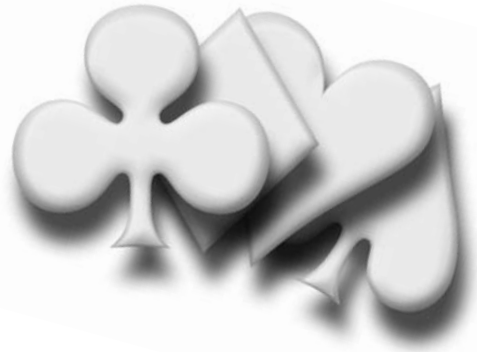


LESSON 6

Finding Key Cards



General Concepts

General Introduction

Group Activities

Sample Deals



GENERAL CONCEPTS

Finding Key Cards

This is the second lesson covering slam bidding techniques. It assumes familiarity with the general requirements for slam and the Blackwood and Gerber conventions. It is mainly a discussion of when not to use Blackwood (or Gerber). It covers the concept of cuebidding controls and covers methods for finding out about trump quality. This material will probably challenge the students.

Bidding

Students frequently equate the Blackwood convention with slam bidding. As soon as a trump suit has been agreed upon and slam is in sight, they launch into Blackwood. This convention, however, only tells how many aces and kings partner holds, not which aces and kings. In addition, the Blackwood convention doesn't effectively handle other forms of controls such as singletons and voids.

Cuebidding can be very effective in uncovering the controls held by the partnership, but does require a lot of partnership cooperation and judgment. The focus of this lesson is to introduce the students to this concept.

Cuebidding also has its shortcomings in that it doesn't deal with controls in the trump suit. Conventions that address this issue, such as Key Card Blackwood, are beyond the scope of this lesson, although the more advanced students can be referred to the material in the Appendix covering this topic. The lesson, however, covers a couple of "standard" methods specific to the trump suit, including the *grand slam force*.

Here are the topics covered:

When Blackwood (or Gerber) Isn't Enough

This is an introduction to the topic, showing why Blackwood (or Gerber) doesn't resolve all of the control issues in slam-going auctions. The important point to emphasize is that Blackwood (or Gerber) tells how many aces partner holds, but not which aces.

Cuebidding First-Round Controls

This section shows how cuebidding can be used to show a first-round control and to elicit partner's cooperation in discovering whether the partnership holds enough controls. Once a trump suit has been agreed upon, both outside aces and voids can be treated as first-round controls.

Finding the Ace of Trump

Because cuebidding ignores the trump suit, this section gives an example of how cuebidding can be combined with Blackwood (or Gerber) to check for the trump ace.

Cuebidding Second-Round Controls

A basic principle assumed in this lesson is that first-round controls are shown ahead of second-round controls. While experienced partnerships may at times sidestep this principle, sometimes showing a second-round control ahead of a first-round control for convenience in the auction, this is not recommended for more inexperienced students. Instead, the students are shown how to show a second-round control in a suit — either a king or a singleton — once a first-round control in that suit has already been shown or denied.

Finding the King of Trump

This is a brief example to show how Blackwood (or Gerber) can be used to ask about kings in a slam-going auction that started with a cuebid. As mentioned earlier, Key Card Blackwood is outside the scope of the lesson, but more experienced students can be referred to the Appendix in the student textbook if they want more details.

Trump Quality

There are some standard methods to ask about trump quality. The students are shown examples of quantitative trump auctions and are introduced to the grand slam force convention.

Play & Defense

The first two deals focus entirely on the auction. There are no play challenges involved if the partnership reaches the appropriate contract. Both of these deals have variations. Be sure to have the students make the appropriate changes once they have completed the initial bidding and play, and then have them rebid and replay the deal.

The last two deals combine slam bidding with some more challenging play concepts:

- End play.
- Safety play.
- Suit establishment.

The third deal is an excellent example of an endplay. It is unlikely that many of the students will spot the winning line of play the first time through. Declarer must plan ahead and strip out a side suit to be successful. On the actual lie of the cards, partially stripping out the diamond suit will suffice, but the students should be shown how to make sure that West has no diamonds left before being endplayed.

The fourth deal has a couple of challenges for declarer. The first involves a standard safety play in the trump suit. In addition, declarer must be careful to combine suit establishment with safety when handling the trump suit. It would not be surprising for most declarers to get tangled up with entries in the play, so be sure to walk slowly through the recommended line of play.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This is a continuation of the previous lesson on slam bidding. It's assumed that the students are familiar with the basic requirements for slam bidding, especially the need to check for controls. It's probably a good idea, however, to briefly review the basic principles before moving into the concept of cuebidding.

You might start like this:

“In the previous lesson, we discussed the three basic requirements for slam bidding:

1. **Combined strength.** The partnership needs approximately:
 - 33 or more combined points for a small slam;
 - 37 or more combined points for a grand slam.

“This amount of combined strength doesn't guarantee that the partnership can take 12 or 13 tricks, but does put the partnership in the slam zone — where it is worth investigating the possibility of slam if the next two requirements can be met.

2. **Trump fit.** Before launching into slam, make sure you know in which strain the partnership belongs — in a suitable trump suit or in notrump. You may need the early rounds of the auction to uncover your best fit.
3. **Controls.** In a slam contract, it's important to make sure that the opponents can't take enough tricks to defeat the contract before you gain the lead.
 - A first-round control is a holding that makes sure your side can win the first trick in a suit. An ace is a first-round control; a void in a trump contract is a first-round control.
 - A second-round control is a holding that makes sure your side can win the second trick in a suit. A king is a second-round control; a singleton in a trump contract is a second-round control.

“In a small slam, you must have at least first-round control in three suits and second-round control in the fourth. In a grand slam, you need first-round control in all four suits.

“In the previous lesson, we looked at two of the conventions that can be used to find out about controls, Blackwood and Gerber. These conventions reveal the number of aces and kings partner holds. Combined with the first two requirements, strength and fit, that will often be everything needed to bid a good slam or to keep out of a bad slam.”

GROUP ACTIVITIES

When Blackwood Isn't Enough

Introduction

“Knowing how many aces and kings partner holds won't always give you enough information to decide whether slam is a reasonable prospect. In a trump contract, for example, there are other forms of controls, such as singletons and voids. There may be other considerations as well.”

Instructions

“The cards are sorted into suits.

“Give each player one suit and construct the following hand in front of South.

“In spades: the ace, the king and the queen.

“In hearts: the ace, the king and four low cards.

“In diamonds: two low cards.

“In clubs: the king and the queen.”

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	?

SOUTH
 ♠ A K Q
 ♥ A K x x x x
 ♦ x x
 ♣ K Q

Check that each table has the correct starting hand set up dummy style in front of South.

“**What is South's opening bid?** (2♣.) With 21 HCP plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, South has enough for a strong two bid.

“**How would the bidding proceed?** North bids a waiting 2♦. South shows a good heart suit with a 2♥ bid, and North shows more than a minimum hand by bidding 3♥.

“**After North bids 3♥ and East passes, does South think slam is a possibility?** (Yes.) North's raise to 3♥ shows a better than minimum response, since 4♥ would have been a signoff.

“**What's the only concern before simply bidding 6♥?** (Controls.) The only thing holding you back from jumping to 6♥ — which wouldn't be entirely unreasonable — is the possibility that the opponents might take the first two tricks. For example, two aces may be missing.

