

## Five Clubs Making Was a Zero?!

“Don’t play five of a minor, unless it’s right.” That was something Steve Robinson said many years ago. “Well, duh!” I thought. “Don’t we always want to play the *right* contract?” When a world champion bridge player says something, though, one should always think about it. In a pairs game, there really is only one situation when playing a five club or five diamond contract is right.

1. There is no eight-card major suit fit; *and*
2. Nine tricks are not possible in a no trump contract; *and*
3. The minor suit contract takes *precisely* eleven tricks – not ten and not twelve.

When a hand is opened one club or one diamond, and responder does not have a four-card major, but does have a fit for opener’s minor suit, the bidding system ideally must allow the partnership to investigate the possibility of a no trump game, the possibility of a minor suit slam, the number of quick tricks the opponents are likely to take, and finally, the possibility of a major suit game contract if a Moysian fit<sup>1</sup> exists. Although the Standard 1C-3C or 1D-3D auction allowed a partnership to make a reasonable exploration of a 3NT contract, it fell short when that contract was impossible. Thus, the *inverted minor raise* was born.

### **The Inverted Minor Raise**

If playing inverted minor suit raises, the *single raise* of partner’s opening minor suit is forcing for one round. It usually shows at least 10 high card points (HCPs), at least four cards – preferably more – in the minor suit, and it denies four or more cards in either major suit. *This bid must be alerted.* If there is an intervening bid, the single raise reverts to its standard meaning: 6-9 HCPs, at least four cards – preferably more – in the minor suit, no four-card major.

#### **Example 1:**

Your hand:     ♠97  
                  ♥KJ5  
                  ♦KQ765  
                  ♣A74

Partner opens the bidding 1♦. After checking to make sure your hand is sorted correctly, you respond 2♦. You hope to force the auction to a game contract. What possible contracts might exist?

The *double raise* of partner’s opening minor suit is *preemptive*. It shows at least five cards – usually more – in the minor suit, denies four or more cards in either major suit, and it may be so weak that a 3NT rebid by opener with a balanced 18-19 HCPs is not a sure thing. *This bid must be alerted.*

#### **Example 2:**

Your hand:     ♠97  
                  ♥J85  
                  ♦KJT765  
                  ♣52

Partner opens the bidding 1♦. Jump to 3♦! If the opponents have values, this preemptive raise may make the auction difficult for them, and it describes your hand perfectly. Partner will be able to take intelligent action.

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<sup>1</sup> Named for Alphonse Moyses, this is a four-three trump fit.

## The Auction Continues: Opener's Rebid

In just one round of bidding, the partnership has learned that a minor suit fit exists and no eight-card major suit fit exists. Responder has at least invitational values, so a game contract is possible. In this second round of bidding, the partnership investigates the possibility of a no trump contract by indicating stoppers, especially in the major suits. If possible, the partnership also determines the appropriate contract level. All example auctions indicate *constructive* bidding, i.e. the opponents are passing throughout.

You opened the bidding 1D with each of these example hands, and partner responded 2D. What is your rebid?

<b>Hand 1:</b> ♠AT87 ♥KJ65 ♦JT3 ♣A7	<b>Hand 2:</b> ♠87 ♥KJ65 ♦AJT3 ♣AT7	<b>Hand 3:</b> ♠AJ7 ♥KJ65 ♦AJT3 ♣A7	<b>Hand 4:</b> ♠7 ♥652 ♦AQT93 ♣AQJ7
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- **Hand 1:** You were hoping to hear 1H or 1S from partner, but your rebid is easy. Bid 2NT. You have a minimum balanced opener with both major suits well-stopped. With only minimum invitational values, partner can pass this bid.
- **Hand 2:** No trump looks like it may be the best strain, but partner needs spade stoppers. Bid 2H to show your heart stoppers. Note that this bid does not guarantee four hearts; it simply shows stoppers in the heart suit for no trump play.
- **Hand 3:** You had planned to jump to 2NT to show this balanced 18-count, so now you jump to 3NT to show the same hand. Partner may pass, or partner may begin exploring for a slam contract.
- **Hand 4:** You have no major suit stoppers; in fact, your hand is very suit-oriented. Bid 3C to show your second suit.

## Responder's Rebid

Partner opened the bidding 1D and you responded 2D with both of these hands. What would you rebid with each one in these auctions?

