Conventional Wisdom - part 2

In each of the next several issues, we’ll break down a section of the new ACBL convention card. See pages 18-19 of the March issue for the complete card and a glossary of terms and abbreviations.

MAJORS
The first boxes are for the normal expected length when your side opens one of a major. This is divided into 1½/2nd and 3rd/4th (to indicate which position you might open a four-card major).

Responses: F is for Forcing 1NT; responder expects opener to bid practically 100% of the time. Semi-F is for Semi-Forcing. This means responder can have up to invitational values, but opener is allowed to pass, usually with a balanced minimum. The Bypass box is checked if responder routinely bids 1NT with four spades; usually because the pair plays Flannery. If you respond 1NT with four spades and three hearts in a normal context, do not check the Bypass box.

On the right, describe any artificial raises. In addition to the 2NT/3NT/Splinter check boxes, you can indicate conventions like Bergen raises in the Other area.

The Other section is for agreements not covered by the boxes. Some examples might be: 3/1 invitational, game-try agreements, or perhaps follow-up bids after 1NT responses.

Jump Raise describes your agreements about 1M–3M. Weak implies less than a constructive raise with four trumps. Mixed can be described as “single raise values with extra trump.” Distribution is subjective, depending on a player’s evaluation. For example, if balanced, they might have the upper range of high-card points. If the hand contains shortness, perhaps fewer.

Invitational is a raise that isn’t forcing to game.