



Marty Bergen
www.martybergen.com

Better Bridge with Bergen

Declarer's short suits after a raise

Declarer's short suits after a raise are often referred to as declarer points. A singleton in declarer's hand is a two-point asset.

The declarer in a suit contract often does not have a singleton. Hands with flat distributions, such as: 5-3-3-2, 6-3-2-2 and 7-2-2-2, deserve their length-points but don't deserve much for short suits. So, when counting points for declarer's doubletons: With one doubleton, do not add anything. With two or three doubletons, add exactly one point only.

What about a void? The traditional value of declarer's void after a fit is 3 points. I recommend counting declarer's void as 4 points, however, after partner supports your suit.

Nice to have something on the side

When partner raises you, having four cards in a side suit is significant, even if the suit is weak. You should

Many players know that a five-card side suit is a huge asset, but why is a four-card side suit such a big deal? The reason is that the defenders are rarely able to capture the fourth card in your side suit. If neither defender has four cards in your side suit, your fourth card will be a winner after you draw trumps.

On other deals, you can ruff your fourth card in dummy or discard it on dummy's winner in another suit.

Let's take one last look at the North Carolina hands from last month:

♠ J 8 6 ♥ A J 10 8 ♦ A J 9 6 4 ♣ J
♠ A 9 7 5 4 3 2 ♥ 3 ♦ 2 ♣ A K 9 5

Why is 6♠ a great slam? One reason is declarer's 4-card club suit. If the ♣5 was the ♥5 or ♦5, you wouldn't want to be in slam. In addition to counting 2 points for each singleton, adding one point for the useful side suit is accurate. If I were asked the value of declarer's hand after partner raised, my answer would be 21. 11 HCP + 3 (length) = 14 starting points.

Then, after partner raises, add 4 (shortness) plus 2 (trump length) plus 1 (4 clubs) = 21. Some would call this inflation. I call it bridge.

The following exercise will consist of three examples. Dummy will have the same hand for all three. Your hands will be very similar, but not identical. The only difference in your cards will be your distribution in the three side suits.

Dummy is:

♠ K 6 5 ♥ A K J 10 ♦ K 10 ♣ A 9 5 3.

How would you fare in 6♥ if your hand was:

1. ♠ A 8 2 ♥ Q 9 8 4 3 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ 6 4
2. ♠ A 8 ♥ Q 9 8 4 3 ♦ A 7 5 2 ♣ 6 4
3. ♠ A 8 ♥ Q 9 8 4 3 ♦ A 7 5 3 2 ♣ 4

1. 6♥ is a terrible contract. You expect to lose a spade and a club and win only 11 tricks.
2. Definitely better. Moving your ♠2 into diamonds to create 5-4-2-2 distribution made your spade loser disappear. You are almost certain to win 12 tricks.
3. Now we're really talking. "5-5, come alive."

With this hand, not only is 6♥ cold, but you are a heavy favorite to win all 13 tricks.

It's time for a word (or two) about my adding a point (or two). I'm sure that some of you are not entirely comfortable when I add points, and do believe that it is inflationary.

I believe, however, that the three examples above demonstrate how valuable side suits are. Don't they richly deserve their modest point (or two)? I think they do. □

Solutions for holiday shopping needs!
A. Online lessons: Bidding-Dec 10, 12; Declaring Suit Contracts — Jan 7, 9. If dates not ok, we have nice option.
B. 8 new booklets with free shipping. Order any #. Special offer thru Jan 1.
C. Jan. 2-day getaway Naples seminar. To order w/ best prices or get details, go to www.martybergen.com or call Marty at 800-386-7432.

When partner raises you,
four cards in a side suit is
significant, even if the suit is weak.