Rodwell Spiral (aka Cue & Cue)

Quite commonly when one opens with a minor suit Responders (as they should) show a Major suit. That Major suit could be 4 or 5+ in length, but because it might be 4 the opener should hold 4-cards in that Major suit in order to show support for the Major. If the Opener has only 3-card support there are few options, and likely the only alternative available is a bid of 1NT which might trigger a New Minor Forcing bid by the Responder if conditions are right or another bid showing a bigger hand. But if Openers hand is not big and if conditions are not right (example, both partners have minimum hands, i.e. 18HCP total) the contract might end at 1NT yielding a score of 90; but with a 7-card fit and 18HCP making a contract of 2 of a Major is just as likely and yields a score of 110. But the 7-card fit will never be revealed because the opener's rebid of 1NT might indicate holding 1, 2 or 3. There is no standard (or conventional) bid that will expose the minimum 7-card fit. We remind ourselves that NMF is a way to discover the 5-3, 8-card fit. Exposing the possibility of the 7-card Major suit fit is a purpose of the Spiral bid, but, like NMF it offers an opportunity to discover the 5-3 fit and it also opens up a whole range of possibilities if the hands are more than just minimum. So lets first look at what certain bidding sequences reveal (1m → 1 of a minor, 1M → 1 of a Major):

1m – P – 1M – P; 1NT Opener is showing a minimum hand < 15HCP and less than 4 of partners Major; if Responder has 10+HCP and 5+Cards in the Major he can execute NMF to show that holding and if the fit is revealed all is good.

1m – P – 1M – P; 1 or 2 of other Major Opener is likely showing a better than minimum hand 15+HCP and less than 4 of partners Major; if Responder doesn't have 4 of the other Major, no fit will be revealed and the contract will likely end up in NT.

1m – P – 1M – P; 2NT Opener is showing a bigger hand 15+HCP and less than 4 of partners Major; if Responder has 10+ and 5+ in the Major he can still execute NMF to show that holding and if the fit is revealed all is good.

1m – P – 1M – P; 2M(same) Opener is showing a minimum hand < 15HCP and 4-card support of partners Major; No problems here!

1m – P – 1M – P; 3M(same) Opener is showing a better hand, 15+HCP and 4-card support of partners Major; No problems here! No need for a conventional bid.

Now if instead of insisting that the 2M(same) shows 4, we allow the 2M to be 3 or 4 (if it was more than 4 Opener would have opened the Major) we set the stage for Responder (and Opener) to show more about their hands. So all we need is to make a trigger bid and define a set of responses to the trigger. Repeating the last sequence but now 2M can be 3 or 4 card support and Responder might need to have that dichotomy clarified first.

1m – P – 1M – P; 2M(same) Opener's strength will still be unknown because 2M might be 3-card support (with 4-card support opener can show strength 2M → minimum hand, 3M → 15+HCP). With 3-card support, there is a possibility of just a 7-card fit so opener doesn't want to bid 3M, even with 15+HCP, because Responder's strength is still unknown. So it is this sequence that we start our consideration of the Spiral bid.

a) if Responder is at minimum (6-9HCP) game is not likely and Responder will pass the 2M bid.

b) if Responder has 10+HCP the Rule of 23 threshold is met and Responder can inquire (Inquiring will take the contract to the 3-level, that is why we insist on meeting the rule of 23). The inquiry is triggered by Responder bidding 2NT. The Rebids by the Opener show two things: # of card support and hand strength:

3♣ → 3-Card Support and Minimum (12-14 PP) hand Note: Point count is PP because Opener will be the Dummy

3♦ → 3-Card Support and Maximum Hand (15+PP)

3♥→ 4-Card Support and Minimum (12-14 PP) hand

3♠→ 4-Card Support and Maximum Hand (15+PP)

Since the Responder is the one doing the Asking – Responder is the Captain

Note that the responses are (in order) 3344 so this is sometimes called the 3344 Convention.