



Adventures in Bridge

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This Week in Bridge

(185) Bergen Raises

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Level: 3

Robert S. Todd

robert@advinbridge.com

General

When responding to partner's 1-Major opening bid, Responder tries to apply the *Law of Total Tricks* (LOTT) – getting to the size of the partnership's fit as quickly as possible. This is particularly true in competitive auctions, but is also useful in constructive auctions. Responder must balance showing the size of their fit with showing their values. This LOTT bidding is especially effective when our side has a 9-card fit. In this case, the auction is likely to become competitive if the opponents have some values as well. Predicting this to happen, we would like to be able to compete to the 3-level with a 9-card fit as quickly as possible, eating up the opponent's bidding space while showing our values. *Bergen Raises* are a set of conventional bids Responder can use when responding to a 1-Major opening bid with 4-card support (at least a 9-card fit). Let's see how this system works.

Bergen Raises

Note: The type of Bergen Raises we present here is the modern approach, called "Reverse Bergen".

The main idea behind Bergen Raises is to use all the bids at the 3-level as artificial raises of Opener's Major suit -- showing a large fit (4-card support) and progressively more values.

1♠ __?

- 3♣* 4-card limit raise, good 10 to bad 12 points, 4+card ♠
- 3♦* Mixed raise, 7-9 points, 4+card ♠
- 3♠* Weak raise, 0-6 points, 4+card ♠ (3-6 points when vulnerable)

1♥ __?

- 3♣* 4-card limit raise, good 10 to bad 12 points, 4+card ♥
- 3♦* Mixed raise, 7-9 points, 4+card ♥
- 3♥* Weak raise, 0-6 points, 4+card ♥ (3-6 points when vulnerable)

Note: The original version of Bergen Raises switched the meaning of 3♣ and 3♦*, being less preemptive with the mixed raise.*

Bergen Raises give up using these 3-level jump shifts into a minor suit as natural bids (or however you played them before – weak, invitational, or strong) for conventional raises of Opener’s Major suit – allowing Responder to apply the LOTT immediately with 4-card support (9-card fit).

Bergen Raises in Competition

Most partnerships that play Bergen Raises return to natural bidding when the Left Hand Opponent (LHO) of the 1-Major Opener makes an overcall – turning Bergen Raises off.

If LHO of the 1-Major Opener makes a takeout double, then many partnerships agree to leave Bergen Raises on.

Example

1♠ X ___?

- 2NT* Jacoby 2NT, 12+ points, game forcing, 4+card ♠
- 3♣* 4-card limit raise, good 10 to bad 12 points, 4+card ♠
- 3♦* Mixed raise, 7-9 points, 4+card ♠
- 3♠ Weak raise, 0-6 points, 4+card ♠ (3-6 points when vulnerable)

Conclusion

There are many options for how to use 3-level jumps in response to a 1-Major opening bid (Weak, Invitational, Strong, Fit-Showing, Bergen Raises, etc.) You should use what you and partner find most comfortable and effective for you. The most important takeaway from learning about and understanding Bergen Raises is the power of fit and trying to apply the LOTT as often as possible to make life more difficult on the opponents – especially in competitive auctions.