

## Splinters

### Rationale

Last lesson, we looked at confirming the fit below the game level when responder held a flattish hand. This lesson examine fit-showing bids when a shortage is present. These singletons and voids are called *splinters*. Let's review the meaning of changes of suit by responder:-

- 1H – 2C *Simple shift*. Natural club suit and forcing, 10+HCP
  - 1H – 3C *Jump Shift*. Whatever you & partner agree. 16+HCP & 5 card suit? etc
  - 1H – 4C *Double Jump Shift*. Not used?
- Most pairs use the double jump shift to show a game forcing splinter raise. Here, responder is showing a singleton or void, at least three hearts and sufficient values for game. Opener revalues his hand in the knowledge of partner's hand. Singletons are far more common than voids. So, this is the presumed holding. With no real slam interest, opener simply rebids 4H. *Fast Arrival*. A new suit by opener shows extra values with interest in pursuing slam.

- Responder can also show slam interest in a contested auction:-  
1H – (1S) – 3S – (4S) 2S would be a stopper ask.  
? So, 3S is a splinter just as  
1H – 3S would be a splinter. This is a far better bid than 4H by responder. 4H *could* be the *weak freak* leaving opener poorly placed if (when!) they bid 4S. The more they bid spades, the more we like our hands. Those spade values will be wasted.

- Splinter raises are also possible in the minors.  
1D – 3H! Again with the double jump shift.  
This shows a singleton hearts and 5 diamonds.

- Opener may also make a splinter raise of responder' suit:-  
1D – 1S Again with the double jump shift.  
4C Opener has 4 spades, singleton club and sufficient for game. Failure to splinter means that opener's game raise is based on 19 – 20 HCP.  
1D – 1S Opener is giving a huge balanced  
4S raise in spades.

- Some pairs won't splinter unless they have an extra trump. Others – and this is fairly common – won't splinter with a singleton honour.

- Occasionally, responder can splinter on opener's second suit:-  
1S – 2C OK, it's not a double jump shift.  
2H – 4D However, 3D would be 4<sup>th</sup> suit forcing and with a natural diamond suit, responder would bid NT. If it is not a splinter, it will certainly be a heart raise with a diamond control (ace or king).

- Sometimes, opener can make an "auto splinter".  
1S – (2H) – 2S – (3H)  
4H – (P) – 4S  
Opener is clearly strong enough to bid 4S. The reason for the splinter is to focus responder on what to do over their 5H, if they bid it.

- Splinters opposite 1NT opening.  
If you're really into splinters, try this torture:-  
1NT – 2H! 3C would be natural and forcing. To  
2S – 4C make opener pick a black suit, we  
bid 3C and then 4C. So, this 4C is an auto-splinter.  
Of course, responder must have six spades.  
1NT – 2C! 4D as a splinter is the only "obvious"  
2S – 4D meaning for the bid

Try bidding these hands. West is dealer.

|        |        |                 |     |
|--------|--------|-----------------|-----|
| ♠832   | ♠4     | 1H              | 3S! |
| ♥AQT76 | ♥K43   | 4C <sup>1</sup> | 4H  |
| ♦KQ3   | ♦A976  | all pass.       |     |
| ♣K3    | ♣A8765 |                 |     |

<sup>1</sup> Opener likes the splinter and makes a forward move. Responder gets cold feet after the minimum splinter. Trump leads (recommended) will shoot slam efforts.

|        |       |                 |                  |
|--------|-------|-----------------|------------------|
| ♠AQ76  | ♠K954 | 1H              | 1S               |
| ♥KQ963 | ♥A5   | 4C <sup>1</sup> | 4D <sup>2</sup>  |
| ♦AQ7   | ♦K843 | 4H <sup>2</sup> | 4NT <sup>3</sup> |
| ♣6     | ♣832  | 5S              | 6S               |

<sup>1</sup> Opener can easily reach game with his 4 loser.

<sup>2</sup> Responder, with his 8 loser is ready to co-operate.

<sup>3</sup> RKC Blackwood confirms the slam.

|        |       |                 |                 |
|--------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ♠K32   | ♠5    | 1H              | 3S!             |
| ♥AQT76 | ♥K432 | 4C <sup>1</sup> | 4D <sup>2</sup> |
| ♦KQ3   | ♦A976 | 4H <sup>3</sup> | 4NT             |
| ♣K3    | ♣AQ87 | 5D              | 6H <sup>4</sup> |

<sup>1</sup> Despite the wasted SK, opener wisely makes a forward move with his extra values.

<sup>2</sup> Responder co-operates.

<sup>3</sup> Opener doesn't want to appear too keen.

<sup>4</sup> Responder would like to know about HQ. Even without it, the 9<sup>th</sup> trump could well be enough.

|       |                     |                  |      |
|-------|---------------------|------------------|------|
| ♠AQ86 | ♠5                  | 1D               | 3S!  |
| ♥AT65 | ♥KQ2                | 3NT <sup>1</sup> | pass |
| ♦K74  | ♦AQ <sup>T</sup> 53 |                  |      |
| ♣Q7   | ♣A963               |                  |      |

<sup>1</sup> 3NT looks to be enough from opener's point of view.

On a good day 6D makes. On a bad day 5D fails.

The field will be in 3NT at pairs. Go with them here.

|        |        |                 |                   |
|--------|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
| ♠AQ876 | ♠K43   | 1S              | 2D <sup>1</sup>   |
| ♥KT76  | ♥A765  | 2H              | 4C <sup>2</sup>   |
| ♦K92   | ♦AQ743 | 4D <sup>3</sup> | 4NT               |
| ♣6     | ♣9     | 5H              | pass <sup>4</sup> |

<sup>1</sup> Responder could splinter immediately showing his spade support but doesn't want to give up on hearts or even diamonds as possible slams.

<sup>2</sup> Opener can hardly believe the splinter when he has a singleton club too! Still it means all HCP are working, so he co-operates by bidding 4D

<sup>4</sup> Missing an ace and HQ is too much. So, 6H can't make. They will certainly lead a club. Annoyingly, both 6D and 6S can make if both suits break 3-2.

• For a more detailed treatment, read Max Hardy's "*Splinters And Other Shortness Bids*"