

Krzysztof Martens

# Professional Slam Bidding

## Part II

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Krzysztof Martens

Translated by

Cathy Bałdysz

Editor

Brian Senior

Cover Design

Aleksandra Berkowska

# *Contents*

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Bidding space.....	5
Splinters .....	30
Agreements.....	48
Last train.....	73
Blackwood.....	80
Ace asking at low levels .....	83
Conditional RKCB.....	91
Blackwood depending on the context .....	95
When Blackwood is urgently needed.....	99
Exclusion Keycard Blackwood.....	108
Turbo.....	115
Pick a slam.....	127
Another meaning for 5NT.....	136
In the Blackwood neighborhood .....	139
Decision .....	148



## BIDDING SPACE

Preemptive bidding has a great advantage – it takes bidding space away from the opponents. Of course, it's true that the gains are offset by the risk of going down for a very costly penalty on misfit hands.

A conservative pair doesn't preempt very often, because their requirements for preempting are too restrictive. Undoubtedly, they don't give away -800 or -1100. On the other hand, look at how rarely the opponents make a mistake against them. A passive pair very often complains that they were unlucky.

Personally, I'm a big fan of active bidding. I like a good fight "under the knife," and a little chaos in the bidding which, after years of experience, I think I can handle better than my opponents.

In tennis the pros call it a forced error. It's when a tennis player takes a risk, goes for the line, and changes the tempo and style of the game.

There's a category of forced errors that can also be applied in bridge.

Bidding space is fundamental to successful partnership bidding. Especially in slam bidding, bidding space is as necessary as the air we breathe.

It sometimes happens that a pair loses bidding space in an uncontested auction without a good reason for doing so. When this happens it's the result of an individual error or a misunderstanding of the basic principles of natural bidding.

It can also happen if a system agreement is badly or illogically constructed.

In boxing, there's a saying that there are no boxers resistant to taking blows, only punches that missed the mark.

I'd like to show, using a few examples from world class bridge play, that there is no such thing as a pair that is invulnerable to preemption, only that some pairs aren't so effectively preempted out of the bidding.

BEIJING 2008  
 OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP, THE FINAL

	♠ 8 4										
	♥ 8 7 6 5										
	♦ 6 5 2										
	♣ K J 7 5										
♠ 6 5 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A J 4		♥ K Q 3 2									
♦ A K 10 3		♦ Q 9 8 7 4									
♣ 10 9 3		♣ A Q 6									
	♠ K Q J 10 9 7 2										
	♥ 10 9										
	♦ J										
	♣ 8 4 2										

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Nunes	Gold	Fantoni	Townsend
			2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♦	Pass	...	

The very conservative opening 2♦ — Multi — bid by Townsend left the Italians with a lot of bidding room. It was only pessimistic hand evaluation on the part of Nunes that kept them from bidding a slam.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Malinowski	Lauria	Sandqvist	Versace
			3♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♦	Pass ...

Versace made a better opening bid of 3♠.

The surprisingly passive bid of 4♦ by Malinowski must have been because they have an aggressive style of reopening the bidding.

However, the 5♦ bid should have woken him up to the fact that he had a beautiful hand for his partner.

At this point he should have made a grand slam try with a 5♥ cue bid.

SAO PAULO 2009  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

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

NS vulnerable

W	N <small>Lauria</small>	E	S <small>Versace</small>
	1♦	1♠	2♥
4♠	Dbl	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

Despite the lack of bidding space, Lauria and Versace handled the situation perfectly.

One debatable point is whether 4NT wouldn't have been better than 5♦.

In my opinion 4NT shows 6♦ and 4♣.

W	N <small>Hamman</small>	E	S <small>Zia</small>
	1♦	1♠	2♥
4♠	5♦	Pass	

Hamman chose a worse option than did Lauria. He could have bid 5♦ with a lot of weaker hands than the one he actually held.



Zia didn't have any reason to bid the slam.

<b>W</b> Rodwell	<b>N</b> De Wijs	<b>E</b> Meckstroth	<b>S</b> Muller
	1♦	1♠	2♥
3♠	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	7♦	Pass	

Meckwell left the Dutch pair a lot of bidding room. You have to admit that Muller and De Wijs were quite optimistic on this deal. I greatly sympathize with their attitude.

SAO PAULO 2009  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

	♠ Q 9 7 6 5 4									
	♥ 5									
	♦ A K Q 6 2									
	♣ 4									
♠ J 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px; text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>		N	W			E		S	♠ A K
	N									
W										
	E									
	S									
♥ A 10 9 8 3		♥ K Q 4								
♦ J		♦ 9 8 7 5 3								
♣ K Q 9 6 2		♣ A J 3								
	♠ 10 8 2									
	♥ J 7 6 2									
	♦ 10 4									
	♣ 10 8 7 5									

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Zia	Fantoni	Hamman	Nunes
			Pass
1♥	3♣	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	...	
3♣	—	+5♠ +5♦	

Hamman's cue bid didn't get any reaction out of Zia.

This must have been because their bidding style very rarely allowed for such a weak opening hand.

*And yet, once partner shows a genuine heart fit and hand too good to simply bid 4H, the West hand is a lot better than it was when Zia opened 1H. Flexible hand evaluation is needed and now he might bid 4C because it commits to nothing, in case partner is strong. Or, is this a non-serious 3NT situation, in which case he can do that?*

*Brian Senior*

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Versace	Rodwell	Lauria	Meckstroth
			Pass
Pass	1♠	1NT	Pass
2♦	3♦	3♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

Versace didn't follow the same path as Zia and didn't open the bidding.

The auction continued much more slowly and Alfredo showed excellent hand evaluation.

I should add that Lorenzo also helped out in the auction.

SAO PAULO 2009  
 TRANSNATIONAL TEAMS, THE FINAL

The same hand.

	♠ Q 9 7 6 5 4										
	♥ 5										
	♦ A K Q 6 2										
	♣ 4										
♠ J 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 20%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 10 9 8 3		♥ K Q 4									
♦ J		♦ 9 8 7 5 3									
♣ K Q 9 6 2		♣ A J 3									
	♠ 10 8 2										
	♥ J 7 6 2										
	♦ 10 4										
	♣ 10 8 7 5										

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Żmudzinski	Narkiewicz	Balicki	Buras
			Pass
1♥	1♠	2♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	...	
2♠	— game forcing with support		

Just like Zia, Żmudziński reacted negatively, although he had more bidding space available to him had his judgment been more positive.

Adam belongs to the group of players who make very sound opening bids, so it is not unexpected that he took a negative view with such a minimum opening hand.

W Kalita	N Helness	E Kotorowicz	S Helgemo
			Pass
1♥	1♠	2♦	Pass
2♥	3♦	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	

2♦ — support in hearts either weak 6-8PC or strong +13PC

This was a good showing by the young Polish pair.

The 2♦ bid created a lot of additional bidding space and a more comfortable psychological situation.

Opener limited his hand (with the 2♥ bid). Thanks to this, after the 3♠ cue bid he could react positively without overstating his enthusiasm for slam.

The 4♠ cue bid not only showed the lack of a diamond control, but also promised extra values.

PARIS 2001  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

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

♠ A Q 10 3
♥ K J 7 4
♦ A 8 7
♣ A 6

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Meckstroth	Bocchi	Rodwell
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
4♦	Pass	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	5NT
Pass	7♣	Pass	7♠
Pass			

4NT — Blackwood, spade agree

5NT — grand slam invitation

Despite the lack of bidding space, Meckwell got to the excellent grand slam in spades.

The fact that the critical suits split badly, doesn't at all detract from my admiration for their bidding.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Hamman	Lauria	Soloway	Versace
<hr/>			
4♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	4♠	Pass	...

Hamman preempted the bidding in the modern way (I like it).

The Italians reopen the bidding very aggressively, so partner has to be very careful in deciding to go beyond game. In my opinion, however, Lorenzo Lauria was too careful.

PARIS 2001  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ A J 10 9 8 5 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N		W	E		S	♠ K
N								
W	E							
	S							
♥ A 2		♥ K 5 4 3						
♦ Q 5		♦ J 10						
♣ K Q		♣ A J 9 8 3 2						
		♠ —						
		♥ Q J 9						
		♦ A 8 7 6 4 3						
		♣ 7 6 5 4						

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Versace	Aa	Lauria	Groetheim
		1♣	2♦
2♠	4♦	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	4♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

This is an example of what is referred to in sports as a forced error. The activeness of the Norwegians during the bidding provoked the Italians into making a mistake.

*What is going on here? If West has shown a hand too good to bid 4S on the previous round, then East has no business bidding on with such a minimal opening bid. If West has shown a hand with spades plus club tolerance, then he should pass 5C as East rates to be his actual shape so often – marked with a singleton spade at most or would have passed 4S, and hence often two diamond losers.*

*Brian Senior*



VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ —		♠ A 10 6 5 3			
♥ A Q J 9		♥ 8			
♦ A K J 8 6 3		♦ 7 2			
♣ Q J 3		♣ A 9 7 4 2			
♠ Q J 7 4 2	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W      E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W      E	S	
N					
W      E					
S					
♥ K 10 7 4 3 2					
♦ 5					
♣ 6					
		♠ K 9 8			
		♥ 6 5			
		♦ Q 10 9 4			
		♣ K 10 8 5			

Both vulnerable

W Kalish	N Lindkvist	E Podgur	S Fredin
			Pass
2♥	Dbl	2NT	Dbl
3♠	4♦	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		
2♥	— 5+♥/4+♠ and 5-10 HCP		
2NT	— asking		
3♠	— 5+♥/5+♠ and 6-8 HCP		

The Israelis used a bidding strategy which I am constantly trying to get “my students” out of the habit of using.

A jump to 4♠ by Podgur was called for. However, he decided to bid slowly and that gave the Swedish pair a lot of bidding room.

A club ruff set the slam, but this was a matter of luck, and not part of a well-thought out plan.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Bertheau	Doron	Nystrom	Israel
			Pass
Pass	1♦	1♠	Pass*
4♠	Dbl	Pass	...

\*Pass — mystery call?

The result of +200 was hardly satisfying for the Israeli pair.

VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

	♠ 6 ♥ A ♦ K Q J 7 4 ♣ A K J 9 8 6										
♠ J 4 2 ♥ 7 6 5 4 2 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ 10 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">W</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 5px;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> </td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 8 3 ♥ K Q J 9 8 3 ♦ 9 6 ♣ Q 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K 10 9 7 5 ♥ 10 ♦ A 10 2 ♣ 7 4 3										

NS vulnerable

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Fredin	Helness	Lindkvist	Helgemo
			1♠
Pass	2♣	2♥	2♠
3♥	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	7♦	Pass	...

4♥ — cue bid

Helness took excellent advantage of the bidding space left by the Swedes.

The grand slam in diamonds was much better than the grand in clubs. A 3–2 diamond break and 3–3 spade break was an additional chance, when North’s potential club loser would go on the established clubs.

<b>W</b> Sontag	<b>N</b> Nystrom	<b>E</b> Bates	<b>S</b> Bertheau
			1♠
Pass	2♣	3♥	3♠
4♥	6♣	Pass	...
2♣	— game-forcing relay		

Bates jumped to the three level in hearts and that was all it took to keep Nystrom from finding the optimal contract.

VERONA 2006  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

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

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Lindkvist	Helness	Fredin
		1♦	3♣
Pass	4♥	Pass	...
3♣	— majors		

Fredin's bid at the three level, showing a two-suiter with both majors, kept Helgemo out of the auction.

Why Fredin decided to take such an aggressive action at unfavorable vulnerability will remain his secret. This is another deal which proves that it pays to be active in the bidding.

One down, -100.

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Sontag	Bertheau	Bates
		1♣	1♥
1NT	3♥	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♦	Pass ...
1♣	— strong		
1NT	— 5+♠, unbalanced		
4♥	— good diamond raise		

Bates made a completely sensible overcall of 1♥, but it left a lot of bidding space available to his opponents and allowed the Swedes to get to the diamond slam.

Bates led the ♥A for -1370.

ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

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

♠ K J 10 9 7 5 2
♥ 8 6 4
♦ 5
♣ 5 3
♠ 8 6
♥ J 7
♦ J 10 9 7 6 4
♣ 9 8 2

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Schollaardt	Fantoni	Drijver	Nunes
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♣	Pass
6♠	Pass	7♥	Pass ...

Bidding like music.

3♥ — game forcing and showing four hearts plus a spade stopper (3♠ would have shown four hearts without a spade stopper).

Note that in this very unusual situation the Dutch pair had a precise agreement:

6♠ — pick a grand slam.

Creating a bid at the six level which means pick a grand slam is evidence of a highly sophisticated style of bidding.

*Would it be too wild for North to overcall 3S instead of 2S at this vulnerable?*

*Brian Senior*

<b>W</b> Duboin	<b>N</b> v Prooijen	<b>E</b> Bocchi	<b>S</b> Brink
	Pass	1NT	Dbl
Rdbl	2♠	3♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

Dbl — clubs or diamonds

Rdbl — strong

3♣ — Bocchi thought the redouble showed clubs (as it would have over a 'strong' double)

When they found themselves in a similar bidding situation, the Italians were completely lost.

ESTORIL 2005  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Versace	Hamman	Lauria	Soloway
Pass	1♣	2♣	2♠
4♣	Pass*	Pass	Dbl
Pass	4♠	Pass	...

1♣ — strong

\*Pass — Hamman forgot that he was supposed to double to show interest in a spade slam and now Soloway expected him to have a minimum without good spade support.

The Italians did an excellent job of creating the right tempo for the bidding.

The Americans' mistake can be counted as a forced error.



W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Fantoni	Meckstroth	Nunes
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	6♠	Pass	...

The Americans were passive and didn't get in the way of their opponents' bidding.

With plenty of room the Italian bidding machine got to a good slam.

