter bid. It's one higher than a reverse to 2D, which would be a natural bid showing a good hand. Do not bid spades. Keep your partnership eyes on the heart fit.

## HAND TWO

AQ2   2   KQJ8   KQJ72

Hand Two is a 2D rebid. It's a reverse, natural and forcing for at least one round. A reverse usually implies opener's first suit is longer than his second suit. One thing is guaranteed. The second suit is never longer than the first.

### HAND THREE

AQJ4 7 K4 AKQ854

Hand Three is a 2S bid, showing a strong jump shift hand. It's a rare bid.

### HAND FOUR

4 Q1095 AJ3 AKQJ8

Hand Four is a 3S bid. It is a jump reverse showing a singleton spade and four-card heart support and a game-going hand.

### HAND FIVE

A5 KQ76 5 AKJ764

Hand Five is a 3D rebid, showing a singleton diamond and a big heart raise. These splinters are forcing to game. Note that on this hand, South's shape is better than it had to be. Compare it with Hand One, which was bid the same way.

Note that the opening bid for the next two hands is 1D.

W	N	E	S
			1D
P	1H	P	?

#### HAND ONE

AJ3 KQ87 AQJ86 8

Hand One is a 4C splinter bid.

#### HAND TWO

KQ5 KJ83 AKJ543 - - -

Hand Two is almost impossible to bid. You are probably best off bidding 4C, showing a singleton club with a big heart raise. Hands with voids are problem hands. These hands come up; fortunately not often.

There's no good way to show a void. I hate putting this hand here because I don't have a perfect bid to offer.

Summing up the common hands where opener makes a splinter raise of partner's suit:

A jump bid by opener is a splinter if the jump is one level higher than a jump shift.

A jump bid by opener is a splinter if the jump is one level higher than a reverse.

## NEW – A QUESTION THAT WAS SENT TO ME AFTER THE SPLINTER LECTURE.

W    N    E    S  
                    1S

P    2C   P    3H

What does the 3H bid show? It can be used in two ways.

Does it show a strong hand with five spades and five hearts?

Does it show a heart splinter in support of partner's suit?

ANSWER - A good question. I am familiar with both treatments. My preference is to play that a jump shift to the tree level into a suit lower ranking than my original suit ought to be used as a splinter bid.

Why?

Both treatments are valid but the splinter situation comes up far more often.

Note that:

W    N    E    S  
                    1H

P    2D   P    3S

This one is a splinter for sure. Opener has four spades and five hearts. A jump to 3S has no logical meaning other than a splinter.



## SPLINTER RAISES WHEN PARTNER MAKES A TWO-OVER-ONE RESPONSE

This is a good moment for splinter bids. (I'm assuming you are using Two Over One bidding, which means your partner also has an opening bid.) If you have a splinter raise for partner's two-over-one suit, you are likely to have a slam.

W	N	E	S
			1H
P	2D	P	?

### HAND ONE

3    AJ874   K874   A73

BID 3S. Given you know your partner has a good hand, you are entitled to make a splinter bid with this hand. It was a minimum opening bid but North's 2D bid is really good news. You almost always have four-card support for one of these splinters.

## HAND TWO

AK4 KJ843 KJ93 4

4C is a splinter bid here. I might not use a splinter bid if my values were boring.

## HAND THREE

QJ4 KQ764 QJ93 K

Bid 3D. I suggest you do not make a splinter with such values. If partner is interested in slam, he will show it.

## HAND FOUR

2 AJ764 KJ432 AQ

Bid 3S. This hand is terrific. If partner bids 3NT, you will not pass. You could cuebid 4C with this hand.

## HAND FIVE

2 AK874 AK1097 43

Bid 3S. This hand is also terrific. If your partner bids 3NT, you should bid 4D to imply that you have something like this hand but do not have a club stopper. A 4D bid by you is saying that you are looking for slam but probably are worried about clubs. A good hand for a partnership to learn from.

## SITUATIONS WHERE YOU CAN MAKE A SPLINTER WITH THREE TRUMPS

If your partner opens a suit and you make a splinter bid, you have four trumps. Guaranteed. Here's the first example of a splinter bid that shows three trumps.

W	N	E	S
	1H	P	2C
P	2H	P	?

HAND ONE	HAND TWO	HAND THREE	HAND FOUR
2	842	K32	A63
KJ3	AJ4	J104	KQ8
Q843	43	A5	A6
AK975	AQJ74	KQ985	K10864

**HAND ONE** Bid 3S. This is a splinter raise. Because you did not raise hearts immediately, you show three hearts and game values. Your 2C bid showed the game values, the splinter bid showed three hearts.

**HAND TWO** Bid 4H. This bid is not a closeout bid. It's probably contrary to some of your partnerships. Some use a 4H bid here as something called *fast arrival* in which they are showing a minimum hand. As used by me here, the raise to game says that you have most or all of your points in the suits

you have bid. You do not have an ace or a king in the other suits and you have a game hand with about 12-15 support points. And you do not have a singleton or void. The value of this bid is that partner knows you don't have anything in an unbid suit, and he won't look for slam unless he has those suits stopped.

