

## Four Card Majors: a Brief System Summary

By Eddie Kantar

Eons ago when four card majors were the norm, penalty doubles of overcalls were also de rigueur. As a result many 4-4 major suit fits, particularly 4-4 heart fits were lost after a minor suit opening followed by a spade overcall. However, once negative doubles burst onto the scene there was little chance of losing a 4-4 major suit fit. Five card majors became the norm. Responder now had the security of knowing partner had at least five cards for a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid. Also, the "danger" of playing a 4-3 major suit was now practically nil. The fact that the 4-3 fit might actually be the place for the two hands was dismissed as being too hard to pinpoint. Also, many players did not relish playing 4-3 major suit fits with shaky trump suits (and who could blame them?) even though they were told that playing such contracts build character.

Given that negative doubles are here to stay, and 4-4 major suit trump fits are unlikely to be lost if a minor suit is opened, and it is comforting to know that your partner has a five card suit, minimum, when you hear a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid, why play four card majors at all? The answer is sevenfold and presumes you will only open the bidding 1♥ or 1♠ with a "strong" four card major (three of the top five honors-AKxx or AQ9x will do in a pinch), a minimum hand, plus a convenient rebid available after any one or two level response.

### Why You Should Play Four Card Majors

1. The best contract for a hand that has a strong four card major may well be a 4-3 major suit fit, the dummy having side suit shortness.
2. The lead factor. If partner is on lead you get a lead where your strength lies.
3. The need to open 1♣ or 1♦ with a three card suit is diminished and partner can have more "length confidence" in the integrity of your minor suit opening bids.
4. Overnight you become a more dangerous opponent. It is as easy (or safe) to come in over a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid as over a 1♣ or 1♦ opening bid.
5. The opponents can no longer balance risk-free after a single raise is

passed out. They can't be sure whether you have landed in a 7 or an 8 card fit.

6. It is more difficult for the opponents to defend. It is harder for them to count the hand because they can't automatically assume opener has a five card major.
7. If responder happens to have four (or more) cards in opener's major, and raises immediately, you will be way ahead of the game. Your side will have uncovered an immediate fit and will not have to reveal any gratuitous distributional information to the opponents.

The key for the opener to play this method successfully is to choose the "right" hands to open 1♥ or 1♠ with a four card suit. The key for the responder is to assume a 1♥ or 1♠ opening shows a five card suit and support freely with any three cards. If you can't get yourself to do this, DO NOT PLAY FOUR CARD MAJORS.

### Opening the Bid with a Four Card Major

The following are my suggestions for when to open a four card major in first or second seat: In third or fourth seat, opener has more latitude because a rebid need not be planned with a minimum balanced hand.

### Opening Hands with Four Strong Spades

1. Four spades and four diamonds 3-2 in the other suits; 14 HCP. ♠ AK10x-♥Axx-♦Kxxx-♣xx. Open 1♠; pass 1NT; rebid 2NT over 2♣; raise hearts. It helps to have a stopper in your three card suit so you can rebid 2NT if your partner responds at the two level in your doubleton suit.
2. Four spades and four hearts 3-2 in the minors; honors should be concentrated strength in the majors, particularly in SPADES 13-14 HCP.

♠AKJx-♥AJxx♦Jxx-♣xx. Open 1♠. Pass 1NT; rebid 2♥ over a two level minor suit response. If the spades aren't strong, open in the three card minor. Some open these hands with 1♥ expecting partner to respond 1♠ with four small. I don't buy that. In my opinion a 1♠ response to 1♥ should show four good spades or five spades and

welcome a three card raise.

3. Four spades, four hearts, four diamonds, one club; WEAK diamonds. 12-15 HCP ♠KQ10x-♥AKJx-♦Jxxx-♣x Open 1♠ and rebid 2♥ over 2♣ or 1NT.
4. Four spades, three hearts, five diamonds, and one club; 12-15 HCP ♠AJ10x-♥AQx-♦Jxxxx-♣x. Open 1♠; raise hearts; rebid 2♦ over 1NT or 2♣. If this hand is opened 1♦; opener is endplayed after a 1NT response.