*Blame the swing to a substantial degree on the strong club methods – few would bid as East over a 1H opening, but all would bid over 1C. And the American mistake is only partially forced – someone forgot his system. As did Bocchi in the previous example.*

*Brian Senior*

ESTORIL 2005  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

♠ K Q 10 6 4 3
♥ J 9 6 5
♦ 7
♣ 10 9

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Nickell	Bocchi	Freeman	Duboin
	Pass	1♣	1♠
Dbl	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

Here is another good example. Holding an interesting hand, Freeman shot himself in the foot. He took up all the available bidding space yet gave very little information about his hand other than general strength.

*I agree, of course, but perhaps you should suggest what East should have bid instead of 3NT – 3D, 2S? And, as regards 3D, that would be forcing because 2D would not be a minimum opener? My personal approach would be that 2D is not a full reverse but definitely shows extras, with a minimum 4-5 rebidding the clubs.*

*Brian Senior*

LILLE 2012  
 14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ J 4								
	♥ J 7 6 4								
	♦ Q 10 5								
	♣ A K 9 5								
♠ A 10 5 2	<table style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>		N	W	E		S	♠ K Q 9 7 3	
	N								
W	E								
	S								
♥ A K 10 9 2		♥ 8 3							
♦ A 8 4		♦ K J 7 3							
♣ 3		♣ 7 4							
	♠ 8 6								
	♥ Q 5								
	♦ 9 6 2								
	♣ Q J 10 8 6 2								

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Fantoni	Upmark	Nunes
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	2♣
3♣	5♣	5♦	Pass
5♠	Pass	...	

I applaud N/S's active bidding. The Italians took a lot of bidding space away from their opponents.

At the other three tables the E/W bidding was undisturbed.

*Perhaps I am crazy, but if I bid as South it would be more likely to be with 3C not 2C.*

*Brian Senior*

I agree. KM

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Helgemo	Cullin	Helness	Bertheau
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♦	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

The Norwegian pair places great weight on uncovering shortages. Helness showed good hand evaluation, with 3NT asking for a shortage.

4♦ — the club shortage was accepted (last train). That was enough for Helness to use the world's favorite convention – Blackwood.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Buras	Garvey	Narkiewicz	Carrol
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass ...

Perhaps Buras was closer to a Splinter than a 3♠ bid in the Polish system. Narkiewicz's reaction shows that he didn't expect such a good hand from his partner.

This was a lack of consistency in the partnership. If the system allowed a 3♠ bid with Buras's hand, then this would have been bad hand evaluation by Narkiewicz.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	
Mcgann	Balicki	Hanlon	Żmudziński	
		Pass	Pass	
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass	
2NT	Pass	3♣	Dbl	
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass	
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass	
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass	
5♦	Pass	6♠	Pass	...

The Irish did well on this tricky hand. Thanks to their system, they had more bidding room.

2NT — strong raise with spade support

3♦ — shortness in ♣'s

## SPLINTERS

A Splitter is an unusual jump which otherwise makes no sense. It guarantees a fit for the last-bid suit by partner and shows a singleton or even a void in the suit in which the jump is made.

The conventional method was developed in 1963 by Mr. David Cliff, and he was the first to publish an article on this concept.

Splinters have become an important part of the concept of slam bidding in modern bridge. A key task in every sequence is the ability to differentiate honor cue bids from shortage cue bids. Why?

Let's look at two similar deals.

1)

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

W	E	
1♠	—	2NT — game forcing with support
3♥	—	3♠
4♣	—	4♦
4♥	—	?

I don't need to point out that slam would be very bad on these cards. After a club lead the situation is hopeless. After other leads it needs the ace of diamonds outside, and if North ducks a diamond when it is led towards dummy the chances of making are still not great.

2)	♠ Q J 10 5 3 ♥ A Q 9 5 ♦ A 9 4 ♣ 4	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 9 ♥ K J 10 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ 7 6 5 3
	N											
W		E										
	S											

W	E
1♠	— 2NT — game forcing with support
3♥	— 3♠
4♣	— 4♦
4♥	— ?

This time slam is practically cold.

Note that, in the traditional approach to slam bidding, the cue bidding sequences would be identical with the two West hands.

Of course, there's a model to solve this problem.

1♠	— 2NT - game forcing with support
3♥	— 3♠
?	
3NT	— accepting the slam try and denying shortness
4♣	— shortness
4♦	— shortness

On the first deal, when responder hears about the diamond shortness he should see that he holds wasted diamond values so should react negatively and bid 4♠.

In the second example, the club shortness is good news as he has no club wastage and the slam will undoubtedly be reached after he has reacted in a positive manner.

A similar scheme should be applied to hundreds of other possible sequences.

A very good concept that helps is “Extra-length transfer bids” – for those who are interested, I recommend my book by the same name.

Creating a bidding system which has two levels of Splinters (mini- and regular) greatly improves bidding effectiveness.

**A) After a 1♦ opening that promises at least four cards in the suit a good tactical idea is to use mini-Splinters.**

- 1♦ — 3♥/♠, 9-11PC and at least a four-card fit  
This mini-Splinter is one exception in which the auction is not forcing to game – the bidding can stop in 4♦.
- 1♦ — 3♣ is artificial and has two possible meanings:  
a) preemptive with a fit 4–7 PC  
b) most often partner continues by bidding 3♦ and then 3♥/♠ shows regular values for a Splinter (12–15PC).  
Note that when the opponents remain silent it's more likely that the 3♣ bid is the stronger Splinter.

**B) After openings in a major I recommend:**

**Sequence 1.**

- 1♥ — ?
- 3♦ — any regular Splinter 12-15PC
  - 3♠ — ♠ void 9-11PC
  - 3NT — ♦ void 9–11PC
  - 4♣ — ♣ void 9–11PC
  - 4♦ — similar to a 1♥ — 4♥ raise, but a slightly better hand.

**Sequence 1a.**

- 1♥ — 3♦  
?  
3♥ — waiting  
3♠, 3NT(♦), 4♣ — I have my void.  
4♥ — “I'm not interested in your shortness”



### Sequence 1b.

1♥ — 3♦

3♥ — 3♠ — “I have a void” and therefore also 12+ HCP

3NT(♠), 4♣, ♦ — singleton

### Sequence 1c.

1♥ — 3♦

3♥ — 3♠

?

3NT — waiting ( where?)

4♣, ♦, ♥ (♠) — void

These sequences work the same after a 1♠ opening.

### Sequence 2.

1♠ — ?

3♦ — any regular Splinter 12-15PC

3♥ — ♥ void 9-11PC

3NT — ♦ void 9-11PC

4♣ — ♣ void 9-11PC

4♦ — similar to a ♠-4♠ raise, but a slightly better hand

4♥ — to play

### Sequence 2a.

1♠ — 3♦

?

3♥ — waiting

3NT(♥), 4♣, ♦ — shortness

4♠ — “I’m not interested in your shortness”

### Sequence 2b.

1♠ — 3♦

3♥ — ?

3♠ — void

3NT(♥), 4♣, ♦ — singleton

**Sequence 2c.**

1♠ — 3♦  
3♥ — 3♠  
3NT — ?  
4♣, ♦, ♥ — void

Splinters can be used in hundreds of sequences, but each sequence should have a place for two strengths of Splinter.

Here's a simple sequence:

**Sequence 3.**

1♠ — 2♥  
4♣, ♦ — a regular Splinter (14-16PC)

Unfortunately, there's no room after a 4♦ Splinter to ask partner his opinion. What should be done with 'crowded Splinters'? There are two possible meanings for 3NT:

- a) 18-19PC 5332 – this is a suicidal waste of bidding space. When the combined hands are near the slam zone it doesn't make sense to use this treatment.
- b) mini-Splinter 11-13PC

**Sequence 4.**

1♠ — 2♥  
3NT — ?  
4♣ — asking  
4♦ — singleton ♦  
4♥ — singleton ♣

Note that in some sequences the strength ranges are automatically adjusted in a natural way.

### Sequence 5.

1♦ — 1♥  
?

3♣ — mini-Splinter (♣ or ♠) with 16-18PC

3NT — ♠ Splinter 19-21PC

4♣ — Splinter 19-21PC

*Did I miss somewhere else what we do with a standard 3NT  
rebid – long diamonds too good for a 3D rebid?*

*Brian Senior*

In Splinter concept, you don't have this option. KM

I'm greatly opposed to crowded Splinters.

1♠ — 4♥,

1♥ — 4♦

Why?

*If we must play them then they need to be very specific – void  
within a narrow range?*

*Brian Senior*

Partner has to have a way to show his intentions depending on his hand evaluation.

1. A direct sign-off - bidding game in the agreed suit
2. Conditional acceptance - making a cue bid below game
3. Full acceptance - continue bidding to the five level
4. Enthusiasm - practically forcing the auction to slam and inviting a grand slam

As you can see, a crowded Splinter makes it impossible to show conditional acceptance.

PHILADELPHIA 2010  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL.

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

♠ K Q 9 8 3
♥ 6
♦ 10 9 7 5
♣ J 10 3
♠ 7 6 5
♥ J
♦ K J 8 6 2
♣ K Q 7 6

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Hampson	Meckstroth	Greco
	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	

Meckwell use crowded Splinters.

- 4♠ — RKCB
- 5♣ — 0-3
- 5♦ — cue bid in case Rodwell has extras
- 6♠ — Rodwell denied extras

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Diamond	Katz	Platnick	Nickell
	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	
3♠	— any Splinter		
3NT	— waiting		
4♦	— shortness in ♦		

Diamond and Platnick use two-way Splinters with different strength.

ESTORIL 2005

BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS. ALL VULNERABLE

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

♠ K
♥ 9 5 2
♦ K 6 3
♣ A K 10 7 5 2

W	N	E	S
Venkat'ran	Fantoni	Choksi	Nunes
		1♠	2♣
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♠	Pass	...	

Choksi made an aggressive opening bid and reacted positively to his partner's Splinter bid.

Did he go too far? The answer to that question depends on what strength range of Splinters they use.

For the 10–12PC range there's no need to show slam interest.

For the 13–15PC range we need perfect points.

♠ K Q 9 5
♥ A Q 7 3
♦ A 6 5 4
♣ 3

For sure, the auction was inconsistent.

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

W	N	E	S
Versace	Gupta	Lauria	Tewari
		Pass	1♣
Dbl	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

Lauria didn't open the bidding, but that didn't stop Versace from getting to slam. Their hand evaluation was unusually stretched.

After 3♠ Versace had a chance to bid 4♠.

After the 4♦ bid he could have bid 4♥ (or 4♠).

*4NT was surely a huge overbid, having already shown slam interest by bidding 4C facing a passed hand. I think he assumed the DK rather than a shortage, which upgraded his own diamond holding.*

*Brian Senior*

SAO PAULO 2009  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

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

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Stewart	Sementa	Woolsey
		1♠	Pass
3♦	4♣	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

3♦ — game forcing with support and unknown shortness

The club interference bumped the Italians out of their agreed bidding scheme and achieved the desired effect – Sementa got lost along the way to seven.

*What was going on? Did East cuebid 4D or was that asking and, if the latter, why would not a pass have asked for the shortage? Was 4H a cuebid or the lower shortage?*

*Brian Senior*

Looks like 4♦ cue bid, and 4♥ cue bid with club shortage.

KM



<b>W</b> Wildavsky	<b>N</b> Fantoni	<b>E</b> Doub	<b>S</b> Nunes
		1♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5NT	Pass
7♠	Pass	...	

The direct Splinter, with the help of Blackwood, took care of everything.

PARIS 2001  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Helness	Bocchi	Helgemo
			1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	...

3♦ — Splinter

Helness showed unusually pessimistic hand evaluation.

PARIS 2001  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

W Groetheim	N Weichsel	E Aa	S Sontag
	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	...		
3♦	— Splinter		
4♦	— void		

*This time Weichsel's highly dynamic bidding was met with bad hand evaluation from Sontag. Rather than seeing his three keycards, Sontag saw that he held only four clubs plus 5 HCP facing partner's void.*

*Brian Senior*

W	N	E	S
Stansby	Helness	Martel	Helgemo
	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		
4♦	— void		

Helness took matters into his own hands and dragged his partner to slam.

LILLE 1998

OPEN PAIRS, SESSION ONE OF THE FINAL

	♠ K 2										
	♥ K J 9 7 5										
	♦ K 10 9										
	♣ 10 7 6										
♠ 7 6 5 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ A J 4 2 ♣ K 5 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 4 3 ♥ Q ♦ Q 8 7 6 5 3 ♣ 9 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q 9 8										
	♥ A 10 6 3										
	♦ —										
	♣ A Q J 8 4										

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Fallenius	Campos	Nilsland	Villas-Boas

---

			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♥	Pass	...

4♦ — void

Campos decided his hand was good enough to use Blackwood. Maybe it was unsophisticated, but it was effective.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Versace	Garner	Lauria	Weistein

---

			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	...

Garner showed very bad hand evaluation. With five good hearts and the king of spades his hand was definitely worth a cue bid of 4♠, which in no way commits the partnership to a slam.

This is a good example of the disadvantages of using crowded Splinters.

If Garner had a way to show conditional acceptance he certainly would have made use of it.

VERONA 2006  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE EARLY STAGES

	♠ 2										
	♥ 10 7										
	♦ J 5										
	♣ A J 8 7 5 4 3 2										
♠ J 10 9 5 4 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 8 6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 3		♥ K Q J 4 2									
♦ A 9 7		♦ K 8 6 2									
♣ K 10 9		♣ —									
	♠ Q 7										
	♥ A 9 8 6 5										
	♦ Q 10 4 3										
	♣ Q 6										

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Rodwell		Meckstroth	
		1♣	Dbl
1♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

- 1♣ — strong
- Dbl — black suits or reds
- 4♣ — Splinter
- 5♣ — void

This was smart hand evaluation by Rodwell. Even though his king of clubs was wasted, he appreciated the potential of a hand with six trumps and controls in both red suits.

