

## Two Over One

# Modified Bergen Raises

## Getting to the 3 level with 9 trump

Bergen raises are named after Marty Bergen, a rather prolific bridge author whose books include **To Bid or Not to Bid: The Law of Total Tricks**. One basic observation drawn from the Law is that you should bid to the level of your trumps. That is, with 8 trump in the two hands, bid to the level of 8 tricks, which is the 2 level. With 9 trump in the two hands, bid to the level of 9 tricks, which is the 3 level. For a deeper understanding of the basis of this observation I will have to refer you to the book. Let it suffice for now to recognize the immense impact the Law has had on bidding systems, including Two Over One.

Because the Law indicates that we should bid to the 3 level with 9 trump, Bergen suggested that we should bid to that level as soon as possible. If we can arrive at the proper level not just safely but also quickly, then the opponents may be closed out of the auction altogether, unable to communicate. We, in the meantime, can make distinctions in our strength to aid our decision regarding the final contract. The system of describing our 9-card fits at the 3 level has become known as Bergen Raises.

- with 4 trump and 10 to 12 points, jump to 3 diamonds.
- with 4 trump and 7 to 9 points, jump to 3 clubs.
- with 4 trump and less than 7 points, jump raise partner's suit (preempt).

This is the unmodified system of Bergen Raises.

Before feeling the impact of the Law, the Two Over One System already had developed an articulated variety of major suit raises that included some very popular and successful bids called "concealed splinters." This system was already using the bid of 3 diamonds to show certain types of "concealed splinter" hands. The conflict over 3

diamonds, however, turned out to have a solution. We have been able to retain all of the original Two Over One raises in a modified form by adding Bergen Raises in a modified form.

### Modified Bergen

When partner opens 1 heart or 1 spade, adhere to the following agreements:

- **Raise to 2 of the major** as a "nonconstructive raise." It shows either 3-card support and 6 to 9 points, or else it shows 4-card support with 5+ to 7- points.

If you hold 4-card support and if you are not vulnerable, you can compete to the 3 level if necessary.

- **Raise to 3 of the major** as a preemptive jump raise. It shows 4-card support and less than 5+ points.
- **Raise to 3 diamonds** as a constructive raise. It shows 4-card support and 7+ to 9- points.
- **Raise to 3 clubs** to show either of two types of hands.
  1. **Limit raise**, which shows 4-card support and 9+ to 12- points, denying shortness.
  2. **Mini-splinter** which shows 4-card support and 9+ to 12- points, guaranteeing an unnamed singleton or void.

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### **The Non-Constructive Raise**

Raise 1 of a major to 2 of the major

The nonconstructive raise is very similar to the standard raise showing 6 to 9 points. It includes all 5+ to 9- hands with 3-card support, and it also includes hands with 4-card support if they contain only 5+ to 7- points. Certainly partner needs to know about this level of value. If partner has 18+ points they can bid game, or even invite game with 15+ to 18-, just as they would with standard raises.

The Law says we can bid safely at the three level with 9 trump, and yet we have bid only at the two level with 4 trump and 6 to 7 points. We do this to distinguish the low point count of these hands from the better 4-card support hands that have 8 or 9 points, which will be constructive raises of 3 diamonds. We also distinguish the 6 or 7 point hands from even weaker hands with 4-card support, which we show with the preemptive jump raise of the major suit. The nonconstructive raise, then, fills an important gap between a weak preemptive bid (5 or less) and a constructive bid (8 or 9).

Because the Law says we may compete to the 3 level with a 9-card fit, a hand that has raised only to 2 with a 4-card suit may still compete to the 3 level if pushed in competition. But this push should probably not be undertaken if you are vulnerable. The advice to bid to the 3 level with 9 trump is based on being non-vulnerable. The prospect of being down 1 doubled and vulnerable is not rewarded by the Law's protection. Neither is down 2 undoubled when the opponents are competing in a minor suit.

### **The Preemptive Jump Raise**

Jump raise from 1 of a major to 3 of a major

The preemptive jump raise does not occur in standard bidding practice. It becomes possible playing Modified Bergen Raises because a limit raise is shown by bidding 3 clubs instead of by jump raising in the major suit.

