

RAISING IN COMPETITION

A bid of the opponents' suit is rarely "natural"¹, for if we have length in the opponents' suit(s), we tend to aim for notrumps. Instead of showing length, a bid of the opponents' suit(s) tends to show:

- a) SUPPORT FOR PARTNER'S SUIT, and
- b) A BETTER HAND THAN RAISING DIRECTLY WOULD DO

So, W N E S
1♥ 1♠ P 2♥! ...does not show hearts. It shows;

- a) SUPPORT FOR PARTNER (3 or more spades in this case as partner showed 5 or more), and
- b) A BETTER HAND THAN "2♠" WOULD SHOW (experts are fond of the phrase; "invitational, or better, values")

This is called a "CUE RAISE". Because it is:

- 1) A BID OF THE OPPONENTS' SUIT ("CUE")
- 2) SHOWS SUPPORT FOR PARTNER'S SUIT ("RAISE")

Here are some other bids that show support for partner and a good hand:

W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S	W	N	E	S
2♥	3♣	P	3♥	1♥	1♠	P	2♥	1♣	1♥	X	2♣

So with the basics out of the way, let's take a look at the corollary:

Pre-emptive freedom:

¹ A "natural" bid is one which shows LENGTH in a suit (say, 4 or more cards), and a willingness to play with that suit as trumps.

W	N	E	S	Sitting South, you hold:
1♥	1♠	P	?	♠J876
				♥4
				♦Q632
				♣T965

What do you bid?

Well, you're hardly worth a raise if you're a point counter, but there's no doubt that West would dislike hearing you bid 3♠. If you've agreed to play cue-raises, a bid of 3♠ will not deceive your partner. They will know you're weak by the following logic: "If you had an invitational(+) hand, you would have made a cue-raise. 3♠ can only be pre-emptive (3-8 total points, or thereabouts)"

W	N	E	S	The same principle applies if your side opens:
	1♥	2♣	?	♠98
				♥QT43
				♦QT983
				♣42

Here you should shove your 9-card fit in the opponents' faces! bid 3♥! Partner knows you don't have a strong hand because you didn't bid 3♣.

So when is a cue-raise not a cue-raise?

Here's a common misunderstanding:

W	N	E	S
1C	P	1H	1S
2S			

Here, West is not showing a heart fit. If she had a fit for hearts, she could bid 2H (12-14), 3H (15-17) or 4H (18-19) - opener doesn't need a "pre-emptive" option with long trumps as she's extremely unlikely to hold more than 4 hearts.

Instead, West's cue-bid here says "strong hand, partner. Forcing". Which suit could West have wanted to bid but would not be forcing? That's right, it's clubs. West is odds on to have a long club suit and enough points for game. If West had diamonds, she could force by bidding 3D. If spades, she could bid 3NT. And if hearts, she'd raise

to 4H. Her hand therefore probably looks something like this:

♠J
♥Q3
♦AQ5
♣AKQT865

So we can deduce this rule: Opener can't cue-raise.²

W	N	E	S	
1H	2D	P	3C	
P	3H			What is North doing here?

The simple answer is; she's stalling.

South has forced to game by bidding a new suit at the 3-level. And North has run out of room to be cute. When we have only bid minor suits, we prioritize 3NT. North would have bid 3NT had she a stopper in hearts. She therefore has no heart stopper. South is obliged to bid 3NT now if she has one.

It looks also like: Overcaller can't cue-raise³ either. Is the following auction an exception to that idea...?

W	N	E	S	
1C	1D	P	1S	
P	2C			Here, North might well have a fit for South's spades, but she hasn't promised it. She might have:

♠K
♥AQ3
♦AKJT765
♣Q3

She sensibly chose not to double over 1C with shortage in spades and now has no way to force, other than the enemy suit. South will further describe her hand, safe in the knowledge that North has the goodies to keep the auction sailing upwards.

² Like all rules in bridge, we can find counter-examples. We'll see one below where opener's bid cannot logically be other than a cue-raise

³ see footnote 2!