“Should South jump to 4NT to ask about aces? (No/Yes.) 4NT might work, but it still might leave South guessing what to do. To understand why, let’s see what might happen if South bids Blackwood.

“If South were to bid 4NT and North responded 5♣, what call would South make? (5♥.) North’s 5♣ bid would show no aces. Now South would know that slam isn’t a good spot because two aces are missing. South would sign off in 5♥, the agreed trump suit.

“If South were to bid 4NT and North responded 5♥, what call would South make? (6♥/5NT.) North’s 5♥ response shows two aces, so the partnership holds all of them. That means that 6♥ should be an excellent spot.”

South might even consider bidding 5NT to try for a grand slam. If North holds the missing ♦K, that would account for 11 high-card points in North’s hand — the ♦AK and the ♣A. Provided North doesn’t have a doubleton ♣A, South will be able to discard the spade loser on dummy’s ♣A. If the missing hearts divide 2–1, South will be okay.

“So, South will be okay if North shows no aces or two aces.

“If South were to bid 4NT and North responded 5♦, what call would South make? (5♥/6♥.) If North shows one ace, South will be left to guess whether to stop at 5♥ or bid slam.

“To see this, leave the South hand as it is and construct a hand in front of North.

“In spades: the jack and three low cards.

“In hearts: the queen and three low cards.

“In diamonds: the ace, the queen and a low card.

“In clubs, two low cards.

NORTH ♠ J x x x ♥ Q x x x ♦ A Q x ♣ x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♦</td> <td>2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♥</td> <td>(4NT)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(5♦)</td> <td>(6♥?)</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH		2♣	2♦	2♥	3♥	(4NT)	(5♦)	(6♥?)	SOUTH ♠ A K Q ♥ A K x x x x ♦ x x ♣ K Q
NORTH	SOUTH											
	2♣											
2♦	2♥											
3♥	(4NT)											
(5♦)	(6♥?)											

“South opens 2♣. What would North respond? (2♦, waiting.) With four-card support for both majors, North bids 2♦, waiting for South’s rebid.

“What does South bid next? (2♥.) South bids the six-card heart suit which North supports by raising to 3♥.

“If South were now to bid 4NT, what would North respond? (5♦.) With one ace, North would respond 5♦.

“Would slam be a reasonable contract? (Yes.) Slam would be an excellent contract. Declarer doesn’t even need to take the diamond finesse, since South’s diamond loser can be discarded on North’s extra spade winner.

“So, the partnership could have 12 tricks if North holds only one ace.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away the ace.

“In clubs: add the ace.

NORTH ♠ J x x x ♥ Q x x x ♦ Q x ♣ A x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♦</td> <td>2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♥</td> <td>(4NT)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(5♦)</td> <td>(5♥?)</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♦	2♣	3♥	(4NT)	(5♦)	(5♥?)	SOUTH ♠ A K Q ♥ A K x x x x ♦ x x ♣ K Q
NORTH	SOUTH									
2♦	2♣									
3♥	(4NT)									
(5♦)	(5♥?)									

“**South opens 2♣. What would North respond?** (2♦, waiting.) North is waiting for South’s response. Again, South bids the six-card heart suit.

“**What does North bid next?** (3♥.) North shows a better than minimum hand by bidding 3♥.

“**If South were now to bid 4NT, what would North respond?** (5♦.) Again, North would respond 5♦ to show one ace.

“**Would slam be a reasonable contract?** (No.) The opponents can take the first two diamond tricks to defeat the slam contract, before South gains the lead.

“Notice that there are enough tricks to make slam if the opponents don’t take their diamond winners right away. In fact, there are 13 tricks — four spades, six hearts and three clubs. North–South are definitely in the slam zone, but North–South just don’t have first- or second-round control of diamonds.

“These hands illustrate why it’s sometimes better just to jump to slam instead of using — or misusing — a convention. If South jumps right to 6♥ over North’s raise to 3♥, West might not lead a diamond, and North–South will get a lucky result. If South bids 4NT and North responds 5♦, East might make a lead-directing double. Now West will lead a diamond even if that wasn’t what West was intending to lead.

“The real problem is with the use of the Blackwood convention. It may work out all right if North shows no aces or two aces, but South won’t know what to do when North shows one ace. Slam will have a chance if North holds the ♦A, but the contract may go down if North holds the ♣A.”

Summary

“One disadvantage of the Blackwood convention is that it reveals how many aces partner holds, but it doesn’t tell you which aces partner holds. When you need information about specific controls, other methods must be used.

“Sometimes simple is best — as this hand illustrates. With the South hand, you could jump to slam over the limit raise and be right most of the time. When it’s wrong — because the opponents have two tricks to take — you may get lucky and make slam anyway. It isn’t always easy for the opponents to find the winning defense when you don’t give them any information.”

Cuebidding First-Round Controls

Introduction

“There is a way to get information about specific controls; it’s called cuebidding. Like the double, the cuebid can be used in many different ways. You’ve already seen some uses, the Michaels cuebid and the cuebid as a limit raise, for example. Slam cuebidding, however, is a separate art. Unlike the Blackwood and Gerber conventions, which are quite mechanical, cuebidding requires good judgment.

“Cuebidding works this way: Instead of asking how many aces partner has, you show partner a specific ace you hold, then partner can show you a specific ace, and so on. Let’s see how that works.”

Instructions

“Start with the hands as they are.

NORTH ♠ Q J x x ♥ Q x x x ♦ Q x ♣ A x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> NORTH 3♥ 4♣ Pass </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> SOUTH 1♥ 3♠ 4♥ </td> </tr> </table>	NORTH 3♥ 4♣ Pass	SOUTH 1♥ 3♠ 4♥	SOUTH ♠ A K x ♥ A K x x x x ♦ x x ♣ K Q
NORTH 3♥ 4♣ Pass	SOUTH 1♥ 3♠ 4♥			

“Suppose South opens 1♥ and North makes a limit raise to 3♥. How can South start a cuebidding sequence? (3♠.) Now that the trump suit has been agreed, South can start a cuebidding sequence by showing a first-round control. Typically, South shows the most convenient first-round control outside of the trump suit. South shows first-round control of spades, the ♠A, by cuebidding 3♠.

“How would North recognize South’s 3♠ bid as a cuebid, rather than simply a bid of a new suit? (Trumps are already agreed upon and the bid commits the partnership to game.) There are two indications that South is cuebidding with interest in slam:

- First, hearts have already been agreed upon as the trump suit, so South can’t be suggesting spades as a trump suit.
- Second, South’s 3♠ bid commits the partnership to at least game. South can’t be interested in stopping in a partscore, because South would simply pass North’s raise to 3♥. When South bids 3♠, the partnership can no longer stop below the game level in hearts. South can’t be merely interested in getting to game, since South could simply bid 4♥ instead of bidding 3♠.

“When the partnership is already committed to at least game, the bid of a suit in which the partnership can’t want to play is a cuebid, showing interest in reaching a slam contract.

“After South cuebids 3♠, what call would North make? (4♣.) South initiates the cuebidding sequence by showing a first-round control. This asks North to cooperate by showing a control in one of the suits outside of the trump suit — typically a first-round control. North cooperates by cuebidding 4♣, showing first-round control of clubs.