J1063 876 J975 84

If you are holding the cards shown above when partner opens 1 spade, jump raise to 3 spades. If the intervening opponent has passed, the remaining opponent has the same problems he would face over an opening preempt of 3 spades. Indeed, you and partner have the same number of trump as might exist with a standard preempt, and perhaps about the same combined point count or thereabouts. The difference is that your trump are dispersed more evenly between the two hands instead of all piled up in one.

Play this preemptive jump raise on in competition. You simply don't need the jump raise to show a limit raise. We can always find alternative bids to use for limit raises.

### **The Constructive Raise**

Jump to 3 diamonds over 1 of a major

The constructive raise shows 4-card trump support and 7+ to 9- points. If partner has a minimal opening bid, he can simply return to 3 of the major, and there you are at your optimal partscore and the opponents may not even have gotten out of the starting blocks. You have considerably decreased their ability to compete or to exchange information.

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Suppose that partner has opened 1 heart and you hold

84 K865 742 AJ53

Respond 3 diamonds with your 8 points and 4 trump. If partner has a minimum, he can simply bid 3 hearts. You will have reached your optimum partscore.

With more than a minimum opening hand, partner may elect to bid the 4 heart game directly over your 3 diamond call. Consider what has happened. Playing standard raises, you would have bid 2 hearts over 1 heart. Partner with extra values would have made some sort of game try by bidding again, and you would then be the player responsible for bidding 4 hearts. Playing the constructive raise, you have, in essence, accepted any impending game try in advance. In the meantime, you have likely stifled competitive bidding and enjoyed the safety of the Law.

Play the Constructive Raise on over doubles and off over overcalls.

<u>pard</u>	<u>opp</u>	<u>you</u>	<u>opp</u>
1♠	dbl	3♦	

Here is your constructive raise of spades. The next opponent will not likely be able show whether or not a heart fit exists. But even if a call ensues, your partner is well-equipped to make the best possible decision.

## The Two-Way 3 Club Call

Jump to 3 clubs over 1 of a major

The jump to 3 clubs over 1 of a major shows 4-card trump support and 9+ to 12- points. But two different hand types are covered by this description. One hand type has no shortness and is a typical limit raise hand:

KJ8 K1075 A543 76

This hand type invites partner to bid game with sufficient values, but if partner has minimum values, he will not accept the invitation.

The second hand type has the same point count range, but it contains a singleton or void:

A543 KQ 76 9 J1054

This type of 9+ to 12- hand is called a mini-splinter, and it is not invitational. You want to insist that a game contract be reached. Moreover, if partner happens to have extra values and a good fit, he may want to explore for slam. It is called a splinter hand because it contains a shortness, even though the location of that shortness has so far remained concealed. It is called “mini” because the point count is only 9+ to 12-.

So how does partner know which of the two hand types you hold? As a matter of fact, he may not care. Let us see how this works out by discussing opener’s rebids over 3 clubs.

## Opener’s rebids over 3 clubs

When opener hears the 3 club response, he next decides whether or not he has any interest in slam. Usually he does not, so let’s cover that situation first.

When opener has no interest in slam, he treats the 3 club call as if it were simply a limit raise hand, and he will sign off, either at the 3 level or at the 4 level. So if opener has minimal values, he simply bids 3 of the major to sign off. If, on the other hand, he wants to be in game, he jumps to 4 of the major as a sign off.

If opener has signed off in game, then responder is satisfied that game has been reached, and he passes no matter which of the two types of hands he has. Or, if opener has signed off at the 3 level, then responder passes with a mere limit raise, but he raises to game with the mini-splinter. Since partner has no interest in slam, responder does not need to reveal in which suit he holds the singleton or void. He continues to conceal this information from the opponents.

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When opener does have interest in slam, he will want to know which of the two hand types responder has. To find out, he bids 3 diamonds. If responder holds a limit raise, he simply rebids 3 of the agreed major suit. But if he holds the mini-splinter, then he bids the suit in which he holds the singleton or void.

Now opener will evaluate his slam chances based on what responder has revealed. If opener was hoping for a mini-splinter, but found only a limit raise, this may be the basis to sign off in game. Or, if responder did show a mini-splinter, the shortness may not be in a helpful suit, and again opener may sign off in game. On the other hand, opener may have liked what he heard, whereupon he will continue on toward slam in some manner of his choosing.