<b>Hand A:</b> ♠97 ♥KJ5 ♦KQ765 ♣A74	<b>Hand B:</b> ♠97 ♥52 ♦KJ765 ♣AQ42
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### AUCTION 1.

1D – 2D! // 2NT (opener has a minimum balanced hand with both major suits stopped)

- **Hand A:** Options: 1) 3NT; or 2) 3H. This shows game-forcing values and heart cards. Partner will probably continue to 3NT, but with controls in spades, may look for a slam.
- **Hand B:** Options: 1) pass; or 2) 3NT. This may be a slight push, but partner did open the bidding. You have so much in the minor suits that most of partner's values are (hopefully) in the majors.

## AUCTION 2.

1D – 2D! // 2H (opener has a heart stopper, but doesn't have a spade stopper)

- **Hand A:** Options: 1) 3C. With no spade stopper, 3NT is out, but you still want to get to a game contract: 4H, 5D, maybe 6D? You need more information. 2) 3H. Partner knows you don't have four hearts, so this suggests the Moysian 4H game. If partner doesn't have four hearts, he will make a descriptive bid.
- **Hand B:** Options: 1) 3D, which opener can pass. 2) 3C is possible, but it's forcing and might get the partnership too high.

## AUCTION 3.

1D – 2D! // 2S (opener has a spade stopper, but doesn't have a heart stopper)

- **Hand A:** Bid 3NT. Your heart holding and full opener makes this a good contract.
- **Hand B:** Options: 1) 3D, which opener can pass. 2) 3C is possible, but it's forcing and might get the partnership too high.

## AUCTION 4.

1D – 2D! // 3NT (opener has a balanced 18-19 HCPs)

- **Hand A:** Make the bid that gets your partnership to the best slam – or avoids an impossible slam. 1) Is 4C Gerber in your system? 2) Does 4NT ask, "How much do you like your hand?"
- **Hand B:** Pass.

## AUCTION 5.

1D – 2D! // 3C (opener's clubs could be longer than diamonds; no major suit stoppers)

- **Hand A:** Bid 3H. You don't know where this hand belongs, but you're not ready to give up on a 5D contract.
- **Hand B:** Options: 1) pass is probably best; or 2) 4C, hoping the opponents don't cash four major suit tricks immediately.

Most bridge auctions reach a point in which rebids are not clear-cut. In inverted minor auctions, this point is usually reached at responder's first rebid. Your bidding judgment will improve with experience, if you take note of your thoughts and actions at these points.

## ***Responder Bid One Heart!***

In a scan of approximately 300 hands, the inverted minor suit raise opportunity occurred only two times. It's far more common that responder will have a four-card or longer major suit to bid first. What are some of the considerations that come into play when this occurs – but still no eight-card major suit fit exists?

- The correct strain must be determined, and investigation usually proceeds in this order. Is a no trump contract possible? If not, is the minor suit the best place? Is there a four-three major suit fit to be considered?
- Given responder's wider range of values, the correct level must be determined. The partnership may have to settle in a part-score contract.

Bidding considerations in this situation may be best illustrated by examining a few hands actually played at the club during the month of September. When deciding between a no trump contract or playing in a known minor suit fit, keep these considerations in mind.

- How many tricks is your long suit, or partner's long suit, likely to generate in a no trump contract? The fewer tricks the long suits will yield, the less likely it is that no trump will be successful.
- How many times must you lose the lead to set up your long suit in a no trump contract? The more times you lose the lead, the more likely it is that a no trump contract will fail.
- How good is the transportation between the two hands? The more cards you have in partner's long suit, the more likely it is that a no trump contract will be successful – assuming outside suit stoppers, of course. With few cards in partner's long suit, a successful no trump contract may depend on good side suit transportation.
- What do your stoppers look like? An ace will stop a suit only one time, and it accounts for a considerable part of a hand's high card points. JT9x will do the same job, leaving your hand full of tricks in other suits.

**Example 1:**

Your hand:     ♠K54  
                     ♥—  
                     ♦AK75432  
                     ♣AJT

Partner passes and you open the bidding 1♦. Of course, partner responds 1♥. You have one spade stopper, but your hand is best described by jumping to 3♦. The final contract may depend on partner's rebid. If partner bids 3♥, do you optimistically bid 3NT? Why or why not? If partner bids 4♦, what is your call?

