

## The Spiral Convention

Last week we looked at several hands where we might want to raise responder's major with 3 card support because it looked like the "best lie". This was often the case with reverse shape and therefore a singleton with a 5 card minor that we didn't want to emphasize.

Let's look at a less obvious case today.

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	?		

Holding this fine collection

♠AQ2 ♥AQT3 ♦9874 ♣83

You open 1♦ and partner bids 1♠. The textbook rebid is 1N but you have 2 unstopped suits and a small doubleton. Bidding NT seems potentially dangerous and you should be tempted to bid 2♠ rather than 1N. However if you are going to bid 2♠ with balanced hands like this it's important for partner to be able to get to the right contract with a hand like

♠J752 ♥K3 ♦AQ4 ♣QJ54

Clearly you'd rather be in 3N than 4♠.

So players who want to give in to the temptation to raise spades with hands like the above need a tool to inquire about their partner's raise. A simple convention that developed works like this:

1m-1M

2M-2N!

2N is artificial and asks partner to describe their hand. The responses are:

3♣: 3 card raise with a minimum

3♦: 3 card raise with a maximum

3♥: 4 card raise with a minimum

3♠: 4 card raise with a maximum

While popular, I do not think that this is a very good system since it doesn't tell you why partner made their 3 card raise. There are many, many variations of this convention almost all of which offer great improvement on the above system with the downside of added complexity. Pete Matthews has a nice summary of several of them [here](#).

Before you choose which style you want to play I would suggest that you decide what hands you are going to raise your partner's major when holding only 3 card support. If it's only singletons then your responses should show that. If it includes doubletons then you want to cater to that possibility as well.

I would suggest that when you are dipping your toes into raising with 3 card support that you only raise with a singleton.

Here's a system that caters to singleton raises only (in response to 2N!):

3m! (opener's minor): 3 card raise with a minimum

3om! (other minor): 3 card raise with a maximum and singleton in the unbid minor

**3M (responder's major): 4 card raise with a minimum**

3oM! (other major): 3 card raise with a maximum and singleton in the unbid major

**3N: 4 card raise with a maximum and an offer to play**

**4M 4 card raise with a maximum no singletons**

Other 4 level bids would show singletons somewhere

!=alertable bid

**Bold bids are normal and what you probably already play. As such they aren't alertable.**

Examples:

1. ♠AQ2 ♥AT43 ♦QJ743 ♣8
2. ♠872 ♥AQ43 ♦Q8743 ♣A
3. ♠A82 ♥3 ♦KQ432 ♣QJ53
4. ♠3 ♥A82 ♦KQ432 ♣QJ53

1. in the auction 1♦-1♠-2♠-2N what do you respond?

3♣ = I have a maximum and a singleton club

2. in the auction 1♦-1♠-2♠-2N what do you respond?

3♣ = I have a maximum and a singleton club

3♦ = I have a minimum and a 3 card raise **\*recommended action**

3. in the auction 1♦-1♠-2♠-2N what do you respond?

3♦ = I have a minimum and a 3 card raise (hence a singleton somewhere)

3♥ = I have a maximum and a singleton heart

**Neither auction is recommended, both are reasonable**

4. in the auction 1♦-1♥-2♥-2N what do you respond?

3♦ = I have a minimum and a 3 card raise (hence a singleton somewhere)

3♠ = I have a maximum and a singleton spade

**Neither auction is recommended, both are reasonable. However do try to make the same decision on 3 and 4 so that you'll be right some of the time. :-)**