

Improve Your Slam Bidding

by Steve Wood

One of the greatest pleasures in bridge is working cooperatively with your partner to reach a successful slam contract.... and if it's a successful grand slam, then you've reached the top of the mountain!

Slam bidding can be tricky, but there are important principles that good partnerships employ to maximize their chances.

Don't Jump to Game Too Early

If partner opens the bidding and you jump to game, it's a preemptive bid. For example, after a 1♠ opening, you would jump to 4♠ with something like ♠ QT642 ♥ 8 ♦ K843 ♣ J87 to show your excellent trump support and weak high-card holding with some distribution. The goal of bidding 4♠ is to show your hand while shutting out the opponents. You also are telling partner that you have little or no slam interest. If partner can make a slam opposite this collection, it means he probably forgot to open 2♣!

Even though the sequence 1♠-4♠ is defined as preemptive, it is common to see players make the mistake of jumping to game with hands that don't fit the profile.

Example 1

You hold ♠ KJT73 ♥ K82 ♦ QT65 ♣ 5.

Both sides are vulnerable.

You partner is dealer and opens 1♠. The next player overcalls 2♦.

What do you bid?

Answer: Jump to 4♣ (splinter)

You have a terrific hand – spectacular spades, a singleton in one side suit, a key king in another side suit, and very good reason to think that partner is short in diamonds. If you jump to 4♠ immediately, there is no way that partner can tell you have a hand this strong. To give partner a better picture, make a splinter jump to 4♣, showing at least four trumps, about 9-12 HCP, and a singleton or void in the splinter suit.

In actual play, the player with these cards just jumped to 4♠ -- so his partner, who held ♠ AQ9862 ♥ A6 ♦ A4 ♣ AJ7, had no idea that slam was in view. They stopped in 4♠ when 6♠ was cold.

Note: If you and your partner(s) don't play splinter bids (you really should), then it would have been acceptable for responder to cue-bid 3♦, showing a limit raise or better with at least three spades. Not as clear a description as a splinter bid – but much better than a premature, misdescriptive jump to 4♠.

Let's look at some other situations where players sometimes jump to game too early.

Jacoby 2NT auctions

After a Jacoby 2NT bid, opener is supposed to show shortness. With no singleton or void, opener can jump to game with a minimum or bid 3M or 3NT to show extra values. In this situation, opener should be very reluctant to jump to game unless she has a very minimal opener that looks poor for slam.

For example, after opening 1♥ with ♠ Q8 ♥ KJ764 ♦ KQ7 ♣ Q65 and hearing partner bid Jacoby 2NT, opener should jump to 4♥, denying shortness and warning partner about a hand that is decidedly mediocre for slam purposes. It's not merely that opener "only has 12 points" – it's the poor quality of the HCP for slam (three queens, no aces). Opener can continue toward slam with a powerhouse 2NT hand, but she has been warned that opener is dead minimum.

Example 2

You hold ♠ AQ853 ♥ T8 ♦ AKT2 ♣ 53.

Both sides are vulnerable, and you open 1♠ as dealer.

Your partner jumps to 2NT (Jacoby).

What do you bid?

Answer: 3♠ (or maybe 3NT, depending on your agreements about these bids)

You have only 13 HCP, which superficially could be considered “minimum.” It’s important to realize, though, that you don’t have a minimum hand. You have nice trumps, an AK combination on the side, and two doubletons. If partner is thinking slam, you don’t want to short-circuit the conversation by jumping to 4♠. It’s much better to make an encouraging bid – either 3♠ or 3NT, depending on what these mean to you and your partner – and let the bidding develop from there. Stated differently, if partner wants to talk about slam, why cut that off with a jump to 4♠, when you have a useful hand for slam purposes?

After partner’s overcall

Another situation that often tempts players to jump to game too early is when partner overcalls and catches you with a nice hand and good support.

If an opponent opens 1♣, partner overcalls 1♠, the next player passes, and you have ♠ KT5 ♥ AJ43 ♦ A843 ♣ J6, would you jump to 4♠? If so, think again, because a jump to 4♠ is a preempt, not a show of strength. Start with a cue-bid of 2♣ to share the good news with partner that you have support for his spades and at least a game-invitational hand. That way,

partner will have a good idea what's going on. If slam is possible, partner can start exploring for that. And if the opponents make a bid – maybe a sacrifice in 5♣, for example -- you and your partner will have a good chance to make a winning decision about whether to double or keep going to 5♠. If you jump to 4♠, telling partner you have a preemptive hand when you don't, things can go off the rails very quickly.