*Bad hand for the two-way two-suited defence to a strong club as North could not pre-empt in clubs, presumably all his bids would have been pass or correct.*

*Brian Senior*

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Balcombe	Soloway	Colbert	Hamman
		1♣	Pass
1♦	4♣	Dbl	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	5♣
Dbl	Pass	...	
1♣	— strong		
1♦	— ?		

Balcombe didn't appreciate the potential of the hand and made a hasty double.

West should make a forcing pass, which I recommend here should be used to invite slam.

- a) If East doubles 5C I bid 5♠
- b) If East instead bids 5♠ I bid the slam.

## AGREEMENTS

Systemic agreements are very important. In uncontested auctions a decent pair doesn't usually make many obvious mistakes. Force of habit, and the number of hands played together, allows them to avoid making common mistakes. Different interpretations of bidding sequences usually occur in contested auctions. Why? When everyone gets involved in the bidding there are few universal rules. For every three or four bidding positions a pair's system should build separate agreements.

I don't need to add that the variety of contested auctions is rather unlimited. In the course of running training for national teams of different countries I'm convinced that the lessons dedicated to contested auctions take a lot of time – about 100 hours, not counting exercises that are necessary to solidify the presented material.

Here, we'll be able to see that even the best pairs in the world have trouble interpreting particular bids. Their logic is the same, but their approach to analysis is different. In some situations many players engage in wishful thinking. They do this from a tendency to assign a meaning to a bid that satisfies their needs on this particular hand.



BEIJING 2008  
 OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS, THE QUARTER-FINALS

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

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Smirnov	Bertens	Piekarek	Bakkeren
			1♦
1NT	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	...	

- 1NT — 5♣ – 4 major
- 2♥ — transfer
- 2NT — was interpreted by North as a fit?
- 4♣ — in South's opinion, an autosplinter

Different interpretations of systemic agreements during contested auctions usually lead to disaster. Note that the Dutch pair had their own agreement after an opponent comes in with

1NT. 2♥ was a transfer to spades. Alas, it appears that there wasn't any discussion between the partners about what happened next?

*Very un-Dutch to not have had further discussion.*

*Brian Senior*

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Westra	Gromoeller	Ramondt	Kirmse
			1♦
2♣	Dbl	Pass	3♥
3♠	Dbl	Pass	...

Westra's active bidding was punished.

This might be the record for the largest number of tricks taken by one side with the same trump suit.

SHANGHAI 2007  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

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

♠ A
♥ J 10
♦ J 10 7 6 5
♣ K J 9 6 5

W	N	E	S
Holman	Fantoni	Cope	Nunes
			2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	7♥	Pass	...

2♦ — 10-13PC +5♦

Fantoni understood 4♠ as showing a void, and he thought the ace of spades should have been in the diamond suit.

*He has my sympathy. 4S looks to me to be a gross overbid. Nunes has a minimum and 4H over 3S would complete the picture of his hand. To be fair, he has denied three hearts, I suppose, so the void makes him 0-2-6-5 or the like – but, why not?*

*Brian Senior*

SHANGHAI 2007  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

W	N	E	S
Zia	Helness	Rosenberg	Helgemo
3NT	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	6♠	Pass ...

Some agreements bring unexpected profits.

3NT was gambling, showing a good four-level opening in a major. This is a great hand for this method, as the system let them bid the spade slam from the safe hand. Note, that Rosenberg and Zia had discussed the later auction after this opening bid.

5NT meant show your suit.

6♦ — “I have spades”

W	N	E	S
Brogeland	Garner	Saelensminde	Weinstein
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Dbl	5♠	Dbl
Pass	...		

Here, we have different interpretations of a double.

I agree with Weinstein, that the double of 5♦ in this position, when we are almost certain to be on lead, should show a hand with some strength that couldn't make a direct double of 4♠.

In light of this interpretation, it's hard to blame him for suspecting that Saelensminde was psyching.

LILLE 1998  
 OPEN PAIRS, SESSION ONE OF THE FINAL

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

♠ 8 7 6 4 3 2
♥ J 10 9 3
♦ J 5
♣ 2

W	N	E	S
Jason Hackett	Wang	Justin Hackett	Zhuang
	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass ...

Justin's Hackett explanation of the 4♠ bid was 1-4-4-4.

*Apart from adding weight to any argument that says we should not play complicated methods in situations that come up only rarely, I'm not sure that this is very educational. Just bad preparation from a Hackett.*

*Brian Senior*

W	N	E	S
Pszczola	Miller	Kwiecień	Cheek
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	1♥	Dbl	3♥
4NT	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

- 1♦ — negative, or unbalanced with one or both minors
- 4NT — minors

The Polish pair didn't have any doubt that 4NT showed the minor suits.

VERONA 2006  
OPEN PAIRS

		♠ 9 2									
		♥ —									
		♦ A J 8 7 5 3									
		♣ A K J 5 4									
♠ K J 10 8 6 5 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;"></td><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td><td style="padding: 5px;"></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 7 6		♥ 10 8 5 4 3									
♦ 10		♦ K Q									
♣ 8 2		♣ 10 9 7 6									
		♠ A Q									
		♥ A Q J 9 2									
		♦ 9 6 4 2									
		♣ Q 3									

None vulnerable

W <small>Levin</small>	N <small>Robson</small>	E <small>Weinstein</small>	S <small>Zia</small>
			1NT
3♠	5NT	Pass	6♥
Pass	6NT	Pass	...

Robson unsuccessfully bid 5NT as “pick a slam in a minor.” Instead of choosing a minor suit, Zia showed his strong hearts. Robson saved the deal by bidding 6NT. This time it worked. It's worth adding, that Robson and Zia are a regular partnership, and this situation was not typical for them.

ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

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

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Rosenberg	Bocchi	Zia
		1♣	1♠
3♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
5♦	5♠	6♦	Pass ...

I don't know the particular agreements of the Italian pair, but their bidding looks very cohesive.

W	N	E	S
Weinstein	Lauria	Levin	Versace
		1♣	1♠
2♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♦	Pass ...

There was a difference in the American's auction – 4NT was stronger than bidding diamonds directly.

I suggest doing the opposite.



Directly bidding a new suit (5♣, ♦, ♥) is invitational to slam, and 4NT is bid without slam interest. Why?

It's easier to handle.

		1♣	1♠
2♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
4NT	Pass	?	

Note, that:

♠ 3 2  
 ♥ Q 10  
 ♦ J 6 5 4  
 ♣ A K Q 8 7

East can't bid 5♦ with the understanding, "If you've got clubs, then I want to play slam." If partner corrects to 5♥ it won't be clear if he's inviting slam with longer hearts or if he has a two-suited hand with hearts and clubs.

When West bids his second suit directly this problem is avoided.

W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♠
2♥	4♠	Pass	Pass
4NT	5♠	?	

In this situation we have to guess (if our agreement is that 4NT is stronger than bidding a new suit directly).

ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

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

♠ K 9 7 5 4 3
♥ A 4 3
♦ A J 5
♣ 4

W	N	E	S
McGann	Lindkvist	Hanlon	Fredin
	2♣	Pass	2♦
Dbl	2♠	3♦	4♦
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♠
Dbl	7♣	Dbl	Pass

In the Swedish pair's system 2♠ meant a one-suited hand. According to Fredin, after intervention by the opponents he thought it was natural (5♣ +4♠).

*This is only educational in that it says 'you need to have and know an agreed system'. It is ridiculous for an international pair to be derailed by such a low-level intervention.*

*Brian Senior*

PHILADELPHIA 2010  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

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

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
<small>Rodwell</small>	<small>Moss</small>	<small>Meckstroth</small>	<small>Gitelman</small>
Pass	Pass	1♠	Dbl
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠
Dbl	4♥	Pass	...

Despite the unfavorable vulnerability, Meckstroth decided to open his hand in third seat (I approve).

W	N	E	S
Hampson	Hamman	Greco	Zia
Pass	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Rdbl	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		

3♠ — relay

Rdbl — “I am waiting for more information” (according to Hamman)  
shortness or cue bid (according to Zia)

*North is a passed hand so is unlikely to hold hearts to be making a heart slam try when partner has done nothing to indicate even three-card heart support. Would North take the ‘free’ shot to show his ace then show a second suit at his next turn, rather than just show it immediately? Clearly we see the answer to that with Hamman’s actual auction, because he has two top spade losers so if partner has something like his actual holding 3NT may make when 5D does not. Should Hamman commit to a suit contract by bidding 4D over the double, or to NT by bidding 3NT? One can see his point.*

*But most average tournament players in the UK would expect that the redouble showed the spade ace.*

*Brian Senior*

MONTREAL 2002

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

♠ K 8 6
♥ A 7 6
♦ K J 10
♣ K J 9 3

W	N <small>Balicki</small>	E	S <small>Zmudziński</small>
	1♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

3♠ — transfer to 3NT

This is one of the worst system agreements I've encountered. It only works well when opener has a balanced hand with 12–14PC.

In the Polish system 1♣ has multiple meanings. It includes not only game forcing hands, but also hands with more than +18PC.

Losing three levels of bidding space when opener can have one of the strong varieties of hands is inexcusable.

You have to hand it to the Polish pair for staying out of trouble.

W	N Lauria	E	S Versace
	1♣	Pass	2♣
3♥	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥
Pass	5NT	Pass	7♣
Pass			

- 2♣ — inverted raise, game forcing
- 5NT — all the key cards and solid trumps, minimum hand for the strength promised
- 7♣ — misreading 5NT as a grand slam try

*I would be fascinated to have someone explain to me why 5NT to show a minimum is a good idea. How often will it have to come up and be remembered by this pair before it earns back the IMPs lost here. Serves them right for playing something so obscure.*

*Brian Senior*

MONTREAL 2002  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

EW vulnerable

W Fredin	N Lauria	E Lindkvist	S Versace
		1♣	Pass
1NT	2♥	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♦	Pass
7♣	Pass	...	
1NT	— 8–12PC balanced		
2♠	— strong hand		
4♦, 5♦	— void		

Lauria's 2♥ bid helped the Swedish pair get to an excellent grand slam.

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Bertheau	Bocchi	Nystrom
		1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass ...
2NT	— non-forcing		

Is opener's next bid (3♣, ♥, ♠) forcing after a non-forcing bid at his previous turn?

There's no doubt that 3♦ (as fourth suit forcing) would have been game forcing.

*If East bid 4C instead of 3C, committing to clubs and saying 'this is a potential slam auction', there would be no problem. I know that my pro/client partnerships might have a misunderstanding regarding the forcing nature of 3C, but a world-class pair!!!!*

*Brian Senior*



MONTREAL 2002  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

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

W Karwar	N Bocchi	E Sacul	S Duboin
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	Pass	...

2♥ — artificial, minimum opening

The Italian bidding machine didn't find the nine-card club fit.

*So 2H was artificial and therefore 3C natural (I suppose?) not FSF, and South couldn't convince himself to support clubs?*

*Brian Senior*

W	N	E	S
Versace	Manoppo	Lauria	Lasut
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♣
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

3♣ — fourth suit forcing

It's interesting that Lasut treated 3♣ as a natural bid.

What should partner have bid with:

♠ 4 2  
 ♥ K 8 7  
 ♦ A K Q 10 6  
 ♣ J 7 6

There's always trouble when showing support for the artificial fourth-suit-forcing.

Trying to anticipate this problem, perhaps it's better for responder to first bid 2♣ rather than 2♦.

A four-card diamond fit won't get lost this way.

PHILADELPHIA 2010

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS. ALL VULNERABLE

		♠ K 3 2										
		♥ K 2										
		♦ K Q J 8 7 3										
		♣ Q 5										
♠ Q 9		<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 7 5 4
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J 10 9 5 3			♥ A Q 7 6 4									
♦ 10 4			♦ 9									
♣ 10 7 3 2			♣ A 6									
		♠ A 8 6										
		♥ 8										
		♦ A 6 5 2										
		♣ K J 9 8 4										

Both vulnerable

W Hampson	N Fantoni	E Greco	S Nunes
		1♠	Pass
1NT	2♦	2♥	2♠
3♥	3NT	4♥	4♠
Dbl	4NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		

4NT — to play (according to Fantoni)  
 — a slam try (according to Nunes)

W Helgemo	N Gitelman	E Helness	S Moss
		1♠	2♣
Pass	2♦	2♥	3♦
4♥	5♦	Pass	...

Moss made an interesting overcall. I like this kind of style.  
 The auction continued rather quietly in a natural way.

*Every little old lady in the country would overcall 2C. It is only a generation of experts who said that two-level overcalls should deliver better suits than this. My generation, I should add, though I am no longer at all convinced that we had it right.*

*Brian Senior*

LILLE 2012

14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE SEMI-FINALS

	♠ K Q 4										
	♥ A 5 4										
	♦ A Q 3										
	♣ J 10 8 5										
♠ J 10 9 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 5 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 3 2		♥ Q 8 7									
♦ 8 7		♦ 2									
♣ K 9 7 6		♣ A Q 4 3 2									
	♠ A 3										
	♥ K J 10 6										
	♦ K J 10 9 6 5 4										
	♣ —										

W	N	E	S
Multon	Nystrom	Zimmerman	Upmark
	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Dbl	4♣
Dbl	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♣	Pass	7♦
Pass	...		

- 2NT — transfer to 3♣
- 4♣ — diamonds with ♣ shortness
- 4♦ — after the double, Nystrom denied holding the ace of clubs
- 5NT — grand slam invitation
- 6♣ — “I’d like to, but I’m afraid.”

The Swedes were able to uncover the club void.

A grand that requires guessing a finesse is not a good idea from the standpoint of risk and reward. You can gain 11 IMPs or you can lose 14 IMPs.

A lot of players who don’t have precise information about opener’s distribution – for example, if opener has a doubleton heart – would have taken the risk.

