



Billy Miller
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Dear Billy

spot is used that could take a trick. Bottom line: you can tell which method I prefer.

Dear Billy,

At a recent club game, I held the following:

♠AKJ643 ♥— ♦8 ♣A98652

The bidding, of course, went 1♦ by my left-hand opponent and proceeded Pass, 1♥. I had been taught to anticipate the bidding on such a hand by bidding a quiet 2♣ and I did so. LHO bid 2♥ and RHO bid 4♥ as expected. I bid 4♠ and it went Pass, Pass, 5♥. I bid 5♠, feeling I had completely described my hand. LHO passed, as did partner (an excellent one) holding:

♠1098752 ♥KJ4 ♦5 ♣KQ7

We failed to bid the laydown spade slam. She maintains that all bids were predicated on the first bid and she could not read me for the hand I held. I respect her opinions, but is all bidding predicated on the first round as she insists? I was taught to be aggressive, but sometimes isn't it better to listen to the bidding and come in on the second round to better describe a hand.

Second Round Bidder

Dear Sandbagger,

Personally, I greatly prefer to show as many of my cards in one bid as is possible. Instead of overcalling clubs or spades, I would have used a Michaels 2♦ bid. If your partnership does not treat that as Michaels, you could start with 2NT, showing at least 5-5 in the unbid suits.

Also, by starting with one suit and reversing into a higher ranking one, you guarantee more length in the first suit. Obviously, your partner would have bid 4♠ after your two-

suiting overall and you could have taken over from there, knowing partner had good enough support and some stuff to bid on their own at the four level.

Getting partner involved usually pays dividends.

Dear Billy,

My hand was

♠QJ5 ♥AKJ6 ♦A72 ♣KQ

Pard's hand was

♠AK1064 ♥— ♦Q ♣A76543

The bidding:

<i>Me</i>	<i>Partner</i>
2NT	3♥
3♠	4♣
4NT	5♦
6♠	Pass

I thought 4♣ was Roman Key Card Gerber for spades; partner was bidding clubs. I meant 4NT to show two key cards with the ♠Q, partner thought I was bidding Blackwood. The auction was obviously muddled and did not get better from there. How do you get to a grand slam in spades or clubs? Should 4♣ be natural? What about 4NT?

Anonymous

Dear No-Name,

4♣ is natural. If you cuebid 4 to say you like one of partner's suits, there is a chance that you could reach the grand depending on your system and ability to judge well, as normally we won't use Blackwood with a void.

Part of my system is that 4NT Roman Key Card Blackwood where it follows a Texas transfer (4♦ 4♥), whereas 4NT is quantitative when it follows a lower-level transfer. These are very difficult hands to get to seven on without good partnership trust. The main lesson is to iron out your system; you can be on the same wavelength in the future.

Dear Billy,

When following to declarer's play of the trump suit, do you prefer to give suit preference or count?

Up in the Air

Dear Levitator,

Nice question. When I learned the game the only thing that was ever mentioned was that a high-low in the trump suit showed a third trump and with interest in a ruff. Even if there was no ruff, this showed three trumps, not two. Only later in my bridge career did I learn of another type of signaling in the opponent's trump suit. Instead of high-lowing to show three, a high-low would indicate that I have a strong preference for the highest ranking unbid side suit. A low-high would indicate a lower-ranking suit preference or no preference at all, but not the highest suit. The latter is a negative inference.

I've found this system to be considerably more valuable than the ruff indicator. I seldom wish to tell partner, "I have another trump, so please get in and give me a ruff." In almost every session, there will be an opportunity to give partner some information about what your side-suit preferences are. One last note: never high-low when an important