

SIMPLIFIED BOSS RAISES

In the November 1999 *Bridge World*, I outlined Boss Raises, which differ from Jacoby 2NT primarily in that a 2NT response does not deny a singleton (only a void), and opener does not show a singleton in reply (only a void). Instead, opener bids a new suit at the 3-level to initiate cue-bidding with a slammish hand, or (rarely) bids three of the trump suit to ask responder for a singleton. The advantage of starting cue-bidding at the 3-level is enormous.

Here is a simplified version of Boss Raises that works almost as well.

Responses to Major-Suit Openings

With primary support, game values and a void, responder jumps to four of a minor in which he is void, or to 3NT if his void is in the unbid major. These void splinters are normally limited bids (13 to a bad 16 support points), but occasionally responder may use them with a hand good enough to take control via a Roman Key-Card ask next turn. Note that a 4♥ response to 1♠ or a 3♠ response to 1♥ is not a splinter at all.

With primary support, game values but no void, responder jumps to 2NT. This artificial forcing raise is also, normally, a limit bid. A stronger hand calls for a jump shift.

Opener's Rebids After Responder's 2NT

With a void, opener uses the same scheme as responder, jumping to four of a minor in which he is void, or bidding 3NT if his void is in the unbid major. Lacking slam interest, opener bids game in the agreed trump suit, a rare sequence in which a "fast arrival" jump makes good sense.

If opener wants to learn about a singleton that responder may have, he can bid three of the trump suit as a singleton-ask. In reply, responder bids the suit of his singleton, or 3NT with a balanced hand.

Sometimes opener may have sufficient information to ask for key cards directly over 2NT, but most of the time he will initiate a search for slam by cue-bidding. Boss Raises let cue-bidding start at the 3-level.

An Example Comparing Boss Raises to the Jacoby 2NT

These were the hands and the auction in a recent game at the online bridge site Swangames:

WEST	EAST	bidding (form of contest and vulnerability irrelevant)			
♠KJ632	♠AQ1094	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥K4	♥AQ75	1♠	pass	2NT*	pass
♦KQ62	♦J9	3♠**	pass	4♥***	pass
♣A4	♣105	4♠	pass	pass	pass

*Jacoby 2NT

**extra strength, no shortness

***cue bid

West won the club lead and soon claimed twelve tricks, discarding her low club on the third heart. West conjectured afterwards that she might have ventured a 5♣ cue bid over East's 4♥, but I don't see how that would have helped: East, lacking diamond control, could do no better than return to 5♣. Nor could West have benefited from using Roman Key-Card Blackwood, for what made 6♠ laydown was the discard provided by East's queen of hearts.

East could have done slightly better by bidding 3NT instead of 4♥. That would deny the ace of clubs and permit West to cue-bid a minor-suit ace. However, after West's 4♣ cue bid and East's 4♥ cue bid in reply, slam would still be unattainable: West could not show the red-suit kings, nor East the pivotal queen of hearts, that made 6♠ a fine contract.

Here's how users of Boss Raises could bid these hands:

WEST	EAST	bidding (form of contest and vulnerability irrelevant)			
♠KJ632	♠AQ1094	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
♥K4	♥AQ75	1♠	pass	2NT(a)	pass
♦KQ62	♦J9	3♣(b)	pass	3♥(b)	pass
♣A4	♣105	4♥(b)	pass	5♠(c)	pass
		6♠(d)	pass	pass	pass

(a) artificial forcing raise (primary support, game values, no void)

(b) cue bids

(c) "I'm worried only about diamonds, where I lack control."

(d) "I have the second-round diamond control we need."