### ***Opening Hands with Four Strong Hearts***

1. Four hearts, three spades, two diamonds, and four clubs and 14 HCP.  
♠Axx-♥AK10x-♦Kx-♣10xxx. Open 1♥; raise spades; raise clubs, rebid 2NT over 2♦; pass 1NT. Should have a stopper in the three card suit in case partner responds at the two level in the doubleton suit.  
With: ♠xxx-♥AK10x-♦Kx-♣Axxx. Open 1♣; no stopper in the three card suit.
2. Four hearts, four diamonds, and 3-2 in the blacks ( 13-14 HCP) ♠xx-♥AKQx-♦Qxxx-♣Kxx. Open 1♥; rebid 1NT over 1♠: pass 1NT; rebid 2♦ over 2♣; raise diamonds.
3. Four hearts, five diamonds, 3-1 in the blacks (12-15 HCP) ♠x-♥AKJx-♦Qxxxx-♣Axx. (Open 1♥) Rebid 2♦ over 1♠ or 1NT; rebid 2♦ over 2♣; raise diamonds.

One of the few "strong" hand types that, in my opinion, should open with a four card major is the 18-19 point hand with 3-4-3-3 or 4-4 in the reds with gigantic hearts: ♠AKJ-♥AKQJ-♦xxx-♣xxx. (Open 1♥)

I had this hand in World Championship play and to please my then partner, I opened 1♣, vulnerable, which ended the bidding. Partner came down with two small clubs, four small hearts, and zero high card points. Beautiful. I went down three, vulnerable, and we could have made a few hearts. Never again.

### ***Third and Fourth Seat Opening Bids with a Four Card Major***

In third or fourth seat, where no rebid need be planned, it frequently pays to open minimum hands with a strong four card major intending to pass

partner's response.

- ♠AKJ9-♥Jx-♦Kxxx-♣xxx. (Open 1♠ in 3rd or 4th seat).
- ♠xxx-♥AQJ10-♦Kx-♣Qxxx. (Open 1♥ in 3rd or 4th seat).

When you play "good" four card majors as suggested here, you put your best foot forward by landing the first punch. Beefing up the suit requirements for a four card major opening bid reduces the frequency, but makes it far more palatable to raise with three small when you know partner has a five card suit (about 85-90% of the time) or a strong four card suit headed by at least three honors (the other 10 or 15%).

No method works all the time, and neither does this one. However, over the long haul it should prove to be a plus-and it's fun. In fairness, the downside of playing four card majors should also be presented:

### The Disadvantages of Playing Four Card Majors

1. Responder does not have total security that opener has a 5 card major for a 1♠t or 2nd seat opening of 1♥ or 1♠. This can be crucial if second hand preempts.
2. You may lose a good minor suit fit.
3. You may land in an occasional 4-2 fit! If you think playing a 4-3 fit builds character, wait till you play a few 4-2's!
4. It's difficult to find partners who play four card majors. These days most players are weaned on five card majors and it makes them edgy to even think of opening a four card major. Many prefer opening 1♦ with the 432 or the 5432 rather than open 1♥ with the AKQJ or AKQ10. C'est la vie.

### Four Card Majors: Full Description

#### I. Opening Bids (Excluding exceptions already mentioned)

##### *One Level*

Opening suits bids of 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or 1♠ show 11-20 HCP. For best results, responder assumes a minor suit opening shows four or more cards (though it may contain three) and an opening bid of 1♥ or 1♠ shows five or more cards

(though it may contain four). In both cases the percentages overwhelming favor that opener has the greater rather than the shorter length.)

Assuming the hand is not strong enough to open 1NT or is unbalanced:

With four spades and four clubs or four hearts and four clubs; open 1♣.

With four spades and four diamonds or four hearts and four diamonds, open 1♦.

With four spades and four hearts, (4-4-3-2 or 4-4-2-3) open the three card minor.

With a five card minor and a four card major; start with the minor.

With 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3 open 1♣.

With three four card suits and a singleton diamond, open 1♣; with any other singleton, open 1♦.

With two five card suits open the higher ranking suit. But, with five clubs and five spades open club if: (1) the clubs are strong, the spades weak, and the hand is minimum; (2) the hand is strong enough to jump shift.

### **Two Level**

Opening two bids in diamonds, hearts, or spades are weak-typically 7-9 HCP, atypically 6-10 HCP. The suit is expected to be "hearty" when vulnerable.

The opening bid of 2♣, artificial, is reserved for all game-forcing suit oriented hands or for balanced hands in the 22-24 or 27-28 point range.

### **Three Level**

Standard preemptive openings; can be shaded at favorable vulnerability. Should NOT contain a solid suit.

