

Solutions to Test Your Play

(Problems are on page 78.)

- ♠ K 10 6 4
 - ♥ A Q 7 5
 - ♦ 6 4
 - ♣ A 7 3

♠ 5

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

 - ♥ 2
 - ♠ A 9
 - ♣ J 6 4

Assuming West has the ♥K, you have 11 tricks, which is getting there.

West is likely to be 5-5 in clubs and hearts given that West didn't open 2♥ in first seat. If this is all true, you must win the opening lead (no ducking to rectify the count on this one) and reel off six rounds of spades. Before you play the sixth spade, this is what the four hands should look like:

♠ —	♥ A Q 7 5	♠ —	♥ 10 8 6
♥ K J 9 4	♦ —	♦ —	♦ K J
♦ —	♣ A 7 3	♣ A 7 3	♣ K 9

N	8 3
W	♥ 2
E	♦ 9
S	♣ J 6 4

West is squeezed on the sixth spade. A heart discard allows you to finesse the heart and ruff a heart to set up dummy's

Time to renew your ACBL membership? Use the ACBL Action Form on page 114.

Paying the piper

It was the last board. You were playing a new convention which hadn't come up the entire tournament. It finally came up — and you messed it up. Your partner was like a dog on a bone. He just wouldn't let go. You apologized. "I try to do the right thing," you pleaded.

"Sure," said he, "after you've tried everything else."

You attempted to switch the subject from the miserable past to the brighter future. "We'll get it right next time. When are we playing next?"

"How about never?" he sneered. "Is never good for you?"

Guess he hadn't heard of Zero Tolerance. Oh, well, if you dance, you gotta pay the piper.

Mark this down. You should know it. It won't change what you do, but you should know it: Every time you add a new convention to your repertoire, it will probably cost you a minimum of half a board — maybe more — before you begin to reap any benefits.

The price could be an event or a partner. When Key Card Blackwood first began to be widely used, it cost my team a shot at a national championship. Play-shot in the semifinals of a national team game, our consistently fine teammates, new to the convention, managed to have a misunderstanding and bid a grand slam off the king of trumps. The good bad news was that the king was guarded and could not be picked up. 7NT or seven of a minor was cold. We lost by 8 IMPs, and needless to say, there were other places to pick that up, but *what we remembered* was the key-card snafu.

Most of you play some version of key card. If you don't, you should. If you do, I have some recommendations. There is

WHEN 4NT IS NOT RKB

Tales of the Trail

Winsome & Coathsome

one I am anxious to make before you get bored and turn to something entertaining like the Appeals column. When partner opens the bidding with one of a suit, say 1♠, is a leap to 4NT key card? *It should not be!* It should be straight Blackwood. Don't argue, trust me. Maybe that's asking a lot. OK, you don't have to

New Location!

South River Knights of Columbus Hall

88 Jackson St.
South River NJ 08882

Playing Site and All Events Are Non-Smoking

December 6-8, 2002

(In Strata/Flighted—Flight A is separate and unlimited)
Open A=1500+ B=500-1500 C=0-500
Newspicate A=100-200 B=50-100 C=0-50

- Friday December 6**
- 1:30 pm Stratified Pairs
 - Stratified Senior Pairs
 - Stratified Newspaper Pairs
 - Strata/Flighted Pairs
 - Stratified Newspaper Pairs
- 7:30 pm**
- Stratified Senior Pairs
 - Stratified Newspaper Pairs
 - Strata/Flighted Pairs
 - Stratified Newspaper Pairs

Saturday December 7

- 1:00 pm Stratified Pairs
- Stratified Senior Pairs
- Stratified Newspaper Pairs
- Strata/Flighted Pairs
- Stratified Newspaper Pairs

7:30 pm

- Stratified Senior Pairs
- Stratified Newspaper Pairs
- Strata/Flighted Pairs
- Stratified Newspaper Pairs

Sunday December 8

9:30-10:30 am **FREE BAGEL BRUNCH**

10:30 am Stratified Swiss Teams
(play through NO BREAK)
Stratified 299er Swiss Teams
(play through)

★ Strats may be combined based on participation ★

Tournament Chairs: Brent Kunin & Julie Rowe
Information: Tom Achambault (908) 789-9088
Pairings: Cookie Bernstein (732) 494-1550

DIRECTIONS: FROM NEW JERSEY, N.Y. OR SOUTH: New Jersey Turnpike to Exit 9. Follow sign to NJ Route 18 South. Pass 5 traffic lights, about 2 miles (the last light is Ferris St). After the last light, take the SECOND Milltown Rd. exit. Lughandle across Rte. 18, the ramp will go to the left. At second traffic light, make left onto Main Street (Middlesex Rte. 633). At the next light (about 6 blocks), turn right onto Jackson St. K of C is 1/2 mile from intersection at bottom of hill, just before the road veers to the left. Look for a brown brick bldg. with white columns. There is limited parking, but street parking is permitted, and there is a small municipal lot across the street.

trust me, I'll demonstrate.

