

Inverted minor raises

Rakesh Kumar

With neither side vulnerable, partner opens 1D, promising 4+ cards. You hold:

♠95
♥AQJ
♦AK743
♣K94

What are you going to bid? Clearly you have the values for game, but which game? How can you make a forcing bid – ideally a game-forcing bid – to find out if partner has a hand suitable for notrumps? You really don't want to bypass 3NT to play in 5D at matchpoints, do you?

This hand turned up on Monday 3 August. In fact it is exactly the sort of hand that was discussed in the session on Monday 4 May, about "Getting to the right game", the notes for which are on the Lessons page of our website.

If you agree to play inverted minor raises with partner, in which 1m-3m promises 5+ support and 6-9 hcp while 1m-2m promises support and 10+ hcp, you don't have a problem. You can bid 2D as a one-round forcing bid and when partner rebids 2NT showing stoppers in both majors, you can raise to 3NT. That works well because this was the complete deal:

BD: 1	♠AQ	Dlr: N
	♥T964	Vul: None
	♦QJT8	
	♣QJT	
♠KJT872		♠643
♥875		♥K32
♦52		♦96
♣83		♣A7652
	♠95	
	♥AQJ	
	♦AK743	
	♣K94	
	♣♦♥♠	N
		T
N	4 6 6 2	6 12
S	4 6 6 2	6 4 7
E		17
W		

A variation on this theme is to play 1m-2m as showing a game-forcing hand, with a jump shift to the other minor (1C-2D or 1D-3C) showing a 10-12 hcp hand (so-called criss-cross raises).

If you reach 3NT, how are you going to play it? With North as the declarer, the likely opening lead is ♣5. North wins with the queen and plays a heart. When the finesse succeeds, declarer can return to hand with ♦Q to repeat the finesse, then drop ♥K on the next round for 4 heart tricks. Another club forces out the ace and declarer ends up with 5 diamond tricks, 2 club tricks and the spade ace, so no spade finesse is needed!

On the day, however, half the field played in a diamond contract and most did not make the 12 tricks available in 3NT.



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