### **Four Level**

Tend to show an eight card suits or 7-4 distribution with less than opening bid values. In fourth seat **all preempts show opening bid strength.**

## **II. No Trump Openings (4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2, or 5-3-3-2 patterns)**

1NT- 15-17 (may contain a five card major)

2NT- 20-21 (possibly 19 with a very strong five card suit)

3NT- 25-26

Open 2♣ and rebid 2NT with 22-24

Open 2♣ and rebid 3NT with 27-28

### III. Responses

#### *One Level*

A "one over one" response can be made with as few as 5 HCP (and a decent four or five card suit, no upper point count limit.

A 1NT response shows 6-10 HCP and, in theory, denies a biddable four card major. However, responder need not go out of his way to respond 1♥ to a 1♦ opening with four indifferent hearts (if opener had four decent hearts, the opening bid would have been 1♥.) The same holds true when partner has four indifferent spades and partner opens 1♥. Better to respond 1NT. \*See Flannery listed under "Useful Conventions" on the last page.

#### *Two Level*

##### **Two Level Responses in a New Suit**

A "two over one" response starts at 11 HCP (unless the suit is rebid immediately) and promises a rebid unless partner jumps to game.

##### **The Single Raise**

A single raise shows 7-10 support points with presumed three card support.

##### **The 2NT Jump Response (two possibilities)**

1. A jump response to 2NT is a balanced game force and shows 13-15.
2. A jump response of 2NT to a MAJOR suit opening bid FOLLOWED BY A REBID of FOUR of opener's major shows a balanced hand with primary trump support and 12-14 HCP. Opener assumes (a) until he hears that jump to game on responder's second bid. Both responses show about the same amount of strength, both show balanced hands, but one has four card major suit support.

A response of 2♣, 2♦, or 2♥, followed by a rebid of that suit at the three level shows a six or seven card suit with 9-10/11 HCP and is invitational. With weaker hands, respond 1NT and then, if you get the chance, show the long suit.

## **The Jump Shift**

Game forcing (usually starting at 17 HCP-could be less with a fit or a very long suit) and shows one of three types of hands:

1. A long, strong, independent suit (responder rebids the suit)
2. Primary support for partner's suit (support shown on next round)
3. A balanced hand with a five card suit (notrump rebid on the next round)

## **The Three No-Trump Response**

16-17 balanced (See section on "useful conventions").

## **Responses to a Weak Two**

1. New suits forcing
2. 2NT asks for a feature
3. Raise not forcing
4. A direct jump to 3NT is to play

## **Responses to a Strong, Artificial, 2♣ Opening**

2♦ waiting (followed by 3♣ over 2♥ or 2♠=double negative)

New suits natural-five card length, minimum 7+ HCP, at least one ace or king.  
Does not promise two of the top three honors.

Jumps to 3♥ or 3♠ show one loser six or seven card suits.

2NT (two kings, balanced, no five card suit, generally 7-9 HCP)

## **Responses to Three of a Suit**

New suits beneath the game level are forcing.

3NT is to play.

## **Responses to a 1NT Opening Bid**

2♣= non-forcing Stayman- if followed by 2♥ or 2♠, opener can pass.

2♣ followed by a leap to 3♥ or 3♠ over 2♦ shows a five card suit with four cards in the other major (see "Smolen" under useful conventions):

2♦= transfer to 2♥, if followed by a new suit, a game force.

2♥= transfer to 2♠, if followed by a new suit, a game force.

2♠= minor suit stayman-game force.

2NT= natural 8-9 HCP (8 with a strong five card suit only)

3♣, 3♦ invitational

3♥, 3♠ slam invitational with broken six card suits.

3NT= to play

4♣= Gerber

4♦= Transfer to 4♥

4♥= Transfer to 4♠

Note: A two level transfer followed by 4NT is natural; a four level transfer followed by 4NT is Key Card Blackwood.

### Responses to a 2NT Opening Bid

3♣= Stayman

3♦ = Transfer to 3♥

3♥ = Transfer to 3♠

3♠= Minors

4♣= Gerber

4♦= Transfer to 4♥

4♥= Transfer to 4♠

Note: A three level transfer followed by 4NT is natural; a four level transfer followed by 4NT is Key Card Blackwood.

### *Three Level*

1. The jump raise shows primary trump support and 9-11 support points.
2. The jump from 1♣ to 3♦, 3♥, or 3♠ or the jump from 1♦ to 3♥ or 3♠ are game forcing splinters if second hand passes. If second hand interferes, the jumps are natural and invitational, not jump shifts.
3. Jumps from one of a major to three of a minor are game-forcing jump shifts and show one of three types of hands as described previously.