**Example 2:**

Your hand:     ♠AKQ4  
                     ♥Q3  
                     ♦3  
                     ♣JT9863

Partner opens the bidding 1♦. You choose to bid 1♠. Partner rebids 2♦. Even though partner may think you have 5 spades, your best option is 3♣. This bid will give you more information about partner's hand. Partner responds with 3♠. What is your call – and why?

**Example 3:**

Your hand:     ♠8643  
                     ♥A  
                     ♦AQJ74  
                     ♣QT2

You open the bidding 1♦. Partner responds 1♥. You trot out your anemic spade suit, and partner replies 2♣\*. This auction is not progressing as you had hoped, but you bid 2♦. Partner now bids 3♦. Do you sign off in 3NT or 5♦? Or do you start slam exploration? What are your thoughts?

Finally, consider the game in which you're playing. In a team game, go for the sure game or slam contract, even if it's in the minor suit. In a pairs game, lean towards a no trump contract. You are usually protected by the field. **If 5C is the right contract, though, bidding and making it will definitely *not* be a zero!**

## Discussion of Example Hands

<p><b>Example 1:</b>          ♠K54          ♥–          ♦AK75432          ♣AJT</p>	<p>Even if partner rebids 3♥, 3NT doesn't sound like a good contract. You have only one spade stopper and transportation to partner's hand may be nonexistent. I would bid 4♦, but pass might be best.</p> <p>If partner rebids 4♦, a 5♣ response is a mild slam try. Pass, if partner then responds 5♦.</p> <p>Should partner pass, rebid hearts, or support diamonds? The poor heart suit, singleton spade, and known eight-card diamond fit improve this hand. I would bid 4♦, but pass is a strong second choice.</p>	<p><b>Partner's Hand:</b>          ♠6          ♥A87652          ♦T9          ♣K932</p>
<p><b>Example 2:</b>          ♠AKQ4          ♥Q3          ♦3          ♣JT9863</p>	<p>The heart holding, queen doubleton, is very seductive. This holding often yields an extra trick on opening lead – if partner holds Axx or Kxx. Opposite Jxx, this may be a stopper. Does this auction suggest that partner holds any of these combinations?</p> <p>Partner has shown three spades, at least five diamonds, and has made no move towards no trump. Your six-card club suit isn't too pretty and that heart queen may not be helpful. Pass and play the Moysian part score for a good matchpoint result.</p>	<p><b>Partner's Hand:</b>          ♠T65          ♥JT          ♦AKJT8          ♣A74</p>
<p><b>Example 3:</b>          ♠8643          ♥A          ♦AQJ74          ♣QT2</p>	<p>Partner has created a game-forcing auction and has shown four hearts and at least four diamonds. Despite your spade bid showing stoppers in that suit, partner has made no move towards a no trump contract. It's likely that partner is short in spades, so your lack of values in that suit is good for any slam prospects.</p> <p>3NT is likely to be a frequent contract, but your poor spades and singleton ♥A suggest a suit contract. You've already denied as many as three hearts, so a 3♥ bid here should be a cue bid in search of a diamond slam. 6♦ is a great score. Despite the fact that 3NT makes, 5♦ making six is still a good matchpoint result.</p>	<p><b>Partner's Hand:</b>          ♠J          ♥QJ94          ♦KT862          ♣AJ9</p>

**1**

♠ Q87  
 ♥ J8  
 ♦ AJ1086  
 ♣ AJ9  
  
 ♠ K65  
 ♥ 109543  
 ♦ 42  
 ♣ 876  
  
 ♠ A943  
 ♥ AK72  
 ♦ 73  
 ♣ 542  
  
 ♠ J102  
 ♥ Q6  
 ♦ KQ95  
 ♣ KQ103

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1 ♦	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The auction shows the partnership has no heart stopper. Neither player has shortness, either, so the opponents are likely to hold at least three defensive tricks. Not every inverted minor auction results in a game contract. Take the plus score in the 3D contract.

**2**

♠ Q32  
 ♥ K86  
 ♦ 10542  
 ♣ 1063  
  
 ♠ 1095  
 ♥ 1097  
 ♦ AKJ  
 ♣ A974  
  
 ♠ AJ86  
 ♥ AQ  
 ♦ 873  
 ♣ QJ52  
  
 ♠ K74  
 ♥ J5432  
 ♦ Q96  
 ♣ K8

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		1 ♣	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

2C may not be my favorite response, but I dislike my other options more. When partner rebids 2NT, though, I'm happy to raise to game.

