



Adventures in Bridge

Leaders in Bridge Entertainment and Education

www.advinbridge.com

This Week in Bridge

(163) Constructive and Limping Major Raises

© AiB

Level: 1

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

When partner opens the bidding with a 5-card Major and we have 3-card support for partner and minimum values of 6-9 points, then we want to support and show our fit but we also want to show our values. Let's see our options for best doing so.

Constructive Raises

When partner opens 1M and we raise to 2M, showing this fit tends to encourage partner to bid forward and investigate game when they have a good hand. But we do not want to encourage partner by raising directly when we have a very poor hand with a fit. This is the idea behind constructive raises.

A *Constructive Raise* is a "slightly heavier" raise than a traditional simple raise, which would show 6-9 points. Playing constructive raises, 1M-2M shows about 8-9 points (occasionally a good 7 points or a poor 10 points) and at least 3-card support. Playing constructive raises, this raise is not made with a poor hand of only 6-7 points and a fit.

Examples

♠ K84

♥ T842

♦ AJ75

♣ 83

1♠ P 2♠

With 8 HCP and one support point for the doubleton ♣, we make a constructive raise to 2♠.

♠ K74

♥ AT92

♦ 653

♣ 872

1♠ P 2♠

With an Ace and King, we have a good 7 points, so this is enough to make a constructive raise to 2♠.

♠ KJ83

♥ K9

♦ J742

♣ T65

1♠ P 2♠

With 8 HCP, one support point for a doubleton ♥, and four-card ♠ support, this hand also makes a good constructive raise.

Alternative Definition of a Constructive Raise

Another way to define a constructive raise, instead of using high-card points, is to say that a constructive raise is one that would accept at least one game try. The idea is that you never raise if your hand is so bad that it does not have help in any suit.

Preference

When Responder has 6-9 points and 2-card support for partner's Major suit then the auction will frequently go something like this:

1♠ P 1NT* P

2♦ P 2♠

As Responder, when we start with 1NT Forcing (or 1NT Semi-Forcing) and Opener bids a second suit, then we take a "preference" back to partner's primary Major suit when we have 2-card support and 6-9 points (unless we have a better place to play).

Limping Raise

When we have 3-card support for Opener's Major suit and only 6-7 points, we do not want to encourage partner to keep bidding by raising, so we do not make a constructive raise. The way that we bid with this weak hand with 3-card support is as if we have only 2-card support. We "limp" our way into 2-Major instead of raising to it directly.

Example

♠ Q84

♥ 9732

♦ QJ5

♣ J43

1♠ P 1NT P
2♦ P 2♠

With such a weak hand we do not want to encourage partner to try for game. Raising to 2♠ may do that, so instead we make a Limping Raise by starting with 1NT and later bidding 2♠.

Competition

In a competitive auction it is very important to let partner know about our 3-card support before the opponents eat up our bidding space - by raising or preempting the bidding. Thus, this idea of making a constructive raise with 8-9 points and a limping raising with 6-7 points does not apply in competitive auctions.

Example

1♥ 1♠ 2♥

It is important to show our fit to partner as soon as possible in competitive auctions, so a raise to 2♥ in competition shows 6-9 points and at least 3-card support, but it is not a constructive raise.

Conclusion

Limping Raises are a good way to keep partner from getting too excited and to slow down the auction. Constructive Raises are a good way to ensure that we have a good hand that may be helpful to partner if they choose to explore game. Try taking this approach to raising partner's Major suit with 6-7 points and 8-9 points in non-competitive auctions.