

Splinter Raises

Tuesday Morning Lecture

Splinter raises are tightly defined, used to get to slams that are not otherwise biddable if we are guided by high card points alone. Splinters don't happen very often, but when they do, they are very effective. Splinter bids have been used since the 1960's. You will find it on your convention card under "Major Opening". Partner must alert your Splinter raise. If asked you say, "Splinter raise: 4+ support and shortness in x".

Splinters are often used by Responder to a major suit opening. Responder's hand evaluates to 13 to 16 Dummy points. Responder shows 4+ card support of opener's suit, 10-13 HCP with a singleton or 9-11 HCP with a void. Responder should not make a Splinter raise if he has the ace or the king in the Splinter suit because it is too difficult for Opener to accurately evaluate his hand. The Splinter paints a clear picture.

The Splinter is a double jump-shift by either Responder or Opener. Partner will usually remember the gadget and alert. 1♠ - 4♦ is rarely misplayed; but 1♠ - 4♥ may cause confusion. As always, have a firm agreement with your Partner. Splinters are generally fun to use, and do not replace an essential alternative use for the double jump-shift.

When evaluating opposite a Splinter raise, be bold with all low cards in the Splinter suit; but be cautious with shortage and/or the King or Queen of the Splinter suit. Axx in the Splinter suit is OK, but not as good as xxx.

Here are a five examples with you as Responder after Partner opens 1♠. What is your bid? Remember that a Splinter shows 13-16 Dummy points.

Hand (A) ♠QJ83 ♥7 ♦AK32 ♣J432

Hand (B) ♠Q9832 ♥AK32 ♦ - ♣6432

Hand (C) ♠AQ83 ♥Q432 ♦AK32 ♣7

Hand (D) ♠Q6432 ♥K76 ♦Q532 ♣7

Hand (E) ♠T8632 ♥A42 ♦KQJT2 ♣ -

Hand (A): 11 HCP + 3 points for singleton. Bid 4♥ splinter raise.

Hand (B): 9 HCP + 5 points for void. Bid 4♦ splinter raise.

Hand (C): 15 HCP + 3 points for singleton. This hand is too strong for a Splinter raise. If we incorrectly splintered with ♠AQ83 ♥Q432 ♦AK32 ♣7, Partner would sign-off with good slam hands like:

♠KJxxx ♥Ax ♦QJx ♣Kxx or
♠KJxxx ♥AKx ♦xx ♣Kxx

Hand (D): 7 HCP + 3 points for singleton. Bid 4♠. Responder does not have enough HCP to make a Splinter bid. This is what some call a “weak freak”, which is a super (10+) trump fit, plus a singleton or void, with up to 7 HCP.

Hand (E) 10 HCP + 5 points for void. Too good to splinter; bid 2 Diamonds

Opener could have: ♠AK754 ♥Kxx ♦xx ♣Qxx or ♠AK754 ♥xxx ♦Ax ♣Qxx

From Opener's point of view

You open ♠KQJ96 ♥KJ4 ♦K43 ♣K10 with 1♠. Partner bids 4♥.

Since the King and Jack of Hearts are now non-working cards opposite partner's shortness, Opener's hand reevaluates to 13 HCP instead of 17 HCP. Opener bids 4♠. Even three Aces with Partner are not enough.

Alternatively, opener's hand could be ♠KQJ96 ♥654 ♦AK3 ♣K10

In this case, opener's high card points are all working. Let's envision partner's hand:

♠A754 ♥9 ♦Q865 ♣A876

Between the Opener's and Responder's hands, there are only 26 combined HCPs. The only loser we have, however, is one Heart. Opener should bid Blackwood. When he hears that responder has two Aces, he bids slam. 6 spades bid and made!

Deal 1

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ K Q J 10 2

♥ 2

♦ Q 7 4 3

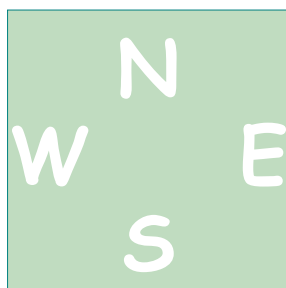
♣ A 7 2

♠ 3

♥ K 10 7 5 4

♦ A 10 5

♣ 10 9 8 5



♠ 7 5

♥ J 9 8 6 3

♦ K 9 2

♣ Q J 6

♠ A 9 8 6 4

♥ A Q

♦ J 8 6

♣ K 4 3

West

North

East

South

Pass

4 ♥!

