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Better Bridge with Bergen

What's the point?

A discussion of adding distribution points in different situations should be helpful. Let's look at three hands. Then, I'll take you through four bidding situations with them. Here are the hands:

1. ♠A J 8 5 2 ♥A Q 9 2 ♦K 4 ♣4 3
2. ♠A J 8 5 2 ♥A Q 9 ♦K 6 5 4 2 ♣—
3. ♠A J 8 5 4 2 ♥A Q 9 ♦K 6 4 ♣4

Notice that all three hands have 14 high-card points and identical honor cards. Let's focus on distribution.

Situation A: You are the dealer. Obviously, you will open 1♠ on all three hands. The only question you need to answer is: Before the auction begins, how many starting points do you have?

Hand 1. 14 HCP + 1 length point (five-card suit). You have 15 starting points.

Hand 2. 14 HCP + 2 points (two five-card suits). You have 16 starting points.

Hand 3. 14 HCP + 2 points (six-card suit). You have 16 starting points.

Reflection: Although hands No. 2 and No. 3 have the same totals, I'd rather have 5-5-3-0 shape than

6-3-3-1.

Situation B: Partner opens 1♥. Whether you plan to raise hearts now or show your spades, because you have a heart fit, the relevant concept is dummy points.

All you have to do is add your short-suit points to the starting points that you already added in situation A. The only other issue is the obvious one of deciding what to bid.

Hand No. 1 has 15 starting points. Add 2 points for your two doubletons, so you have 17 dummy points. Your correct response is Jacoby 2NT.

Hand No. 2 has 16 starting points. Because you have three hearts, you should add only 3 points for your void. The total is 19 dummy points. Respond 1♠.

Hand No. 3 has 16 starting points. Because you have three hearts, you get to add only 2 points for your singleton. The total is 18 dummy points. Obviously, the correct response here is 1♠.

Situation C: You open 1♠ and partner responds 2NT (Jacoby 2NT). Partner promises four or more spades and 13 or more dummy points. How many Bergen Points do you have? What would you bid?

Hand No. 1. 14 HCP + 1 (five spades) = 15 starting points. Add 1 (two doubletons) + 1 (four hearts) so the total = 17 Bergen Points. With a medium opening bid and no short suit, the recommended Jacoby rebid is 3NT (forcing).

Hand No. 2. 14 HCP + 2 (two five-card suits) = 16 starting points.

Add 4 (void) + 1 (five-card side suit after being raised). Total = 21 Bergen Points, so bid 3♣ to show a void or singleton.

Hand No. 3. 14 HCP + 2 (six trumps) = 16 starting points. Add 2 (singleton) + 1 (sixth trump).

Total = 19 Bergen Points. The correct bid is 3♣.

Situation D: Sometimes you won't have a fit.

<i>Partner</i>	<i>You</i>
1♣	1♠
3♣	?

Partner has an invitational hand with a strong suit of six or more clubs. The correct bids are 3♥, 3♦ and 3♠, respectively. Each of these bids is forcing.

Although you are far from sure that you will end up in clubs, on hand No. 1, you have a fit in partner's suit. You have 15 starting points. Add one point for the doubleton, and you have 16 dummy points.

When you're short in partner's suit (hand No. 2 and No. 3), you should count only HCP. Being short in partner's long, strong suit is *not* a good thing. Unless you find a fit later, the value of both hands is merely 14 HCP. When you sense a misfit, proceed with caution. □

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