As a passed hand

Players sometimes get too excited when they are a passed hand and partner opens in third or fourth chair. Again, a too-early jump to game can lead to problems. For one thing, partner may have opened light and not be interested in game. For another, partner will expect you to have a preemptive hand and – as we've seen before – miss a slam.

The solution? Use Drury – in whatever form you and your partner play it. That way, partner will know that you have a good passed hand with good support – and he can use that knowledge to stop at the 2-level or bid game or even slam.

Example 3

You hold ♠ AJ985 ♥ K75 ♦ Q84 ♣ 85.

Your side is vulnerable.

You pass as dealer, the next player passes, and partner opens 1♠. The next player passes.

What do you bid?

Answer: 2♣ -- Drury (or 2♦ if you play two-way Drury)

You are delighted that partner opened 1♠, but that doesn't mean you should jump to game. Instead, let partner know that you have support and high-card values (not a preemptive hand), and let the auction develop from there. Most

of the time, you will end up in 4♠, but not always. When this hand was played, opener's actual hand was ♠ KT7643 ♥ A3 ♦ AK ♣ AT3 – so when responder bid Drury instead of jumping to 4♠, it was easy to reach 6♠, which is ice-cold.

Use 2/1 Game Forcing to Your Advantage

Most people play 2/1 Game Forcing these days, but many players fail to make full use of the advantage that 2/1 gives you when it comes to bidding slams. In many 2/1 sequences, the partnership can agree on a trump suit below game. This makes it easy for one partner or the other to suggest slam.

Example 4

You hold ♠ AQ6 ♥ Q42 ♦ A73 ♣ AT85.

Both sides are vulnerable.

Partner opens 1♥ as dealer. You respond 2♣, and partner raises to 3♣ (the opponents are silent).

What do you bid now?

Answer: 3♥

This is a very important hand for 2/1 GF bidders. Many players are so happy to tell partner about the heart support and good hand that they lose patience and jump to 4♥. This is a mistake. It is not necessary to jump to 4♥ -- we are in a game force. The correct bid is 3♥ -- showing a good hand with heart support and leaving bidding space for partner to show slam interest if he wants to. If you jump to 4♥ with this hand, partner will have to guess on his own about what to do next. If you take your time with 3♥, partner will have room to make a bid that shows slam interest – such as 3♠, 4♣, or 4♦. When this hand was bid against me by two experts, the responder couldn't resist jumping to 4♥. After that, his partner had to take a stab at what to do with this hand -- ♠ J4 ♥ AKT96 ♦ Q2 ♣ KQ63. He decided to pass, and they

missed a cold slam. If responder had taken his time, opener would have been able to bid 4♣ to suggest slam, and responder would have taken over from there.

Here are some examples of 2/1 GF auctions where responder is setting trumps below game and leaving the door open for slam exploration:

1♠-2♣, 2♥-3♥

1♥-2♦, 2NT-3♥

1♠-2♦, 3♣-3♠

1♥-2♣, 2♠-3♠

In each of these cases, responder could have jumped to game – but, unless responder has a minimum 2/1 hand with marginal values for slam, she should avoid jumping. It's not necessary – we are in a game force. With a normal 2/1 hand (or better) and reasonable cards for slam purposes, it's better to make the simple raise and leave room for slam discussion, if partner has interest.

Another nice advantage of 2/1 GF is that neither partner is required to jump to show strength. Because we are in a game force, nobody needs to jump "to make sure we get to game." Instead, we can use jumps in highly descriptive ways.

Example 5

You hold ♠ T ♥ AJ9743 ♦ Q5 ♣ AQ32.

Both sides are vulnerable.

Partner opens 1♠ as dealer, you respond 2♥.

Partner jumps to 3♠ (the opponents are silent).

What do you bid?