W	N	E	S
Ahlesved	Helness	Peterson	Helgemo
	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

- 4♦ — agreed diamonds and denied a club cue bid
- 6♦ — Helness didn’t accept the invitation because of his 4333 shape.

You can see here how Helgemo trusted Helness’s hand evaluation.

W	N	E	S
Žak	Hanlon	Zaremba	McGann
	1NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Dbl	Rdbl
Pass	4NT	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		

W	N	E	S
Carroll	Narkiewicz	Garvey	Buras
	1NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♥	Pass	7♦
Pass	...		

Buras and McGann went down the same path of transferring to diamonds then showing club shortness. This undoubtedly makes life easier, but it solves only part of the problem. Let's look at one of many hands opener could have.

♠ Q 4 2  
 ♥ A Q 5 4  
 ♦ A Q  
 ♣ J 10 8 6

A diamond grand would be a bad idea, but the heart grand is cold.

What do I recommend? A type of extra-length transfer bidding.

### Sequence

W	E	
1NT	—	2♣
2♦	—	3♣** — transfer to diamonds
3♦	—	?
	3♥	— shortage, 4♠/5♦ (three-suited hands are bid by transferring to clubs);
	3♠	— shortage, 4♥/5♦;
	3NT	— shortage in clubs,
	4♣	— void in clubs + extra strength;
	4♦	— singleton club + substantial extra strength;
	4♥	— 2452 distribution, invitational, 4NT — negative;
	4♠	— 4252 distribution, invitational, 4NT — negative.

After 4♣ or 4♦, a 4NT call is negative. After showing a void and possibly a cue bid, asking for aces does not preclude an ace in the void suit.

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

W	N	E	S
	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♦ (7♦)
Pass	...		

- 3♣ — transfer ♦ (4 major +5♦)
- 4♣ — void in ♣ (3NT — singleton ♣, 4♦ — singleton ♣ + extras)
- 4♦ — “I like the ♣ void.”
- 4♥, 4♠ — cue bids
- 5♠ — 2A + ♦Q (of course no ♣ ace)
- 6♦ (7♦) — not knowing about the queen of hearts (or a doubleton) we take the risk or not.

We should bear in mind, however, that partner’s bidding shows that he doesn’t have perfect points for us.

With this hand:

♠ KQx
♥ Ax
♦ AQx
♣ xxxxx

After the 4♥ cue bid he should take control and use Blackwood.

The entire concept is called Stayman + Transfer and it’s described in the “Martens System” book.

BALI 2013

BERMUDA BOWL, RR3 MATCH: MONACO - INDONESIA

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

W Helgemo	N Tobing	E Helness	S Asbi
		1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	

6♦ = +1370. The other table bid to 3NT = +660.

I mention this hand because of the interesting agreement that Helgemo-Helness have.

1♦ — 1♠

3NT — shows six good diamonds, three spades and, of course, a hand with some extra values. Bad slam, good result.

*Either Helgemo did too much, he did after all have only one diamond and no ace or, more likely, Helness was supposed to be a bit better than this.*

*Brian Senior*



## LAST TRAIN

A survey in the magazine *The Bridge World* showed a strong consensus in support of the “Last Train” convention with the following definition:

“Any time there is only one call that indicates slam interest or further slam interest without raising the partnership’s level of commitment, it is a Last Train slam try, unrelated to the strain named (unless followed by an uninvited further action).”

The convention is named after the Monkees’ “song “Last Train to Clarksville”

It was both devised and named by Jeff Meckstroth.

A Last Train cue bid is usually the cue bid of the suit immediately below game, sending a general message of lingering interest but also the inability to personally take that next step.

The concept of “Last Train” can apply in many different situations, not just slam auctions.

The Last Train cue bid, first and foremost, shows intentions and doesn’t convey any specific information.

Examples:

### Sequence 1.

1NT — 2♣

2♥ — 3♦ — slam invitation with ♥ support, without shortness

4♣ — 4♦ — Last Train

4♣ — cue bid, denies a ♠ cue bid.

4♦ — doesn’t say anything about diamonds. It says, “I control spades and I have a hand that would allow me to go past 4♥.” Of course, this could be a hand with both a

spade and a diamond control that can't take captaincy (by bidding Blackwood).

**Sequence 2.**

- 1♥ — 4♣ — Splinter +13PC  
4♦ — “I’ll give you one last chance. I’d like to talk about slam, but I’m a bit afraid.”

A possible hand:

♠ Q J 6  
♥ A K J 10 6  
♦ Q 10  
♣ 9 7 4

This hand is too good for a sign-off bid of 4♥ and not good enough to jump to 5♥ – “I don’t have a side cue, but my trumps are excellent.”

For example:

♠ Q J  
♥ A K Q 10 6 2  
♦ Q 10  
♣ 9 7 4

This hand is perfect for a jump to 5♥.

**Sequence 3.**

- 1NT — 2♣  
2♥ — 3♦ — slam invitation with ♥ support, without shortness  
4♣ — 4♦ — Last Train  
4♠ — “transfer” to Blackwood  
4♣ — cue bid, denies a ♠ cue bid

Typical hand for transfer to Blackwood:

♠ J 6  
♥ A K J 6  
♦ A 10 9  
♣ A 9 7 4

Slam is indicated, but it wouldn't make sense for opener to take control of the bidding with this hand. A decision about the final contract should be made by partner.

Opener can show all the key values (four aces out of five) via a response to Blackwood.

#### Sequence 4.

1♠ — 2♠

3♦ — 3♥ — the simplest example of Last Train – “I'd like to go on, but I'm afraid.”

This convention is very popular with bridge players who have a humanistic mentality. The message “I want to go on, but I'm afraid” is sent to partner who also wants to and doesn't have any doubt. “Bidding like music.” The result of this kind of discussion is often getting to a decent slam.

This convention is disliked, however, by players with an analytical mind, for whom the purpose of bidding is not to show intentions, but to fill in the blanks. An artificial cue bid, which is what Last Train is in reality, doesn't fill in the right blank, and the analytical mind feels as though something has been put together the wrong way.

I've quite often encountered bidding situations in contested auctions where the concept of Last Train would have worked out beautifully. What kept me from using it was the fear that the bid would be misunderstood. The remedy for this is, of course, frequent discussion on the subject with partner.

Here is Dutch champion Van Prooijen with an excellent example of the Last Train in action when fighting for the contract at a high level.

ISTANBUL 2004

WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE OPEN QUARTER-FINALS

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

♠ A 6	N
♥ 6	W
♦ 9 7 5	E
♣ A Q 10 9 6 5 3	S

♠ —
♥ A Q J 10 8 7 5 4 2
♦ 2
♣ K J 8

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
McGann	van Prooijen	Hanlon	Brink
1♦	3♠	3NT	4♥
Pass	Pass	5♣	Dbl
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
7♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	...		

Brink decided to bid slam. He couldn't use Blackwood, but he had a lot of confidence in partner's bidding. The 5♦ bid is an excellent example of the applied concept of Last Train.

W	N	E	S
Schollaardt	Fitzgibbon	Drijver	Mesbur
3♦	4♠	5♣	5♥
Dbl	Pass	...	

Only a conventional meaning for the double (or maybe an inappropriate use of a convention?) and bad assessment of the situation by Drijver can explain the final result.

MONTREAL 2002

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE QUARTER-FINALS

		♠ K 7 4																	
		♥ 5 4 3																	
		♦ Q 9 8 2																	
		♣ Q 6 3																	
♠ 9 5		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; height: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N			W		E							S			♠ A Q J 10 8 2
	N																		
W		E																	
	S																		
♥ A Q 10 9 8 2				♥ K J 6															
♦ 10 3				♦ A J 7 5															
♣ K 9 2				♣ —															
		♠ 6 3																	
		♥ 7																	
		♦ K 6 4																	
		♣ A J 10 8 7 5 4																	

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S	
Fredin	Rosenberg	Lindkvist	Zia	
		1♠	2♣	
2♥	Pass	4♣	Pass	
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass	...

Zia left his Swedish opponents a lot of bidding room. With six good trumps, even though he had the worthless king of clubs, Fredin accurately judged the worth of his hand and decided on the Last Train bid of 4♦.

Lindkvist showed bad hand evaluation and 4♥ ended the auction.

W	N	E	S
Cohen	Bertheau	Berkowitz	Nystrom
		1♣	4♣
4♥	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	
1♣	— strong club		

High level interference got in the way of the Americans being able to invite slam. In fact, seven is the right contract after a diamond lead – it's the kind of hand that either makes game (4♥) or a grand (7♥).

*Not sure about that. Take away the D10 and I would agree but, with the potential to duck the diamond then take a second finesse, West can pitch his second spade on the DJ, and now exactly 12 tricks is a possible outcome.*

*Brian Senior*

ESTORIL 2005  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

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

♠ 9 3
♥ A Q 7 6 5 3
♦ 10 2
♣ K J 5

W	N	E	S
Castanheiro	Fu	Pessoa	Zhao
1♣	Pass	1♠	2♥
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♦	Pass	...	

4♥ — Last train

The timing of the cue bidding was vital.

Pessoa found himself in a tricky situation. He was afraid to ask for aces when holding two small hearts, while 4♠ and 5♣ could have been interpreted by partner as “choice of contracts.”

Castanheiro could have anticipated his partner’s problem and, instead of bidding 4♦, could have made an optimistic Splinter bid of 4♥.

## BLACKWOOD

This is a convention which has been thoroughly described many times, but some details have to be decided on. Do we ask about the queen of trumps or do we show kings?

Do we show specific kings or the number of kings?

Clubs are agreed.

### Sequence 1

1♣ — 2♣ — inverted

3♣ — 4♥ — Splinter

4NT — 5♣ — 0–3

5♦ — asking about the ♣Q

5♥ — asking for kings

5♠ — bid 5NT (this is the only way to stop in 5NT)

5NT — general grand slam invitation

Concept – asking about the queen of trumps and specific kings

### Sequence 2

1♣ — 2♣ — inverted

3♣ — 4♥ — Splinter

4NT — 5♣

5♦ — 5♥ — ♣Q and no kings

5♠ — ♣Q + ♠K

5NT — ♣Q + ♦K

6♣ — no ♣Q

Concept – asking about the queen of trumps and the number of kings.



### Sequence 3.

- 1♣ — 2♣ — inverted
- 3♣ — 4♥ — Splinter
- 4NT — 5♣
- 5♦ — 5♥ — ♣Q – no kings
- 5♠ — ♣Q and 1 king
- 5NT — ♣Q and 2 kings
- 6♣ — no ♣Q

There are advantages and disadvantages to each treatment.

Asking about specific kings prevents us from making a general grand slam try, when we ask partner about third round control of a side suit – either the queen or a doubleton. Of course, this is done more often when the agreed trump suit is a major.

Example:

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

- 1♠ — 2♦
- 3♣ — 3♠
- 4NT — 5♣ — 0–3
- 5♥ — 5NT
- 6♣ — 7♠
  
- 5♣ — 0–3
- 5♥ — asking for kings (5♦ would ask about the ♠Q)
- 5NT — 1 king
- 6♣ — “What about the ♣Q (or xx)?”
- 7♠ — “Yes, I have it.”

In my opinion a good bidding foundation and good cooperative cue bidding should be able to locate a side suit king before applying Blackwood.

*This is an important philosophical point. We were all taught not to use simple Blackwood to bid slams. Rather, it was to be used to avoid bad ones. But then along came RKCB, and gradually many players have started to use this more modern type of Blackwood to bid slams, not only to avoid bad ones. This becomes possible because RKCB discovers the key trump honours and then you can ask for specific kings later on if need be. That, I think, is a good approach for lower level or pro/client partnerships, who would just find your ideal approach too difficult.*

*Brian Senior*

After other responses the bidding is more or less along the same lines, although we have to realize that the bidding space is more cramped.

## ACE ASKING AT LOW LEVELS

What I would like to propose is an ace asking bid below the level of 4NT. Is there a need for this? Yes, indeed – on hands with clubs as the agreed suit.

Asking for aces with 4NT often creates anxiety that the response might be too high. Using “reverse” Blackwood helps, but not much. The responses 4–1, 3–0 only mean that on those hands which answer 5C with one ace the response is relatively safe. Of course, if in the modern style, the answer is 5♦ with zero aces, then that response puts the final contract in jeopardy.

Meanwhile, the traditional scheme means that with clubs agreed we can stop in 5♣ when the response is zero aces, and the response of 5♦ with one ace is very uncomfortable.

A real solution to the problem of asking for aces in clubs is to create a bid below the level of 4NT. Meckstroth – Rodwell are impressive in this respect. They have a whole range of agreements depending on the situation.

Let’s look at how they applied their agreements on authentic deals.

HAMMAMET 1997  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS.

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

♠ 7 5 4
♥ Q J 8 5 3
♦ 5 4
♣ 7 5 3
♠ J 8 6 2
♥ K 10 9 7 6
♦ 10 9
♣ J 4

W	N	E	S
Meckstroth		Rodwell	
1♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♥	Pass
7♦	Pass	...	

- 1♣ — strong
- 2♥ — +14PC balanced
- 3♣ — asked for a four-card minor suit
- 4♥ — RKCB
- 4♠ — 3 aces
- 5♣ — “What about kings?”
- 5♥ — 1 king

There is a particular type of deal, especially in uncontested auctions, in which their complex system agreements are applied. I'm not sure about the precision of the bidding in the above sequence.

I wonder if the whole sequence shouldn't look just a bit different.

1♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	?	
		3♦	— 3343
		3♥	— 2344
		3♠	— 3244
		3NT	— 3334

Note, that Meckstroth didn't know about the queen of spades in their actual auction.

♠ K 4 3  
 ♥ A 4  
 ♦ K 8 6 2  
 ♣ A J 10 6

If Rodwell had had the above hand, then the right contract would have been 7♣.

