



BARRIER REEF CONGRESS

EDUCATION PROGRAM – CELEBRITY SPEAKERS

PRESENTER: Joan Butts

**TOPIC: CUE BID (PAINLESSLY) TO
SLAM**

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Cuebids exist in many different shapes and forms. Every person at the table – opener, overcaller, responder – is entitled to make a cue bid. The Encyclopaedia of Bridge defines a cue bid as:

“A forcing bid in a suit in which the bidder cannot wish to play”

A cue bid is a convention, and the definition of a convention is:

“A call that is given a specialised meaning, usually contrary to its natural interpretation”

The cue bids for today’s workshop are those that help the partnership find whether there are the requisite controls to bid **small or grand slams**.

Once a trump suit has been agreed, the focus now shifts to **how high to go**. Sometimes there might be enough points for slam, not just game. For small slam, (6 level, 12 tricks) you need 33 combined points, for a grand slam, (7 level, 13 tricks) 37. For slams in no trumps, the main consideration is points, as there is no really long suit to develop. For suit slams, the important issues are **fit, distributional points**, and **controls**.

A **control** is a holding that prevents the opponents from taking too many tricks in a suit. An **ace** is a 1st round control as it will win the first round of the suit led. In trumps, a **void** is a 1st round control too, because you can trump the lead of that suit, and win the trick. A **king** represents a 2nd round control. The opponents can take the first trick with the Ace, but then the king will stop them on the second round. In trumps, a **singleton** is a 2nd round control too. For small slam, the partnership needs 1st-round control in three suits, and at least 2nd-round control in the fourth. To bid a grand slam, the partnership needs 1st-round control in all four suits.

In testing for slam, the Blackwood convention (4NT) will help the partnership find **how many** aces there are, but not **which** aces. It will keep you out of slam when too many aces are missing.

The time to avoid using Blackwood is when there are:

- (1) two or more cards in an unbid suit with no ace or king; or
- (2) a void.

A cue-bid will show **which** ace, or other control, you hold. In turn, partner is expected to show a control too, and the bidding continues back and forth until there’s enough information to either bid a slam, use Blackwood to check other controls, or realise that there are not enough controls for slam, and stop bidding at game or the five-level.

When is it a cuebid and when is it simply a new suit?

- When the partnership is already committed game, the bid of a suit in which the partnership can't want to play is a **cuebid**, showing interest in reaching a slam contract.
- With a choice of cuebids, make the most **economical** (cheapest) cuebid first.

Aces or voids are shown first in cue-bidding sequences. If there are still some questions as to the best contract, the partnership continues by showing 2nd round controls, kings or singletons.

<i>West</i>	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	<i>East</i>
♠AKQ1063	2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass	♠J852
♥QJ9	2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass	♥K763
♦-	4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass	♦Q105
♣AKQ6	5♦	Pass	5♥	Pass	♣84
	6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	

West starts with 2♣ and then bids 2♠ after East's waiting bid of 2♦. East raises to 3♠ in support. West can't use Blackwood, as it won't help to know what to do if partner shows 0 or 1 ace. Instead, West cuebids the ♣A. East doesn't have a first-round control to show and goes back to the agreed trump suit. West hasn't had enough and shows the diamond void by cuebidding 5♦. Having denied the ♥A by failing to cuebid 4♥ previously, East can afford to bid 5♥, showing second-round control, (♥K) That's what West wanted to hear, and the slam is reached.

The partnership needs a way to stop below slam when it doesn't have the required controls, so the **trump suit is not included** when showing controls. A return to the trump suit says "I have nothing further to show". It doesn't necessarily end the auction. Partner may have more to say, but it allows the partnership to stop in game. That's why we can then use Blackwood to find out about controls in the trump suit.

Here are some tips about the cue –bidding process:

- Once the trump suit has been agreed, the bid of a another suit is a control-showing bid, showing interest in slam
- The control-showing process rarely continues beyond the game level
- Both 1st-round controls – aces and voids – and 2nd controls – kings and singletons- can be shown
- With a choice of controls to show, controls are usually bid "up the line", leaving the maximum amount of room
- Controls are not shown in the trump suit
- The partnership can stop the control-showing process by returning to the agreed trump suit, jumping to slam or bidding Blackwood.

