

WASHINGTON BRIDGE LEAGUE

We offer our thanks to Washington Bridge league as we, present a copy from their 2012 March -Apr bulletin on Major Suit Raises by columnists > Ron Zucker and Shawn Stringer. Read original - [Here](#)

MAJOR SUIT RAISES - PART 4

The Preemptive Raise to game

So far in this series of articles, we have studied many ways that Responder can show trump support after partner opens one of a Major. We have covered raises increasing in strength from the simple raise, the constructive raise, the invitational raise, and the game forcing raise. So far, there has been no competitive bidding. Opponents, however, are not always silent - particularly when they have values and a fit of their own.

When responder is relatively weak and suspects that the opponents may get into the auction, she should jump to the partnership's highest reasonable level as quickly as possible. The goal should be to force the opponents to begin their search for a fit at a high level. You want to prevent, or preempt, the opponents from taking advantage of the one, two, three or even four levels to find their best trump suit. Such responder jumps are known as Preemptive Raises. While you can preempt at lower levels, our focus is on the preemptive jump to game.

The most powerful preemptive Major Suit raise is 1♠ - P - 4♠. If the next player has a good hand, he has to make a huge decision at the five level. In order to make the 4♠ bid, Responder's hand should be limited to about 3-9 HCP because, with more than that, Responder is too strong to jump to 4♠. The shape of the hand also affects the decision to jump or not. The following shapes are appropriate for a jump to 4♠:

- a) 5 trump and a singleton or void (5431, 5521, 5440 shapes)
- b) 4 trump and a void (4540 shapes)
- c) 5 trump and two doubletons (5422 shapes) (**note:** points should be in your long suits)
- d) 6 trump and two doubletons (6322 shapes)
- e) 4 trump and 6 card side suit (4162 shapes)
- f) Do NOT bid 4♠ with 5332 shapes unless all points are in the major and vulnerability is favorable.

A preemptive jump to 4♠ is known as a "shut out" bid. It warns partner that she should not bid again, even if she has a good hand. If Responder makes a preemptive raise to 4♠, and Opener bids on, she should expect no help from partner. If Opener has a very good hand, she should pass and hope that her good hand is really good enough to make the game contract.

There are many ways that a preemptive raise can lead to a good score.

- 1) Due to distribution, you might be able to make a fairly high contract even with few high card points. Imagine, for example, the following hand (from a recent Thursday night unit game):

| | |
|---------|---------|
| ♠A954 | ♠KQJ72 |
| ♥void | ♥T8 |
| ♦KQT964 | ♦Void |
| ♣T95 | ♣AQJ863 |

Although the partnership has only 22 HCP, and the ♠K is offside, they can make either 6♣ or 6♠ against any defense on the lie of the cards!

- 2) Even if you can't make your contract, perhaps you can go down less than the value of the opponents' contract, even if doubled.

- 3) By bidding quickly to a high level, you can force the opponents to make a difficult guess about whether their combined assets belong in a partial, a game or a slam.

Let's look at a few hands. Partner has opened 1♠ and your RHO has passed. You hold

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ♠QT863 ♥7 ♦J732 ♣742 | Bid 4 ^a ♠. You don't expect that partner will make 4♠. But from your hand, it looks like the opponents can make SOMETHING, probably in hearts. Don't let them find their fit easily. If LHO wants to bid hearts, let her bid at the 5 level. Perhaps partner can set that. Or perhaps they'll miss 6. |
| ♠QT863 ♥K3 ♦K73 ♣Q42 | Do NOT bid 4♠. Remember, the jump to 4♠ shows fewer HCP than this. With this many points, your side has more than half the deck. The opponents will have difficulty competing. Let partner decide whether to play this in game or in a part score. |
| ♠AT863 ♥7 ♦QJ32 ♣742 | Bid 4♠. This is close to a maximum for the bid. With this shape and points in your long suits, you are getting close to being too good to preempt. But it is better to make them guess, so preempt here to take away their room to find a likely heart fit. |
| ♠AT863 ♥742 ♦Q32 ♣72 | Bid 2♠. With 5 trumps and fewer than 8 HCP, but with no shortness and three hearts, don't be concerned with preempting to a high level very quickly. There are quite a few losers, despite the five-card support. If vulnerable, you don't want to bid 4♠, go down 2, and discover that the opponents could only make 3♥. It is true that the opponents can get into the bidding more cheaply, but having spades means you can outbid the other suits if it turns out to merely be a part-score battle |

With most bridge hands, each side can make some contract. So, remember that bidding is both about finding your best contract, and preventing the opponents from finding their best place to play. And just because the opponents have the HCP, there is no reason to let them have all the bidding room, too!

Next month, we're going to discuss some tools for competitive auctions, and introduce one of the most important concepts in bridge, the Law of Total Tricks.