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THINK back to traditional Acoll: Strong Twos and Weak Threes. It is important to understand the logic behind this. If you have a strong hand, you cannot open it at the one level in case it gets passed out, but you do want to conserve bidding space as much as possible. If you have a weak hand, you want to take up as much space as possible in order to deprive your opponents of bidding space.

This principle has spread into many other areas. In a sequence like (1♥) – 1♠ – (Pass) – 2♥, the last bid is an Unassuming cue-bid, agreeing spades and making a game try. Whereas in (1♥) – 1♠ – (Pass) – 3♠, the last bid is pre-emptive. Traditionally, 1♥ – (Double) – 3♥ was pre-emptive, showing a good raise to 2♥. Nowadays many pairs want to play 1♥ – (Pass) – 3♥ or 1♥ – (1♠) – 3♥ as pre-emptive, genuine raises to the three level being shown by a Jacoby 2NT bid after a pass, or a cue-bid of the opponent's suit after an overcall. So the question is this: 'If the principle of conserving space with a good hand, but destroying space with a fit and a weaker hand is so good in so many areas, why should it not be good if your side opens a minor suit?' I cannot see any logical answer to that, and that in turn leads on to Inverted Minor Raises.

Suppose partner opens 1♣, playing a weak 1NT. You hold Hand A below:

Hand A: ♠ 9 7 ♥ 8 5 4 ♦ K Q 7 6 ♣ Q J 3 2

A passing fairy tells you your partner has a minimum 1♣ opener but offers you the chance to buy the contract in 3♣. Of course you would accept. How would you feel if you knew that 3♣ might go one off? You should still accept. If 3♣ goes one off you can be virtually certain that opponents can make 2♥ or 2♠. It is pure fantasy to imagine that if you raise to 2♣ three passes will follow. Why should competent opponents allow you to buy the contract

Inverted Minor Raises Are a Good Convention

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at the two level when they know you have a fit? If you have a fit, they will also have a fit. If you bid just 2♣ then this sort of auction is likely to develop:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	2♣	Pass
Pass	2♠	3♣	3♣

Your 2♣ invited opponents into the auction: now they have found their fit and out-bid you at the three level. Serves you right! Of course, if you believe that it is right to bid 3♣ over their protective major, wouldn't it be better to try to stop them entering the auction in the first place with a jump to 3♣?

Playing Inverted Minor Raises 1♣ – (Pass) – 3♣ shows a normal raise to 2♣. Of course you don't want to raise to 3♣ with Hand B which has less playing strength but far more defensive strength than Hand A. In that case respond 1NT which must now show 6-9 points, not 8-10 as was the case with traditional Acoll.

Hand B: ♠ Q 7 6 ♥ A J 6 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ 8 5 4 3

So, how about if you are stronger?

Hand C: ♠ K 10 9 ♥ 8 5 ♦ A J 7 6 ♣ K 6 3 2

If partner opens 1♣, respond 2♣ with Hand C. This shows at least the values for a jump-raise to 3♣ and is forcing to 3♣. If either partner bids beyond 3♣ the auction becomes game forcing. Opener often rebids suits where he has values rather than length, for example:

Opener	Responder
♠ 8 5	♠ K 10 9
♥ A Q 2	♥ 8 5
♦ 10 9	♦ A J 7 6
♣ A Q J 7 5 4	♣ K 6 3 2

Opener	Responder
1♣	2♣
2♥	2NT
3NT	

2♥ cannot reasonably be taken as a desire to play in hearts: responder's 2♣ bid denies a four-card heart suit. 2♥ shows heart values, allowing responder to show stoppers in the other two suits with 2NT.

Opener	Responder
♠ A 5	♠ K 10 9
♥ Q J 2	♥ 8 5
♦ Q 10 8	♦ A J 7 6
♣ A Q J 7 5	♣ K 6 3 2



Opener	Responder
1♣	2♣
2NT	3NT

2NT is below 3♣ but logically it must be game forcing. Opener is clearly balanced, and with a balanced 12-14 points he would have opened 1NT. Therefore opener has 15+ points, plenty for game opposite a raise to 3♣.

Finally, imagine the problems you face if you are not playing inverted minors when partner opens 1♣ and you hold Hand D:

Hand D: ♠ A 6 2 ♥ A Q 6 ♦ 7 5 ♣ A Q 7 3 2

You don't seem to have much alternative to either hacking 3NT or some number of clubs, or responding in a short suit and hoping to avoid disaster in the horrible auction that will follow. Playing inverted minors it is easy: start with 2♣ – plenty of time later to show your powerhouse.

So let me weigh up the pros and cons of inverted minor raises.

Pros: Inverted minors are a concept based on logic rather than a convention. There are no significant memory demands, making them easy to play. The raise to the three level deals with weak hands, making it harder for opponents to enter the auction. The constructive raise to 2♣ gives you extra bidding space with stronger hands.

Cons: Um . . . Over to you, Paul. □