Bergen Raises

The Law of Total Tricks (LOTT) is an intriguing and very useful treatment of the bidding system, while still staying within the confines provided by SAYC. Bergen raises are based on the theory behind LOTT and since they are conventional must be **Alerted**. Briefly (we have a whole chapter devoted to it), LOTT suggests that you can bid to the level determined by the number of trump cards held by the declaring side thus if your side has a know 8-card fit you can safely (and safely is the operative word) compete to the 2-level. With 9 trumps the 3-level should be achievable and with 10 trump the 4-level is OK. These are just suggestions that have been backed up with some good theory and years of experience. It's primary advantage is in its preemptive nature. When speaking of preempts we generally think of opening bids, Bergen raises, based on LOTT, are preemptive responses to an opening bid. Recall the purpose of preempts: use up bidding space so as to interfere with opponents ability to compete and/or exchange information. So how do Bergen Raises work?

First, Bergen raises are only used when partner opens in a Major suit. Secondly there has been an acronym invented to help us remember the meanings of the 4 bids that constitute the Bergen raise system – **CLAP**. We all know what a limit raise is, don't we? That's the **'L'**, and we also know what preemptive means – that's the **'P'.** The **'C'** and **'A'** stand for <u>C</u>onstructive and <u>A</u>mbiguous Splinter, respectively. Constructive means "I can help there but you still have to do most of the heavy lifting'. More on the **'A' a** little later.

Thirdly, Bergen raises always show 4-card support, that is why they are all preemptive in nature: Opener's bid promise 5-cards and with responder's 4-cards means a 9-card fit. LOTT tells us that when holding 9 Trump the 3-level is a safe bid so why not just go there. Bergen raises do that but provide additional information:

3♣ is **'C'** showing **7-10** HCP **and** 4-card support. Constructive means I've got the Trump, not many HCPs

3♦ is **'L'** showing **11-12** HCP **and** 4-card support. Same meaning as the standard Limit raise.

4♠/4♥ is the '**P'** shows **0-6** HCP **and** 5-card support. It is purely preemptive; a LOTT 10-card fit.

3♠/3♥ is the **'A'**mbiguous Splinter showing up to **12** HCP the standard Bergen 4-card support and a undisclosed singleton or void. In other words an unbalanced hand; with 13+ and a balanced hand we would use **Strong Jacoby Trump Raise.** Partner can bid 3NT asking for the location of the singleton or void.

Some players reverse the meanings of the two minor suit responses, this is referred to as **reverse Bergen.** This reverses the sonorous acronym but so does our ordered explanations. Does it matter if it's **CLAP**, **LCAP**, **LCPA** or **CLPA?**   The bids work their magic once partnerships agree on the meaning of: 1♠-P-3♣

1♠-P-3♦

1♠-P-3♥

1♠-P-3♠ and 1♠-P-4♠. There are, after-all, only 5 meaningful, information-packed bids to remember.

1♠-P-2♠ still shows 3-Card support and 6-9/10 HCP. 3-Card support and 10+ HCP is shown by bidding a   second suit (at the 2-level) and then delayed support for Partner's Major.

You might have noted that when one combines Bergen Raises, Jacoby Trump Raise and Splinters you have the ability to describe practically any hand you might hold.   You might want to know if Bergen raises are ON or OFF if the intervening opponent bids. The answer is that they are OFF! The reason is simple: The interference can only be a (a) Dbl (X), (b) a suit bid or (c) a Conventional bid. Conventional bids (Michaels and UNT) are more complicated and treated separately so lets look at (a) and (b).

(a) Takeout Double: we use a Convention called Jordan 2NT for our **L**; the 2N response after a TOD indicates a Limit+ raise with 3+Card support. Note: JORDAN ONLY PROMISES 3-Card support. Re-Double (XX) shows 10+HCP with less than 3-Card support. 1♠-P-2♠ still shows 3-Card support and 6-9/10 HCP.

(b) Any suit bid: Cue bid opponents suit to show Limit+ raise (3+Card). Raise to 3-level for **P** (4-

Card).

(a) & (b) The standard Splinter bid remains available to show 10+ HCP and singleton or void.