“What does North know about South’s hand from South’s use of cuebidding instead of using the Blackwood convention? (South is interested in specific controls.) If South were only interested in the number of aces North held, South could use the Blackwood convention right away. Since South has cuebid instead, South must be interested in which controls North holds, rather than just the number of aces North holds. That’s why North cooperates by showing controls.

“What does South do after North cuebids 4♣? (4♥.) The ♣A isn’t the ace South was looking for. The partnership could be losing the first two tricks in diamonds. South signs off in the agreed trump suit by bidding 4♥.

“How does North know that 4♥ isn’t a cuebid, showing the ♥A? You only cuebid controls outside of the trump suit. The trump suit is used to sign off — or at least to say you have nothing further to cuebid at this point in the auction.

“What call would North make after South bids 4♥? (Pass.) North has already shown the ♣A and doesn’t have any other controls to show. North accepts South’s decision to sign off by passing the 4♥ bid. The partnership rests safely at the game level, avoiding the poor slam contract.

“Change the North hand back to the previous example.

“In diamonds: add the ace.

“In clubs: take away the ace.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ Q J x x</p> <p>♥ Q x x x</p> <p>♦ A Q x</p> <p>♣ x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6♥</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	3♥	1♥	4♦	3♠	Pass	6♥	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K x</p> <p>♥ A K x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x</p> <p>♣ K Q</p>
NORTH	SOUTH									
3♥	1♥									
4♦	3♠									
Pass	6♥									

“What would South open? (1♥.)

“What would North respond? (3♥.)

“What would be South’s next call? (3♠.) Since Blackwood won’t tell South what to do if North holds only one ace, South starts a cuebidding sequence by bidding 3♠.

“What would North respond after South’s 3♠ bid? (4♦.) Recognizing South’s 3♠ as a cuebid showing interest in reaching slam, North cooperates by cuebidding 4♦, showing the first-round control North holds in diamonds.

“**What does South know after North’s 4♦ bid?** (North has first-round control of diamonds, but no first-round control of clubs.) South now knows that North holds a first-round control of diamonds, likely the ♦A. South knows more than that, however. Since North bypassed 4♣, South knows North doesn’t hold the ♣A. First-round controls are usually bid up the line — cuebidding the cheapest control first.”

Experienced partnerships sometimes bid controls in a prepared order to avoid unnecessarily using up bidding room. This is beyond the scope of this lesson. It is best to start with showing first-round controls first, cuebidding them up the line. That’s more than enough for now.

“**What call does South make after North’s 4♦ cuebid?** (6♥.) South now knows that North holds the right ace, the ♦A. The opponents won’t be able to take the first two tricks in a slam contract. Since the partnership has enough combined strength and an agreed trump suit, South can simply jump to slam, knowing it should have a reasonable chance.

“South knows there’s no chance for a grand slam. Since the partnership is missing the ♣A, there’s no need for any further cuebidding.”

If South is nervous that there has been a misunderstanding (or if the partnership would sometimes show a second-round control in this sequence), South now could safely bid 4NT to check for aces. However, that is essentially a redundant bid. It may only serve to give the opponents further information or another opportunity for a lead-directing double. There is a practical example of using Blackwood after cuebidding later in this lesson.

“Cuebidding resolves the earlier flaw with using the Blackwood convention when North has only one ace. South can now avoid bidding slam when North holds the ♣A, but get to slam when North holds the ♦A. What would happen in a cuebidding sequence, however, if North held neither ace?”

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away the ace and add the king.

“In clubs: take away a low card and add the jack.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ Q J x x</p> <p>♥ Q x x x</p> <p>♦ K Q x</p> <p>♣ J x</p>	<p>NORTH</p> <p>3♥</p> <p>4♥</p>	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>1♥</p> <p>3♠</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K x</p> <p>♥ A K x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x</p> <p>♣ K Q</p>
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“**South again starts the auction with 1♥. What response does North make?** (3♥.) North still has enough to make a limit raise to 3♥.

“**What call does South make next?** (3♠.) South shows interest in reaching slam by cuebidding 3♠.

“**What does North respond to South’s 3♠ cuebid?** (4♥.) With no first-round control to cuebid, North simply returns to the agreed trump suit by bidding 4♥.

“**What does South call after hearing North’s 4♥ bid?** (Pass.) South now knows that the partnership is missing both the ♦A and the ♣A, since North couldn’t cuebid either of those controls. That tells South that slam is a poor contract. South passes, leaving the partnership in the safe game contract.

“Cuebidding on these hands also works well if North holds no aces. In fact, it works better than the Blackwood convention, since the partnership stays one level lower. Now let’s see what happens if North holds both of the missing aces.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the queen.

“In diamonds: take away king and the queen; add the ace and a low card.

“In clubs: add the ace.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ J x x</p> <p>♥ Q x x x</p> <p>♦ A x x</p> <p>♣ A J x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>NORTH</p> <p>3♥</p> <p>4♣</p> <p>5♦</p> <p>Pass</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>SOUTH</p> <p>1♥</p> <p>3♠</p> <p>4♥</p> <p>6♥</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>NORTH</p> <p>3♥</p> <p>4♣</p> <p>5♦</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>1♥</p> <p>3♠</p> <p>4♥</p> <p>6♥</p>	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K x</p> <p>♥ A K x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x</p> <p>♣ K Q</p>
<p>NORTH</p> <p>3♥</p> <p>4♣</p> <p>5♦</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>1♥</p> <p>3♠</p> <p>4♥</p> <p>6♥</p>			

“**South starts with 1♥. What call does North make?** (3♥.) With four-card support and 12 high-card points, North makes a limit raise to 3♥.

“**What is South’s rebid?** (3♠.) With interest in slam, South cuebids 3♠.

“**What does North respond to South’s 3♠ cuebid?** (4♣.) With first-round control in two suits, North starts with the cheaper cuebid, 4♣.

“**What does South respond after hearing North’s 4♣ cuebid?** (4♥.) South knows that North holds the ♣A, but is afraid that the partnership is missing the top two diamond tricks. South returns to the agreed trump suit by bidding 4♥. Remember, South’s 4♥ bid isn’t a cuebid. It simply says that South has nothing further to say.

“**What does North call after South bids 4♥?** (5♦.) North now can show the other first-round control by cuebidding 5♦. North knows that South is interested in slam because of the 3♠ cuebid. South didn’t continue to slam after hearing about North’s ♣A, so South is presumably worried about a control in diamonds. North can show that control now, leaving the final decision to South.

“**What call does South make over the 5♦ cuebid?** (6♥.) Now that South knows North holds controls in both clubs and diamonds, South can bid the slam. South might even try for a grand slam at this point — but more on that later. For now, you can see how cuebidding works no matter how many aces North holds:

- If North holds no aces, the partnership can stop safely at the game level.
- If North holds two aces, the partnership can reach the slam level.
- If North holds one ace, the partnership can get to slam if it is the ♦A, but keep out of slam if it is the ♣A.

“Cuebidding tells you which controls partner holds instead of how many controls partner holds. This can be useful on many types of hands.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the queen and add a low card.

“In clubs: take away the ace and add a low card.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add the queen.

“In hearts: add the jack.

“In diamonds: take away two low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ J x x</p> <p>♥ x x x x</p> <p>♦ A x x</p> <p>♣ J x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6♥</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♦	2♣	3♥	2♥	4♦	3♠	Pass	6♥	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x</p> <p>♥ A K J x x x x</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ K Q</p>
NORTH	SOUTH											
2♦	2♣											
3♥	2♥											
4♦	3♠											
Pass	6♥											

“**What would South open?** (2♣.) South would open with a strong 2♣ bid.

