

Chapter 11: Slam Treatments

As I was doing the development for KLP V12, I was fortunate enough to grab hold of a compilation book discussing the Bermuda Bowl. As I read the text I was alarmed to find out that the United States as a whole haven't bid slams well at all during this competition. Furthermore, with my experiences seeing players fail to grasp this important concept, I crafted a system from the bottom up to evaluate your chances at slam once the hand mandates it.

Why do players struggle in reaching slams?

I think it's a combination of three factors: failing to value their hands, not enough instruction and practice, and failing to have the mindset required to bid slams accurately and directly. In every bridge class I've participated in, slam bidding is almost an afterthought. Due to this, when people play in tournaments they get low scores or lose IMPs because they stopped at 4 or 5 making 6. There is nothing more demoralizing, especially at team-of-four games, then to return to your home table and report that you've lost 8 or more IMPs due to failing to get to slam.

How did I make this system bid accurately to slam?

I designed KLP from the initial version to effectively and skillfully bid slams. From the onset, the system was geared to finding the right degree of fit(s), then exploring to find the optimum contract. That's why there are so many different slam conventions in KLP; the system's structure allows great flexibility in determining the level the partnership should play at. There are many treatments in KLP to handle any type of slam exploration, from exclusionary bidding, double fits, cuebidding (both accepting and denying), to standard RKC Blackwood. It is a great feeling going to your teammates and telling them that you got to those slams in a controlled, methodical manner.

When I'm not sure what 4NT is, do I treat it as keycard asking for the last suit bid?

Absolutely do NOT treat it as keycard asking. If you haven't found your fit yet you need a place to stop and assess the total collective assets of the hand. It is the duty of the partnership to agree to a suit BEFORE making any other bids. That's why at times I'll bypass a 4 card major to make a 2/1 forcing bid or to set trumps early on suppressing a second suit to give the auction a sense of direction. Not knowing where you are going in an auction is a recipe for disaster. Don't muddle the issue; support vigorously at your first turn.

Lastly, how do my partner and I practice our slam bidding?

I recommend using a hand generator that you can set certain ranges of points, cards in suit, and total points. This will allow you to practice a particular concept with repetition. This will in turn give you the needed confidence to bid slams and win.

4♣ ROMAN KEYCARD GERBER (RKCG)

This is used only in two situations: over a NT opening and over a weak 2 preempt. The responses are identical to standard RKCB (see below). This is rarely used in KLP.

ROMAN KEYCARD BLACKWOOD (RKCB)

RKC Blackwood is the most common mechanism used by tournament players to ask for features of a player's hand. There are 6 keycards: the 4 aces, the king of trumps, and the queen of trumps. If the partnership has 10 or more trumps collectively, it is assumed that you hold the queen. The schedule of responses after 4NT is:

- 5♣ → 1 or 4 keycards
- 5♦ → 0 or 3 keycards
- 5♥ → 2 keycards, no queen
- 5♠ → 2 keycards, has queen
- 5NT → 2 keycards with a void
- 6X → 3 keycards with a void in the bid suit (unless trump suit)

After a 5♣ answer, the 4NT asker can bid 5♦ to ask for the queen of trumps. 5♥ denies the queen, while 5♠ shows the queen, and a 6 level bid shows the queen AND the king of the bid suit.

6 ACE ROMAN KEYCARD BLACKWOOD (6A-RKCB)

6A-RKCB is a logical extension of standard RKCB. What this treatment allows the partnership to do is to ask for keycards when a **double fit** has been established in the auction. There are 8 keycards in a double fit: the 4 aces, the 2 kings, and the 2 queens. The schedule of responses to 4NT is:

- 5♣ → 1 or 4 keycards
- 5♦ → 0 or 3 keycards
- 5♥ → 2 keycards, no queens
- 5♠ → 2 keycards, 1 of 2 queens
- 5NT → 2 keycards, BOTH queens
- 6X → 3 keycards with a working void (unless trumps)

After a 5♣ answer, the 4NT asker can bid 5♦ to ask for the queen of trumps. 5♥ denies BOTH queens, while 5♠ shows one queen, 5NT shows BOTH queens, and a 6 level bid shows BOTH queens AND the king of the bid suit.

