



Major Suit Raises - Part II

How do we show a game raise of partner's major suit with 13 or more points? As **Eric Rodwell** explains in this article, responder has a number of different options.

This is part of a series of articles by Eric on 2/1 game force. Eric is a world-class player and theorist. Previous articles in the series can be found at: www.betterbridge.com/articles

In the previous article, we started to discuss raising partner's major suit. Since a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid promises a 5-card or longer suit, we immediately have the answer to **WHERE** when we have 3-card or longer support. We've found an eight-card major suit fit. The only remaining question is **HOW HIGH**?

In 2/1 game force, we distinguish between raises with 3-card and 4-card support. When valuing responder's hand, we use a 3-2-1 dummy point scale with only 3-card support (void - 3; singleton - 2; doubleton - 1). We can be more aggressive when we have 4-card support. With 4-card support, we use a 5-3-1 scale.

We also take advantage of the forcing 1NT response. After valuing the hand using dummy points, we can use the following guidelines:

RAISING WITH 3-CARD SUPPORT

Points

- 5-6 Bid 1NT (forcing) then give preference to the major.
- 7-10 Raise to the two level.
- 11-12 Bid 1NT (forcing) then raise the major to the three level.
- 13+ Bid a new suit* and then show the support.

* A new suit response at the two level is forcing to at least game.

RAISING WITH 4-CARD SUPPORT

Points

- 4-5 Bid 1NT (forcing) then give preference to the major.
- 6-9 Raise to the two level.
- 10-12 Make an immediate limit raise to the three level.
- 13+ Make a game-forcing raise*.

* Discussed in this article.

We did not discuss how to handle raises with 4-card support and 13 or more points. There are a variety of options in 2/1 game force, so let's take a look.

Raising with 13 or more points and 4-Card support

With 13 or more points and 4-card or longer support, we know we are headed for at least game, so **the focus is on determining whether there is enough extra strength for slam.**

With a good trump fit, slam can often be made with fewer than 33 combined points. Controls—aces, kings, singletons, and voids—and the fit in the side suits can play a big part. To investigate such possibilities, responder has three main approaches:

- Jacoby 2NT
- Splinter Bid
- New Suit

Jacoby 2NT

A response of 2NT to a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid shows 4-card or longer support for partner's major and 13 or more points. It is forcing to at least game, shows interest in slam, and asks opener for a further description.

Opener replies to the Jacoby 2NT convention as follows:

REPLYING TO JACOBY 2NT

- A new suit at the three level shows a singleton or void.
- A jump in a new suit shows a good side 5-card suit.
- A rebid of the major at the three level shows a 6+-card suit, no shortness, and extra values*.
- A 3NT rebid shows extra values* and a semi-balanced hand.
- A jump to the four level in the major shows a minimum hand with no shortness.

* Extra values is about 15+ points.

Jacoby 2NT is a marathon bid ★, forcing to at least game. Uncovering a singleton in opener's hand can help responder evaluate how well the hands fit together for slam. For example:

WEST	EAST
♠ A J 7 5 3	♠ K Q 9 6
♥ K 9 3	♥ A Q 5
♦ 5	♦ 7 4 2
♣ A 9 8 7	♣ K Q J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT ★	Pass
3♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♠	All Pass

West shows a singleton diamond in reply to East's Jacoby 2NT forcing raise. East now knows all the high cards in the combined hands are likely to be 'working' together since there are no 'wasted' values in the diamond suit. East uses Blackwood to check on aces and puts the partnership in the excellent slam contract although the partnership has only 29 combined high-card points.

Let's exchange opener's clubs and diamonds:

WEST		EAST	
♠	A J 7 5 3	♠	K Q 9 6
♥	K 9 3	♥	A Q 5
♦	A 9 8 5	♦	7 4 2
♣	7	♣	K Q J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT	★ Pass
3♣	Pass	4♠	All Pass

This time, West shows a singleton club in reply to Jacoby 2NT. East can judge that the ♣K-Q-J are likely to be 'wasted' high cards opposite West's shortness and signs off in game. If the defenders lead a diamond, 4♠ will likely be held to ten tricks.

