

# Slam bidding

**When to ask**

**When to show**

**When to bash**

# Slam Bidding

- Once partnership knows it has enough values for slam
- **How to bid the slam?**
  - Asking bids:
    - Gerber
    - Blackwood
    - Roman Key Card Blackwood
  - Descriptive bids:
    - Cue Bidding
  - Combination: exclusion key card blackwood

# Hypothetical situation

- 2 hands with 16 HCP each and a combined 9 card spade fit
- Opener bids 1S
- Responder makes an artificial game force raise (Jacoby 2nt bid) in spades:
  - 1s—2nt—showing 4S and game force
- Opener rebids 3S showing extras; responder now knows slam is possible. ***What next?***
- We will switch the cards around in different ways to show ***when to ask and when to cue.***

# General Principle: When do we ask for aces or keycards?

- Enough values for slam
- No void
- No problem side-suit with 2 fast losers (i.e. a suit lacking both the ace and the king, and not consisting of a singleton)
- Always check your hand for these conditions before thinking about asking for aces or key cards!

# When do we describe/cue?

- When we hold a void
- When we have a problem suit-- with 2 fast losers (no ace or king in that suit and no singleton)

# Asking Methods

- Gerber -- most use this only after NT openings
- Simple blackwood: 4nt ace ask: 5c=0/4, 5d=1, 5h=2, 5s=3
- Roman key card blackwood -- 0314 OR 1430 VARIATIONS
  - **Includes the K of trump as a “fifth ace”**
  - Used either after trump suit has been agreed or some also use without trump agreement, by using the last bid natural suit as hypothetical trump suit for the ask
  - **0314** 5C=0/3 5D=1/4, 5H=2 w/o Q 5S=2 with Q
  - **1430** 5C=1/4; 5D- 0/3; 5H and up same as per 0314 rkcb
  - Follow up bids asking for the Q of trumps after 5c and 5d replies
    - Next step bid up **which is not the trump suit itself** asks for Q of trumps
      - » Some bid cheapest step with no queen, and jump a step to show the Q
      - » Others sign off in trump suit without Q and bid cheapest outside K with the Q
      - » **Important to agree with pd if a previously bid suit by either party is still the queen ask. Eg 1D---1S—3S—4NT—5C—5D**

# RKCB

- Important to discuss if you play simple blackwood ever especially if you play 1430 as the 5C and 5D answers will be very garbled if you play both RKCB and simple blackwood
- Important to discuss when 4nt is just quantitative.

# Example of hand when asking with simple blackwood works

Opener 16 points

Responder 16 points

S AQJ62

• KT87

H AK9

• 6

D 93

• KQJT75

C Q53

• AK2

Conditions for the asker:

enough values

No void

No suit with 2 losers

1s—2NT GAME FORCE—3s (EXTRAS)—4NT ACE ASK—5H—6S

Note responder holds the K of trumps which makes bidding the slam easy



# Example of When RKCB helps more than simple blackwood

Opener: 16pts

Responder: 16 pts

- S AKT62
- H AK9
- D 93
- C Q53

- Q987
- X
- KQJT7
- AKJ

Here, responder is missing K of trumps

1s—2nt Jacoby—3s extras –if 4nt blackwood is bid, the simple blackwood reply of 5H showing 2 aces, doesn't show K of Trump; responder cannot be sure slam makes even tho it does in this case

Whereas RKCB 5C SHOWS 3 key cards and slam is definitely on with 4/5 Key cards

# Roman key card revealing no A or K of trumps

- Opener 16 pt
- Responder 16 pt
- JT962
- Q875
- AKJ
- Q
- A2
- KQT975
- QJ5
- AK4

**1S—2nt—3S---** what next? Here they have 32 points but **no A or K of trumps**: Simple blackwood might mislead responder into bidding slam holding 3 of 4 aces but no AK of trump

RKCB much better to avoid slam. They have a total of 3 of the 5 key cards, and 4 are required for a small slam.

# cue bidding

- When we hold a void
- When we have a suit with 2 fast losers (no A,K, of that suit and no singleton)

In these 2 situations, u need to know not just **how many** key cards partner has but **which ones**, esp if pd has only 1 key card, u don't want it to be the ace in your void. And u don't want to find pd without the Ace in your problem suit.

# How to Cue

- Many variations based on partnership agreement
- General rules: Cue up the line; “cheapest” (earliest sequential) bid first
- Some cue only first round controls (Aces or voids) on the first round and proceed to second round controls on the second round
- Recently most expert partnerships cue first and/or second round controls right from the start
  - Eg, With king of clubs and ace of D, after 1s—2nt—3s, responder would cue 4C showing K of club first rather than 4D. (older methods would bypass clubs and bid A of D first)
- Most pairs cue only non trump controls (though some have bids to cue trump honours)
- 4NT breaks the cuing and is blackwood or RKCB depending on your agreements. Once partner cues your problem suit away, you can sigh with relief and blackwood or key card, knowing that pd has that suit covered.