W	N	E	S
Zia	Rosenberg		
1♦	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♣	Pass ...

3♥ — Splinter

6♣ — grand slam invitation

Pass — Zia didn't correctly judge the situation. The agreed suit was diamonds, therefore, Rosenberg's 6♣ bid was inviting a grand slam.

W	N	E	S
Brogeland		Saelensminde	
1♦	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	

2♦ — inverted minor

4NT — RKCB for ♦

According to Saelensminde, clubs were trumps.

<b>W</b> Multon	<b>N</b> Aa	<b>E</b> Mouiel	<b>S</b> Groetheim
			2♥
Dbl	3♥	Dbl	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♦	Pass ...

2♥ — both majors, (with NS vulnerable!)

Opening 2♥ on this South hand at unfavorable vulnerability makes the blood turn cold in my veins. It certainly requires a strong constitution to make such a bid. The result of -1100 (for 3♥x -4) wouldn't have been worth the potential to put pressure on the opposition. This time taking up all the bidding room almost made it easier for the French pair to get to the grand.

Surprisingly, they stopped in 6♦.

BERMUDA 2000  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

W	N	E	S
Branco	Meckstroth	Chagas	Rodwell
		Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

Again, we see here Meckwell in action. The sheer number of bidding agreements they have is a result of the fact that they have been playing together for over 40 years.

4♥ — RKCB for clubs

W	N	E	S
Freeman	Janz	Nickell	Mello
		Pass	2♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	

2♥ — 6–11PC, 5♥+ and 5+minor

Using the 2♥ opening was definitely a mistake on this hand, and the Brazilian pair's bidding adventure ended in game.

BERMUDA 2000  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Campos	Meckstroth	Villas-Boas	Rodwell
			2♣
Pass	2♦	2♠	Pass
4♣	4♠	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♣	Pass	Pass
6♠	Dbl	Pass	...
4♠	— RKCB for clubs		

The great effort Meckwell have invested in their bidding system gives them a wide range of agreements for ace asking in clubs. On this deal it was a cue bid of the opponents' suit – spades.



VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE EARLY STAGES

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

♠ Q 5 2
♥ K 9 6
♦ K J 8 5
♣ A Q 4

♠ K J 9
♥ A 3 2
♦ A 9
♣ K J 8 6 3

W Helgemo	N Rodwell	E Helness	S Meckstroth
Pass	1NT	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	5NT	Pass	6NT
Pass	...		
2NT	— Puppet Stayman		
3♣	— denied a 5-card major		
4♣	— natural slam invitation		
4♦	— RKCB		

This is a borderline slam, which is basically on a finesse. An experienced declarer can usually gather clues from the opponents' discards, but probably will have little option but to play in simple fashion on this occasion.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Freeman	Sontag	Nickell	Bates
Pass	1NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	...		

3♦ — puppet

Luck was with the Nickell team on this deal.

## CONDITIONAL RKCB

An interesting convention is conditional RKCB, which gives partner a chance to react negatively to a slam invitation.

For example:

### Sequence 1

1♣ — 2♣ — inverted  
4♣ — 4♦ — “I don’t want to answer aces, because I have a minimum hand.”  
4♥ — 0–3 etc....

### Sequence 1a.

1♣ — 2♣ — inverted  
4♣ — 4♦ —  
4♥ — RKCB once again — “You have to show me”

### Sequence 1b

1♣ — 2♣ — inverted  
4♣ — 4♦ —  
4♥ — 4♠ — 0–3, etc.

Preemptive openings nowadays are highly variable. Their popularity inevitably leads to a relaxation of the traditional requirements for their use.

This means that with everyone vulnerable we can open 3♠ with either of these hands:

- 1) ♠ A Q J 10 7 6 4  
♥ 3 2  
♦ 9  
♣ Q J 6

2)

♠	A 10 9 8 7 3 2
♥	2
♦	9
♣	J 8 6 3

As a result of the wider-range opening style, conditional RKCB is a valuable tool.

**Sequence 2.**

3♠	—	4♣	—	RKCB
4♦			—	“I don’t want to answer aces”
4♥			—	zero aces
4♠			—	one ace

Other sequences:

3♣	—	4♦	—	conditional RKCB
3♦	—	4♣	—	conditional RKCB
3♥	—	4♣	—	conditional RKCB

Conditional RKCB is very useful in a pairs tournament.

An unsuccessful slam try in a minor suit that ends at the five level often scores a near zero because most less ambitious pairs will stop in 3NT and take 10 or 11 tricks.

**Sequence 3.**

1♠	—	2♣
2♥	—	2NT — forcing
3♣	—	3♦ — conditional RKCB in clubs
3♥	—	0–3
3♠	—	1–4
3NT	— negative response to a slam invitation	
4♣	— 2–5 without the queen of clubs	
4♦	— void	
4♥	— 2–5 with the queen of clubs	

Transfers to show extra suit length are very helpful.

#### Sequence 4.

1♠ — 2♦

2♥ — 2NT

3♣ — diamond fit (5♠ 4♥ 3♦ ? — the 13th card is unknown)

3♦ — “I have 5 hearts” (+5♠ and +5♥)

3♥ — “I have 6 spades” (+6♠ and +4♥)

3♠ — “I have a club fragment” (5♠ 4♥ 3♣ ? — the 13th card is unknown)

3NT — 5422

#### Sequence 4a.

1♠ — 2♦

2♥ — 2NT

3♣ — 3♦ — conditional RKCB in diamonds

3♥ — 0–3

3♠ — 1–4

3NT — negative response to a slam invitation

4♣ — void

4♦ — 2–5 without the queen of diamonds

4♥ — 2–5 with the queen of diamonds

I would like to emphasize two particular responses.

(i) 3NT — a negative sign-off which can be passed, allowing us to stop in the best contract when we’re playing a pair game.

(ii) Repeating the short suit shows a void.

This could be critical information for evaluating chances for slam.

Fredin – Lindkvist show how conditional RKCB looks in practice.

BERMUDA 2000

BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

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

♠ Q J 9 7 3 2
♥ J 10 3
♦ 6 4
♣ 8 4

♠ K 5
♥ 8 7 5 2
♦ 8 3 2
♣ K Q J 6

### Vulnerability

W	N	E	S
Fredin	Tuszynski	Lindkvist	Jassem
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♦	Pass	...	

1NT — waiting

2♣, 2♥, 3♦ — means 1345 shape

3♠ — asking for key cards if opener is not a minimum

4♠ — maximum with two key cards and the queen of trump

On this deal 3NT would have been a negative sign-off. This would have allowed the Swedish pair to explore slam possibilities but still stop in the best contract.

## BLACKWOOD DEPENDING ON THE CONTEXT

In my opinion, one key to improving slam bidding is the concept of:

Blackwood depending on the context.

Certain elements can be found in the French style of bidding.

After a strong opening 2♣ or 2♦ and ace asking – even if one ace is missing – 4NT always asks for kings.

There is a bidding gadget which can be applied to this concept.

Imagine a situation in which partner shows 0–6PC strength.

How obvious it now appears, that the responses to Blackwood should consist of three steps:

4NT — 5♣ — 0

5♦ — 1 ace without the Q of trump

5♥ — 1 ace with the Q of trump

4NT — 5♣

5♦ — 5♥ — no Q of trump

5♠ — the Q of trump but no kings

5NT — the Q of trump and 1 king (if hearts are agreed

5NT — ♥Q + ♠K, 6♣ — ♥Q + ♣K, 6♦ — ♥Q + ♦K)

If hearts are agreed:

4NT — 5♦

5♠ — 6♥ — no other Q

6♣ — ♣Q

6♦ — ♦Q

BERMUDA 2000  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Martel	Meckstroth	Stansby	Rodwell
			Pass
2♣	2♥	3♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♥	Pass
6♠	Pass	...	

3♥ — three-suited hand

For purposes of analysis we assume that 3♥ means a three-suited hand with a heart void.

Without a doubt, the sign-off in 4♠ denies a minor suit cue bid.

In this context 4NT should be asking about queens, which responder shows up the line.



- 4NT — 5♣ — “I have the queen of clubs”
- 5♦ — “I have the queen of diamonds without the queen of clubs”
- 5♥ — “I have only the queen of trump”
- 5♠ — “I don’t have any queens”

After locating a necessary queen we can squeeze out even more information about a suit we are interested in.

- 4NT — 5♣
- 6♣ (5NT) — “Tell me more about your club suit. (you promised with your 3♥ bid at least four cards in this suit)”
- 6♦ — “I have QJxx”
- 6♥ — “I have Qxxxx”
- 6♠ — “Sorry, I have only Qxxx”

W	N	E	S
Soloway	Rosenberg	Hamman	Zia
			Pass
1♣	3♥	Dbl	4♥
6♠	Pass	...	

The lack of bidding space made it more difficult for Soloway – Hamman to get to the grand slam. Just the same, it seems that the 6♠ bid was a bit hasty.

Let's see how the idea would have worked on the above deal.

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

W	N	E	S
2♣	2♥	3♥	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♣	Pass	6♥	Pass
7♠	Pass	...	

- 3♥ — a three-suited hand with a heart void
- 4♠ — “I don't have a minor suit cue bid”
- 4NT — asking about the queen of trump
- 5♣ — “I have the queen of clubs”
- 6♣ — “I need more information about this suit”
- 6♥ — “I have Qxxxx”
- 7♠ — OK. (7NT in pairs tournament).

# WHEN BLACKWOOD IS URGENTLY NEEDED

Ace asking bids are often either overused, too hastily applied, or, to my great surprise for some unknown reason, not used at all.

BEIJING 2008  
OPEN TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS, THE SEMI-FINALS

♠ J 9 2					
♥ K Q 10 9 4					
♦ K Q 4					
♣ A K					
♠ 6 5 4 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W      E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W      E	S	♠ A Q 10 8 7
N					
W      E					
S					
♥ A J 8 7 6		♥ 3 2			
♦ 6 5		♦ J 10 3 2			
♣ 7 2		♣ 10 5			
	♠ K				
	♥ 5				
	♦ A 9 8 7				
	♣ Q J 9 8 6 4 3				

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Helness	Sementa	Helgemo
			1♣
Pass	1♥	1♠	2♣
3♠	Dbl	Pass	4♣
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

Blackwood was missing.

On this deal the agreement that 4♦ was RKCB would have worked out perfectly.

*And 41, 30 responses to 4NT would also have been OK. By no means an automatic 1C opener. Many would see a pre-empt of some kind according to vulnerability.*

*Brian Senior*

SHANGHAI 2007  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL.

	♠ A Q 10 9 6 4										
	♥ 7 3										
	♦ 9 8 4 3										
	♣ 5										
♠ K 8 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —			♥ A K Q J 9 6 5 4								
♦ 7 6 5 2			♦ K Q J								
♣ A K Q J 10 8			♣ 3								
	♠ J 7 3										
	♥ 10 8 2										
	♦ A 10										
	♣ 9 7 6 4 2										

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Rosenberg	Helness	Zia
		2♣	Pass
3♣	3♠	4♥	4♠
6♣	Pass	6♥	Pass ...
2♣	— game forcing		

There wasn't enough bidding space to stay out of trouble.

Helgemo could have passed after the 4♠ bid and waited for partner's next move.

If partner had bid 5♥ should he have passed? It's hard to imagine cards in partner's hand where slam doesn't make.

Zia led trump and it was +1460 for East/West.

*This is always a problem with low-point count 2C openings. Not that this is the subject of this book, but leading a trump when dummy has a shown a big side-suit on which declarer can get discards looks poorly judged.*

*Brian Senior*

W	N	E	S
Weinstein	Saelensminde	Garner	Brogeland
		2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
6♣	Pass	...	

No one interfered in the American pair's auction, and the slam was hurriedly bid off two aces. Weinstein could have let his partner ask for aces by rebidding 4C over 3H.

Brogeland led the ♠A and a spade.

I recommend this sequence:

W	N	E	S
		2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♥	Pass ...
5♣	— only 1 ace		

*This seems to require another agreement that most pairs do not have when playing RKCB. They are sued to rules for which suit is to be treated as the trump suit but that there always is a trump suit so that four-ace Blackwood only applies after, say 1H – 4NT, where responder could have used Jacoby or the like to agree hearts before using 5-ace Blackwood.*

*In the featured sequence, is there any way for opener to say when he wants to use RKCB for clubs, when for hearts, and when 4-ace Blackwood? He has a big hand and has only had one opportunity to describe his hand, so presumably a new suit would have been natural and not a club-agreeing cuebid?*

*Brian Senior*

LILLE 1998

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

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

W	N	E	S
Versace	Sementa		
		1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	...	

3♣ — forcing

This time simple bidding led to the no brainer contract of 4♥.

W	N	E	S
Campos	Villas-Boas		
		1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	

3♦ — +6♥

5NT — one key card and a void

This auction shows the adverse effect of having an awful bidding foundation. Campos shouldn't have bid no trump from his side without a spade stopper.

This is a classic example of badly applied Blackwood.

A decidedly better continuation would have been a 5♣ cue bid, which would have dampened Villas-Boas's enthusiasm.

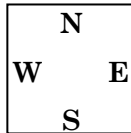
I am definitely not in favor of automatically showing a void in response to the 4NT ask when holding either one or two aces. Why?

A void (or at least shortness) should be revealed below the level of 4NT.

Let's imagine a hand for West where bidding 2NT would have been more appropriate.

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

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



♠ K Q 7 4  
♥ K Q 9 8 7 3 2  
♦ —  
♣ Q 6

W	N	E	S
		1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♠	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	
3♦	—	+6♥	
3♥	—	“What about slam in ♥’s?”	
4♦	—	shortness (3♠, 4♣ — shortness, 3NT — no shortness)	
4♠	—	cue bid	
5♦	—	void	

ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

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

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
<i>Jansma</i>	<i>Lauria</i>	<i>Verhees</i>	<i>Versace</i>
	2♥	Pass	2NT
3♣	3♦	3♠	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	6♥	Pass	...