## IV. Continuation by Opener (Opener's Second Bid)

### *After an One Level Response*

1. A 1NT rebid shows 12-14 HCP
2. A 2NT rebid shows 18-19 HCP
3. A 3NT rebid shows a solid minor plus stoppers in the unbid suits; frequently with a singleton or even a void in partner's suit.
4. A rebid of the original suit tends to show a six card suit.



5. A jump rebid in the original suit is not forcing and shows a hand that can take 7 1/2 to 8 tricks with 15-17 HCP.
6. A simple change of suit shows 11-18 HCP (Some 18 point hands jump shift)
7. A jump shift is a game force and shows 18+ HCP.
8. A reverse is a one round force and starts at 17 HCP.
9. A jump reverse: 1♣-1♥, 3♦ is a game forcing splinter showing a singleton in the jump suit with primary support for responder's suit.
10. A double jump reverse 1♣-1♥, 4♦ is a void splinter.
11. A single raise can be made with three or four card support (if made with three card support the hand must have side suit shortness) and 13-15 support points.
12. A double raise promises four card support and 16-18 support points.
13. A leap to game in responder's major promises four card support, 19-20 support points and denies side suit shortness (would have splintered)

### ***After a Two Level Response***

1. A rebid of 2NT shows 14-15 HCP
2. A rebid of 3NT shows 18-19 HCP (With 15-17, open 1NT).
3. A rebid of the original suit tends to show a six card suit, but it is not written in stone. In any event, partner cannot pass; a two level response promises another bid-that is written in stone.
4. A rebid in a new suit is forcing.
5. A jump in a new suit is best played as a splinter describing a hand with four card support plus a singleton in the jump suit.
6. A two-level reverse or a new suit at the three level is a game force.
7. A raise to the three level is shows extras and is forcing to the four level of the agreed suit or 3NT.

### ***After a 1NT Response to a Major Suit Opening Bid***

1. Pass with balanced hands that have less than 17 HCP
2. Raise two 2NT with 17-18, balanced.
3. Raise to 3NT, with 19, balanced.
4. New lower ranking suits are not forcing and show 11-17/18 HCP.
5. A reverse is a one round force (optional)
6. A jump rebid is invitational.

7. A jump shift is a game force.

Note: In response to a 1♣ opening where responder is more apt to be at the top of the range, raise to 2NT with 15-16 HCP.

### ***After a 2NT Game Forcing Response***

1. New suits, natural.
2. Jumps in new suits (other than clubs) are natural and show slam invitational two suiters.
3. A raise to 4NT is natural.
4. A jump to 4♣ is Gerber, opener's suit the presumed agreed suit.
5. A rebid of the original major suit is game forcing and shows a six card suit. Responder cue bids with a maximum for opener's suit.

## **V. Responder's Rebid**

### ***After a One Level Response***

1. 1NT 7-10 HCP
2. 2NT 11-12 HCP (not forcing)
3. 3NT 13-15 HCP

A rebid of the original suit at the two level shows a six card suit 6-9 HCP.

A jump rebid to the three level of the original suit shows a six card suit 10-11 HCP; not forcing.

To force in the original suit, bid the 4th suit and then bid the six card suit at the three level.

A new suit by the responder is forcing (except after a 1NT rebid).

A return to opener's major at the two level shows a doubleton with 6-9 HCP.

A jump preference to opener's major is invitational, and shows three card support. A jump preference to opener's first bid minor is also invitational but usually shows four or five card support.

To force in opener's first or second suit, bid the fourth suit and then return to opener's suit at the three level.

A jump in a lower ranking suit is invitational. To force in a lower ranking suit, bid the 4th suit and then bid the lower ranking suit.

### ***After a Two Level Response***

1. A rebid of the original suit is not forcing unless opener has reversed.
2. 2NT=11-12 HCP; not forcing.
3. 3NT=13-15 HCP
4. A return to opener's major at the two level shows three card support with 11-12 support points; not forcing.
5. A jump preference to opener's major at the three level shows three card support plus 13-15 support points; a game force.
6. A jump to game in opener's major shows four card support, 12-15 support points; plus concentrated strength in the two suits.
7. The fourth suit at the two level, or any new suit at the three level, is a game force.
8. A raise of opener's second suit to the three level is forcing to 3NT or the four level of the raised suit. 1♠-2♣, 2♦-3♦ (the three diamond bid is a one round force.)