### **The Effect of Competition**

- The Nonconstructive raise is on over both doubles and overcalls.
- The Preemptive jump raise is on over both doubles and overcalls.
- The Constructive 3 diamond raise is on over doubles, but off over overcalls.
- The Two-Way 3 club call is on over doubles, but off over overcalls.

After an overcall, a cuebid of the opponent's suit is a limit raise or better.

### **A word on 5-card support**

When partner opens 1 of a major and you have 5-card support, how should you act? Generally speaking, you upgrade your hand by one category. But if you have 5 trump and a

singleton or void, you will always end up at least in a game contract, either constructively or preemptively.

If you have limit raise values or better, then show your strength as you would with a 4-card suit by bidding 3 clubs. But then insist on a game contract, even without a singleton or void.

If you hold 7+ to 9- points, leap immediately to game in your suit.

With 5+ to 7- points, jump to game if you also have a singleton or void. Without a singleton or void, simply upgrade your hand to a 3 diamond constructive raise. If partner doubles the opponents at the 4 level, consider bidding again.

With 5 or less points, raise to 4 if you also have a singleton or void. Lacking a singleton or void, simply use the preemptive jump raise. The Law may offer us 4-level protection if we need it, but as a practical matter you may be able to win the auction at the 3 level and be able to take no more than 9 tricks.

Observe, then, that with shortness, a hand with 5 trump will jump to four with point counts ranging from zero to 9-. Opener should not feel in the least eager to continue any higher. If the opponents outbid you at the 4 level, opener doubles at his own risk. With an exceptionally weak hand, you will probably want to pull the double by bidding one more time.

### **Over 3rd & 4th Seat Openers**

When partner has opened in 3rd or 4th seat, they may have opened light. In this case, Two-Way Reverse Drury is used instead of the Bergen Raise to 3 clubs. Likewise, the jump to 3 diamonds is also off. The single raise from 1 of a major to 2 of a major shows 6 to 9 without consideration of the number of trump. The preemptive jump raise still remains on.

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## Samples

With each of the following hands, what is your call over partner's opening bid of 1 spade?

1. 9874 K54 87542 9
2. QJ86 98 AK64 873
3. K86 7632 A42 1064
4. A986 82 KJ104 642
5. 10532 AK3 4 KJ973
6. 9875 AQ84 975 106

You have opened 1 heart on this hand:

43 AQJ86 AQ K942

What is your rebid over each of the following responses from your partner?

7. 3 hearts
8. 2 hearts
9. 3 diamonds
10. 3 clubs

Here is your hand:

843 AQ10854 AK K8

You have opened 1 heart and partner has responded 3 clubs. You now continue 3 diamonds. What do you bid if partner now bids:

11. 3 hearts
12. 3 spades
13. 4 clubs
14. 4 diamonds

## Discussion

1. 3 spades. Preemptive jump raise.
2. 3 clubs. Limit Raise. If partner next bids 3 spades, just pass. If partner next bids 3 diamonds, bid 3 spades.
3. 2 spades. Nonconstructive with 3 trump and 6 to 9 points.
4. 3 diamonds. Constructive raise with 4 trump and 8 HCP.
5. 3 clubs. If partner bids 3 spades, raise to game. If partner bids 4 spades, pass. If partner bids 3 diamonds, bid 4 diamonds.
6. Bid 2 spades. You have 4 trump, but your values are nonconstructive.
7. Pass. If you take 10 tricks, buy a lottery ticket.
8. Bid again and invite partner to game.
9. Bid 4 hearts. Partner has good points in addition to the 4 trumps promised.
10. Bid 3 diamonds. If partner bids 3 hearts, then sign off in game. If partner shows a mini-splinter in any suit you maintain slam interest.
11. Bid 4 hearts.
12. Best possible response. Check keycards before bidding slam.
13. Not the ideal answer, but if partner is short in clubs, where are his high cards? They must be in spades, where you need them. Don't rule slam out yet. Cuebid diamonds, suggesting to partner that spades are a problem.
14. Worst possible mini-splinter. A discard from dummy onto your king of diamonds won't get you far. Take your plus in 4 hearts.