Hand 1 Dlr N- Hands taken from ACBL More Commonly Used Conventions

♠ AK10853 ♥ void ♦ QJ962 ♣ AK ♠ J4 ♥ J1097 ♦ K4 ♣ 108652 ♠ Q976 ♥ AK83 ♦ 83 ♣ Q73	♠ 2 ♥ Q6542 ♦ A1075 ♣ J94
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Bidding:	N	E	S	W
	1♠	P	3♠	P
	4♣	P	4♥	P
	5♣	P	5♥	P
	5♠	all pass		

The limit raise by S encourages N to start a cue-bidding sequence to check for controls for slam. Blackwood is unlikely to do any good. If S shows one ace, or none, N still won't know what to do. 4♣, a cue-bid, shows first round control of clubs and interest in slam. S cuebids the ♥A in return. This is not what N was hoping to hear, but N makes one more try by repeating the club cuebid (5♣) to show second round control. S shows second round control of hearts by bidding 5♥, and N stays out of slam, knowing that there will be losers in diamonds.

The play in 5♠ is not hard, and the secret is not going too far, (to slam), which will fail on the lead of a diamond and another diamond. By cuebidding this hand rather than using Blackwood, you are sure of your controls, and where they are missing.

Hand 2 E Dlr

♠ J4 ♥ 862 ♦ AK5 ♣ Q10754 ♠ 93 ♥ J1043 ♦ 643 ♣ KJ92 ♠ 107652 ♥ void ♦ 109872 ♣ 863	♠ AKQ8 ♥ AKQ975 ♦ QJ ♣ A
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Bidding:	N	E	S	W
		2♣	P	2♦
	P	2♥	P	3♥
	P	3♠	P	4♥

P 5♣ P 5♥ all pass

After the GF 2♣ and response of 2♦, when the heart suit is shown by E partner raises hearts. Now the cuebidding starts (up the line, the cheapest next bid being spades). 3♠ shows first round control of spades, 4♥ is a sign-off, without an ace or control to cuebid. East makes one more try by cuebidding 5♣, still hoping West has something in diamonds. With three small diamonds, West signs off in 5♥. That's it. On the lead of the ♦10, EW will lose two tricks, and make 5♥.

Hand 3 Dlr S

♠ A1083	
♥ 72	
♦ AK85	
♣ 973	
♠ 5	♠ 9
♥ KQ109	♥ 86543
♦ 1073	♦ QJ94
♣ K8642	♣ J105
	♠ KQJ7642
	♥ AJ
	♦ 62
	♣ AQ

Bidding:	N	E	S	W
		P	1♠	P
	3♠	P	4♣	P
	4♦	P	4NT	P
	5♥	P	6♠	all pass

S is not quite strong enough for a strong 2-bid, so opens 1♠. When partner makes a limit raise to 3♠, S is interested in slam, but can't use Blackwood with two low diamonds. So S cuebids instead. N cooperates by bidding 4♦ to show first-round control of diamonds. S could continue with 4♥, but that won't accomplish much. Cuebidding won't tell S whether the partnership has the ♠A, since spades, the trump suit, is used as a sign-off. So, Blackwood is used instead, as N is known to hold the ♦A. The partnership can't be losing the first two tricks in diamonds. The lead will be the ♥K, and declarer will only make this hand by using a strip and end play, ie after drawing trumps, play AK♦ and ruff two diamonds, and then throw W in with ♥J.

Hand 4 Dlr W

♠ 3	
♥ 763	
♦ QJ1085	
♣ Q865	
♠ KQJ764	♠ A98
♥ A95	♥ K84
♦ 73	♦ A6
♣ AK	♣ J10942
	♠ 1052
	♥ QJ102
	♦ K942
	♣ 73

Bidding:	W	N	E	S
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1♠	P	2♣	P
2♠	P	3♠	P
4♣	P	4♦	P
4NT	P	5♥	P
5NT	P	6♦	P
6♠	all pass		

Using 2 over 1 game force, it will be easier to reach slam on this hand, because both players can go slowly after 1♠ p 2♣ as this is game forcing. W needs to cue, because they hold two low diamonds, and you need to know that there will not be two losers. N will lead ♦Q, and declarer can see 6 spade tricks, 2 heart tricks, 1 diamond trick, and 2 club tricks. The 12th trick will need to come from the club suit, so after drawing trumps with the ♠K and ♠Q, leaving the ♠A as an entry to dummy, declarer plays the ♣AK, and then draws the remaining trump with the ♠A, crossing to dummy at the same time. Now play the ♣J and pitch a diamond, losing this trick to the ♣Q. This is called a “loser on loser” play. 12 tricks will now be made.



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Joan has represented Queensland and Australia in bridge for over 20 years. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree and Diplomas in Education and Educational Psychology, and is an expert bridge teacher.

Joan has a passion for bridge education, both for students and for teachers, and has developed a new approach for beginners.

Joan has been the official teacher for the Queensland Bridge Association for 8 years and the ABF National Teaching Coordinator since January 2011.