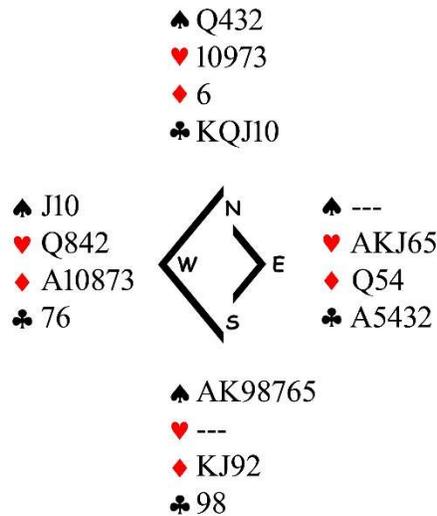


309. Reverse Bergen Raises after an Overcall

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E	S	W	N
1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥	3 ♣
P	4 ♠	P	P
5 ♥	5 ♠	All Pass	

--North South Vulnerable--

Bergen Raises are on after partner overcalls because as was the case for Bergen raises in competition, one gives up nothing because one never wants to be at the three-level in what could be a double misfit situation. In addition, the law of total tricks suggests that one should compete to the three-level with a nine-card fit whether it makes or not.

Reverse Bergen raises just switch the Three Club and Three Diamond responses. This is because it is more likely that Three Diamonds will be needed as a game try when partner has a limit raise and not a constructive raise. Therefore, Three Clubs is the limit raise and Three Diamonds is the constructive raise when one is playing Reverse Bergen raises.

The bidding:

East opens One Heart and South overcalls One Spade. South is far too strong to pre-empt because it is a distributional hand that will go to game opposite a four-card limit raise. West has a simple raise for partner and North shows a four-card limit raise for partner.

The vulnerability is good for a sacrifice so West bids Five Hearts after the opponents get to game on their own. I like Five Hearts immediately after the Three Club bid to give the opponents the last guess, but West did not think it was obvious that the opponents had game.

South, even though the five-level is for the opponents, is pretty sure that 11 tricks are available and bids Five Spades.

The Play:

West leads partner's suit, a Heart. A Club or a Diamond would set up a suit for a discard or two. There is no need to lead a trump because with a five-four fit, one will never stop short hand ruffs when it is looking like trump are two-two. West has no idea that East has a Spade void. A Heart lead is best for partner harmony, and in case declarer can pitch a Heart or two.

When a Diamond is led from dummy, East will rise with the Diamond Ace because discards on the remaining Diamond honours will not help declarer. Normally, an expert East will duck with the Ace and declarer will take the finesse to the Jack losing to the Queen because he will think East does not have the Ace. Therefore, declarer would not get any pitch on the Diamonds. This play is more common in team games but can also occur in matchpoints.

Declarer will lose no cards in the majors and one card in each of the minors making +650.