“**What would North respond?** (2♦.) North makes a waiting response of 2♦.

“**What would be South’s rebid?** (2♥.) South would now describe the hand by bidding 2♥.

“**What would North respond over South’s 2♥ bid?** (3♥.) With four-card support for hearts, North can raise to the three level. North is too strong to jump to 4♥, which would show heart support, but deny any ace or king outside of the trump suit. North’s 3♥ bid commits the partnership to at least the game level.

“**Is South interested in reaching a slam?** (Yes.) Now that a trump fit has been agreed upon, South definitely wants to be in slam. The only question is whether the partnership belongs in a small slam or a grand slam. If North holds the ♣A, the partnership can make a grand slam.

“Would Blackwood give South the information needed to determine whether the partnership belongs in a grand slam? (No/Maybe.) If North holds both missing aces, Blackwood would work, because South would know the partnership could make a grand slam. If North showed no aces, South would know the partnership belongs in a small slam, since it is missing the ♣A. If North were to show one ace in response to Blackwood, South still would not know whether to bid the grand slam.

“North would respond 5♦ to Blackwood, showing one ace, but the partnership cannot make a grand slam. Instead, South should resort to cuebidding to try to discover whether North has first-round control of clubs.

“Over North’s raise to 3♥, what would South respond? (3♠.) South can initiate a cuebidding sequence by bidding 3♠, showing first-round control of spades.

“What does North respond after South’s cuebid of 3♠? (4♦.) North shows first-round control in diamonds by cuebidding 4♦.

“What does South respond after hearing North’s 4♦ cuebid? (6♥.) South now knows that partner holds the wrong ace. South settles for a small slam by jumping to 6♥.

“Of course, the partnership doesn’t need the ♣A to make a grand slam. It only needs first-round control of the club suit.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away ace and add four low cards.

“In clubs: take away the jack and two low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ J x x</p> <p>♥ x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x x x x x</p> <p>♣ —</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♣</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7♥</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♦	2♣	3♥	2♥	4♣	3♠	Pass	7♥	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x</p> <p>♥ A K J x x x x</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ K Q</p>
NORTH	SOUTH											
2♦	2♣											
3♥	2♥											
4♣	3♠											
Pass	7♥											

“What would South open? (2♣.)

“What does North respond to South’s 2♣ opening? (2♦.) North makes a waiting response of 2♦.

“What is South’s rebid? (2♥.)

“What does North respond over South’s 2♥ bid? (3♥.) Even though North has only 1 high-card point, the hand is excellent in support of hearts — especially in support of a strong two-bid in hearts. North starts by simply raising to 3♥ to agree on the trump suit. North’s hand is too good for a jump to 4♥.

“Now that you are becoming familiar with cuebidding toward slam, you can begin to see why it is important to leave lots of bidding room available for careful exploration of slam. The raise to 3♥ is forcing to at least game. With a very weak hand, North would make the negative rebid of 2NT — or jump right to 4♥ with a weak hand but good trump support. Any other bid by North commits the partnership to game and leaves room to explore for slam.”

If any of the students are familiar with splinter bids, they might suggest jumping to 4♣ with the North hand to show heart support and club shortness. That’s okay, although splinter bids with voids can sometimes lead to an awkward auction.

“Over North’s raise to 3♥, what does South respond? (3♠.) South moves toward slam by cuebidding 3♠.

“After South’s cuebid of 3♠, what does North respond? (4♣.) A first-round control doesn’t have to be an ace. A void is as effective as an ace in a trump contract. North can cooperate in the slam investigation by cuebidding 4♣.

“After hearing North’s cuebid of 4♣, what does South respond? (7♥.) Once South learns that North has first-round control of clubs, there’s no reason not to bid a grand slam.

“South will probably be expecting North to put down the ♣A in the dummy, but will be equally happy to see the void. Both of South’s club losers can be ruffed in the North hand. Intermingling voids and aces in a cuebidding auction can be dangerous, but it is often the only way to get to a slam like this one.

“Both partners have to use good judgment. If partner shows a first-round control in a suit in which you are holding the ace, for example, you’ll have to recognize that your ace is probably a wasted or duplicated value. At the same time, you’ll know that any remaining losers you hold in that suit can be ruffed in dummy — if there are enough trumps in the dummy. Cuebidding takes a lot of practice.”

Summary

“The Blackwood convention won’t tell you which controls partner holds, only how many aces or how many kings. If you need information about specific controls, you must resort to cuebidding. Here are some guidelines on cuebidding:

- A cuebidding sequence is initiated by showing partner a specific first-round control that you hold. Partner can then show a specific first-round control and so on.
- How do you recognize whether partner is cuebidding or simply bidding a new suit? When the partnership is already committed to game, the bid of a new suit in which the partnership can’t want to play is a cuebid showing interest in reaching a slam contract.
- You only cuebid controls outside of the trump suit. The trump suit is used to say that you have nothing further to say at that point in the auction.
- In a trump contract, both aces and voids can be treated as first-round controls.
- First-round controls are generally bid up the line — the cheapest first-round control first. If you skip a suit, presumably you don’t have first-round control in that suit.”

Finding the Ace of Trumps

Introduction

“The one first-round control you can’t cuebid is the ace of the trump suit. You use the trump suit to sign off, or to say that you have nothing further to bid. In a cuebidding situation, sometimes you will need to know how to find out whether partner holds the trump ace.”

Instructions

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away four low cards and add the king.

“In clubs: add three low cards.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away the ace and add the queen.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
♠ J x x			♠ A K Q x
♥ x x x x	2♦	2♣	♥ K Q J x x x x
♦ K x x	4♥	4NT	♦ —
♣ x x x	5♣	5♥	♣ K Q
	Pass		

“**What would South open?** (2♣.) With 20 high-card points plus 3 length points for the seven-card suit, South is strong enough to open with 2♣. South can visualize taking at least 10 tricks with no help from North.

“**What would North respond to the 2♣ bid?** (2♦.) North would make a waiting response of 2♦.

“**What would South rebid?** (2♥.) South would show a strong two-bid in hearts.

“**What would North respond over the 2♥ rebid?** (3♥.) With four-card support and an outside king, North can raise to 3♥, committing the partnership to at least the game level.

“**Should South now bid Blackwood?** (No.) Using the Blackwood convention would be okay if North shows no aces, since South would then be sure that there is no slam. If North were to show one ace or two aces, however, South wouldn’t know what to do. South should start a cuebidding sequence, looking for specific controls.

“**What call does South make?** (3♠.) South initiates a cuebidding sequence by showing a first-round control. South starts bidding controls up the line by bidding 3♠, the cheapest available cuebid.

“**What call does North make after South’s 3♠ bid?** (4♥.) With no first-round control outside of the trump suit, North returns to the agreed trump suit by bidding 4♥.

“**What does South know from North’s 4♥ bid?** (North does not have the ♣A or the ♦A.) North has bypassed both the club and diamond suits, so North doesn’t have first-round control of either suit.

“**Should South settle for game in hearts?** (No.) It is still possible for North to hold the ♥A. That’s the one ace that North can’t cuebid.

“**How does South find out if North holds the ♥A?** (4NT.) South can use the Blackwood convention to discover how many aces North holds. If North holds one ace, it must be the ♥A, since North has already denied possession of the ♣A and the ♦A.