Answer: 4♣

The key to this hand is partner's jump to 3♠. Why is he jumping, when 2♠ or some other bid like 3♣ or 3♦ or 2NT would be 100% game forcing? Partner is jumping to send you a message that he has a very specific type of hand, *i.e.*, "spades are trumps." Partner has a self-sufficient spade suit – a suit that will play for zero or one loser even if you have a void in spades. His unusual jump to 3♠ shows a super-strong suit that doesn't need help and invites you to cooperate toward slam. Once you see partner's 3♠ bid, you realize that your hand may be suitable for slam, because you have two aces plus two potentially useful queens. Tell partner the good news. In actual play, opener bid 4♦ over 4♣ to show a diamond control, so responder bid 4♥ to show a control there. Opener now bid 4NT and landed in 6♠. Opener's hand was -- ♠ AKQJ543 ♥ T6 ♦ AJ9 ♣ 7. The auction went smoothly because opener was able to set trumps early.

Note: Another time where the "unnecessary" jump to 3♥ or 3♠ can be very useful is when the auction starts 2♣-2♦. With a normal strong hand with 5+ cards in a major, the 2♣ bidder would rebid 2♥ or 2♠. If he jumps to 3♥ or 3♠, opener is showing a long, self-sufficient suit ("my suit is trumps") and inviting responder to show a control.

Don't Over-Use Blackwood

When Easley Blackwood invented his ace-asking convention 70+ years ago (with the help of other experts), he did not foresee that it would become so complicated (think Roman Key Card, 1430, Kickback, and the like), and he never dreamed that players would think that the only meaning for 4NT is to ask for aces.

Modern players are infatuated with 4NT as an ace or key-card ask, and it's hurting their slam bidding.

Usually wrong to use Blackwood with a void

With a few rare exceptions, it is usually wrong to use Blackwood or key-card when you have a void on the side. That's because you don't really

want to know the number of aces or key-cards partner has, you want to know where they are.

For example, you hold ♠ AQxxx ♥ void ♦ AQxx ♣ KQxx. You open 1♠ and partner jumps to 3♠ (limit raise with 4+ trumps). Your hand looks great for slam, and it's tempting to jump to 4NT to share the good news with partner. But let's say partner shows two key cards – how will you know whether that includes the valuable ♣A or the nearly worthless ♥A? Even if he shows only one key card, that might be enough for slam as long as it's not the ♥A – but how will you know?

To use Blackwood in this situation asks the wrong question. It's much better to get partner to tell you where his key cards are – using control bids (see details starting on Page 11 below). And remember – there is nothing in the Constitution that requires you to use Blackwood or key-card on every slam hand. Save it for the hands where partner's answer will do you some good.

Dangerous to use Blackwood with two quick losers in a side suit

It is dangerous to use Blackwood or key-card with hands where you have two (or three) quick losers in a side suit, unless the bidding has given you some assurance that partner has a control in that suit. Unless you are willing to take a chance, it's usually best to find out where partner's controls are before launching into Blackwood or key-card.

For example, you hold ♠ AJxx ♥ KQxx ♦ AJx ♣ Jx. Partner opens 1♥, you use Jacoby 2NT, and he responds 3♥ -- denying a singleton or void and showing some extra values. You could jump to 4NT, praying that partner has clubs under control – but why not just ask him by using a control bid of 3♣? If partner has the A or K of clubs, he will make a control bid of 4♣ -- and now you can use Blackwood or key-card, secure in the knowledge that your opponents can't cash club winners on the first two tricks.

4NT is quantitative in many situations

The best bidders use 4NT as Blackwood or key-card in specifically defined situations – and they recognize that 4NT is not “Blackwood” in many other situations.

For example, the bidding goes:

1NT-2♥
2♠-4NT

Is that Blackwood (or key-card)? No. It is a quantitative slam try – like 1NT-4NT – that includes a 5-card spade suit. Opener can pass with mediocre 1NT opening, or he can head toward slam in spades or NT if he likes his hand.

If responder simply wants to set trumps and ask for key cards, he should use a Texas transfer and then bid 4NT.

2NT-3♦
3♥-4NT

This is a quantitative slam try – same logic as above. To simply ask for key cards in hearts, responder starts with 4♦ (Texas transfer) then bids 4NT.

1♦-3NT
4NT

Responder is showing a balanced, game-going hand with no 4-card major. Opener's 4NT is a slam invitation – not Blackwood.

1♠-2♦
2♥-3NT
4NT

Opener has values beyond what he has shown so far and is asking responder to take another look for slam. Maybe ♠AQxxx ♥KQTx ♦Ax ♣Qx.