## **VI. More Bidding Descriptions**

### ***Passed Hand Agreements***

All jump shifts whether in response to an opening bid or an overcall are fit showing. They are forcing to the next cheapest level of partner's suit. They are not point count bids; they show two-suited hands.

### ***Defensive Agreements***

#### **Landy Over No-Trump**

An overcall of 2♣ shows both majors, usually 5-5. A response of 2♦ shows equal length in the majors and asks the 2♣ bidder to bid his longer suit. If both suits are of equal length, the 2♣ bidder bids the stronger. Responder can then pass or raise.

#### **Michael's Cue Bid**

A direct cuebid over a minor suit opening bid shows both majors 7-11 HCP or 16+. With 12-15 HCP, bid both suits. A direct overcall of a major suit shows the other major and one of the minors. Once again the range is 7-11 or 16+.

Responder bids 2NT to ask the Michaels' bidder to name the minor.

### **Leaping Michael's**

The jump to four of a minor over a weak two opening bid shows a strong hand with five cards in the other major as well as five or six cards in the bid minor.

Leap to 4♣ over a 2♠ opening bid with: ♠x-♥AKJxx-♦x-♣ AK10xxx.

### **Unusual 2NT Overcall**

A direct jump to 2NT over a major suit opening bid shows both minors 7-11 or 16+ HCP. A direct jump to 2NT over a minor suit opening bid shows hearts plus the other minor with the same range. A passed hand overcall of 1NT in the direct position carries the same meanings with a range of 6-9 HCP.

### **The Jump Cue Bid of a Major Suit Opening Bid**

The jump cue of a major suit opening bid shows a solid suit and ask partner for a stopper in the opponent's suit. Bid 3♥ over a 1♥ opening bid with: ♠Ax-♥xx-♦Kx-♣AKQJxxx.

### **Weak Jump Overcalls**

A weak jump overcall can be compared to a Weak Two bid; typically a decent six card suit with an approximate range of 6-9 HCP.

### **Negative Doubles**

After partner opens and next overcalls 4♦ or lower, a double by responder is for takeout and shows distributed values. At the lower levels, a negative double promises, in theory, at least four cards in the unbid major(s). At the higher levels, this promise does not hold true.

### **Responsive Doubles**

After partner makes a takeout double of an opening bid which is raised on the right to the two or three level, a double by you is also for takeout and tends to show "two places to play". After 1♥-DBL-2♥, double with: ♠Qx-♥xxx-♦KJxx-♣QJxx.

Can also be played after partner overcalls and opener's suit is supported.

1♥-2♣-2♥-Dbl. Fourth hand's double shows is for takeout.

### **Support Doubles and Redoubles**

After an opening bid followed by a one level response and enemy

interference by fourth hand beneath the two level of responder's suit, a raise of responder's suit shows four card support, a double shows three card support. If fourth hand makes a takeout double after responder's one level response, a raise of responder's suit shows four card support, a redouble three card support.

### **Lightner Slam Doubles**

The double of a voluntarily bid suit slam by the partner of the opening leader calls for an unusual lead. More often than not, particularly if a preemptor has doubled, the doubler has a void. In any event the double of a suit slam forbids partner from leading any suit the doubler has bid or a trump. The double of 6NT calls for the lead of dummy's first bid suit.

### **Carding Agreements vs. Suit Contracts**

A from AK at trick one only.

K from AK after trick one or in a suit bid by partner, or in any suit that has been and supported, or at the five level or higher.

K from AK at trick one with a doubleton.

Standard honor leads fourth best from four or more cards. Avoid leading low without an honor in the suit.

### **Leads in Partner's Suit**

With three or four small lead high if you have supported; low if you haven't.

With three or four cards headed by one honor, lead low. If the honor is the ace, lead the ace.

Standard count= low from an odd number; high-low with a doubleton, second high from four (if you can afford it).

Standard attitude attitude signals when partner leads a high honor or when discarding: High means you like it; low means you don't.

### **Leads vs. No Trump**

A asks for unblock or count.

K asks for an attitude signal

Q asks for an attitude signal

Fourth best. The lead of a low card should promise an honor. Lead

**second highest from four or five small.**

**Standard count and standard attitude.**

## VII. Optional Defensive Lead and Carding Conventions

The lead of the Q from the AKQ at suit contracts. Third hand gives count on the first play, suit preference on the next. Third hand can infer from the lead of king or an ace, that the leader cannot have the AKQ.

**Jack Denies:** The lead of a jack denies a higher honor and shows the ten (unless it happens to be from Jx). This immediately places the missing honors for third hand who can defend more accurately. Unfortunately, it also places the missing honors for the declarer who can play more accurately!