HAND THREE Bid 3H. This says you have scattered honors with something in at least one of the unbid suits.

HAND FOUR Bid 3H. You are allowed to have a big hand with this bid. It leaves partner room to show slam interest. Partner doesn't know if you have Hand Three or Hand Four. He does know you don't have a singleton or void.

## SPLINTERING AFTER PARTNER OPENS 2C AND REBIDS A NEW SUIT

W    N    E    S

      2C   P    2D        2D is a waiting bid.

P    2H   P    ?

HAND ONE        HAND TWO        HAND THREE    HAND FOUR

Q6                8763                7                876

K32                Q97                K83                32

8732                J53                J10985                98763

9832                876                8764                J108

HAND ONE Bid 3H. This shows a good-looking four or more points and guarantees three-card support. You could have ten or eleven points. If so, raise and then cooperate if partner makes a slam try.

HAND TWO Bid 4H. This shows a tiny sign of life with three or four hearts and little more than a bad balanced hand. This one has three points, a doubleton, and a smidgeon of values. It's par for the jump raise.

HAND THREE Bid 3S. This is a splinter bid. A four-point splinter bid. This hand is not great but in one bid you have told partner two things about your hand. You have a few points with heart support and you have a singleton. Many times, this is all partner needs to go to slam. A fourth trump would turn this nice hand into an even nicer hand.

HAND FOUR Bid 3C. This bid shows you have a truly wretched hand. It is not a natural bid. It is negative in all ways. This topic deserves more conversation but it's not appropriate here.

You would make jump bids showing splinters with these hands too. Note that some of them are good hands.

SPLINTER HAND 1	SPLINTER HAND 2	SPLINTER HAND 3
3	9	98732
J984	K104	J1075
K7532	AQ876	QJ7
763	9763	7

SPLINTER HAND 1      Bid 3S. Your range is wide. The big deal is you are telling partner something important.

SPLINTER HAND 2      Bid 3S. An even bigger hand. If this doesn't excite partner, you will find a way to keep on bidding.

SPLINTER HAND 3      Bid 4C. Any jump in a new suit after partner opens 2C and rebids a suit is a splinter.

Note that these splinter bids are being made on this auction with three or four trumps. Partner has an excellent suit, and in any event, this is your only chance to show a singleton. You might have three small cards in support of opener's suit and if so, you probably need a tiny bit more values to make this splinter.

## HERE'S ONE EXAMPLE OF A SPLINTER AUCTION

W    N    E    S

2C

P    2D   P    2H

P    4C   P    ?

8754

10843

K983

J

AKJ

AKQ976

A

543

North learned that partner has one club (possibly no clubs) and now knows slam is worth bidding. You can ask for aces if you wish. Most likely partner doesn't have one, but you will bid a slam anyway. Should partner have the ace of clubs, you can, if methods permit, ask for kings. If he has one, you can bid seven.

If partner had not bid 4C, you would surely miss slam facing a scattered five high-card points. Partner's splinter bid puts your club worries to rest.

DO YOU USE LIMIT-OR-BETTER CUEBIDS WHEN YOUR PARTNER  
BIDS A SUIT AND THEY OVERCALL?

Here's a bidding sequence you have seen almost daily.

W	N	E	S
			1H

1S	2S	P	?
----	----	---	---

Do you know what North's bid shows?

Yes/No

A very popular treatment today for this bid is called *limit-or-better* raises. Partner has either a limit heart raise or a forcing heart raise.

All very nice. Yes? I suggest no.

Here's my rationale:

Using the auction shown, you know partner has nine or more points in support of hearts. Armed with this information, you get ready to make your next bid. Not all that easy, really. But before you sort out your thoughts, East raises to 3S. Or perhaps he raises to 4S. Whatever you have, you will have a terrible problem making a sane bid.

I hate the limit-or-better raise as used on the auction above.

For me, I use this routine when faced with this auction:



The auction has started:

W	N	E	S
			1H

1S ?

If partner has heart support he bids as follows:

2H Normal raise

3H Normal four-card limit raise.

2S Game-forcing cuebid raise. Four-card support expected.  
Balanced hand.

3S A splinter raise of hearts showing game points with a  
spade singleton and four trumps.

4C or 4D A splinter raise of hearts showing game points  
with a singleton in the suit just bid, and four trumps.

This sounds too good to be true. Why isn't everyone using it?

Do you know? Yes/No

If you use limit-or-better bids here, you are expected to play  
that 3H shows a weak raise. It's supposed to make life hard for  
the next player to bid.

I suggest that this treatment is nonsense.

If you use what I am suggesting, all of partner's bids are  
defined.

If you use the limit-or-better cuebids, you don't have much of a clue and getting it straightened out is a misery.

If you use 3H as a normal limit raise, your RHO won't be stopped from supporting spades if he wants to. And, if he has a minor suit he wants to bid, he has to bid it at the four level.

I once saw a premier US pair, playing in a recent world championship, that started the bidding with 1H - 1S - 2S showing the limit-or-better hand.