2NT — inquiry, at least invitational

3♦ — two top honors in hearts

Everything was beautiful and scientific up to the 4♥ bid. Lauria's jump to 6♥ could now have been the result of a misinterpretation of one of partner's earlier bids or simply a great champion hurrying to get to dinner.



ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE FINAL

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

W Jansma	N Lauria	E Verhees	S Versace
			Pass
1♦	1♥	4♠	Pass ...

Simplicity triumphed.

W Duboin	N Drijver	E Bocchi	S Schollaardt
			Pass
1♦	1♥	2♥	3♥
Dbl	4♥	4♠	5♥
Dbl	Pass	6♠	Pass ...

2♥ — 5+♠, game forcing; or 6+♠, at least invitational

First double-game forcing, usually with two spades

Second double — constructive (5♠ would have been competitive; pass would expect a double)

There wasn't enough bidding room, but also the lack of bidding consistency in the contested auction contributed to a slam being reached missing two aces.

VERONA 2006  
OPEN PAIRS

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

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Auken	Jansma	Christiansen	Verhees
Pass	Pass	4♠	4♦
6♠	Pass	...	Pass

I don't understand not using Blackwood here.

Why?

It's very easy to get to a grand slam when partner holds the right cards.

W	N	E	S
			4♦
Pass	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♠	Pass

With a slightly better East hand:

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

After asking for kings with 5NT, the response of 6♣, showing the king of clubs, would have got them to the grand.

## EXCLUSION KEYCARD BLACKWOOD

Exclusion Keycard Blackwood is a continuation and extenuation of the Roman Keycard Blackwood convention. The concept behind this convention is to show a void while exploring for slam. The bidding process is easy and by exchanging information with partner the correct final contract is reached. Many contributions to bridge theory were made by its inventor, Mr. Bobby Goldman.

In Exclusion Keycard Blackwood there are only four Keycards. The ace of the void suit is not counted. Therefore, only the other three aces and the king of trumps count as the four keycards. This conventions applied:

1. after establishing the trump suit;
2. by a jump bid above game level in an unbid suit;
3. in a suit bid by the opponents.

PHILADELPHIA 2010  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

♠ K 10 8
♥ A Q J 7 6
♦ A J 8 5
♣ 3

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Diamond	Multon	Platnick	Zimmerman
			1♥
Pass	1♠	3♦	Dbl
Pass	5♦	Pass	5NT
Pass	7♠	Pass	...

This was transparently clear and elegant bidding by the pair from Monaco, featuring a support double and Exclusion Blackwood.

*Do you have an opinion regarding the use of support doubles at the three level – standard usage is only when the player has the option of raising to the two level to show four cards.*

*Brian Senior*

My suggestion:

W	N	E	S
Pass	1♠	3♦	1♥ Dbl

Double =

- a) not minimum with 3 cards in ♠
- b) game forcing with 4 cards in ♠, without ♦ shortness.
- c) any other game forcing hands without clear bid.

Cue bid 4♦ = Splinter

KM

W	N	E	S
Helgemo	Hampson	Helness	Greco
Pass	1♠	3♦	1♣ 3♠
4♦	5♦	Pass	5NT
Pass	7♠	Pass	...

1♣ — strong

1♠ — +5♠

5♦ — Exclusion Blackwood

W	N	E	S
Ginnosar	Rodwell	Pachtman	Meckstroth
Pass	1♥	3♦	1♣ Pass
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♦	Pass	5NT
Pass	7♠	Pass	...

1♣ — strong

1♥ — transfer

5♦ — Exclusion Blackwood

W	N	E	S
Nickell	Rosenberg	Katz	Willenken
			1♥
Pass	1♠	2♦	Pass
Pass	3♣	3♦	Dbl
Pass	4♦	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		

Willenken's very messy bidding made it hard to bid the grand slam.

*Willenken could have made a more standard support double and it would all have been easy from there. Or maybe they don't play EKCB!*

*Brian Senior*

VERONA 2006

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE EARLY STAGES

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

♠ 9 2
♥ 8 6 5 4
♦ J 2
♣ Q 10 7 6 3

♠ 10 8 7 4 3
♥ 2
♦ 9 8
♣ K J 9 4 2

W	N	E	S
Gitelman	Tiwari	Moss	Prabhakar
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Dbl
3♦	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♦	Pass ...

The 5♣ bid by Moss was intended as Exclusion Blackwood. It wasn't clear to Gitelman, who read it as a Splinter. As a result, an easy grand slam was missed.

W	N	E	S
Satyana	Hampson	Nadar	Greco
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♣	Dbl
Rdbl	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	...	



Satyana – Nadar had huge problems in understanding what the later bidding meant.

*If 3D was a transfer then West broke it. How can 4NT not be forcing? And East could have used EKCB instead of the 4C cue bid.*

*Brian Senior*

LILLE 2012  
14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE FINAL

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

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Bertheau	Narkiewicz	Cullin	Buras
		2♥	4♦
4♥	5♠	Pass	Pass
6♥	6♠	Pass	Pass
7♥	Dbl	Pass	...

Bertheau's poker-style bidding paid off. Good poker players often use their skills in bridge bidding.

W	N	E	S
Żmudziński	Ahlesved	Balicki	Petersson
		1♥	3♣
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♥	6♠	Dbl	Pass ...

Ahlesved used a typical strategy for the defense. He allowed the opponents to exchange information then, based on what he learned, he took the sacrifice.

For sure, Balicki-Żmudziński had a bidding misunderstanding.

Both of them attempted to ask for aces – Żmudziński by bidding 4♠ Exclusion, Balicki via 4NT – Blackwood.

*4S appears to fulfill all the rules to make it EKCB.*

*Brian Senior*

## TURBO

The idea of showing the number of aces at the same time as cue bids are exchanged is an Italian invention, and it has not gained widespread popularity outside that country.

This method makes it possible to gain a lot of bidding space and exchange information without the danger of going to the five or six level.

It requires a very well prepared bidding foundation, meaning complete information has to be exchanged about how the two hands fit together.

There's no doubt that the concept based on only two options is not very precise and risks playing a slam or a grand slam missing two aces.

- a) 0 – 2 – 4 aces
- b) 1 – 3 – 5 aces

Information from earlier rounds of bidding is essential, to avoid misreading these responses. As a result, I recommend using active aces in uncontested auctions.

It is also possible to apply this concept to contested auctions when the opponents' bidding doesn't interfere with the exchange of information.

An operational bid can play the role of no trump at the 3, 4, or 5 level, or many other bids. As usual everything depends on the context.

The weakness of Turbo, just as with Blackwood, is the necessity of playing at the five level. Other than missing two aces, we can encounter unfavorable layouts (a bad trump split) which will sink the contract.

Future versions of Turbo will be based on the fact that the role of 4NT (an even number of aces) will be taken on by bids below the game level, in order to avoid the risk of unnecessarily going down,

in just the same way as lower-level bids than 4NT can be used as RKCB.

For example, in a sequence which shows opener to have a shape of 5♠ – 4♥ – 3♣:

### Sequence A

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♥ — 2NT — forcing
- 3♣ — 3♦ — “What do you think about slam in clubs?”
- 3♥ — “I have an even number of aces.”
- 3♠ — cue bid — “I have an odd number of aces.”
- 3NT — “I’m not interested in slam.”
- 4♣ — no ♠ cue bid, “I have an odd number of aces.”
- 4♦ — diamond void, “I have an odd number of aces.”

### Sequence B

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♥ — 2♠ — good hand with support
- 3♣ — 5♠ 4♥ 3♣

### Sequence B

- 1♠ — 2♣
- 2♥ — 2♠ — good hand with support
- 3♣ — 3♦ — “I need more information.”
- 3♥ — “I have an even number of aces.”
- 3♠ — “I have an odd number of aces.”
- 3NT — “Careful – weak trumps. I have an odd number of aces.”
- 4♣ — cue bid — “I have an odd number of aces.”
- 4♦ — void — “I have an odd number of aces.”

### Sequence C

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♥ — good hand with support
- 2♠ — 3♠ 5♥ 4♦

### Sequence C

- 1♥ — 2♣
- 2♦ — 2♥ — good hand with support
- 2♠ — 2NT — “I need more information.”
- 3♣ — void — I have an even number of aces.
- 3♦ — “I have an even number of aces.”
- 3♥ — “I have an odd number of aces.”
- 3NT — “Careful – weak trumps. I have an odd number of aces.”
- 4♣ — void — I have odd number of aces.

There are dozens of sequences like this. The most important thing is the clearly understood use of the waiting bid.

Note that in similar sequences the role of Turbo can be replaced by conditional Blackwood.

### Example 1

♠ A J 3  
♥ A 8 7 4 2  
♦ A Q 3 2  
♣ 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

- 1♥ — 1♠
- 2♦ — 2NT\*
- 3♥\*\* — 3♠

- 3NT — “I have an even number of aces.”
- 4♣ — “Void – I have an odd number of aces.”
- 4♦ — “I have an odd number of aces, and I don’t have a club void.”

\*forcing

\*\*Extra length transfer bid (3♣ = 5♥ – 5♦, 3♦ = 6♥ – 4♦, 3♥ = 3♠ 5♥ 4♦, 3♠ = 5♥ 4♦ 3♣, 3NT = 2♠ 5♥ 4♦ 2♣).

The entire sequence:

<b>W</b>	<b>E</b>
1♥ —	1♠
2♦ —	2NT*
3♥ —	3♠
3NT —	4♦
4♥ —	5♣
5♠*	5NT
6♦*	7♠
3♥ —	3♠ 5♥ 4♦
3NT —	“I have an even number of aces.”
5♠ —	“I don’t have either red king.”
5NT —	“Anything else? (of course, we have all the aces)”
6♦ —	“I have the queen of diamonds.”

### Example 2

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 10 9 2  
♥ A 3  
♦ 6 5  
♣ A K 8 7

1♥ — 1♠  
2♠ — 2NT  
3♥ — 3♠  
3NT — 4♣  
4♦ — 4♥  
4♠ — 5♣  
5♥ — 5NT  
6♣ — 7♠

3♥ — maximum with 4522  
3♠ — what about slam in ♠?  
3NT — “I have an even number of aces.”  
4♣, ♦, ♥, 5♣, ♥ — cue bids  
5NT — “We’ve got all the aces – have you got anything else?”

6♣ — the queen of clubs (responder showed the ace and king  
— 4♣, 5♣)

**Example 3**

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

1♠ — 2♣  
2♥ — 2NT  
3♣ — 3♦  
3♥ — 4♣  
4♥ — 4NT  
6♣ — 7♣

3♦ — “What do you think about slam in clubs?”  
3♥ — “I have an even number of aces.”  
4♥ — cue bid – more in ♥.  
4NT — “Anything else?”  
6♣ — ♣Q

SAO PAULO 2009  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

	♠ A K 10 6 4										
	♥ A K 4										
	♦ Q 10 2										
	♣ K 2										
♠ J 9 7 5	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 8 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9		♥ J 10									
♦ A J 7 3		♦ 8 5									
♣ A J 6 4		♣ 9 8 7 5 3									
	♠ —										
	♥ Q 8 7 6 5 3 2										
	♦ K 9 6 4										
	♣ Q 10										

W	N Fantoni	E	S Nunes
	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	...		

- 2♣ — Gazzilli
- 2♦ — waiting +8PC
- 2♥ — good hand 3-4 cards in ♥.
- 3♠ — void

Here we have an excellent example of the basics.  
 The Italian pair managed to agree hearts and show the spade void.



Both players admitted to me later that Fantoni should have bid 3NT instead of 4♣. Nunes understood the 4♣ cue bid as confirmation of holding all four key values.

If opener's hand had looked a bit different:

♠ J 10 6 4 3  
♥ A K 4  
♦ A Q J  
♣ A 2

the grand slam would have been within their reach precisely because of the excellent bidding foundation.

ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE QUARTER-FINALS

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

♠ A 4
♥ Q 10 9 4
♦ 10 9
♣ A Q 10 3 2

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Allana	Bocchi	Fazli
Pass	1♣	3♣	Dbl
Pass	3NT	Pass	

It was very pessimistic to bid 3NT. One can't open 1♣ with a strong hand and subsequently bid it the same way as a weak hand.

The right bid was a quantitative jump to 4NT.

W	N	E	S
Jaffer	Fantoni	Khan	Nunes
Pass	1♣	3♠	Dbl
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		

Fantoni's 1♣ opening showed +14PC with clubs or a balanced hand, so Nunes had an easy bid at his next turn.

Hand evaluation should have helped the Italians get to the right slam. Partner has 5♣ and 4♥ and could not make a heart cue bid. The club slam could therefore be in danger of suffering a heart ruff.

In my opinion Fantoni didn't have enough imagination. The advantage of a club slam over a no trump slam was an illusion from his point of view.

LILLE 2012  
 14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

♠ 4
♥ A K 5 4
♦ Q 8 7
♣ A Q 9 5 4

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Multon	Cullin	Zimmerman	Bertheau
			1♣
Pass	1♦	2♠	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
Pass	...		
1♦	— ♥		

Even with the questionable club values, this was good hand evaluation and the slam was reached.

W	N	E	S
Nystrom	Fantoni	Upmark	Nunes
			1♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♥
Pass	..		

2♥ — natural, GF

3NT — waiting

5♣ — cue bid and an odd number of aces (4NT would have been an even number)

In my opinion 3NT could serve as a “Turbo” bid. I’m fascinated by the Italian approach to slam bidding, the way the players can differentiate between honor and shortness cue bids. This is often how high cards on a particular hand are evaluated. It goes without saying that KQ in a suit opposite shortness is not very useful, whereas an ace is a good value.

On this hand, most players in Nunes’ seat would have splintered with 3♠. In the Italian system that would show a void.