“There is nothing to prevent you from using the Blackwood convention after a cuebidding sequence has been started. Sometimes you need to find some information about a specific control — the ♣A in this example — before using the Blackwood convention. Sometimes, one partner initiates a cuebidding sequence, and that’s all the other partner needs to take over and use the Blackwood convention. Cuebidding and Blackwood can work hand in hand — but the cuebidding must come first.

“**When South bids 4NT, what call does North make?** (5♣.) North shows no aces by responding 5♣. 5♣ is not a cuebid. The use of the Blackwood convention ends the cuebidding sequence. North merely makes the standard response to Blackwood to show no aces.

“**After North’s 5♣ response, what call does South make?** (5♥.) South now knows that the partnership is missing both the ♣A and the ♥A. South signs off in the agreed trump suit, keeping out of the unmakeable slam.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away a low card and add the ace.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ J x x</p> <p>♥ A x x x</p> <p>♦ K x x</p> <p>♣ x x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">5♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">6♥</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♦	2♣	4♥	2♥	5♦	4NT	Pass	6♥	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x</p> <p>♥ K Q J x x x x</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ K Q</p>
NORTH	SOUTH											
2♦	2♣											
4♥	2♥											
5♦	4NT											
Pass	6♥											

“What is South’s opening bid? (2♣.)

“What is North’s initial response? (2♦.)

“What is South’s rebid? (2♥.)

“What is North’s rebid? (3♥.)

“After North’s raise to 3♥, what call does South make? (3♠.) South starts a cuebidding sequence by bidding 3♠. Notice an immediate use of the Blackwood convention at this point would leave South guessing. North would show one ace, but South wouldn’t know if it was the ♣A, the ♦A or the ♥A.

“What call does North make over South’s cuebid of 3♠? (4♥.) With no ace outside of the trump suit, North simply returns to the agreed trump suit by bidding 4♥.

“What call does South make next? (4NT.) South now can check on the trump ace by using the Blackwood convention.

“What is North’s response to South’s 4NT bid? (5♦.) North shows one ace by responding 5♦.

“What call does South make after hearing North’s 5♦ response? (6♥.) South knows that North holds an ace, and since it isn’t the ♣A or the ♦A, it must be the ♥A. That’s all South needs to know to bid the excellent slam.”

Summary

“After a slam, cuebidding auction has been initiated, either partner can subsequently launch into the Blackwood convention to check on the number of aces held — assuming the auction is still below the level of 4NT.”

With an experienced group, you could mention that some judgment may be required when responding to Blackwood after a cuebidding sequence. For example, if partner has shown first-round control in a suit in which you hold the ace, you should ignore that ace when responding to Blackwood. Partner presumably has a void in that suit.

➡ “Let’s do Exercise 1 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise One — Cuebidding First-Round Controls

What call does West make on each of the following hands after the auction has started?

1)	♠ A K 9 7 4 2 ♥ 7 5 ♦ K J 2 ♣ A 3	WEST 1 ♠ ?	NORTH Pass	EAST 1 ♦ 3 ♠	SOUTH Pass Pass
2)	♠ Q 5 ♥ K 10 9 3 ♦ A Q 6 2 ♣ 9 7 4	WEST 3 ♥ ?	NORTH Pass	EAST 1 ♥ 3 ♠	SOUTH Pass Pass
3)	♠ A K Q 7 3 ♥ Q J 9 8 2 ♦ — ♣ A Q 8	WEST 1 ♠ ?	NORTH Pass	EAST 3 ♠	SOUTH Pass
4)	♠ A K Q J ♥ A K Q 10 7 5 ♦ Q 3 ♣ 6	WEST 2 ♣ 2 ♥ 3 ♠ ?	NORTH Pass Pass Pass	EAST 2 ♦ 3 ♥ 4 ♥	SOUTH Pass Pass Pass
5)	♠ A 9 3 ♥ Q J 6 5 ♦ A 8 6 2 ♣ 7 5	WEST 3 ♥ 4 ♦ ?	NORTH Pass Pass Pass	EAST 1 ♥ 4 ♣ 4 ♥	SOUTH Pass Pass Pass

Exercise One Answer — Cuebidding First-Round Controls

- 1) 4♣. Cuebid the ♣A. Don't use Blackwood with two low hearts.
- 2) 4♦. East has cuebid the ♠A. Cooperate by showing the ♦A.
- 3) 4♣. Cuebid the ♣A. Don't use Blackwood with a void.
- 4) Pass. East doesn't appear to have either the ♣A or the ♦A.
- 5) 4♠. East has shown interest in slam by starting a cuebidding sequence. The 4♦ cuebid didn't inspire East to go beyond the game level, but West has more to show. East may hold two or three low spades and be afraid to move beyond the game level if the partnership doesn't have a control in spades.

Cuebidding Second-Round Controls

Introduction

“In addition to cuebidding first-round controls, the partnership can cuebid second-round controls — kings and singletons. The usual practice is to show a second-round control only after a first-round control has been shown or denied by the partnership. Let’s see how this works.”

Instructions

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the jack and add two low cards.

“In clubs: take away a low card.

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: add two low cards.

“In hearts: take away the jack and four low cards.

“In diamonds: add the queen and a low card.

“In clubs: add the ace.

NORTH

♠ x x x x

♥ A x x x

♦ K x x

♣ x x

NORTH

2♦

3♠

4♥

5♦

Pass

SOUTH

2♣

2♠

4♣

5♣

6♠

SOUTH

♠ A K Q x x x

♥ K Q

♦ Q x

♣ A K Q

“**What would be South’s opening bid?** (2♣.) With 25 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card suit, South has enough for game without any help from North. South starts the auction with a strong, artificial, 2♣ bid.

“**What would North respond to South’s 2♣ bid?** (2♦.) North would respond with a waiting bid of 2♦.

“**What would be South’s rebid?** (2♠.) South would describe a strong two-bid in spades by rebidding 2♠.

“**What call would North make over the 2♠ rebid?** (3♠.) With support and some useful strength outside the spade suit, North would raise to 3♠.

“**Is South interested in a slam contract?** (Yes.) Having found a trump fit, South is definitely interested in a slam contract, if the partnership has enough controls.

“Should South use the Blackwood convention to check for aces? (No.) If South were to bid 4NT, North would show one ace, but South still wouldn’t know whether to bid slam. The opponents might take the first two diamond tricks. Instead, South should start a cuebidding sequence.

“What call does South make after North’s raise to 3♠? (4♣.) South bids 4♣, a cuebid, showing first-round control of clubs and asking North to cooperate in looking for slam.

“Over South’s 4♣ cuebid, what call does North make? (4♥.) North is happy to cooperate in searching for a slam and cuebids the first-round control of hearts by bidding 4♥.

“What does South know from North’s 4♥ cuebid? (North has the ♥A, but not the ♦A.) South knows that North holds first-round control of hearts, either the ♥A or a void. South also knows that North doesn’t have first-round control of the diamond suit, since North bypassed 4♦.

“Does South know enough to place the contract? (No.) South knows that the partnership cannot make a grand slam, since it is missing the ♦A. South is still worried that there might be two diamond losers, but cannot be certain that there is no small slam, since North might hold second-round control of diamonds.

“How can South discover more information about controls? (By continuing to cuebid.) Since South doesn’t have enough information yet to decide whether there is a slam, South can continue the investigation by making another cuebid.

