

## RAISING MINOR-SUIT OPENINGS

Once upon a time (it was more than fifty years ago), a East player in a duplicate bridge game somewhere had a hand with 7 HCP, including four diamonds and four hearts. He raised West's 1♦ opening to 2♦, which bought the contract. West also had four diamonds and four hearts, and made 2♦: E-W 90. Was this a good result?

Well, it was hard to tell, as the deal occurred on the second round of the session, and the board had been played only once before. However, East at the other table had scored 110 in 2♥. West was very upset, and scolded East: "Whyncha bid *one heart*? Dincha think king-fourth was good enough? Don't you have confidence in your declarer play?"

The bridge player who had bypassed a four-card major to raise his partner's minor to two was fully chastened, and he resolved never to do so again. Eventually, he became a bridge teacher, and he taught his students, "A simple raise of a minor-suit opening denies a four-card major, as the main purpose of bidding is to find a four-four fit in a major."

The above is a fable, of course, but it explains the origin of the dogma. And dogma is what it is. To continue the fable, at the other eleven tables, the auctions all began 1♦-pass-1♥. From there, the auctions diverged. At seven tables, South, who had a 5=2=2=4 pattern, entered with 1♠.

At three tables, the final contract was 2♠ making two, N-S 110:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	pass	pass
pass			

At two tables, West took the push to 3♥ and East went down one, N-S 50:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	pass	pass
3♥	pass	pass	pass

At another two tables, South took a phantom save against 3♥ and went down one, E-W 50:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	pass	pass
3♥	pass	pass	3♠
pass	pass		

At four tables, South who had a 5=2=2=4 pattern, entered with a takeout double.

At three tables, the final contract was 3♣ down one, E-W 50:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	1♥	double
2♥	3♣	pass	pass
pass			

At one table, West took the push to 3♥ and East went down one, N-S 50:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	pass	1♥	double
2♥	3♣	pass	pass
3♥	pass	pass	pass

Incidentally, I have chosen these outcomes in conformity to the "Law of Total Tricks" and the "Law of Total Trumps," even though I place little credence in either.

Look what the 2♦ raise accomplished that the 1♥ response didn't:

(a) 2♦ kept the next player from bidding 1♠; he wasn't strong enough to bid 2♠.

(b) 2♦ kept the next player from making a takeout double; he didn't have the required heart support.

Both East-West pairs that bought the contract for two of a red suit earned good scores. 2♥ making two was worth 12 matchpoints, 2♦ making two was worth 11 matchpoints.

Note that these results were obtained with East and West having equally good fits in the red suits. West didn't have to have four hearts when he opened 1♦, and might well have had a fifth diamond. And when that happens, the contrasting auctions might be:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1♦	pass	1♥	1♣	
pass	2♣	pass	pass	
pass				
		N-S 110		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1♦	pass	1♥	1♣	
2♥*	2♣	pass	pass	*3-card raise
pass				
		N-S 110		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1♦	pass	2♦	2♣*	*stretching
3♦	pass	pass	pass	
		E-W 110		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1♦	pass	2♦	2♣*	*stretching
3♦	3♣	pass	pass	
pass		E-W 50		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	
1♦	pass	2♦	pass	
pass	pass			
		E-W 110		

Now you know how to solve this bidding problem from a recent game:

Matchpoints, E-W vul

You, East, hold ♠93 ♥K874 ♦Q86 ♣Q952

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	pass	?	

Bid 2♣.

When partner has four hearts and passes, you will miss an admittedly superior 2♥ contract, but you will usually earn a good score just for buying the contract cheaply, even if partner goes down one in 2♣ when 2♥ would have made (perhaps because partner has a minimum 3=4=3=3 hand). For the opponents can make 2♠.

When partner has fewer than four hearts, your 2♣ raise will surely be a winner.

When partner has four hearts and a good hand, e.g. ♠AQ8 ♥A1095 ♦K9 ♣AJ104, he will try for game over your 2♣ raise. If he tries with 2♥, you will raise to 3♥, and you will wind up as *dummy* in 4♥ instead of declarer. Which would you rather be?

The single minor raise that bypasses a four-card major may be the best-kept secret of winning bridge. Once you've tried it, you won't want to give it up, nor will you be tempted to play *Inverted Minor Raises*. The preemptive value of a single raise may be the second best-kept secret of winning bridge.

By the way, I do not recommend bypassing a four-card major when you have "limit raise" values. Then you can respond in your four-card major without fear of losing the battle of the partscores, as bidding three of partner's minor is already on your agenda.