The US pair never had a clue. They reached a slam missing two aces and some other needed values.

I beg you to drop this convention.

SPLINTERS CAN (RARELY) BE USED IF THEY OPEN THE BIDDING

YOU ARE NORTH

NO ONE VUL

EAST DEALS (The bad guys!)

W	N	E	S
		1H	1S

P ?

K10964

2

8

AK10653

East opened but West isn't showing any life. Your side can have up to 27 points. You have ten high-card points, and that leaves your partner with up to seventeen.

Bid 4H, showing a big splinter raise for spades.

It might get your partner to look for a slam.

It will hope partner's judgment if the opponents keep bidding.

And if you're thinking of asking for aces, it would be a disaster if partner does not have an ace.

IMPORTANT: If West raises to 2H, you can still use a splinter bid.

Here are three possible layouts:

LAYOUT ONE

K10964

2

8

AK10653

AJ753

J976

AQ7

2

Slam is a huge favorite.

On this hand, your partner has twelve high-card points.

He could have had much more. Of interest is that you can make 6S if he didn't have the queen of diamonds and the jack of hearts. Nine high-card points will probably be enough.

South should realize he has an excellent hand. He might elect to bid 4NT. Hard. Some hands are just too difficult. The point here is that the good fit can provide a lot of tricks.

LAYOUT TWO

K10964

2

8

AK10653

AQ753

8743

AK

Q2

On this layout, South has a good enough hand to use 4NT.

## LAYOUT THREE

K10964

2

8

AK10653

QJ853

QJ84

K4

Q2

If partner has this hand, he will expect to make 4S, but he will do nothing to cooperate in getting higher.

Will you reach many of these slams? Probably not. But if you are ever going to do so, the splinter raise will be a big part of it. Your judgment will be enhanced by these splinter bids.

Earlier, I promised you a splinter bid that requires a true monster hand. Here it is. You don't rate to see one but it's fun to consider that it might exist.

W	N	E	S
P	P	1D	Dbl
2D	P	P	Dbl
P	2S	P	?

AKQ102

AJ103

4

AKQ

Hard to believe this bidding is happening. You have twenty-three fine high-card points and both of your opponents are bidding. Your partner has at most two or three points. And that's on a good day.

There's a very good chance that partner is broke. 4S could be all there is if this is the layout.

Seen from partner's point of view:

AKQ102

AJ103

4

AKQ

7654

765

842

865

You could lose two hearts and a diamond.



But if partner has this smidgeon, slam is cold.

AKQ102

AJ103

4

AKQ

87643

K42

653

87

Over partner's 2S bid you could reasonably bid 4S. But if you wish to test your partner's nerve, you can jump to 4D, which is a splinter showing an enormous hand for spades.

Your partner, if holding the awful first hand with no points, will bid 4S, doubting that it is going to make.

But if he has the second hand, the one with five spades and the king of hearts, will realize that he does have something that he did not promise, and he will bid 4H, a cuebid. He knows that this is a card you will be interested in. If he does this, you can bid 6S knowing it has a good chance.

## INFORMATION FOLLOWING IS NOT COVERED IN THE DISCUSSION

### A PROBLEM WITH SPLINTER RAISES

I've been spending a lot of time with splinter bids in the last two weeks. They are covered in today's talk and they will play an important role in the upcoming Jacoby 2NT talk.

Splinters are a good convention but they have a hidden problem that no one seems to want to talk about. The problem is that some splinters don't leave room for opener to express an opinion.

1S   P   4C

This splinter showing game points with one club leaves room for opener to do something other than to sign off in 4S. He can choose from 4D, 4H, and 4S.

1S   P   4H

This splinter cramps opener's options, He can't make a constructive bid at the four level. He has to bid something higher that could put the partnership in jeopardy.

Right now, I'm not sure about how to improve this. IF and when I find an answer, I'll share it in a future Zoom session or perhaps via a Bulletin article.

## UPCOMING TALKS

As with the Drury convention, there is a need to know how a convention works. You have to know what you need in order to use a convention and you must have the tools to continue the auction.

## NEXT WEEK – THE JACOBY 2NT RAISE.

In this discussion I will discuss the Jacoby 2NT response to a major. Most players have a good idea about this bid but I can offer a number of things to help you maximize the value of a 2NT bid. Splinter bids will play a role in this discussion.

I will also offer something about the Jacoby 2NT bid that has never been discussed.

Here's one example only.

W	N	E	S
			1H
P	2NT	3S	?

How does opener bid when RHO comes into the bidding? Are you sure?

### THIRD SEAT MAYHEM

In the fourth talk in this series, I will be looking at life in third seat. This is bridge at its competitive finest. The things you can and should do in third seat are unlike the things you do in any other seat.

In third seat, opening bids do not have to be sound openers.

In third seat, preempts take on a new flavor.

It's chaotic. It's fun. It's really exciting. Here's one example.

### EAST-WEST VULNERABLE

W	N	E	S
	P	P	?

South has:

KQ1085

54

QJ76

94

Imagine the possibilities.

I'll be the first to confess that life at the bridge table is not always calm and unchallenging.