**3**

♠ 74  
 ♥ AQ10  
 ♦ KJ76  
 ♣ K876  
  
 ♠ KQ982  
 ♥ J92  
 ♦ 85  
 ♣ Q94  
  
 ♠ AJ1053  
 ♥ 6543  
 ♦ 94  
 ♣ 53  
  
 ♠ 6  
 ♥ K87  
 ♦ AQ1032  
 ♣ AJ102

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1 ♦
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	6 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Yes, I would overcall 1S with the West hand, but this session focuses on constructive bidding. Overcalls will be allowed in later sessions. This auction pinpoints South's spade singleton and identifies the 4-4 club fit. The slam depends on finding the club Queen.

**4**

♠ 854  
 ♥ AK86  
 ♦ 86  
 ♣ 10963  
  
 ♠ AK107  
 ♥ 92  
 ♦ AQ94  
 ♣ J84  
  
 ♠ Q63  
 ♥ 105  
 ♦ KJ1032  
 ♣ AQ5  
  
 ♠ J92  
 ♥ QJ743  
 ♦ 75  
 ♣ K72

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

With no heart stopper, no trump is not a viable contract. With no heart shortness, the opponents will be able to cash two heart tricks immediately, so 5D will depend on finding the club King. Holding good trumps, the Moysian spade fit may be the best game contract.

## Addendum to “Five Clubs Making Was a Zero?!”

There were a few questions raised during the lecture that I would like to go over in more detail for everyone in the group.

- 1. Any good bidding system must include a forcing raise when partner opens one of a suit!** It does not matter if that opening suit bid is a major suit or a minor suit. If the partnership’s bidding system includes only the minimal raise and a bid that shows invitational values or more, that partnership will frequently be the only pair in the game playing a part score when the rest of the field is in a game contract – or even a slam contract. Although I prefer the inverted minor raise, there are other possibilities to show forcing values after partner opens 1C or 1D. You and your partner should investigate those possibilities – and don’t forget to check with a director to learn what bids need to be alerted and how your partnership agreement should be described to the opponents.
2. One of the example hands included a *fourth-suit-forcing* auction (Example 3, page 4). As I stated during the lecture, I realized too late that this auction would probably open a can of worms – and it did. Variations do exist with this convention, as they do with many conventions. You and your partner need to consider these variations and agree on the variation you both prefer. With one exception, the agreements I play in fourth-suit-forcing auctions are pretty standard and are discussed here.
  - 1D – P – 1H – P // 1S – P – 2C! – P // Although the necessity for the alert of responder’s 2C rebid is debatable, since a new suit bid by responder is forcing, the ACBL currently requires an alert, because this is a suit bid that does not promise at least three cards in that suit.
  - The first question for the partnership: Is this fourth-suit bid forcing for one round, or is it forcing to game? My husband and I play the fourth-suit bid at the two-level as forcing for one round. If made at the three-level or higher, it is forcing to game. On this point, I’m not sure if this agreement is completely standard.
  - The next question for the partnership: Does this fourth-suit bid promise five cards in responder’s first-bid suit, hearts in this auction? My personal feeling is that this imposes too great a limitation on a wonderful bid. Fourth-suit-forcing auctions are great ways to create game-forcing sequences that don’t require jumps in the bidding. The lower the auction level in forcing sequences, the more likely the partnership is to find – or avoid – slam contracts.
  - Regardless of the partnership agreements *vis-à-vis* the preceding questions, opener’s responses follow the same pattern. 1) Show three-card support for responder’s major suit; 2) if that is not true, opener should bid NT if his hand is relatively balanced and has comfortable stoppers in the side suits; 3) if a NT bid is not descriptive, opener should make the bid that best describes his hand.
3. After an opening bid of 1C or 1D, the partnership may find themselves playing a major suit contract in the Moysian fit. Although I am always a little uncomfortable playing these contracts, successful play usually results in a good matchpoint score, especially when the partnership lacks the stoppers for game in no trump or the values for game in the minor suit. The scores for the possible contracts illustrate this point: +120 for the NT part-score contract, +130 for the minor suit part-score contract, and +140 for the successful major suit part-score contract. Of course, this is a matchpoint consideration. When playing a team game, opt for the game or part-score contract you know will make.