1♠-2♦
3♣-4NT

Responder has a hand that looks like 3NT but has a lot of extra values – maybe ♠Qx ♥KQx ♦AQJ9x ♣Axx. That's enough to invite slam, but not enough for responder to bid slam on his own. 4NT here is not key-card for

clubs – with that type of hand, responder would bid 4♣ to set trumps, and then either partner could bid 4NT as a key-card ask after that.

Some similar situations where 4NT is quantitative, not Blackwood:

1♠-1♠
3♠-4NT

1♠-1♥
3♣-4NT

1♥-1♠
3♣-4NT

In each of these, responder has a hand that seems to be a 3NT bid, but he has a lot more HCP than opener is expecting (but not enough to just haul off and bid slam by himself).

Sometimes, 4NT shows a two-suiter

There is another family of hands where 4NT is not Blackwood. The simplest example of these is when an opponent opens 4♥ or 4♠. If we bid 4NT over either of these, it shows a two-suited hand that is good enough or wildly distributional enough (or both) to compete at the 5-level. When you bid 4NT, partner will assume you have the minors – but if you correct 5♣ to 5♦, that means you have diamonds plus the other possible suit. The most important thing to recognize is that 4NT is not Blackwood here.

Other examples:

(1♠)-Pass-(4♠)-4NT

(1♠)-X-(4♠)-4NT

1♥-(4♠)-4NT

1♠-(4♥)-Pass-Pass, 4NT

In all of these situations – and many others like them – the focus is on finding our optimal fit..... not asking for aces.

One final point about 4NT. When partner opens the bidding and you respond 4NT, it is not a key-card situation..... it is a pure Blackwood situation where all you need to know is how many aces partner has. This situation comes up about once every blue moon.

Why is the auction 1♠-4NT not asking for key cards in spades? There are two reasons. First, responder may have a hand where he does not care about key cards, he only cares about aces. After a 1♠ opening, he might hold something like ♠ x ♥ AKQJTxxxx ♦ Ax ♣ x (a real blue moon hand). If he finds out that opener has two aces, he will ask about kings and then decide whether to bid a grand slam. If opener only has one ace, responder will settle for 6♥. Second, on a different hand where responder wants to know about key cards, all he has to do is set spades as trumps, using Jacoby 2NT, and then he can bid 4NT on the next round to ask for key cards. There is no reason to jump the gun and bid 4NT immediately over the opening bid.

Here is a hand that came up two weeks ago. I opened 1♥ and my partner jumped to 4NT. Is that key-card for hearts? Of course not. He was just asking for aces. My hand was ♠ x ♥ AKxxx ♦ xxx ♣ AQxx, so I answered 5♥ to show two aces. His hand was ♠ AKQJT9xx ♥ x ♦ Kx ♣ KJx, so he signed off in 6♠, knowing we were off an ace. If I had mistakenly counted my ♥ K as a key card and shown three, then he would have bid a grand slam off an ace. On this hand, he didn't care about my lousy ♥K – but if he had a different hand and wanted to know about that card, he could have started with 2NT to set hearts and then tried 4NT as a key-card ask.

Use Control Bids to Get Partner's Opinion About Slam

Now the fun part.

We've seen several situations above where control bidding is the best way to try for slam – but what is control bidding exactly, and how does it work?

A "control bid" is a bid in a new suit after a fit has been established. Its purpose is not to suggest that the new suit be trumps – far from it. The

purpose is to show a control in the new suit in order to start or continue a slam conversation with partner. Partner will know you aren't suggesting that the new suit be trumps – you already have agreed on trumps. Partner will know from your control bid that you want to “talk” about slam.

There are four things that a control bid does:

- Shows a control in the suit named.
- Expresses interest in a possible slam.
- Seeks to find out partner's opinion about a possible slam.
- Helps you find out where partner's key cards are.

If you and your partner use control bids, it is important that you both agree what constitutes a “control.”

Some people play that a “control” must be the ace – a clear definition but very rigid to the point that control bidding rarely works.

Some people play that a “control” can be the ace or a void – better, but still not very flexible.

Most experts today define “control” to include the ace, the king, a void, or a singleton – with the caveat that you don't control bid shortness (singleton or void) in partner's main side suit. This expansive definition gives the partnership a lot of flexibility in making control bids, and it works extremely well in practice.

