

Criss-Cross Minor Raises

Simple, *Preemptive* & *Forcing*

Use 1C-2D and 1D-3C as *Invitational or Better Minor Raises* presented by Mike Savage

For those partnerships who play Inverted Minors, how many times have you been dealt something like x xxx J10xxx AQxx and your partner opened 1D and the next hand passed? How many times have you had something like xx xxx xxx AK10xx and your partner opened 1C and the next hand passed? Playing Inverted Minors, the prevailing wisdom is that your best of bad bids is 1NT. This not only miss-describes your hand, it also wrong-sides no-trump—especially if your partner has 18-19 balanced points.

Your other alternatives are to overbid and make an Inverted Minor raise—or *underbid* and make a preemptive jump raise. Change the 1st hand to x Qxx J10xxx Axxx and you might try responding 1H and hope to survive what happens next. Yuck! Isn't there a *better* way to handle these hands?

Yes, my friends, there is! Play *Criss-Cross Minor Raises*. Here is how it works. Keep 1C-3C and 1D-3D as preemptive but play 1C-2C & 1D-2D as purely simple raises (like they used to be *before* Inverted Minors). All that is required to do this and still have an invitational-or-better raise of the minor available is to give up whatever a jump-shift in the other minor currently means in your partnership (preemptive, invitational or strong). Play that a jump-shift in the other minor (1C-2D & 1D-3C) shows an invitational or better raise of opener's minor. Playing *Criss-Cross* you can still stop in a part-score if you wish—or bid on.

One downside to this method is that after opening 1D, opener can't rebid 2NT over an invitational or better minor raise (since that bid is now 3C) and with a weak balanced hand and no game interest, he must sign-off in 3D instead. This seems to be a small trade-off (especially in IMPs) alongside the ability of responder to show a weak hand with a fit in opener's minor and also not wrong-side play in no-trump (especially when opener has a big balanced hand). Here's how Jeff "Sharp" Fang and I play *Criss-Cross*:

1C-2C = 7-9/10 HCP, should have five trumps and a hand unsuitable to bid 1D or 1NT.

1C-2D = **Limit Raise or better** (10/11-12+). No 4-card major and if limit, should have 5+ card support.

2H/2S/3D = Should show no-trump stoppers usually with one unstopped major if balanced. Doesn't necessarily show any extra values.

2NT = A minimum opener with the majors stopped, balanced and prefers to play 2NT to 3C.

3C = Shows a minimum opening hand, unsuitable to bid no-trump.

3H/3S/4D = Splinter raise of clubs showing shortness and may have slam interest.

3NT = Shows enough values for game, major stoppers and is at least semi-balanced.

4C = Roman Key-card for clubs.

4NT = Natural and invitational with 18-19 HCP or so and is at least semi-balanced.

1C-3C = 0-6 HCP and the fewer the points, the better the trump support and distribution.

1D-2D = 7-9/10 HCP, should have five trumps and a hand very unsuitable to bid 1NT.

1D-3C = **Limit Raise or better** (10/11-12+). No 4-card major and if limit, should have 5+ card support.

3D = Shows a minimum opener, may or may not be balanced.

3H/3S = Shows at least values for game with a stopper in suit bid and if balanced, denies a stopper in the other major.

3NT = Shows sufficient values for game, a balanced/semi-balanced hand with major stoppers.

4C/4H/4S = Splinter raise of diamonds showing shortness and usually with slam interest.

4D = Roman Key-card for diamonds.

4NT = Natural and invitational, 18-19 HCP or so and is at least semi-balanced.

1D-3D = 0-6 HCP and the fewer the points, the better the trump support and distribution.