**Nine or Ten Implies:** The lead of a nine or ten is either a top card or shows two higher honors. In the case of the nine, one of the two higher honors must be the ten, in the case of the ten, one of the two higher honors must be the jack. It is expected that third hand can read the lead from the bidding, the cards in dummy, and third hands' holding in the suit.

**Upside Down Count and Attitude:** The signal (or discard) of a low card shows strength and of a high card, weakness. The standard method is reversed in order to allow the signaler to keep the valuable high cards with strong holdings. Particularly effective when discarding.

### *Useful Bidding Conventions to Add to Four Card Majors*

**Splinter Jumps:** A jump in response to partner's last bid suit one level higher than a jump shift or one level higher than a reverse, shows shortness in the jump suit, primary trump support, and slam on the brain. Note: If the opponents intervene, limit splinter jumps to suit(s) they have bid.

**Fourth Suit Forcing:** After a one level response, bidding the fourth suit and then bidding a previously bid suit at the two level or 2NT is invitational; bidding anything at the three level is a game force. After a two level response, bidding the 4th suit is a game force.

**Inverted Minor Suit Raises:** The raise from one to two shows a limit raise or better, is forcing to the three level of opener's minor and might even be the

stepping stone to a slam; the raise from one to three is preemptive, promises at least five card support with 4-7 HCP.

**Smolen:** Consider this sequence: 1NT-2♣-2♦-3♥/3♠. Playing non-forcing Stayman, the standard meaning of the jump to 3♥ is game forcing with five hearts and four spades; the jump to 3♠ shows five spades and four hearts. The effect is that responder winds up playing the hand if opener has three card support for responder's five card suit. Playing "Smolen" the jump to 3♥ shows FOUR hearts and FIVE spades, and the jump to 3♠ shows FOUR spades and five hearts. Now, if opener has three card support for responder's five card suit, opener, the stronger hand, becomes the declarer.

**Reverse Drury:** In order to discover whether partner has opened light in third seat after a 1♥ or 1♠ opening bid, responder with 10-11 HCP and three or four cards in partner's major, bids 2♣ (artificial) asking opener to come clean. If opener rebids the original suit, it announces an opening bid so weak that it would not have accepted a limit jump raise. If opener has full values, the normal rebid is an artificial 2♦. After the 2♦ rebid, responder normally bids two of opener's major with three card support, and three of opener's major with four card support.

**Flannery 2♦:** An opening bid of 2♦ that describes a hand with five hearts, four spades, and typically 12-15 HCP; atypically 11-16. The big plus is that after a 1♥ opening bid, responder knows that opener cannot have four spades (unless opener is strong enough to reverse and will bid spades regardless) and need not respond 1♠ with four crummy spades. A response of 2NT asks opener to further describe the hand.

### ***Responding to 1♥ or 1♠ with Four or More Cards (Bergen Raises with a Twist)***

2NT: Either natural or 12-14, balanced with primary support. Responder leaps to game on the rebid with four card support.

3♣: Powerful raise 15-17 HCP, presumably balanced. Stronger than responding 2NT and then jumping to four of opener's major.

3♦: Limit raise

**Three of opposite major:** Unknown singleton with 13+ HCP. Opener uses the

next step to ask for the singleton. Responses to the singleton ask are low, middle, high. (First step shows a club singleton, etc.)

3♥/3♠: Preemptive; usually four or five trump with a singleton or two doubletons; 4-6 HCP.

3NT: Also shows an unknown singleton, with 10-12 HCP; not as strong as a jump to three of the opposite major. Opener bids the next step to ask for the singleton.

4♣/4♦: Void splinters. Singleton splinters can be shown by jumping to three of the unbid major or to 3NT.

### ***Roman Key Card Blackwood***

A method for responding to Blackwood that includes showing the king and the queen of the agreed suit. In this method the king of the agreed suit is given equal billing with an ace so there are FIVE key cards. There are two ways to answer:

#### **0314:**

The first step shows 0 or 3 keycards

The second step shows 1 or 4 keycards

The third step shows two keycards without the queen

The fourth step shows two keycards with the queen.

#### **1430:**

I prefer 1430 responses. In this responding method the first two responses are inverted.

The first step shows 1 or 4 keycards

The second step shows 0 or 3 keycards

The other two steps remain the same.

The first and second step are inverted for a number of reasons-mainly because after a first step response of "one" opener has more room to ask for the queen as well as other possible asks.