

The “Kickback” (“Redwood”) & “Exclusion” Blackwood Conventions

The Kickback (“Redwood”) Convention

When a Slam in suits other than Spades is contemplated, the use of the standard Blackwood (“4-NT”) asking bid to determine whether or not a potential slam is feasible does not always work. In some instances the responses signifying the numbers of key cards present take the bidding beyond the 5-level of the agreed-upon suit such that the Partnership is inadvertently propelled into an unmakeable 6-level contract. For example, if the agreed-upon suit is Clubs, and one asks for Control cards by bidding “4-NT”, hoping to find two of the four Aces and/or the King of the agreed-upon suit, and the response gets a “5D” call, showing only 1-control card when using Roman-Key-Card (0314) responses, the Partnership is now committed to a doomed unmakeable 6C contract.

So as to eliminate this potential problem, these two conventions are used as an alternative to the standard Roman Key-Card Blackwood Convention. The “**Kickback**” Convention is used for all four suits, and the “**Redwood**” Convention (an abbreviated form of Kickback is only employed when the Partnership commits to using this system only when the agreed trump suit is one of the Minor suits, either Clubs or Diamonds). Thus, in short, these two conventions are methods of using Roman Key-Card Blackwood while saving space.

The step responses in both conventions are the same as in Roman Key-Card; i.e., either “0314” or “1430”, but the initiating call is not singularly “4-NT”. Whatever the suit agreed to by the Partnership, the “**Asking**” Bid is a relay bid to the next higher-ranking suit at the 4-level. Accordingly, if the agreed trump suit is Clubs, then the relay bid is “4D”; if the agreed trump suit is Diamonds, then the relay bid is “4H”; (these first two responses representing both **red suits** and, thus, this conventional method is therefore designated as the **Redwood** Convention, instead of **Blackwood**); and if the agreed-upon suit is Hearts, then the relay bid is “4S”; and if the agreed suit is Spades, then a “4-NT” bid is used. When all four suits utilize the system it is then designated as the “**Kickback**” Convention.

“4D”	Roman Key-Card Blackwood for Clubs
“4H”	Roman Key-Card Blackwood for Diamonds
“4S”	Roman Key-Card Blackwood for Hearts
“4-NT”	Roman Key-Card Blackwood for Spades

When used singularly for the two Minor suits (Clubs and Diamonds, the system is called the “**Redwood**” Convention. In this circumstance, the ace/key card asking bid of “4-NT” is still used when the agreed-upon trump suit is either of the Major suits (Hearts or Spades).

The RCKB Responses To The Relay Bid Are As follows:

If Using Roman Key-Card Blackwood (0314) 3014 Responses:

First Step	Promises 0 or 3 Keycards.
Second Step	Promises 1 or 4 Keycards.
Third Step	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards <i>without</i> the Queen of Trump.
Fourth Step	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards <i>with</i> the Queen of Trump.

If Using Roman Key-card Blackwood 1430 Responses:

First Step	Promises 1 or 4 Keycards.
Second Step	Promises 0 or 3 Keycards.
Third Step	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards <i>without</i> the Queen of Trump.
Fourth Step	Promises 2 or 5 Keycards <i>with</i> the Queen of Trump.

Response scale for the King Asking bid in either Instance:

First Step:	Promises 0 outside King.
Second Step:	Promises 1 outside King.
Third Step:	Promises 2 outside Kings.
Fourth Step:	Promises 3 outside Kings.

The Exclusion Blackwood Convention

“**Exclusion**” Blackwood or “**Voidwood**” was devised so as to resolve the situation when the Blackwood-asker has a void. In that case, he is not interested in the Partner's ace in the void suit, as he already has the first-round control; partner's ace would present a duplicated value in that case. It is usually played as the Roman Keycard Blackwood, with only four keycards: the three Aces outside the void suit and the King of trumps. However, the asking bid is not “**4-NT**”, rather the void suit at the 5-level. “Voidwood” is made by jumping to the 5-level in the void suit after a fit has been found, for example:

1S – 3S – “**5C**”:

Note: A jump to the 4-level would be either 1st round control, else a “Splinter” bid.

Bids of “**5C**”, “**5D**” and “**5H**” represents a initiation of an “Exclusion” Blackwood call, denoting the void in the suit bid and asking for other key-cards. The responses are, as in RKCB, assuming one is playing “0314” responses”

1st step – 0 or 3 key cards (1 or 4, if playing “1430”)

2nd step – 1 or 4 key cards (3 or 0 if playing “1430”)

3rd step – 2 key cards *without* the trump Queen

4th step – 2 key cards *with* the trump Queen