

3344 Convention and Spiral Raises

By Neil H Timm

When opening a minor and partner responds a major, Eric Rodwell developed a game try convention called the Rodwell Game Try Convention. A simple modification of the Rodwell Convention is called the **3344 Convention**; the name was suggested by Joe Sacco of The Villages Duplicate Bridge Club.

After hearing support for the major at the two-level (2♥/2♠), responder needs to know whether major support is three or four cards and whether the opening points are a **minimum** (11/12-15) or a **maximum** (15/16-21). To investigate, responder bids 2NT*. The responses by the opening bidder are:

3♣* shows **three-card (3)** support and a **minimum** opening hand
3♦* shows **three-card (3)** support and a **maximum** opening hand
3♥* shows **four-card (4)** support and a **minimum** opening hand
3♠* shows **four-card (4)** support and a **maximum** opening hand

*=alert

Val Covalciuc recommends in her September 2007 issues of the ACBL “Bridge Bulletin” (page 39) article that there are two requirements for the opener when raising partner’s major: opener should have some decent values in his three-card major suit and he should have ruffing values in his hand.

Let’s consider an example.

Opener	♠ K 10 ♥ Q J 8 4 ♦ Q J 6 5 ♣ A J 9
Responder	♠ 8 ♥ A K 3 2 ♦ A K 4 3 2 ♣ K 5 4

With no five-card major, opener opens the bidding with 1♣ and responde bids 1♥, bypassing his five-card diamond suit. Responder next bids 2NT*. How good is your hand and what is its shape?

Opener has fourteen dummy Points and bids 3♥*. With a minimum and four hearts, responder has no interest in slam and signs off in the heart game by bidding 4♥.

Without a four-card major, opener has several rebids options depending on the structure of his hand:

- (a) With 12-17 starting points, opener’s rebid is 1NT showing a weak hand.
- (b) With a balanced (5-3-3-2) and 18+ starting points, his bid is 2NT.

In the “Bridge Bulletin”: November 2020, Mel Colchamiro in his article “Don’t Let the Tail Wag the Dog” (p. 23) defines “spiral” bids with a different sequence:

3♣* shows **three-card (3)** support and a **minimum** opening hand
 3♦* shows **four-card (4)** support and a **minimum** opening hand
 3♥* shows **three-card (3)** support and a **maximum** opening hand
 3♠* shows **four-card (4)** support and a **maximum** opening hand

The response structure is 3434 NOT 3344 so be careful when using the convention and fails to denote that the responses as above must be alerted.

The 3344 CONVENTION is a subset of the more complicated convention developed by Eric Rodwell called the **Rodwell Game Try Convention** - After responder bids a possible 4 card major and opener makes a 2 level major suit raise, responder makes an artificial next suit rank query to determine opener's trump length and strength. The Rodwell Game Try provides an alternative to the Help Suit Game Try, for example. Details follow.

Bidding	Meaning
1m - 1♥; 1m - 1♠; 2♥ - 2♠; 2♠ - 2NT;	Bids of 2♠/2NT, next rank above agreed on major asks opener to make a step response describing trump suit length and overall hand strength
1♣ - 1♥; 1♣ - 1♠; 2♥ - 2♠; 2♠ - 2NT; 2NT - ; 3♣ - ;	1 st step = 3 trump, minimum hand (11-13 HCP)
1♣ - 1♥; 1♣ - 1♠; 2♥ - 2♠; 2♠ - 2NT; 3♦ - ; 3♦ - ;	2 nd step = 3 trump, maximum hand (14-15 HCP)
1♣ - 1♥; 1♣ - 1♠; 2♥ - 2♠; 2♠ - 2NT; 3♦ - ; 3♥ - ;	3 rd step = 4 trump, minimum hand (11-13 HCP)
1♣ - 1♥; 1♣ - 1♠; 2♥ - 2♠; 2♠ - 2NT; 3♥ - ; 3♠ - ;	4 th step = 4 trump, maximum hand (14-15 HCP)

Eric Rodwell's original treatment incorporates additional features beyond this “Bridge Bit”.

Point Count Game Try Convention (PCGT)

Some may not need the 3344 convention since they may always support a major with four cards. However, to evaluate whether or not you have game going values, you may next employ the Point Count Game try Convention.

The convention is used after the sequences 1♣/1♦ - 1♥/1♠ followed by a two level rebid in the major; 2♥ and 2♠ respectively.

Next the responder bids either 2♠/2NT over 2♥ and 2♠, respectively. Then the next three level bids show dummy points:

For Spades ask = 2NT

For Hearts ask = 2♠

3♣* = 16+ Dummy Points

15 Dummy Points

3♦* = 15 Dummy Points

14 Dummy Points

3♥* = 14 Dummy Points

12/13 Dummy Points

3♠* = 12/13 Dummy Points 2NT= 16+ Dummy Points

The more values, the lower the bid; this allows one to investigate slam or to reach game in the major. The minimum bid is a simple raise of the major suit, 3♠ or 3♥. Over the maximum bid of 4♣ one asks for points in the trump suit. Then steps show 0, 1, 2, or 3.

Spiral Raises

There are many different versions of this convention, on Bridge Webs Galvin Wolpert July 13, 2010 recommends the following bids.

1m -1♥

2♥ - 2♠* Ask – tell me more about your hand (strength and shape)

2NT* Balanced 3-card raise, minimum (11/12-15)

3♣* Balanced 4-card raise any strength

3♦* Unbalanced 3-card raise, shortness in other major

3♥* Unbalanced 4-card raise, shortness in other major

3♠* Splinter, 4-card support any strength

3NT* Balanced 3-card raise, maximum (15+)

4om Splinter, 4-card support

4m* 5422 Maximum

4♥* 5422 Minimum

1m -1♠

2♠ - 2NT* Ask – tell me more about your hand (strength and shape)

3♣* Balanced 3-card raise, minimum (11/12-15)

3♦* Balanced 4-card raise any strength

3♥* Unbalanced 3-card raise, shortness in other major

3♠* Unbalanced 4-card raise, shortness in other major

3NT* Balanced 3-card raise, maximum (15+)

4om* Splinter, 4-card support any strength

4m* 5422 Maximum

4M* 5422 Minimum

A help suit game try convention that is very similar to Spiral Raises is the Short suit game try convention.

It is better than the Help Suit Game try method since it communicates shortness and not weakness.

The convention follows.

1♥-2♥-2♠ (ask)

- 3♣* = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦* = shows shortness in diamonds
- 2NT* = shows shortness in spades
- 3♥ = 4333/4432 Minimum (8/9 dummy points)
- 3NT = 4333/4432 Maximum (10 Dummy points)
- 3♠ = 4333 Maximum with four spades
- 4m = 5+ to KQ in minor bid with Maximum
- 4♥* = Stiff other major with Maximum

1♠-2♠-2NT (ask)

- 3♣* = shows shortness in clubs
- 3♦* = shows shortness in diamonds
- 3♥* = shows shortness in hearts
- 3♠ = 4333/4432 Minimum (8/9 dummy points)
- 3NT = 4333/4432 Maximum (10 Dummy points)
- 4m = 5+ to KQ in minor bid with Maximum
- 4♠* = Stiff other major with Maximum

Shortness is always 1 or 0 cards in the suit. After SSGT, responder re-evaluates his hand with A=3 and K=1.