When using control bids, it's important to bid your controls in order, showing the cheapest one first and so on, up the line. So if the bidding has reached 3♠ (with spades as trumps) and you want to make a control bid, you do so in the cheapest suit where you have a control. Stated differently, if you skip over a suit to make a control bid in the next suit, you are denying a control in the suit you skipped -- *i.e.*, you are telling your partner that you don't have an A, K, singleton, or void in that suit. Note that if partner also lacks a control in the skipped-over suit, then she knows that neither of you have that suit controlled – *i.e.*, the opponents can cash at least two tricks in that suit – and it's time to shut down the bidding at the game level.

Let's focus on how control bidding works.

Example 6

You hold ♠ KJ63 ♥ J854 ♦ K6 ♣ AQ7.

Neither side is vulnerable.

Partner opens 1♠, you try Jacoby 2NT, and she responds 3♥, showing a singleton or void in hearts.

What do you do next?

Answer: 4♣ (control bid)

You have a nice 14-HCP hand with good trump support, and partner's shortness in hearts was good news (she can cover some or all of your losers in that suit). But you have yet to find out whether partner has a bare minimum opener or something better (her 3♥ response said nothing about strength), so you are not strong enough to commit to slam yet. Your best move is to get more information from partner by making a control bid of 4♣. This bid does not suggest that clubs be trumps. It shows a club control – A, K, singleton, void – and invites partner to make a return control bid, if she likes her hand.

Because we are still below game, partner will show a control over 4♣, unless she has a dreadful minimum, *e.g.*, ♠ A9754 ♥ Q ♦ QJ73 ♣ K94 (sign off in 4♠ -- responder then would pass with the example hand and would consider bidding further only with a very powerful hand).

With ♠ AQ872 ♥ T ♦ AJ43 ♣ J84, she will 4♦ to show a diamond control and at least mild interest in slam. If responder then bids 4♥ -- leaving it up to opener whether to continue – she will pass 4♥ because she already has shown mild slam interest and has nothing beyond that.

With a little bit better hand – ♠ AQ872 ♥ T ♦ AJ43 ♣ K84 – opener has plenty of slam interest. Again, she will control bid 4♦ over 4♣ -- but this time, if responder bids 4♥ to tap the brakes a little, opener will keep going with 4NT to check on key cards. As long as responder shows sufficient key cards

– in this case, two with the Q of spades – opener will continue to slam. Opposite responder's example hand, 12 tricks are easy.

This is how control bidding works – an exchange of information about controls and degrees of slam interest until one partner or the other partner has heard enough to be able to make a decision.

Let's try one more example.

Example 7

You hold ♠ AK853 ♥ Q95 ♦ KQ53 ♣ K.

Both sides are vulnerable.

Partner opens 1♣, you respond 1♠, and partner raises to 2♠.

You have a nice 17-HCP hand and your K of clubs appears to be useful, so you are not going to just jump to 4♠. You try 3♦.

Partner reads 3♦ as a game try. She likes her hand and jumps to 4♠.

What do you bid now?

Answer: 5♣ (control bid)

You are pleased that opener responded positively to your “game try.” Now you are serious about slam, but there is one thing that should be bothering you – you could be off the AK of hearts and be down one in 6♠ after the first two tricks. Not good – and not a good hand for Blackwood or key-card, unless you think the opponents have not been listening to your bidding so far (hearts are the unbid suit). How do you figure out what the heart situation is? Try a control bid of 5♣ and see what you learn.

Opener is going to wonder why you didn't use Blackwood and will realize you are interested in specific controls. If she has a red ace, she will show it to you now.

With ♠ QT96 ♥ AJ ♦ T4 ♣ AQ976, opener will make a return control bid of 5♥. This is music to responder's ears, and he'll bid 6♠. (At the table, this was opener's actual hand, and the partnership reached slam as described).

However, with ♠ QT96 ♥ T4 ♦ AJ ♣ AQ976, opener will make a return control bid of 5♦. The ♦A is a nice card, but it doesn't solve responder's problem in hearts, so he will bid 5♠. At this point, it should be clear to opener that responder is looking for a heart control. If opener has one, she will continue to slam – otherwise, she will pass 5♠, stopping in the nick of time.

Conclusion

Partnership teamwork in bidding successful slams and avoiding bad one is one the most fun and satisfying facets of bridge. The keys are using your bidding structure carefully and constructively, with both partners being "on the same page."

