

1. Playing Inverted Minor Raises -- Problem

North Deals
E-W Vul



♠ 9 7 2
♥ 7 6 2
♦ K J 10 4
♣ Q 9 7

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	?

Playing matchpoint pairs, our system includes inverted minor raises: a 2 ♦ response would be natural, but forcing, with at least an invitational hand.

What should we do? Does the vulnerability make any difference?

2. Slam Killer -- Problem

West Deals
None Vul



♠ Q 8 3
♥ 6 5
♦ K Q J 8 6 5 2
♣ 8

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 NT	Pass	?

It's with good reason that the 2 NT opening is called the slam killer.

This one shows a balanced hand with 20 to 21 high card points. We are playing regular Stayman, Jacoby & Texas transfers. 3 ♠ has been agreed as minor suit Stayman, without further discussion.

We also have agreed that we could make a natural slam try in diamonds by bidding Stayman, and then bidding 4 ♦ (no longer implying a 4-card major). Our only way to ask for keycards in diamonds would be to do this, and then bid 4 NT.

What should we do, playing matchpoint pairs?

3. Reopening -- Problem

West Deals
N-S Vul



♠ A Q 8 6 4 2
♥ A K 8
♦ 5
♣ 6 5 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	Pass	Pass	?

What should we do?

1. Playing Inverted Minor Raises -- Solution

North Deals	♠ 10 4 3		
E-W Vul	♥ A K 5 3		
	♦ Q 8 6 2		
	♣ A 5		
		♠ K Q 6 5	
		♥ Q 10	
		♦ 9 3	
		♣ K J 8 6 2	
		♠ 9 7 2	
		♥ 7 6 2	
		♦ K J 10 4	
		♣ Q 9 7	
West	North	East	South
	1 ♦	Pass	?

Respond 1 NT, getting there before the opponents. However, pass when vulnerable, possibly avoiding a disaster. After either, it is reasonable to compete with 2 ♦. Nobody makes much on the actual deal.

2. Slam Killer -- Solution

West Deals	♠ K J 9		
None Vul	♥ A J 8 3		
	♦ A 7		
	♣ A K 9 5		
		♠ 10 6 5 4 2	
		♥ 9 7 2	
		♦ 4	
		♣ 10 7 4 3	
		♠ Q 8 3	
		♥ 6 5	
		♦ K Q J 8 6 5 2	
		♣ 8	
West	North	East	South
Pass	2 NT	Pass	?

The acceptable matchpoint contracts on this deal are 3 NT, 4 NT and 6 ♦. For a thin slam, bid the safest!

Bid 4 ♣, Gerber, asking for aces. Partner's 4 NT shows three, and we bid 6 ♦. Finding fewer aces, sign off in 4 NT. The automatic lead of the ♥ K defeats 6 NT, but in 6 ♦, we win, draw trump, pitch a heart, and knock out the ♠ A - making six.

This is the only hand on which I have used Gerber, since I invented crosswood in 2011.

3. Reopening -- Solution

West Deals	♠ 9 7 3		
N-S Vul	♥ J 10		
	♦ K 9 8 6 2		
	♣ K Q 8		
		♠ J 10 5	
		♥ 9 6 4	
		♦ Q 4 3	
		♣ J 10 9 7	
		♠ A Q 8 6 4 2	
		♥ A K 8	
		♦ 5	
		♣ 6 5 4	
West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	Pass	?

Reopen with 2 ♠, which shows a hand such as this. Some players use this as a weak two bid, but common sense says that's a waste of a good bid. The opponents are unlikely to have a game, so there's no need to preempt.

It's much more useful to show a six card suit in a solid opening bid. For details, see *The Complete Book on Balancing*, Revised Edition, by Mike Lawrence.

Here is a response plan to consider:

Our suit is trump; we cannot play in partner's suit.

Pass = any misfit lacking interest in game.
 cue bid = asks for stopper (may be slamming in ♠)
 2 NT = natural game try
 3 NT = to play
 3 raise = support and two (sure) winners
 4 raise = support and three winners
 3 suit = support, two winners, and K or Q in suit

Applying this method to the current deal, North, with too many soft values, passes 2 ♠. Replace the ♦ K with the ♦ A: North either jumps to game or bids 3 ♣. We can accept with club length, or waffle with 3 ♦ (fear of ♣ Qxx).

Frequent readers will notice the adaptation of my game try system, similar to 1 ♠-2 ♠; 2 NT-? With the actual North hand, we don't bid a secondary value when we have them in two side suits.