In a national championship event, there was a hand with 10 solid hearts and three singletons. The partner to that hand opened the bidding 1♠. Now do you want to bid key card? Of course not. You are interested only in aces. Partner actually would show three. If you are sure that one of them is not the ♠K, you will happily bid a grand. It was matchpoints; would you try 7NT? Better not, since partner was void in hearts. Craig Mertz, however, tried 7NT and his left-hand opponent, holding something in every suit but hearts, made the "safe" lead of a heart! "Greed," said my sarcastic friend, referring to himself, "is a terrible thing." Then, as he spread his hand, "But bridge is a funny game."



If you want to locate a key card in opener's suit, you must do some kind of splinter or dance — Jacoby 2NT, or a did precisely that, when he should not have. He held

♠KQJx ♥KJxxx ♦KQ ♣Q, and I opened the bidding 1♥! Feeling that six-card support was sufficient even for me, he proudly announced it by bidding Jacoby 2NT (bid 3♠ showing shortness, and partner tried key card. I dutifully bid 5♠ showing two aces and the irrelevant queen of trumps! Had he leaped to 4NT directly I would have responded 5♥ and played it there. His only interest was in the number of aces I held. I am embarrassed to report that the hand had a happy ending when the opening lead misfired.

Usually the first (and sometimes only) key card question that a partnership resolves is whether to play standard key card, where 5♣ shows zero or three key cards and 5♦ shows one or four (called "3014" by some) or the other way around (dubbed "1430"). I recommend the latter

as slightly superior, especially when the agreed trump is either clubs or spades. In the case of clubs, if partner bids 5♦ showing only one ace, you may be committed to slam missing two aces! That is not always a success. That's why many partnerships play *minorwood* or *kickback*. In the case where hearts are trump, it leaves room for the "queen-ask" when only one ace is shown.

The queen-ask, of course, is a bid in the next available suit other than trump. Most of you know that. And you know that if responder has the queen and an outside king, he shows the king along the way. I personally, like to respond 5NT to the queen-ask if I hold the trump queen and two outside kings.

After bidding key card, asking for kings is a grand-slam invitation. Asking for kings guarantees all key cards including the trump queen (or extra length). Thus, if responder has a source of tricks outside the trump suit, say a running side suit, he can bid a grand directly. Also, if the queen-ask propels you to the six level, it is an invitation to a grand if, in fact, you hold the queen.

Most people bid 5NT to ask for kings. That is not best. If the queen-ask is the next available suit other than trump, the king-ask should be the second available suit. Thus, after a 5♣ response with, say clubs or spades as trump, 5♦ would be the queen-ask, and 5♥ would ask for kings. This allows for more room to show specific kings and leaves 5NT available to show more than one king. If hearts are trump, 5♠ would be the king-ask and 5NT would show the ♠K. If this is too complex and you and your partner are uncomfortable with it, *don't do it*. It is better to confuse the opponents than

The Bridge Bulletin

A-K-J-10 and three singletons, first seat, red on white. The variety of openings was unreal: 5♦, 3NT, 2♣! Only one bid, 4NT — straight Blackwood — stands out as the best choice. If partner has one ace, you pass; with two you bid a slam; with three you bid a grand. If he has no aces, it's probably their hand (it was) and you are down only one.

Have you discussed such situations, or do you choose to try to be creative when they arise? Creativity is rarely effective in bidding. Discipline works better. The trouble with creativity in the auction is that you have to get by partner. You know by now that if you give him a chance to go wrong, he will — especially if he's not on the same page. Creativity works much better as declarer, because you are aware of all your assets, and you control both sides of the table.

Einstein thought that imagination was more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world. Easy for him to say. He dealt with the fantasy world of physics. You and I have to contend with the brutally real world of bridge. □

one another. It is a convention that comes up seldom, contravenes years of conditioning, and, therefore, may be easily forgotten. However you choose to ask for kings, showing specific kings is a little superior to showing the number.

Enough of key card. There is more, but, like a broken record, my point is that the important thing is that you and partner stay on the same page. Bridge is a game of communication and the single biggest problem of communication is the illusion that it has occurred. The road to disaster is paved with such illusions.

Let me test you. Your LHO bids 3♠, partner overcalls 4♣ and you bid 4NT. Is that Blackwood? I don't think it should be. I think it should be to play and 4♠ should be Blackwood (key card, of course). If partner overcalled a major (e.g., 4♥) which is game, then 4NT would be Blackwood. But have you discussed this with partner?

Partner opens the bidding with 4NT. What is it? It should be *straight Blackwood* — not points, not minors, but straight Blackwood. At the Washington NABCs some of you may remember a hand with 10 diamonds headed by the

Special events calendar

Event

Date(s)

2002

Dec. 2 (Monday evening, analyses)
Dec. 2-8 (Shuffle & deal) ACBL-wide Charity Game
ACBL-wide Charity Game Week

2003

Jan. 25 (Saturday afternoon, analyses)
Jan. 20-26 (Shuffle & deal) International Fund Game #1
International Fund Game Week #1

February
Feb. 24 (Monday afternoon) Junior Fund Games
ACBL-wide Senior Game

Mar. 11 (Tuesday evening, analyses)
Mar. 10-16 (Shuffle & deal) ACBL-wide Charity Game #1
ACBL-wide Charity Game Week #1
Mar. 25 (Tuesday evening) Canada-wide Olympiad Fund Game #1

May 14 (Wednesday afternoon, analyses)
May 12-18 (Shuffle & deal) International Fund Game #2
International Fund Game Week #2