BALI 2013

BERMUDA BOWL, RR3 MATCH: MONACO - INDONESIA

	♠ J 10										
	♥ J 9										
	♦ A K										
	♣ Q 10 8 7 5 4 2										
♠ A K Q 7 3	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td style="width: 50px; height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 8 6 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 10 2		♥ 8 4 3									
♦ 8 7 6 3		♦ J 10 9 4									
♣ 6 3		♣ J									
	♠ 5										
	♥ A K Q 7 6 5										
	♦ Q 5 2										
	♣ A K 9										

NS vulnerable

W Sacul	N Fantoni	E Karwur	S Nunes
			1♥
1♠	2♣	3♠	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		

5♣ — no ♠ cue bid and an odd number of key cards. This is a classic example of the Italian approach to slam bidding.

## PICK A SLAM

In situations when, in the early stages of the bidding, we weren't able to agree the best trump suit, for various reasons, a 5NT bid means – pick a slam.

SAO PAULO 2009  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

W	N	E	S
Versace	Karakolev	Lauria	Danailov
			1♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♠	Pass	...

The Bulgarian pair managed to agree spades, but then they stopped at a relatively safe level.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Karaivanov	Fantoni	Trendafilov	Nunes
			1♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♦
Pass	...		
2♥	— waiting		

The Italians agreed diamonds, but that wasn't the best strain. Fortunately for them, the diamond suit was very favorably placed.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Wang	Rodwell	Zuang	Meckstroth
			2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Dbl	Rdbl
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		
3♣	— Puppet Stayman		
3♥	— 4 spades		
5NT	— pick a slam		

Meckwell showed high class on this auction with a sophisticated sequence.

The key bid was, in fact, 5NT – pick a slam.



W	N	E	S
Katz	Dai	Nickell	Yang
			1♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6NT
Pass	...		

The Chinese pair didn't do so well.

BERMUDA 2000  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

		♠ 5 3 ♥ K 10 8 6 5 2 ♦ K 7 ♣ Q 8 6									
♠ K 8 2 ♥ 4 ♦ 10 9 8 6 4 2 ♣ 9 3 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 10 9 6 ♥ Q J 7 3 ♦ J 3 ♣ 10 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ A 7 4 ♥ A 9 ♦ A Q 5 ♣ A K J 5 4									

Both vulnerable

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Zia	De Falco	Rosenberg	Ferraro
		Pass	1♣
2♣	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4NT
Pass	...		

2♣ — transfer to diamonds

There's nothing good to say about the Italians' bidding in this auction. They got lost in the fog.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Duboin	Stansby	Bocchi	Martel
		Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	2♠	2NT
3♠	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		

5NT — pick a slam – the key bid on this auction

Stansby showed imagination. Note, that the best contract is a grand slam in clubs.

BERMUDA 2000  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS.

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

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Ferraro	Meckstroth	De Falco	Rodwell
			1♦
4♠	Dbl	Pass	4NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♣
Pass	...		
1♦	—	Precision	
5NT	—	pick a slam	

Again, we see Meckwell in action and an elegant and effective auction.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Compos	Lindkvist	Villas-Boas	Fredin
			1♦
4♠	Dbl	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

The Swedes lost the heart suit but a natural sequence led to a makeable slam.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Manoppo	Saelensminde Lasut		Brogeland
			1♣
3♠	3NT	4♠	Pass
Pass	6♣	Pass	...

They had more space, and an easier task.

PHILADELPHIA 2010  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

♠ 9 8 7 3  
 ♥ 8 3  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ K 9 7 6 4 2

W	N	E	S
Diamond	Multon	Platnick	Zimmerman
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♥	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣	Pass	7♦	Pass ...
4♥	— RKCB		
6♣	— a grand slam invitation		

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Helgemo	Hampson	Helness	Greco
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♥	Pass
7♣	Pass	7♦	Pass ...

7♣ — pick a grand slam

Contract of 7NT is slightly better, since it may make even if diamonds split 4–1.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Ginnosar	Rodwell	Pachtman	Meckstroth
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
6NT	Pass	...	

Responder didn't want to bid, and he was undeservedly rewarded.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
Nickell	Rosenberg	Katz	Willenken
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♦	Pass ...

Another example of “pick a slam” – 5NT was bid by Nickell, but he then stopped one level lower than Helgemo.

PHILADELPHIA 2010  
 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE FINAL

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

♠ K 9 5
♥ A J 7 5 2
♦ Q 6 3
♣ A 6

W Rodwell	N Moss	E Meckstroth	S Gitelman
			1NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		
3♠	— game forcing 4-1-4-4		
5NT	— pick a slam		

W Hampson	N Hamman	E Greco	S Zia
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	5NT	Pass	6♠
Pass	...		

Both pairs luckily stopped in six when a spade grand slam would have been an excellent contract.

## ANOTHER MEANING FOR 5NT

- a) The most well-known alternative treatment for 5NT is called “Josephine” – asking for the number of honors in the trump suit.

For example:

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

W	N	E	S
1♠	4♣	4♠	Pass
5NT	Pass	7♠	Pass ...

- 5NT — asking for the number of honors in the trump suit  
 7♠ — a Five-card fit with the ace and king is enough to bid a grand slam



b) 5NT can also be used as a general grand slam invitation.

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

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5NT	Pass	?	

- 1♣ — +15PC balanced or +18 any shape
- 2♦ — natural game forcing
- 5♣ — 0–3 key cards

Other further bids would be:

- 5♦ — asking for the queen of trump,
- 5♥ — asking for the number of kings,
- 5NT — “I’m not interested in the queen of trumps or any major suit kings. I’d really like support in the diamond suit.”
- 7♣ — “I have it”

c) 5NT can be used to ask for aces.

For example:

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

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♥	3♠
4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♠	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♦	Pass	7♥	Pass ...

- 4♣ — shortness, slam invitation
- 5♣ — cue bid – if 4♣ guaranteed a void, then it could be ace asking
- 5♠ — void, grand slam invitation
- 5NT — Blackwood
- 6♦ — 1–4 keycards

I'm a fan of the agreement that, in situations when we go past 4NT for whatever reason, 5NT plays the role of Blackwood.

## IN THE BLACKWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD

When is bidding our second suit at the six level an invitation to a grand slam and when is it a choice of contracts?

Of course, it depends on the context.

Some ironclad agreements can be made

- (i) When it appears from the bidding that we're missing the queen of trumps in the first agreed suit, then bidding our second suit is a choice of contracts.
- (ii) When earlier rounds of bidding indicate that a grand slam is out of the picture, then bidding our second suit is a choice of contracts.

SAO PAULO 2009  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS

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

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Drijver	Meckstroth	Brink
		1♠	3♥
4♠	5♥	5♠	Pass ...

The Dutch pair didn't leave Meckwell much bidding space and getting to a slam in diamonds was practically impossible.

W	N	E	S
Bakkeren	Nickell	Bertens	Katz
		1♠	Pass
2NT	Dbl	3♦	5♥
5♠	Pass	6♠	Pass ...

2NT — invitational with support

The extra bidding space allowed Bertens to show his second suit. The risk of bidding a slam in an uncertain situation can be slightly reduced by suggesting an alternative slam in diamonds.

It's essential for the partnership to discuss the different interpretations of 6♦.

In fact, it is possible to show two intentions:

- a) inviting a grand slam
- b) "We're going to be in slam, what about in diamonds?"

I prefer to use the interpretation of choice of contracts.

Why?

If partner had aspirations of bidding a grand slam he could have bid 6♥. If he was interested in help in the diamond suit he had a 6♣ bid available, which would have steered the way for a diamond cue bid.

*Except that if he wanted specifically third-round diamond control 6C would not normally get the job done, where a traditional 6D ask would do so.*

*Brian Senior*

SAO PAULO 2009  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

♠ A K 10 9 6 2  
 ♥ 5 4 2  
 ♦ A Q  
 ♣ A 5

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

W	N Fantoni	E	S Nunes
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	5♦
Pass	6NT	Pass	...

The bidding was a bit cloudy and it finished in a small slam when there were 13 top tricks.

Nunes should have asked for aces after the 4♦ cue bid and counted the tricks.

6 spades +2 diamonds (with one ruff) + the ♥ ace + 4 clubs

W	N Hamman	E	S Zia
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♦	Pass	7♠
Pass	...		

The excellent cooperation shown between Hamman and Zia got them to a laydown grand slam. They exchanged all the required information and showed all their intentions.

- 4♦ — Splinter
- 5♣ — 1 key card
- 6♣ — Q♠ + ♣K
- 6♦ — a grand slam invitation

ISTANBUL 2004  
THE WORLD TRANSNATIONAL MIXED TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

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

W	N	E	S
Faigenbaum	Zia	Halfond	Auken
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	7♠	Pass	...

Sabina's intention was to play a slam in hearts because they were missing the queen of spades.

For Zia – bidding a side suit at the six level was an invitation to a grand slam and this led to disaster.

In a situation when a response indicates the queen of trump is missing, bidding a second suit (that had been bid earlier) is a choice of contracts.

From Zia's point of view he should have corrected 6♥ to 6NT (or 6♠).



Since they didn't have such a fine-tuned agreement, Sabine should have risked a contract of 6NT rather than risked a misunderstanding.

BERMUDA 2000  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL.

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

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Campos	Meckstroth	Villas-Boas	Rodwell
		2♥	Pass
2NT	3♦	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	7♣	Pass ...

This is another example which shows that in the neighborhood of Blackwood there is trouble even for experienced pairs. After asking for aces, instead of bidding the small slam, Campos asked a further question:

- 5♦ — “Do you have the ♣Q?”. Villas-Boas, who had extras and assumed all the key cards to be present for the 5D bid, responded by jumping to the grand slam.

*Presumably, Campos planned to pass a 5H response, their version of the queen-ask being one-step no, two steps or more yes???? Otherwise, 5D was dumb. If clubs are trumps, 5D does look like a grand slam try, so much sympathy with East.*

*Rodwell did not take space away despite the five-card support and shapely hand.*

*Brian Senior*

W	N	E	S
Freeman	Chagas	Nickell	Branco
		1♥	Pass
3♣	3NT	4♣	5♠
6♥	6♠	Dbl	Pass ...

3NT — ♠ + ♦

A brave action by Chagas got his side to an excellent sacrifice.

I have already mentioned several times that I don't believe in showing a void as part of a response to a Blackwood 4NT bid. First of all, the auction can get too high. Secondly, we take up partner's space for asking further questions. Other information can be more important than the void.

There's a way to find out if partner has a void, even after a standard Blackwood response. There's only one condition: the shortness suit has to be lower ranking than the trump suit.

For example:

<p>♠ K Q J 9 6 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ K Q ♣ K 10 5</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W            E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W            E	S	<p>♠ A 8 5 ♥ — ♦ A 10 9 8 4 3 ♣ A 8 7 3</p>
N					
W            E					
S					

- 1♠ — 2♦  
2♠ — 4♥ — Splinter  
4NT — 5♣ — 0–3  
6♥ — “If you have a void – bid seven”

*Oh, I like that idea. Sadly for me, I'd never come across it before.*

*Brian Senior*

Note, that in a similar situation, there would be more space available earlier on:

- 1♥ — 2♦  
2♥ — 3♠ — Splinter  
4♣ — 4♠ — void

## DECISION

Slam bidding is multi-faceted. There is, however, a certain group of deals with which no convention can help. Decisions have to be made with an element of risk. What guides you is not only knowledge, but also your gut feeling.

The process of hand evaluation leads to a bidding decision. Good decisions are, in part, a result of experience – from the thousands of deals a player encounters. But can the art of decision-making in bridge simply be learned?

Yes, it can. Moreover, it must be learned.

First of all, we have to know our partner's style and temperament, as well as the style and the level of aggressiveness of our opponents. When making a decision we inevitably use our imagination. If we are able to visualize three possible layouts for partner (based on the bidding up to that point):

- a) the favourable one,
- b) the average one,
- c) the unfavorable one

we will be in a position to estimate the results of the decision that we would be intuitively inclined to make, and if need be, correct it.

HAMMAMET 1997  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS.

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

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Meckstroth	Helness	Rodwell	Helgemo
1♣	3♦	3NT	Pass
6NT	Pass	...	

This was an aggressive and a bit unusual decision by Rodwell. I have to say that if I had held his cards, the final contract would have been 3♦ x for a result of +1100.

On the other hand, he who declares well can afford to overbid.

The defense led two round of diamonds and Helgemo threw a heart.

Rodwell took the club finesse, unblocked the spades, returned to the ♥J and cashed 2 tricks in spades.

Helgemo should be criticized for lazily discarding a heart. This helped Rodwell work out the exact distribution of the suits.

In the ending he had to decide whether to pitch a heart or a club from the dummy.

Helgemo was marked with six hearts because, pitching a heart from this hand at trick two:

♠ 10 5 4 3  
♥ 10 9 8 5 3  
♦ 9  
♣ K 9 4

HAMMAMET 1997  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS.

		♠ 10 8 5 3 2											
		♥ Q											
		♦ 7 4 3											
		♣ J 8 4 2											
♠ A 7		<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ K 6 4
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ 2				♥ 9 5 3									
♦ K Q J 10 8 2				♦ A 9 5									
♣ 10 9 6 3				♣ A K 7 5									
		♠ Q J 9											
		♥ A K J 10 8 7 6 4											
		♦ 6											
		♣ Q											

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S	
Zia	Wang	Rosenberg	Fu	
1♦	Pass	2♣	4♥	
5♣	Pass	6♣	Pass	...

Zia's last bid, which was forced by Fu's jump to 4♥, left Rosenberg with a guess. I sympathize with his decision. Why?

Look at what happened at the other table.

W	N	E	S	
Wang	Soloway	Li	Deutch	
1♦	Pass	2♣	4♥	
5♣	Pass	6♣	6♥	
Dbl	Pass	...		