If opener has no short suit and no extra strength, responder will feel comfortable settling for game:

WEST		EAST	
♠	A J 7 5 3	♠	K Q 9 6
♥	K 9 3	♥	A Q 5
♦	9 8 5	♦	7 4 2
♣	A 7	♣	K Q J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT	★ Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

When opener shows extra strength, the partnership can investigate slam with the help of cuebidding:

WEST		EAST	
♠	A J 10 7 5 3	♠	K Q 9 6
♥	9 3	♥	A Q 5
♦	A Q	♦	7 4 2
♣	A 8 7	♣	K Q J

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2NT	★ Pass
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

West has no shortness but shows extra values with a six-card spade suit. East cooperates by cuebidding the ♥A, and the partnership reaches a sound slam—needing either the heart finesse or the diamond finesse to succeed.

Using Jacoby 2NT typically makes responder the 'captain' with opener continuing to describe the hand, although opener can move toward slam with extra values, as in the last example. If responder prefers to be the describer, there are other options.

Splinter Bids

A *double jump* in a new suit in response to an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ shows 4-card support for opener's major, a singleton or void in the bid suit, and enough strength to take the partnership to game. It's a descriptive bid by responder, leaving opener to decide on the prospects for slam.

WEST		EAST	
♠	A 8 5	♠	J 6 3 2
♥	K Q J 6 2	♥	A 10 5 4
♦	K Q 10 5	♦	4
♣	4	♣	A J 7 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	4♦	★ Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opposite West's 1♥ opening, East values the hand using dummy points, counting 3 for the singleton diamond. Combined with 10 high-card points, East has a total of 13 points, enough to take the partnership to game.

East doesn't want to take charge of the hand by using Jacoby 2NT. Even if West were to show shortness in spades or clubs, East wouldn't know enough to determine slam prospects. Instead, East makes a descriptive splinter bid of 4♦, showing a singleton diamond, 4-card support for hearts, and the values to go for game.

West can judge that the hands don't fit well together, with the ♦K-Q opposite a singleton. So West settles for game.

WEST		EAST	
♠	A 8 5	♠	4
♥	K Q J 6 2	♥	A 10 5 4
♦	K Q 10 5	♦	J 6 3 2
♣	4	♣	A J 7 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	Pass	3♠	★ Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

This time East shows a singleton spade with the double jump to 3♠. West can judge that the hands fit well together. There will be no spade losers since West's spades can be trumped in dummy. West uses Blackwood to check on controls. When East shows two aces, West confidently bids the slam. East-West have only 25 high-card points, but slam is excellent.

Bidding a New Suit

Not all hands are suitable for either Jacoby 2NT or a splinter bid. Responder may have a singleton, for example, but too much strength to simply make a splinter bid and leave any further decision to opener. This is especially true when responder has a good side suit which might be a source of tricks in a slam. Responder may choose a slower approach in exploring slam potential by bidding a new suit. *An advantage of 2/1 game force is that responder's new suit at the two level commits the partnership to game, leaving plenty of room to explore slam prospects.*

WEST		EAST	
♠	A Q 9 5 3	♠	K J 6 2
♥	K 9 7	♥	A 4
♦	Q J 5	♦	6 2
♣	7 4	♣	A Q J 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
2NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

When West opens 1♠, East knows *WHERE* the partnership belongs, but slam may be possible if opener has a fit for clubs and the ♦A or ♦K. If East bids 2NT, opener's reply is unlikely to provide this information. So East chooses to start with 2♣ and show the spade support at the next opportunity. When West shows no fit for clubs, no extra values, and no interest in slam, East settles for game.

WEST		EAST	
♠	A Q 9 5 3	♠	K J 6 2
♥	9 7	♥	A 4
♦	A 5	♦	6 2
♣	K 9 7 4	♣	A Q J 5 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Pass	2♣	★ Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	6♠	All Pass

This time, East uncovers the fit in clubs, and West cooperates in the slam investigation with a diamond cuebid. East is happy to go for the slam bonus. If East had started with 2NT, West might have jump to 4♠ to show a minimum, and an easy twelve trick slam would be missed. ♦