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This Week in Bridge

(524) Fits and More: Raising Partner in Competition

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Level: 5 of 10

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General

One of the most important parts of bridge is raising partner. We try to raise partner whenever possible. We may choose not to support partner immediately if we feel we have something more pressing to communicate, in which case we can respond in our own Major, use a negative double, or bid some number of notrump, but in general we strive to “support with support.”

Raising partner is even more important in competitive auctions. When the opponents have entered the auction they start to take away our valuable bidding space and they may raise or preempt the auction to take away even more bidding space. If partner knows we have a fit, they will be in a better position to make a good competitive decision. When partner doesn't know that we have a fit it is difficult for them to judge whether to play offense or defense. This is especially true in high-level competitive auctions where we want to educate partner about our fit and thus better involve them in the decision making process.

Supporting Partner's Major

We need a good set of agreements about how to raise partner. We will try to communicate to partner two important parts of our hand:

- Size of our fit,
- Total points of our hand (HCP + adjustments + re-evaluation for support points.)

The following table is a set of *modern* agreements about how to raise partner in competition. Partner opens the bidding with 1-Major and we consider the meaning of our options when the opponent doubles, overcalls, or jump overcalls.



Raising Partner in Competition Table

<i>Partner opens 1Major - RHO Interferes</i>	vs. X	vs. Overcall	vs. Jump Overcall
Raise	5-9 pts 3-4card support	5-9 pts 3-4card support	Raise to 3L: 7 to 11- pts, 3+card support
Jump Raise	0-5 pts 4+card support	0-5 pts 4+card support	<i>(n/a)</i>
Bid Game	0-8 pts (LOTT)	0-8 pts (LOTT)	11+ to 14 pts, 3+card support. Bid to make – “ <i>We don’t preempt a preempt.</i> ”
Bid 2NT	*10+ pts 4+card support (Jordan)	10+ to 12- pts Natural (0-2card support, stopper in Opp suit.)	10+-12- pts, Natural (0-2card support, stopper in Opp suit.)
Cuebid (Q) Opp’s suit	<i>(n/a)</i>	10+ pts 3+card support (Q=LR+)	<i>Slam Try:</i> 15+ pts, 3+card support.
Jump Q	<i>(n/a)</i>	<i>Splinter</i> , 12+ pts, 4+c support, 0-1card Opp suit.	(Rare)

*LOTT = Law of Total Tricks. This is the idea that we “compete to the size of our fit.” We also try to do this as quickly as possible – we jump there. With a 10 card fit (5-card support for partner’s Major) we raise to 4M even if we do not have a great hand.



Double Raise Weak in Competition

In competitive auctions the general rule is that “jumps in competition are weak.” These jumps show a large fit but a poor hand (usually 0-6 HCP) and apply the Law of Total Tricks (LOTT) – that is, compete to the size of our fit. The meaning of “weak” changes based on vulnerability:

- Non-Vulnerable -- 0-5 HCP
- Vulnerable -- 3-6 HCP.

Examples of Weak Raises

These are bids by Responder or Advancer that show a large fit and weak values when the opponents have shown a suit of their own.

- 1♥ 1♠ 3♥
- 1♥ 2♦ 3♥
- 1♦ 1♠ P 3♠
- 1♦ 1♠ X 3♠
- 1♠ 2♣ X 4♣
- 1♦ 1♠ 3♦

Cuebid Shows a Limit Raise or Better (Q=LR+)

Since we are using jumps in these competitive auctions to show weak hands, then we need to have a way to show a good hand with a fit for partner – a limit raise or better. The general approach is for Responder or Advancer to use a cuebid of the opponent’s suit to show a limit raise or better, commonly denoted on the convention card as “Q=LR+”. This limit raise bid shows an 8+card fit -- 3+card support if partner bids a Major suit, 4+card support if partner bids ♦, 5+card support if partner bids ♣.

Examples of Limit Raises or Better

These are bids by Responder or Advancer that show a fit and invitational or better value, when the opponents have shown a suit of their own.

- 1♥ 1♠ 2♠
- 1♥ 2♦ 3♦
- 1♦ 1♠ P 2♦
- 1♦ 1♠ X 2♦
- 1♠ 2♣ X 2♠
- 1♦ 1♠ 2♠



Jordan 2NT Conventional Raise

We play a jump raise of partner's suit over a takeout double similarly to when the opponents make an overcall, as a weak jump raise.

Weak Raises Over a Takeout Double

- 1♠ X 3♠
- 1♦ X 3♦

Since we play this as a weak jump raise, then we need a way to show a hand with a fit and good values. This is done with a conventional bid called Jordan (or sometimes called Truscott). This bid uses a jump to 2NT over a takeout double as a limit raise or better bid -- "LR+". Traditionally, over a minor suit this 2NT response shows 5+card support and over a Major suit it shows 4+card support. The larger support is required in a takeout double auction than versus an overcall because after a takeout double there is a greater chance that the trump suit is breaking poorly.

Jordan, Limit Raise+

- 1♠ X 2NT*
- 1♦ X 2NT*

Note: A 2NT bid over a takeout double is like a cuebid of the opponent's suit.

Advanced Issue

Double Jump Shifts in competition are also bids that can show support. If these double jump shifts are below game they are splinters, but if they are jumps to game they are to play.

- 1♠ 2♣ 4♦ *Splinter, 12+ pts, 4+card ♠, 0-1♦*
- 1♠ 2♣ 4♥ *Natural, To Play. 7+♥, 0-9 HCP*

Conclusion

Raising partner's suit is one of the most important parts of bidding, but knowing how this changes in a competitive auction is even more important (because the opponents are trying to win the auction as well). Get to know your bidding options so you can make the most descriptive bid possible and give partner the best picture of your hand available.