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It's Just MayHem

Slam bidding: When opponents interfere

Don't you hate it when your partner and you are trying to bid a slam and the opponents interfere? When this happens, your side needs to be able to determine when to continue on and when to defend. Look at this deal:

Dlr: North ♠ 9
 Vul: N-S ♥ A 8 6 3
 ♦ A Q 8 3
 ♣ Q J 10 9

♠ Q J 7 4 2	N	♠ A K 10 8 6 5 3
♥ 9 7 5 4	W	♥ J
♦ 9 6 5 2	E	♦ 10 7 4
♣ —	S	♣ 6 2

♠ —
 ♥ K Q 10 2
 ♦ K J
 ♣ A K 8 7 5 4 3

West	North	East	South
5♠	1♣	3♠	4NT
?			

Perhaps South shouldn't bid 4NT with a void, but over West's 5♠ bid, North and South have a dilemma. If North doubles, he might find out that East-West are only down two for a score of 300 points. If North bids on, however, his side might go set instead of collecting the points for defending. Because North doesn't know what to

do, let's say he passes.

Now it is South who has a problem. He was driving to slam, but doesn't know how many aces North has. He would hate to bid 6♣ and find out his side is off two aces.

The old-fashioned way used to be to pass with no aces, bid one level higher with one ace and bid two levels higher with two aces. The problem with this is that if responder bids one level above the interference (with one ace), his side could be off two aces.

The traditional method is obviously lacking, so bridge players have devised new and improved methods for showing aces in this situation. They do not involve a lot of memorization.

DEPO stands for **Double with Even, Pass with Odd number of aces.**

You would double with zero, two or four aces, and pass with one or three. Using DEPO in the previous example North has two aces so he would double to show an even number.

DOPI stands for **Double with 0 (zero) and Pass with 1 (one).** To show more than one, you would bid one level higher with two and continue bidding up the line with each higher bid showing one more ace. Thus, in the previous example, North has two aces, so he would bid 5NT. If, instead, North had three aces, he would bid 6♣ to show that.

Some bridge players use Roman Key Card Blackwood. Playing that, the king of trumps is considered to be one of five key cards. If you play RKC, and there is interference after a 4NT bid, the responses allow for the extra "ace."

With DEPO, a double shows an even number of key cards and pass shows an odd number. With DOPI,

a double usually shows zero or three key cards while pass shows one or four key cards. The next higher suit would then show two key cards without the queen while skipping a suit would show two key cards with the queen.

Occasionally an opponent will double 4NT. In that case, you can agree to play this:

ROPI stands for **Redouble to show 0 (zero) aces and Pass to show 1 (one) ace.** The responder bids one level higher with two aces, and two levels higher with three.

Try these practice problems. You hold:

♠ 7 3 ♥ K J 7 5 3 ♦ A 8 7 ♣ K Q 9.

You are South and the bidding is:

West	North	East	South
3♦	4NT	5♦	1♥
			?

What would you bid playing:

1. Blackwood and DOPI?
2. Blackwood and DEPO?
3. Roman Keycard Blackwood (assume hearts are agreed trumps) and DEPO?
4. Roman Keycard Blackwood (assume hearts are agreed trumps) and DOPI?

Answers:

1. Pass — you hold one ace.
2. Pass — you hold one ace, an odd number.
3. Double — you have two key cards, an even number.
4. 5♥ — with two key cards (and no trump queen), bid one higher than the opponent's bid. □