

Having fun with bridge on line #3

Bergen-ing around

by RAKESH KUMAR



Rakesh Kumar describes himself as an enthusiast who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

This column features another 3 deals from online pairs events, all involving Bergen raises. Do you play these? They help to quickly establish a 9+ card major suit fit and are thus often very useful, either because of their pre-emptive value or because they enable the partnership to reach game with fewer combined high card points.

This first deal illustrates the pre-emptive effect of a Bergen raise, as well as the notion that a weak hand with extra shape should "take the push". After South's 1♠ opening and West's takeout double, North's 3♠ bid by agreement showed 4-6 hcp and 4+ support. This was a potentially effective pre-empt, but East was not dissuaded and bid 4♥.

Board 7

Dealer S | Vul All

♠ J2 ♥ KQ43 ♦ AJ4 ♣ KQ82		♠ 9863 ♥ ♦ T75 ♣ A97543	♠ KT ♥ JT765 ♦ Q986 ♣ JT
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W	N	E	S
			1S
X	3S	4H	P
P	4S	P	P
X	//		

When South and West passed, North decided that his hand had additional playing strength in offence but hardly any in defence, so went on to 4♠ despite being vulnerable. West doubled, although with only one ace and no trump trick, this was unwise – and on the lead of ♥K, 4♠ was made without difficulty.

This deal featured in a 64-table ABF Nationwide pairs event. On the day, 8 played in 4♠ doubled, for an excellent score, while another 20 played in 4♠ undoubled. The 8 EW pairs who were allowed to play in 4♥ scored very well indeed, as the contract usually went only 1 down. Perhaps that result says something about the importance of bidding on after the opponents have found a 9+ card fit via a Bergen raise.

This next deal, from a MasterBridge pairs session, also illustrates the merits of bidding over a Bergen raise:

Board 19

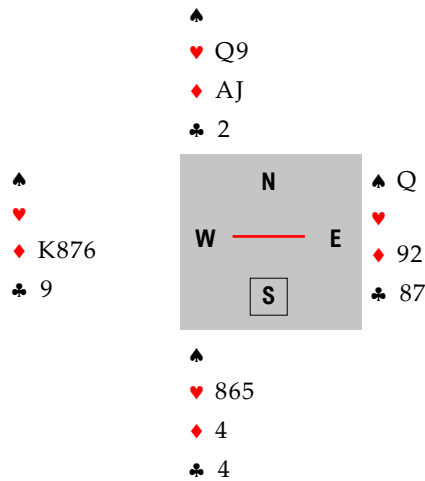
Dealer S | Vul E-W

♠ KJ32 ♥ J ♦ K8763 ♣ JT9		♠ T85 ♥ Q972 ♦ AJT ♣ Q62	♠ AQ74 ♥ T3 ♦ Q92 ♣ K875
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W	N	E	S
			1H
X	3C	3S	//

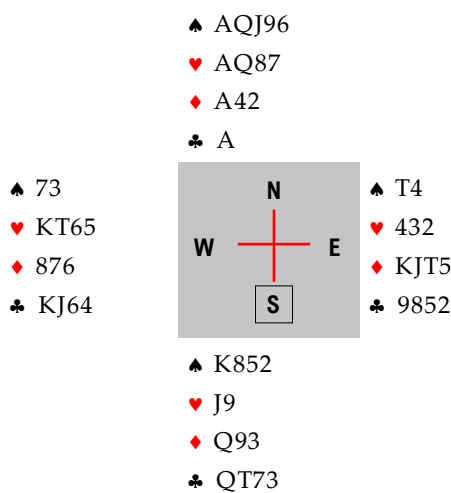
Despite adverse vulnerability, West made a very light takeout double of South's 1♥ opening, based almost entirely on shape. North's 3♣ bid was a Bergen raise showing 4+ support and 7-9 hcp. East now bid 3S and was allowed to play the contract, but given dummy's limited assets, making it needed the cards to lie favourably in at least one of the minor suits.

South led ♥A and, concerned that a diamond switch might finesse partner, chose to continue with the king. Declarer ruffed in dummy and ran the ♣J, successfully forcing the ace. Now it seemed more likely that North held the ♦A, so South switched to ♦5, which ran to the 10 and queen. East drew trumps in 3 rounds, finishing in dummy to repeat the club finesse. This time North covered and East won with the king. The position was as below. How will you play?



While you think about that, from the same pairs session, here is a thin slam that was reached because of a Bergen raise:

Board 23
Dealer S | Vul All



W	N	E	S
			P
P	1S	P	3C
P	4NT	P	5D
P	6S	//	

North opened a very strong 1♠ and heard South bid 3♣, again showing 4+ support and 7-9 hcp. Now there was no stopping North, who checked for keycards and duly arrived in 6♠. However, this turned out to need a lot of things to be right: the heart and diamond kings had to be in the correct hands and unless trumps were 2-2, the ♥10 also needed to be on side. As it happened, all of these things are true. Two of 11 pairs bid to slam and were richly rewarded. Four pairs made 2 overtricks for a reasonable score ... anything else was below average.

And finally, back to that second hand. In the diagrammed position, the defence has won one heart and one club trick. From declarer's perspective, there appear to be 2 diamond losers, but at least the contract will now make. However, it's pairs, the game in which greed is good ... could South have led from the ♦J? If so, running ♦9 will yield an overtrick!

When North takes the ♦9 with the jack, s/he can make things awkward by forcing declarer with ♥Q. Now declarer has an additional problem: although there are 2 club winners, the suit is blocked because dummy's last card is ♣9, which means there is a real risk of going down. The problem is solved by a jettison play. Ruff the ♥Q, discarding ♣9 from dummy, and cash the ♣87 to make 9 tricks! ♠