“What call might South make? (5♣.) A bid of 4♠ over North’s 4♥ cuebid would show no interest in going any higher — although North could make a further move. Instead, South can make a further cuebid by bidding 5♣. Since 4♣ showed first-round control of clubs, 5♣ logically shows second-round control of clubs — the ♣K or a singleton.

“Since North has shown first-round control of hearts with the 4♥ cuebid, South could show second-round control of hearts by cuebidding 5♥. This isn’t as economical, however. South is really interested in the diamond suit, and bidding 5♥ leaves no room for North to conveniently show a control in that suit. As with cuebidding first-round controls, cuebidding second-round controls up the line usually works best.

“If South cuebids 5♣, what call would North make? (5♦.) North denied first-round control of diamonds by not bidding 4♦. A bid of 5♦ by North must show a second-round control of diamonds.

“After North cuebids 5♦, what call does South make? (6♠.) North has now shown first-round control in hearts and second-round control in diamonds. That’s exactly what South needs to know to bid the slam.”

302 More Commonly Used Conventions in the 21st Century

Some students may suggest jumping to 6NT with the South hand. That would work on the actual hand, but you should point out that it wouldn't be very successful if North held a heart void instead of the ♥ A. You have to be careful when cuebidding, because voids and singletons are bid in the same manner as aces and kings.

“Even if South had bid 4♠ on the previous round, an experienced North player would probably bid 5♦, showing second-round control in that suit, and the slam would be reached. North has a very good hand opposite South's strong two-bid in spades, and if South has some interest in reaching a slam, North couldn't have better cards.

“Change the North hand.

“In diamonds: take away the king and a low card.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ x x x x</p> <p>♥ A x x x</p> <p>♦ x</p> <p>♣ x x x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♦</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">3♠</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♥</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">4♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">5♦</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">5♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">6♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♦	2♣	3♠	2♠	4♥	4♣	5♦	5♣	Pass	6♠	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x x x</p> <p>♥ K Q</p> <p>♦ Q x</p> <p>♣ A K Q</p>
NORTH	SOUTH													
2♦	2♣													
3♠	2♠													
4♥	4♣													
5♦	5♣													
Pass	6♠													

“What is South's opening bid? (2♣.)

“What is North's response to the 2♣ bid? (2♦.) North makes a waiting bid of 2♦.

“What is South's rebid? (2♠.)

“What is North's second bid? (3♠.) With support for spades, North raises to the three level.

“What is South's next call? (4♣.) South makes a slam try by cuebidding 4♣.

“What call does North make over 4♣? (4♥.) North cuebids 4♥ to show first-round control of hearts.

“What call does South make over North's 4♥ call? (5♣/4♠.) South could simply sign off in 4♠, but will more likely make one more try for slam by cuebidding 5♣.

“What call does North make over South's 5♣ bid? (5♦.) A singleton works as well as a king in a trump contract to provide second-round control in an outside suit. Having denied first-round control in diamonds, North shows second-round control by cuebidding 5♦.

“**What call does South make over North’s 5♦ cuebid?** (6♠.) South now knows that the partnership has enough controls to bid the small slam in spades. South is probably expecting North to put down the ♦K in dummy, but won’t be disappointed to see the singleton instead. South will be able to ruff one of the diamond losers in dummy.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away three low cards.

“In diamonds: add three low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ x x x x</p> <p>♥ A</p> <p>♦ x x x x</p> <p>♣ x x x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♦</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3♠</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">5♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5♠</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♦	2♣	3♠	2♠	4♥	4♣	5♥	5♣	Pass	5♠	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ A K Q x x x</p> <p>♥ K Q</p> <p>♦ Q x</p> <p>♣ A K Q</p>
NORTH	SOUTH													
2♦	2♣													
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5♥	5♣													
Pass	5♠													

“**South opens 2♣. What response does North make?** (2♦.)

“**South rebids 2♠. What call does North make?** (3♠.)

“**South now cuebids 4♣. What call does North make?** (4♥.) North shows first-round control in hearts.

“**What call does South make over the 4♥ cuebid?** (5♣/4♠.) South might stop in 4♠, but has a good enough hand to make one more try by cuebidding 5♣.

“**What call does North make over the 5♣ cuebid?** (5♥.) Having shown first-round control of hearts, North can show second-round control of hearts as well by bidding 5♥. North’s singleton ace acts as first- and second-round controls — and third-round control for that matter.

“**Over North’s 5♥ cuebid, what call does South make?** (5♠.) Neither partner has shown a control in the diamond suit, so South has to settle for 5♠.

“**What call does North make over South’s 5♠ bid?** (Pass.) North has shown spade support and two heart controls. If South still doesn’t want to bid slam, North has nothing further to say.

“If North didn’t have second-round control in hearts, North would simply have returned to 5♠ over South’s cuebid, and South would pass. The partnership stops short of slam when missing the ♦A and the ♦K.

“**Can you see a disadvantage to cuebidding?** (Gives away information.)

The very accuracy of cuebidding can be a disadvantage as well. After this auction, the opponents are likely to lead a diamond. Your cuebidding has told the opponents where your weakness lies. That's a small price to pay for accurate slam bidding.

“However, you can see why simply jumping to slam sometimes has an advantage over the scientific approach. If South had simply jumped to 6♠ over North's raise to 3♠, North–South would be in a poor contract, but the opponents might not have enough information to lead a diamond. Slam still isn't a good bet, but if the missing clubs are divided 3–3, South can discard a diamond loser on the fourth round of clubs, after drawing trumps, and make the slam.”

Summary

“In addition to first-round controls, the partnership can cuebid second-round controls. Here are some guidelines:

- A second-round control of a suit is not usually shown until the partnership has shown first-round control of that suit. Occasionally, you can show a second-round control, after having already denied a first-round control.
- You only cuebid second-round controls outside of the trump suit.
- Both kings and singletons can be treated as second-round controls in a trump contract.
- Use judgment when showing controls. You don't want to get beyond your last makeable contract in your eagerness to show a control. Also, showing controls gives information to the opponents as well as to partner. Make sure the information you are exchanging with partner is more valuable to your side than to the opponents.”

➔ “Let's do Exercise 2 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Two — Cuebidding Second-Round Controls

What call does West make on each of the following hands after the auction has started?

1)	♠ A J 5 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ K 10 8 5 3 ♣ 8 3	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		3♦	Pass	1♦	Pass
		3♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
		?		4♣	Pass

2)	♠ 9 6 ♥ Q 8 6 3 ♦ A K 9 4 ♣ Q 10 5	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		3♥	Pass	1♥	Pass
		4♦	Pass	3♠	Pass
		?		5♣	Pass

3)	♠ 6 ♥ J 10 7 3 ♦ 9 6 4 3 ♣ A 9 5 4	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
		3♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
		4♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
		?		4♦	Pass

4)	♠ A K J 10 8 7 4 ♥ Q 6 ♦ A ♣ A K Q	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
		2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
		4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
		5♦	Pass	5♥	Pass
		?			