On another day Deutch's decision could have been the winning one, but...

HAMMAMET 1997  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS.

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

♠ K J 10 6
♥ A J 9 8 6 5
♦ Q
♣ 8 7

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Freeman	Deutch	Nickell	Soloway
	1♣	1♥	Pass
2♦	3♣	4♣	4♠
5♦	Pass	6♦	Dbl
Pass	...		

Freeman's accurate bidding led to a spectacular result – 6♦ x making.

Could the 2♦ bid have got EW into trouble?

In my opinion a 2-over-1 response to an overcall shouldn't be forcing.

*Agree. I couldn't bear not to be able to bid a seven-card suit here.*

*Brian Senior*

There is a wide point-count range for a 1♥ overcall (7–16).



Further bidding by East after the 2♦ bid must be based on reasonable strength (+11PC) or a good fit (with shape).

W	N	E	S
Brogeland	Perron	Saelensminde	Chemla
	1♣	1♥	Pass
Pass	2♣	2♥	Dbl
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	...		

When facing the identical situation Brogeland passed and the French bought the contract.

W	N	E	S
Martel	Meckstroth	Stansby	Rodwell
	3♠	4♥	Dbl
Pass	...		
3♠	— unspecified solid suit		

This deal is a great advertisement for active bidding.

Freeman was greatly rewarded for being active, as were Meckstroth – Rodwell.

Meckstroth's 3♠ opening (conventional variation of a gambling 3NT with a solid minor) wasn't according to the book because he had four spades, but it led to the final contract of 4♥ x.

HAMMAMET 1997  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE FINAL

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

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Hamman	Perron	Wolf	Chemla
			Pass
1♣	3♣	3♦	5♣
Pass	Pass	5♦	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♥	Pass ...

Hamman opened his two-suited hand with a strong club and his next bid was a forcing pass at the five level.

Bidding decisions are made by judging the situation and evaluating one's hand.

Most of my "students" rated Wolf's decision (not inviting a grand with a 6♣ cue bid) as a poor assessment of the situation and poor hand evaluation.

<b>W</b> Levy	<b>N</b> Meckstroth	<b>E</b> Mari	<b>S</b> Rodwell
			Pass
1♥	1NT	2NT	3♦
3♠	4♣	4♥	5♣
5♦	Pass	6♥	7♣
7♥	Pass	...	

1NT — 15–17 or weak one-suited hand

2NT — four-card heart raise or two-suited hand

3♦ — Pass or correct

The French pair had a lot more bidding space – thanks to their opponents – and they made good use of it.

PARIS 2001  
 BERMUDA BOWL, THE QUARTER-FINALS.

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

♠ K 10 3  
 ♥ J 9 6 5 2  
 ♦ J 6 5 4  
 ♣ 3

♠ Q  
 ♥ 10 8  
 ♦ 2  
 ♣ K Q J 10 9 8 7 5 2

EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Duboin	Meckstroth	Bocchi	Rodwell
		1♠	5♣
Dbf	Pass	...	

Duboin's decision was the percentage action, but it wasn't a success as even a slam in spades was makeable.

W	N	E	S
Hamman	Lauria	Soloway	Versace
		1♣	5♣
6♣	Pass	6♣	Pass ...
1♣	— strong		

Hamman, in only a slightly different situation, didn't have any doubt about what to do.

I like his style.

*Not sure I'd call it a slightly different situation – quite major with one opener possibly an 11-count with five spades, the other 16+ but no distributional information.  
Hamman did very well, I think.*

*Brian Senior*

PARIS 2001  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS

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

Both vulnerable

W	N	E	S
v.Arnim	Fischer	Auken	Weigkricht
	1♥	2♠	3♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	...

The beauty and attraction of bridge lies in the fact that sometimes an incorrect play can be the only winning one.

I haven't found anyone who sympathizes with Weigkricht's 3♦ bid.

*And yet, if 2NT would have been a heart raise, one can understand her stretching and, once you judge to stretch, you may as well show the diamonds rather than jump to 3NT, making it easier to decide between 3NT, 4H and 5D. She upgraded the spade holding and decided that balanced the two jack-doubletons and missing high card. Of course, this logic is predicated on the assumption that the vulnerability made it sensible. Personally, I would pass and hope for a reopening double, but I at least understand where she may have been coming from.*

*Brian Senior*

Yet the Austrians were the only ones to get to the diamond slam.

The other NS pairs in the semi-final bid:

Martel – Stansby	— 5♦
Pszczola – Kwiecień	— 2♠x
Helgemo – Helness	— 4♥
Lauria – Versace	— 3NT
Cronier – Willard	— 4♥
Schulle – Klar	— 2♠x
Nehmert Rauscheid	— 4♠x

LILLE 1998

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE SEMI-FINALS.

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

EW vulnerable

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	
Versace	Lazard	Lauria	Bramley	
				3♦
4♦	7♦	7♥	Pass	...

Bramley's aggressive 3♦ opening, Versace's forced action and Lazard's wise jump, left poor Lauria with a guess. You could say that he had a pass available (forcing). But having to choose between two bids – pass and 7♥ – leaves no sensible way to show one's intentions. The opponents' jump to 7♦, one assumes, means that our slide can make at least a small slam.

*At least he knew his partner would bid hearts or double, if he made the forcing pass. Imagine if West had actually doubled rather than bid 4D. Now East cannot afford to pass as he fears partner is going to bid 7S if he bids at all.*

*Brian Senior*



Perhaps the pass should make bidding seven dependent only on partner having first-round control of diamonds. We would act the same way when we get to a small slam and the opponents decide to take a sacrifice.

LILLE 1998  
 OPEN PAIRS, SESSION FOUR OF THE FINAL.

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

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Hoyland	Justin Hackett	Hoyland	Jason Hackett
		2NT	3♦
5♦	6♥	Pass	Pass
7♦	Pass	...	
2NT	— minors 7–11PC		
3♦	— better ♠'s than ♥'s		

The devious and clever bid by Justin Hackett forced his opponents to guess.

Another point is the 5♦ bid – it doesn't appear to be a wise choice.  
Why?

We can anticipate that hearts or spades will be bid against us at a high level.

In this situation it is better to direct partner to a club lead. The ace of diamonds may not cash because of the 6-card fit, so 5C would be a smarter choice – we can always correct to 5D if we get doubled.

ESTORIL 2005  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE ROUND ROBINS

	♠ 8 7 5										
	♥ K 10 9 5										
	♦ 10 9										
	♣ Q 6 4 3										
♠ K 10	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q J 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 4		♥ Q 7									
♦ 5 3 2		♦ K Q J 8 6 4									
♣ A 10 9 8 7 5		♣ J									
	♠ 9 6 3 2										
	♥ J 8 6 3 2										
	♦ A 7										
	♣ K 2										

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Chagas	Meckstroth	Villas-Boas
			Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	3NT	Pass ...
2♣	— Precision		
2♦	— relay		

Meckstroth's practical approach to bidding didn't work out well on this deal.

Note that opening the bidding at the two level took away bidding space that was needed to find the best game, or even slam, contract.

After a heart lead, the result was  $-1$  and  $+100$  for NS.

<b>W</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>
M.Branco	Hamman	P.Branco	Soloway
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♦	Pass ...

The diamond slam was better than 3NT, but it goes down on a heart lead when North is able to over-ruff the fourth round of spades after his partner gets in with the ace of trumps.

Soloway was hoping to come out a hero on this deal and led the ♣2.

ISTANBUL 2004  
 WORLD TEAM OLYMPIAD, THE ROUND OF 16

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

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Versace	Levin	Lauria	Weinstein
		Pass	1♣
1♠	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	3♦	3NT
Pass	...		

Nobody particularly interfered with the American pair's bidding so this is clearly a case of bad hand evaluation.

W	N	E	S
Welland	Bocchi	Falenius	Duboin
		3♦	3NT
Pass	...		

Bocchi's pass is evidence of the fact that this pair bids 3NT under pressure in similar situations with much weaker hands.

I'd like to point out once again, that what gives the Italian pair a strong advantage is the consistency of their partnership bidding.

W	N	E	S
Zorlu	Gromov	Assael	Dubinin
		3♦	3NT
4♦	6♣	Pass	...

The Russian pair must use a completely different style. Dubinin clearly would not bid 3NT with a questionable hand.

What's the best way to handle such situations?

As I mentioned before, transfer bids work out the best.

W	N	E	S
		3♦	3NT
Pass	?		
	4♣	—	transfer to diamonds, something like a 3-suited hand with diamond shortness
	4♦	—	transfer to hearts
	4♥	—	transfer to spades
	4♠	—	transfer to clubs
	4NT	—	invitational without shortness in the opponents' suit

On the deal above:

W	N	E	S
		3♦	3NT
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♦ — RKCB in clubs
Pass	5NT		— 2 aces without the trump queen

Why is 5♦ used as RKCB?

- 4NT — is a negative reaction to a slam invitation and is to play
- 5♣ — is a negative reaction to a slam invitation and is to play
- 5♦ — is the first available bid and serves the role of Blackwood

If partner shows 3 aces, then it's reasonable to risk bidding a grand. The transfer to clubs rather promises a 6-card suit.

MONTREAL 2002

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROSENBLUM CUP, THE QUARTER-FINALS

		♠ K 8 7 5 3 2							
		♥ Q 5 4							
		♦ 10							
		♣ K J 4							
♠ Q 6		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> </tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	♠ A J 10 9
N		E							
W		S							
♥ A J 10 7 6 2			♥ K 9 8 3						
♦ 8 7 4 2			♦ —						
♣ 9			♣ A Q 8 7 2						
		♠ 4							
		♥ —							
		♦ A K Q J 9 6 5 3							
		♣ 10 6 5 3							

None vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Fredin	Rosenberg	Lindkvist	Zia
		1♣	5♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
6♥	Pass	...	

A decision was made under risky conditions.

You can agree with their approach or not, but it's good to carefully observe the style of certain players.

W	N	E	S
Berkowitz	Bertheau	Cohen	Nystrom
		2♦	5♦
5♥	Pass	6♦	Pass
6♥	Pass		
2♦	— 4414, 11–15PC		

The situation was different, but Berkowitz also decided to be active.

ESTORIL 2005  
BERMUDA BOWL, THE SEMI-FINALS.

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

♠ K Q 9 4 3
♥ 7 6
♦ Q J 10 5 3
♣ 9

NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Rodwell	Ekelblad	Meckstroth	Rubin
	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♠	3♠	4♥	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♥	Pass ...

Look at how active Meckstroth was. If his hand had looked just a bit different:

♠ 7 2
♥ 10 9 4 3
♦ 8 4 2
♣ Q 6 5 2

Then all the commentators would have said how they didn't understand his 4♥ bid, which was suicidal in pushing the auction up too high.

*And I would agree with the commentators. Surely this piece of filth should pass and only bid a reluctant 4/5H when partner doubles to show extras. Here, Rodwell could invite seven and stop in six, but give him a slightly lesser hand and he would be driving to a no-play small slam.*

*Brian Senior*

W	N	E	S
Hampson	Nickell	Greco	Freeman
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	1♠
2♠	3♠	4♥	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♥	Pass ...

Sometimes the final result is determined simply by chance.

LILLE 2012

14TH WORLD BRIDGE GAMES, THE QUARTER-FINALS

		♠ J 10 9 8									
		♥ —									
		♦ K Q J 10 4 3									
		♣ A 10 6									
♠ Q 7	<table style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ K J 9 8 7 6 5 4	♥ A 3 2										
♦ 9 7 2	♦ A 8 5										
♣ —	♣ K Q 7 5 3 2										
		♠ K 6 5 4 3 2									
		♥ Q 10									
		♦ 6									
		♣ J 9 8 4									

EW vulnerable



W	N	E	S
De Wijs	Multon	Muller	Zimmerman
		1♣	2♠
4♦	4♠	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	6♠	Pass	...

Multon's strategy is quite interesting. He allowed the opponents to freely exchange information and then drew conclusions which led him to take the sacrifice. Down two meant +300 for the Dutch.

W	N	E	S
Nunes	Drijver	Fantoni	Brink
		1♣	2♠
4♣	4♠	5♣	Pass
5♥	5♠	Dbl	Pass
6♥	Dbl	Pass	...

Drijver took a bid at the five level and wasn't certain if the slam was bid under pressure.

The result – 6♥X = +1860.

Of course, both times there was a tricky bidding decision. Since there wasn't a third entry to dummy in hearts, only the ace of clubs third let the slam make.

What is the future evolution of bidding in the slam zone?

In my opinion there will be less universal agreements that will be applicable in all or many bidding situations. For example, asking for aces will depend on the context. Not only will more bids take on the role of Blackwood, but the responses will depend on the strength of responder's hand.

We will pay more attention to how partner tends to evaluate hands and how he thinks about bidding. Knowing about partner's style of hand evaluation will allow the partnership to make rational, joint decisions. The ability to keep track of how partner understands auctions will allow the partnership to avoid making opposite interpretations of the bidding.

By reading this book you have seen how often there can be different interpretations of bids even among top professional pairs.

In slam bidding we will definitely attach greater importance to the idea of camouflage.

Being active in the bidding is very often a risky way to provoke the opponents into making a mistake. In my opinion, in the future players will be more afraid of lost bidding space, and this will cause a dramatic increase in the number of necessary agreements to cope with contested auctions.

The whole bidding structure must be based on a few symmetrical bidding positions, rather than having different agreements to cater to each individual situation.

The competitive advantage will go to those pairs who are better prepared to handle chaos in the bidding.

The recipe for avoiding chaos in contested auctions is not another set of several hundred agreements, but hours of discussion between partners.

There will be an increased role played by soft skills – imagination, fantasy, and creativity.

The ability to control one's emotions and the pace of the auction will be more important.

In fifteen years or so the words used in bridge will be the same, but in each element of the game there will be MORE of them.