6A-RKCB is rarely seen on convention cards, but it's worthy of being on mine because I can ask for both suits simultaneously. Double fits follow the principle of control and fit (CONFIT), and 6A-RKCB delivers.

ROMAN KEYCARD EXCLUSION BLACKWOOD (RKCEXB)

This treatment is only used when responder has a working void. It's triggered by a jump bid to the 5 level showing the void. The responses are exactly similar to standard RKCB EXCEPT that you ignore the Ace of the void suit. Thus, step one is 1 or 4 keycards, step 2 0 or 3 keycards, etc.

ROMAN KEYCARD REDWOOD (RKCREW)

This is used after a 1♦ - 2♦ - 4♦ and a 2♣ - 2♦ - rebid - 4♣ sequence. You can have intermediate bids in the middle of the sequences. Just remember that 4 of a minor is keycard asking for the opened minor. It uses the same steps as in standard RKCB.

ROMAN KEYCARD KICKBACK (RKCKICK)

This treatment is used probably the most out of any that KLP V12 has to offer. It's used in the strong club complex, when a suit has been agreed upon at below game level, and when NAMYATS is implemented. Basically any keycard asking bid other than 4♣/♦/NT AFTER finding a fit BELOW game level is Kickback. Bidding the next available bid, including NT, initializes Kickback, to trigger a keycard ask.

Example: 1♣-1♥-1♠-1NT (Kickback for spades)
1♦-1♥-2♥-2♠* (Kickback for hearts)
1♥-2♦-3♣-3♦*(NOT Kickback for diamonds)*

Once a Kickback inquiry begins, the schedule of responses is identical to standard RKCB. If responder wishes to pursue further, he/she will rebid the suit/NT, to prompt for specific kings, queens, and so on. Once an illogical bid or a jump into game/slam is made, it is to play.

CUEBIDDING

Cuebidding is a lost art form to many players. You start by cuing aces, then kings, then queens, and so on. However no cues can take place until AFTER suit agreement is established. Also remember, if your cue just so

happens to be the suit for a Kickback ask, it is better to enter Kickback BEFORE cuing because most likely you have assets for game only. If the auction gets muddle of confusing, bid the cheapest makeable game and take a sure positive score.

SPIRAL SCAN

Dr. George Rosenkranz invented this treatment for use in Romex. It is a form of denial cuebidding. In essence, you bid the suit you LACK control in, and by implication promise the suits BENEATH your bid as controlled.

Example: 1♣-1♥-1♠-1NT(Kickback for♠)
2♦-2NT*(asking for kings)-3♦ (promises ♣ king)
3♣ (promises ♥ and ♦ king) – 3NT (promises ♠ king)
4♥ (promises ♣ and ♦ queen) – 4NT (asking for Jacks)*

Spiral Scan has a certain order that is used:

1. Queen ask
2. Aces
3. Kings
4. Queens
5. Jacks

Think of Spiral Scan as cuebidding what you DON'T have, and you should grasp this powerful tool quickly.

LAST TRAIN (LTTC)

Last Train occurs normally over a major suit opening. It's used when responder wants to make a slam try but needs to know if opener will cooperate. Responder on their 2nd turn of bidding will bid one suit BELOW 4 of the agreed major to ask opener to bid on or stop (4♦ = ♥, 4♥ = ♠). LTTC is often coupled with the serious 3NT treatment, and there are many permutations that requires discussion.

Summary

Slam bidding is an area of great opportunity for many bridge players. It is an area of bridge that must be practiced often and regularly to ensure future success. The sign of a good partnership is their ability to defend and their ability **to bid accurately in the slam zone**. I feel the aforementioned treatments will give a partnership great amounts of leeway in slam explorations and will further the success of the team in general.