5)	♠ Q 9 6 3 ♥ 10 8 6 5 ♦ — ♣ Q J 7 4 2	WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
		3♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
		4♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
		?		4♥	Pass

Exercise Two Answer — Cuebidding Second-Round Controls

- 4♥. After East's 3♥ cuebid, West showed first-round control in spades. When East continues cuebidding, West now can show a second-round control in hearts — the king. East has already shown first-round control of hearts, so there is no ambiguity when West cuebids 4♥.
- 5♦. West has already shown first-round control of diamonds and now has an opportunity to show second-round control as well.
- 4♠. A singleton is as good as a king when it comes to second-round controls. East has already shown first-round control of the suit; West can show second-round control.
- 6♠. East doesn't have first-round control of hearts, since East didn't cuebid 4♥ over West's 4♣ cuebid. East is now showing second-round control of hearts — the ♥K or a singleton — so a small slam in spades should be a good contract.
- 5♦. A void acts as both a first-round control and a second-round control of a suit. Having shown first-round control of diamonds, West now has an opportunity to show second-round control.

Finding the King of Trumps

Introduction

“The king of trumps is more valuable than any of the other kings. If you are missing a king in a side suit, you may be able to avoid losing a trick in the suit — perhaps by discarding or ruffing your loser(s). There is no way to avoid a missing king in the trump suit — you’ll have to deal with it.

“Cuebidding doesn’t tell you about the trump king, since the trump suit is usually used to stop the cuebidding sequence when you have nothing further to say. There are special conventions to deal specifically with the trump king, but those are beyond the scope of this lesson. In some cases, however, you can find the information you need with the tools discussed so far.”

You can refer more experienced students to the section on Key Card Blackwood in the Appendix of the student textbook.

Instructions

“Pick up the cards in the North and South hands and sort them into suits.

“Construct the following hand in front of South.

“In spades: the king and a low card.

“In hearts: the ace, the jack and five low cards.

“In diamonds: the jack and a low card.

“In clubs: the ace and the king.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
1 ♠	2 ♥	♠ K x
3 ♥	4 ♣	♥ A J x x x x
4 ♦	4NT	♦ J x
5 ♥	5NT	♣ A K
6 ♥	7 ♥	
Pass		

“**Suppose North opens 1 ♠. What call does South make? (2 ♥/3 ♥.)** With 16 high-card points plus 3 length points, you have enough to jump shift to 3 ♥, but that will take up a lot of bidding room. It’s best to respond 2 ♥, planning to show the extra strength later, after you have determined where you want to play.

“**North raises to 3 ♥. Is slam a possibility? (Yes.)** The partnership has the combined strength to be in the slam zone, and you have already found a fit.

“Should South use the Blackwood convention at this point? (No.) If North were to show one ace, South still could not be certain that the opponents would not take the first two diamond tricks.

“What call does South make? (4♣.) Having agreed on hearts as a trump suit, 4♣ must be a cuebid, showing interest in reaching slam.

“Over a 4♣ cuebid by South, North bids 4♦. What call does South make next? (4NT.) South knows that the partnership has first-round control of three suits — hearts, diamonds, and clubs — and at least second-round control of the fourth suit, spades. It is safe to use the Blackwood convention, since the opponents can’t take the first two tricks. South could continue cuebidding, but that is unlikely to give any better information than Blackwood at this point. South won’t be able to find out from cuebidding, for example, whether North holds the king of trumps.

“When South bids 4NT, North responds 5♥. What call does South make next? (5NT.) North’s 5♥ response shows two aces, so North holds the ♦A — which South already knew about — and the ♠A. You could settle for a small slam at this point, but there is still a chance of a grand slam, if North holds both of the missing kings.

“When South bids 5NT, North responds 6♥. What call does South make? (7♥/7NT.) North holds both of the missing kings, the ♦K and the ♥K. That should be enough for the partnership to take all 13 tricks, so you can bid the grand slam.

“On some deals, South can combine cuebidding with the Blackwood convention to discover if North holds the trump king. It won’t always be so easy, however.

“Suppose North responded 6♦ instead of 6♥ to the 5NT bid. What call would South make? (6♥.) If North showed only one king, South would have to settle for a small slam, since the partnership could be missing the ♥K.

“A grand slam still could be possible, however. If North holds the ♥K and not the ♦K, South might be able to take 13 tricks by eliminating the diamond loser. That would be possible if North holds the ♠Q or if North’s spade suit can be established for an extra winner.”

Summary

“Using standard methods, it can be difficult to determine whether the partnership holds the trump king. The trump king can’t be shown through cuebidding because the partnership doesn’t bid controls held in the trump suit. The Blackwood convention can be used to find out if the partnership holds all of the missing kings, but if a king is missing, you may not be able to tell whether it is the trump king.”

Trump-Asking Bids

Introduction

“The trump ace and the trump king aren’t the only critical cards in a slam contract. Even a missing queen in the trump suit can be a challenge, since you can’t escape losers in the trump suit itself. Unless you hold the critical cards in the trump suit, you may need to check on the quality of the partnership’s combined trump holding before committing to a slam.”

Instructions

“Change the South hand.

“In spades: take away the king and a low card.

“In hearts: take away the ace and a low card.

“In diamonds: add the ace, the king and the queen.

“In clubs: add the jack.

NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
	1 ♥	♠ —
3 ♥	?	♥ J x x x x
		♦ A K Q J x
		♣ A K J

“**What would South open?** (1 ♥.) With two five-card suits, South opens the higher-ranking suit — even though the diamonds look better than the hearts. With the poor heart suit, the hand isn’t quite good enough to open a strong two-bid.

“**North raises the 1 ♥ opening to 3 ♥. Is slam a possibility?** (Yes.) Opposite North’s limit raise, there’s an excellent chance that the partnership can make a small slam (or even a grand slam).

“**What is South’s concern?** (The trump suit.) South’s only real concern is that there are losers in the trump suit. South should be able eliminate the club loser — or, at worst, take a finesse.

“**Can South use the Blackwood convention to get the information needed to decide on slam?** (No.) Holding a void, the Blackwood convention is unlikely to do any good. If North were to show one ace, for example, it might be the ♠A, and the partnership could still be missing the ♥A and the ♥K.

“**Can South get the information needed through cuebidding?** (No.) Cuebidding doesn’t include controls in the trump suit. If South were to cuebid 3♠, for example, and North were to bid 4♥, South would be no better off.

“**What bid could South make that shows interest in a slam, but puts the focus on the trump suit?** (5♥.) When the partnership considers a slam contract in a major but there is concern about the quality of the trump suit, a jump or a raise to the five level asks partner to bid the slam with good trump support, but to pass otherwise.

“This is a rather vague agreement and requires good judgment from both partners. Essentially, a jump to 5♥, in this auction, asks if North has better trump support than South might expect, in light of the auction to date. North already has made a limit raise showing four-card heart support, so a 5♥ bid by South asks for good quality in the heart suit — at least two high cards most likely.

“Let’s see how this might work.

“Leave the South hand on the table and construct a hand in front of North.

“In spades: the ace, the king and two low cards.

“In hearts: the queen and three low cards.

“In diamonds: two low cards.

“In clubs: the queen and two low cards.

NORTH ♠ A K x x ♥ Q x x x ♦ x x ♣ Q x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left; padding: 5px;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left; padding: 5px;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">3♥</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Pass</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">5♥</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	3♥	1♥	Pass	5♥	SOUTH ♠ — ♥ J x x x x ♦ A K Q J x ♣ A K J
NORTH	SOUTH							
3♥	1♥							
Pass	5♥							

“**What is South’s opening bid?** (1♥.)