Note: The three discussion hands that follow provide further examples of control bidding in action. Also, the first discussion hand introduces a very useful tool – Specific King Ask – that all players should consider adding to their convention cards.

DISCUSSION HAND #1

Both vulnerable
South dealer

♠ AQ84
♥ K6 (North)
♦ AT754
♣ KT

♠ KJ53
♥ AQ8743 (South)
♦ K
♣ AQ

Suggested bidding –

1♥-2♦¹
2♠-3♠²
4♣-4♦³
4NT-5♠⁴
5NT-6♥⁵
7♠!

¹ With plenty of HCP, show your long suit first and your secondary suit second.

² Confirms a 4-4 spade fit. No reason to jump – we are in a game force. If partner wants to explore slam, you are fine with that, so leave him room to make a control bid.

³ 4♣ and 4♦ are control bids – cheapest first, up the line.

⁴ Two key cards with the Q of trumps.

⁵ Two side kings. South now knows that North has the vital ♥K, so 13 tricks are cold. Time to bid a grand slam!

Now, let's change the North hand's clubs from KT to JT – and let's say you are playing the "Specific King Ask."

♠ AQ84
♥ K6 (North)
♦ AT754
♣ JT

♠ KJ53
♥ AQ8743 (South)
♦ K
♣ AQ

The bidding would be the same until North has to respond to 5NT – but this time South is asking for Specific Kings. Here's how it works:

- With no side kings, responder bids our suit at the 6-level.
- With one side king, responder bids the suit of that king.
- With two side kings, responders bids the suit of the cheapest king
 - If asker wants to know about another king, he bids the suit of the king that he is hoping partner has. If responder has that king, he jumps to a grand slam. If he doesn't have it, he either signs off in a small slam or bids the suit of his second king, whichever is cheaper.

More often than not, a grand slam will depend on whether responder has a specific king that asker is hoping for – that one king usually is enough. If responder has it, we can bid a grand slam. If not, we can stop in a small slam.

In revised example hand, South can count 13 tricks if North happens to have the ♥K. When South bids 5NT to ask for Specific Kings (not "how many kings"), North will respond 6♥ to show the ♥K – South will carry on to 7♠.

Now, switch North's holdings in hearts and clubs. Over 5NT, North will bid 6♣ to show the ♣K. South now bids 6♥ to show that he needs the ♥K. This time, North will sign off in 6♠ -- "Sorry, partner. I don't have the ♥K." But if North happened to have the ♥K (as in the original example), he would jump to 7♠.

DISCUSSION HAND #2

E-W vulnerable
South dealer

♠ A6
♥ A84 (North)
♦ AJT942
♣ 43

♠ KQ97532
♥ Q3 (South)
♦ K3
♣ AQ

Suggested bidding –

1♠- 2♦
2♠⁶- 3♦⁷
3♠⁸-4♥⁹
4NT¹⁰-5♦ (1430)
6♠¹¹

⁶ No reason to jump! Takes up too much room, and the suit is not good enough.

⁷ Forcing. We are in a game force.

⁸ Still no reason to jump! We are in a game force, so take your time and see what partner says.

⁹ Control bid in support of spades! (If North wanted to mention hearts as possible trumps, he would have done that a lot earlier).

¹⁰ If North is interested in slam, South is ready to go!

¹¹ How about that for great partnership slam bidding!

DISCUSSION HAND #3

Both vulnerable
North dealer

♠ J96
♥ AK86 (North)
♦ A82
♣ AJ7

♠ AKQ873
♥ QT953 (South)
♦ 7
♣ 4

Suggested bidding:

1NT-2♥ (transfer)

2♠-3♥ (at least 5-5 in the majors – maybe with slam interest)

4♣¹²-4NT¹³

5♣ (1 or 4)-5♥ (pass if you have 1, but bid on if you have 4)

6♥ (I have 4!)-7♥¹⁴

¹² A critical point in the auction. If opener preferred spades, she would bid 3♠. Otherwise, she prefers hearts. With a mediocre hand in support of hearts, opener would bid 4♥ and leave things up to partner. The 4♣ bid is a control bid that says, "I prefer hearts, and I really like my hand for slam purposes (in case you are interested, partner)."

¹³ South definitely is interested. Her 4NT asks for key cards in hearts.

¹⁴ South now knows that North has the ♥AK and both minor-suit aces. Time to bid 7♥! Do you think South will get a good score for bidding this lay-down grand slam?