

Inverted Minors

In general, great bidding aims to determine if the following contracts are possible

- 3N
- 4♥/♠
- 5♣/♦

Normally, a major suit fit is preferred to 3N, which is far preferred to 5♣/♦. Occasionally, responder knows that 4♥/♠ are contracts out of the question, and there is an issue determining whether to play 3N or 5♣/♦. Take the following South hand:

N	E	S	W
1♦	P	?	

♠xxx ♥KJx ♦AQJxx ♣Kxx

3N will fail if partner doesn't have ♠s covered (example, ♠xx ♥Axxx ♦Kxxxx ♣AJ), but then 5♦ has a reasonable shot. However, if partner holds something resembling ♠KQT ♥Axx ♦Kxxx ♣Qxx, 3N looks more reasonable.

Consider responder's options: 3N (unsafe, given the observation above), 5♦ (see above), 3♦ (passable, and an understatement of the hand), 2N (also passable and a very big understatement)... there's simply no ideal bid for South.

The Solution

One idea is to simply change the meaning of the auctions

- 1♦ - 2♦ and
- 1♣ - 2♣

Rather than define these bids as simple raises (6-9 HCP, 4+cd raise), they are now **invitational or better with 4+ cd support**. The raise is forcing to 3m (three of the agreed minor suit).

This agreement allows opener and responder to exchange information about other suits below the 3N level. Thus, the partnership can determine whether 3N is playable or not.

Opener's Rebids

After 1♣-2♣, opener shows his earliest stoppers. For example,

- 1♣ - 2♣
- 2♦ ♦ stopper, any strength
- 2♥ ♥ stopper, no ♦ stopper, any strength
- 2♠ ♠ stopper, no ♦ or ♥ stopper, any strength
- 2N all suits stopped, minimum (responder can pass)
- 3♣ minimum, unbalanced (responder can pass)

After 1♦ - 2♦,

2♥ ♥ stopper, any strength

2♠ ♠ stopper, no ♥ stopper, any strength

2N all suits stopped, minimum (responder can pass)

3♣ ♣ stopper, no ♥/♠ stopper, any strength

3♦ minimum, unbalanced (responder can pass)

It's important to note that since the initial raise is INVITATIONAL OR BETTER, the partnership may stop short of game when 3N isn't playable and responder has a minimum. For example,

1♦ - 2♦¹ 1: 10+ HCP, 4+♦, f3♦

3♣² - 3♥³ 2: ♣ stopper, no ♥/♠ stopper, any strength 3: Asking for ½ ♥ stopper

4♦⁴ - P⁵ 4: No ½ ♥ stopper, minimum 5: Minimum, judges there are not 11 tricks

Had opener had extra values, he could jump to game or make a cuebid.

Some other passable sequences occur when either party bids 2N or 3 of the minor. For example,

1♦ - 2♦

2N

1♦ - 2♦

2♥ - 2N

1♣ - 2♣

2♦ - 2♥

2♠ - 2N

Dealing with Interference

First and foremost, inverted minors are OFF after an immediate double or overcall of the opening. So

1♦ (X) 2♦ is a normal simple raise. Responder can bid 2N (Jordan for the minors) or XX with a limit raise or better

1♦ (1♠) 2♦ is also a normal simple raise. Responder will make a cuebid (2♠) with stronger raises.

Occasionally, an opponent will overcall or make a takeout double of the forcing raise. For example,

1♦ (P) 2♦ (2♥)

?

In this situation, the opening side would like to sort out stoppers for NT, penalize the opponents appropriately, and compete effectively on hands that belong in a partscore. Thus, the following scheme is suggested:

P Forcing, normally to penalize 2♥

X $\frac{1}{2}$ ♥ stopper
 2♠ ♠ stopper, no ♥ stopper
 2N GF, implies slam interest, balanced (note* open to interpretation)
 3♣ ♣ stopper, no ♥ stopper
 3♦ Competitive (responder can pass)
 3♥ Splinter, 0-1♥, implies slam interest

Responder's bidding is pretty straightforward after all of these bids aside from Pass and X. To clarify,

1♦ P 2♦ 2♥
 P P ?

X Unable to bid otherwise; will tolerate defending 2♥X
 2♠ ♠ stopper, no ♥ stopper
 2N (Idle – needs definition!)
 3♣ ♣ stopper, no ♥/♠ stopper
 3♦ Competitive (opener can pass)
 3♥ (Idle – Needs definition!)

1♦ P 2♦ 2♥
 X P ?

P To defend 2♥X
 2♠ ♠ stopper, implies supporting ♥ stopper unless interested in slam
 2N (Idle)
 3♣ ♣ stopper, no ♠ stopper, implies supporting ♥ stopper unless interested in slam
 3♦ Minimum, no supporting $\frac{1}{2}$ stopper in ♥

Of course, the higher the overcall is, the less precision available in showing all possible hands. At the moment, there is no great solution to this.

Another important situation arises when the auction goes something like

1♦ - P - 2♦ - 2♥
 X - 3♥ - ?

Here, responder cannot just bid 3N with all hands with $\frac{1}{2}$ a ♥ stopper, as opener may be minimum. Thus, the following is recommended:

P no ♥ stopper
 X $\frac{1}{2}$ ♥ stopper, minimum values (now opener can pass to convert to penalty or bid 3N).
 3♠ (Idle – perhaps this is a cuebid towards slam?)
 3N Extra values (at least an opening hand), $\frac{1}{2}$ ♥ stopper

If the opponents double initially, all bids remain the same, except that passing shows a minimum hand (or a penalty oriented hand for one suit), and redoubling implies interest in penalizing the opponents in a major suit.

A Modification: Criss Cross

Occasionally, the inverted minor auction is uncomfortable because the auction can stop below game. To fix this, some players use two bids to distinguish between invitational and game forcing \diamond raises:

$1\diamond - 2\diamond$ shows a GF \diamond raise

$1\diamond - 3\clubsuit$ is artificial and implies an invitational, distributional \diamond raise

$1\clubsuit - 2\clubsuit$ shows a GF \clubsuit raise

$1\clubsuit - 2\diamond$ is artificial and implies an invitational, distributional \diamond raise

The bidding style on both situations remains the same, in and out of competition – 3N is the contract to find, so bids of new suits below 3N are stopper showing.

The Drawbacks

The trouble with not having a simple raise available is that there is no perfect bid with a hand like

$\spadesuit xx \heartsuit xxx \diamond KJxx \clubsuit Qxxx$

After partner opens 1m, responder has to accept either bidding 1N (right on values, but sketchy) or raising partner's minor to the three level (which is preemptive, but is a slight overbid). In practice, however, the opponents have some sort of major suit fit which they must compete in at the appropriate level.

Responder will also have a problem with hands that would normally make a weak jump shift in the other minor. After a $1\diamond$ opening, responder should either pass or try 1N with

$\spadesuit xx \heartsuit xx \diamond Kxx \clubsuit KJxxxx$

Similarly, after $1\clubsuit$ responder is obligated to bid $1\diamond$ on hands resembling

$\spadesuit xxx \heartsuit x \diamond KJxxxx \clubsuit Qxx$

This will make life easier for the opponents on these hands, as they have several bids available to find their major suit fits.