# Example of when to cue bid: *a problem suit*

Opener: 16 pts

- AQJ62
- AK9
- 93
- Q53

Responder: 16 points

- KT87
- **2 3**
- KQJ97
- AK

Here responder has a suit with **2 fast H losers** and needs to know that opener has ace of H or opps could cash the first 2 tricks against 6S

If opener answers to simple blackwood 5H: 2 aces, or to rkcb 5s: 2 plus the Q slam might not make if opener has the AQ of spades and the ace of Diamonds, as opps could cash first 2 h tricks. Responder needs opener to have Ace of H or a void in H

Bidding should go 1s—2nt—3s—4c—4h—then 4nt RKCB—5s—6s

# What to do with a bad club suit

- After major suit agreement, and values for slam u may want to look but could hold no controls in clubs. In this case it is awkward to start cuing at the 4 level eg 4d, as partner will have to bypass game before you know about the club suit.
- Thus, some play that after game going major agreement, bidding 3nt asks pd to cue club control if they have it
  - Options then are for partner to just sign off in game with no club control; probably best as 3nt bid shows 2 losers in clubs
  - Or some may choose to cue other suits if no club control

# Example of looking for club control

OPENER: 16 pts

- AQJ62
- AK9
- 93
- Q53

RESPONDER: 16 pts

- KT87
- Q
- AKQJT7
- JX

1S—2nt—3S.....**what next?**

HERE RESPONDER HAS **2 FAST CLUB LOSERS** SO CUING 4D is awkward in that it might make the auction get too high.

AUCTION SHD GO **1S—2NT—3S—3NT** (ASKING ABOUT CLUBS)—  
OPENER HAS NO 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> rnd (no A or K) CLUB CONTROL SO SIGNS  
OFF WITH 4S; WITH CLUB CONTROL WOULD CUE 4C. WITH NO  
CLUB CONTROL SLAM IS NOT POSSIBLE.

**Exclusion key card blackwood;** A combination of asking and showing: **done when responder has slam values and a void**

- After suit agreement, a jump above game to the 5 level is key card in agreed suit but asks partner to omit any key card in the suit bid at the 5 level
- Eg 1s—2nt—3s—5D = asks for key cards in spades but says pd don't include the A of D if u have it cos I have a void in D and ur ace is useless to me. Says 'I do want to hear about your other aces, K and Q of trump'. Responses are in 0314 or 1430 per pdship agreement



# Example of when to play exclusion key card blackwood

OPENER 16 points

- AQJ62
- K93
- A9
- Q53

RESPONDER 16 points

- KT87
- **VOID**
- KQJT75
- AK2

WITH **H VOID** RESPONDER WANTS TO KNOW IF OPENER HAS A OF H OR THE ACE OF D. With ace of D, grand slam will make

**1S—2NT—3S—5H** EXCLUSION KEY CARD asking for key cards except for ace of H. Opener answers 0314—6d= 2 KEY CARD PLUS Q of spades, NOT INCLUDING THE ACE OF H  
NOW DECLARER CAN BID GRAND SLAM;

# When do we bash?

- As a general rule bashing is to be discouraged when there is opportunity to methodically get the requisite information to know if the slam is percentage or not
- Many slams are bashed due to laziness or impatience, or due to making erroneous assumptions about partner's hand, without confirming them to be correct
- Occasionally, when opponents compete and put high level pressure in the auction, one has to make one's best judgement and that is the only time when one should in rare cases, "bash" slam without the having maximal evidence.

# Easley Blackwood

- *“I devised the convention, not to bid slam, but to know when **not** to bid slam.”*
- So when u think about bashing, take it **Easley!**



# Take home messages

- Roman key card blackwood is an excellent asking tool provided u and pd have agreed on 0314 vs 1430
- Try to play same version of rkcb with all pds if possible
- Discuss whether suit agreement is required and if not, which suit u are asking in
- Discuss if u ever play straight blackwood in addition to rkcb (best not)
- Discuss when 4nt is quantitative
- Discuss if u ever play Gerber or Minorwood etc.
- Discuss continuations re Q ask, making sure that u discuss whether a previously bid suit can still be Q ask, and how u respond to show the Q (ie steps, or outside K show)
- Remember that when the trump suit is H, and the answer to rkcb is 5D, u have to bid 5S to ask for the Q as 5H is a sign off.

- Never key card or blackwood, with a void or 2+ fast losers in one suit
- With a void or 2 losers in one suit either cue bid, or do exclusion key card blackwood
- DON'T LET LAZINESS TURN YOU INTO A BASHER. BASH ONLY WHEN YOU ARE EITHER TRYING TO BE PREEMPTIVE, OR IF CONSTRUCTIVE, ONLY WHEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR BEST JUDGEMENT AND YOU HAVE NO BETTER OPTION DUE TO ENEMY INTERFERENCE. **Take it Easley!!!!** 😊