Pass

1 ♠

4 ♠

All pass

4 ♥ shows 13-16 Support Points; 4+ Trumps; 0-1 ♥'s

South judges that the ♥ Queen is duplicated by the shortness opposite - and signs off.

4 ♠ by South

Opening Lead: ♣ 10

Declarer eliminates ♠'s and ♥'s (ruffing the ♥ Queen), then exits with the third round of ♣'s. Defense is forced to start ♦'s. The ♦ suit is a "frozen" suit. Whoever initiates the ♦ suit will be the worse for it

Deal 2

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A 9 2

♥ Q J 6 5 4

♦ 10 3

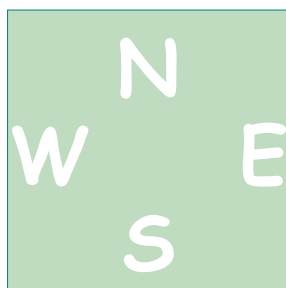
♣ K 10 3

♠ Q 10 5 4

♥ 8 7

♦ Q 9 5 2

♣ Q J 7



♠ K J 8 7 6

♥ 10 9

♦ J 7 6

♣ 9 5 4

♠ 3

♥ A K 3 2

♦ A K 8 4

♣ A 8 6 2

West

North

East

South

Pass

1 ♥

Pass

1 ♦

Pass

6 ♥

All pass

3 ♠!

3 ♠ shows 19-21 Support Points; 4 Trumps; 0-1 ♠s

North judges that the ♠ A92 is strengthened by the shortness opposite - and bids a slam.

6 ♥ by North

Opening Lead: ♥ 10

Declarer eliminates ♠'s and ♥'s; trumps a ♦ in hand; finishes all trump leaving ♣ KTx in hand and ♦ x ♣ Ax in Dummy.

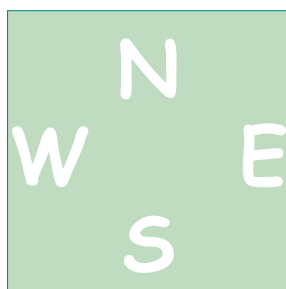
Deal 3

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 5 3
 ♥ 9 6 4
 ♦ A Q 5 4
 ♣ J 8 6 3

♠ Q J 8 7
 ♥ A K 8 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ K 10 9 2



♠ A K 10 9
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ 9 7 2
 ♣ A Q 7 4

♠ 6 4 2
 ♥ Q 10 7 5
 ♦ K J 10 8 6
 ♣ 5

West

North

East

South

1 ♥

Pass

1 ♠

Pass

4 ♦!

Pass

4 NT

Pass

5 ♦

Pass

6 ♠

All pass

4 ♦ shows 13-16 Support Points; 4 Trumps; 0-1 ♦'s

East judges that the ♦ 972 is strengthened by the shortness opposite — and bids a slam.

6 ♠ by East

Opening Lead: ♣ 5

Declarer promptly ruffs two ♥'s (high!) in Hand, using trumps as entries. Then, Dummy draws trump and claims.

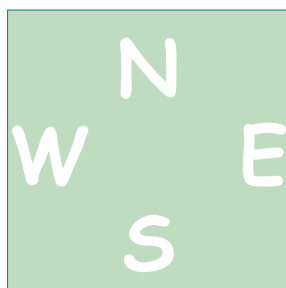
Deal 4

West Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 3
 ♥ K Q 10 4
 ♦ J 10 9 6
 ♣ Q 10 5 2

♠ A K 7 6 5
 ♥ 2
 ♦ A 8 7 5 3
 ♣ 8 6



♠ Q J 10 9
 ♥ A J 7 5
 ♦ 2
 ♣ A 9 4 3

♠ 8 4 2
 ♥ 9 8 6 3
 ♦ K Q 4
 ♣ K J 7

West

North

East

South

1 ♠

Pass

4 ♦!

Pass

5 ♦

Pass

5 ♥

Pass

5 ♠

Pass

6 ♠

All pass

4 ♦ shows 13-16 Support Points; 4+ Trumps; 0-1 ♦'s

West judges that the ♦ A8753 is strengthened by the shortness opposite - and proposes slam via 5 ♦. East gladly accepts.

6 ♠ by West

Opening Lead: ♥ K

Declarer ruffs *four* ♦'s in Dummy – ruffing ♥'s to re-enter his Hand.