“**What is North’s response?** (3♥.) With 11 high-card points and 1 dummy point, North has an excellent limit raise to 3♥. (Remember partner could have a 12-point hand.)

“**What is South’s rebid?** (5♥.) South asks North to focus on the trump suit.

“**What call does North make over South’s jump to 5♥?** (Pass.) Even though North has a maximum for the limit raise, the queen and three low hearts is not much better than South can expect for a limit raise. With only one high card, North declines the slam invitation by passing.

“Slam has absolutely no play on these combined hands. Even 5♥ is in a little danger if the hearts break badly.

“What can North infer about South’s hand from the jump to 5♥?” (South has all the outside controls.) Since South has not started a cuebidding sequence, North can infer that South has enough controls outside of the heart suit to warrant bidding a slam, if the partnership doesn’t have two losers in the trump suit. Since North is looking at the ♠A K and had never mentioned the suit, North can infer that South is void in spades and the ♠A and ♠K are not of much use.

“Notice that this type of bid only works with major suits. With a minor suit, there’s no room to invite slam by going beyond the game level. A jump or raise to 5♣ or 5♦ would simply be a game bid, not a slam invitation.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the ace and add a low card.

“In hearts: take away a low card and add the king.

NORTH ♠ K x x x ♥ K Q x x ♦ x x ♣ Q x x	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: left;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3♥</td> <td>1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6♥</td> <td>5♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	3♥	1♥	6♥	5♥		Pass	SOUTH ♠ — ♥ J x x x x ♦ A K Q J x ♣ A K J
NORTH	SOUTH									
3♥	1♥									
6♥	5♥									
	Pass									

“What would North call after a 1♥ opening bid by South? (3♥.) North has only 10 high-card points plus 1 dummy point for the doubleton diamond, but that’s still enough for a limit raise.

“What call does South make over North’s limit raise? (5♥.) South is only concerned with the quality of the trump fit.

“What call does North make over the jump to 5♥? (6♥.) Although North doesn’t have as good a hand as in the previous example, this time the heart support is very good. Even if South holds five low hearts, the partnership will at least have a chance for slam. North accepts the invitation by bidding 6♥.

“Notice that 6♥ would be a good spot if North held the ♥A K x x or ♥A Q x x, instead of the ♥K Q x x. If North held the ♥A 10 x x, slam would be reasonable, and even ♥K 10 x x would give South a chance.

“Auctions asking about trump quality can be quite challenging, but there is one standard, conventional bid that can sometimes be useful.”

➔ “Keep these hands on the table. Let’s do Exercise 3 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Three — Trump-Asking Bids

What call does West make on each of the following hands after the auction has started?

1)	♠ J 10 8 7 5 ♥ — ♦ K Q 6 ♣ A K Q 10 5	WEST 1 ♠ 4 ♣ ?	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 3 ♠ 4 ♦	SOUTH Pass Pass
2)	♠ J 8 4 ♥ 10 9 7 5 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A K J 6	WEST 3 ♥ 4 ♣ ?	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 1 ♥ 3 ♠ 5 ♥	SOUTH Pass Pass Pass
3)	♠ A K J 8 ♥ K Q ♦ K Q J 7 3 ♣ 9 4	WEST 1 ♦ 4 ♠ ?	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 1 ♠ 5 ♠	SOUTH Pass Pass

Exercise Three Answer — Trump-Asking Bids

- 5 ♠. The cuebidding sequence has revealed that East holds first-round control of diamonds. The only losers are likely to be in the spade suit. It's not necessary to show first-round control in hearts. 4 ♠ would be a sign-off, so jump to 5 ♠ to ask about trump quality. Slam will be a good proposition if partner holds something like ♠A Q x x, ♠K Q x x, or ♠A 9 x x. It won't be good if East holds ♠Q x x x or ♠K x x x. Hopefully, East will make a reasonable decision.
- Pass. East is asking about the quality of the trump support. Since West already promised four-card support with the limit raise, the holding couldn't be much weaker. West rejects the invitation by passing.
- 6 ♠. East could have used Blackwood to ask about the number of aces or started a cuebidding sequence if interested in controls outside the trump suit. East's raise to the five level asks about the quality of West's trump support. It couldn't be much better, so West accepts the invitation and bids the slam.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away the king and a low card.

“In hearts: add two low cards.

“Change the South hand.

“In hearts: take away three low cards and add the ace.

“In clubs: add two low cards.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ x x</p> <p>♥ K Q x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x</p> <p>♣ Q x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">7♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♥	5NT	7♥	Pass	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ —</p> <p>♥ A J x</p> <p>♦ A K Q J x</p> <p>♣ A K J x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH							
2♥	5NT							
7♥	Pass							

“**What would North open the bidding with?** (2♥.) If the partnership plays weak two-bids, North has a good hand for a weak two-bid — a good six-card suit and less than the values for a one-level opening bid.

“**After North’s opening 2♥ bid, what call does South make?** (5NT.) South would be very timid to bid anything less than a small slam — that should have a good chance opposite any six-card heart suit in the North hand. A grand slam, however, is a distinct possibility. The only danger is that there might be a trump loser if North doesn’t hold both the ♥K and the ♥Q.

“In this situation, the partnership can make use of a convention devised by Ely Culbertson in 1936 and popularized by his wife, Josephine — the grand slam force. When the partnership has found a trump fit, a jump to 5NT asks partner to:

- Bid a grand slam if partner holds two of the top three trump honors;
- Otherwise, sign off in the agreed trump suit at the six level.

“On these hands, a jump to 5NT over North’s 2♥ opening would be the grand slam force, agreeing on hearts as the trump suit by inference.

“**What call would North make over South’s jump to 5NT?** (7♥.) With two of the top three trump honors, North jumps to the grand slam in hearts.”

Experienced students sometimes accept the grand slam force by always jumping to 7♣ instead of the agreed trump suit, but this isn’t standard practice.

“Change the North hand.

“In spades: take away a low card and add the king.

“In hearts: take away the king and add the ten.

<p>NORTH</p> <p>♠ K x</p> <p>♥ Q 10 x x x x</p> <p>♦ x x</p> <p>♣ Q x x</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	2♥	5NT	6♥	Pass	<p>SOUTH</p> <p>♠ —</p> <p>♥ A J x</p> <p>♦ A K Q J x</p> <p>♣ A K J x x</p>
NORTH	SOUTH							
2♥	5NT							
6♥	Pass							

“Not everyone would open North’s hand with a weak 2♥ bid, but some players might. What call would South make over a weak 2♥ bid by North? (5NT.) South would use the grand slam force to ask about the quality of the trump suit.

“What call would North make over South’s 5NT bid? (6♥.) Without two of the top three heart honors, North would sign off in the agreed trump suit at the six level. The term ‘force’ in the name of the convention really means that the partnership is forced to at least a small slam by the 5NT bid.

“Change the North hand.

“In hearts: take away the queen and add the king.

NORTH	NORTH	SOUTH	SOUTH
♠ K x	2♥	5NT	♠ —
♥ K 10 x x x x	6♥	Pass	♥ A J x
♦ x x			♦ A K Q J x
♣ Q x x			♣ A K J x x

“If North chose to open 2♥, what would North respond over South’s jump to 5NT? (6♥.) With only one of the top three honors, North would sign off in 6♥. 7♥ is reasonable, but being in a grand slam missing the trump queen isn’t generally a good idea. If the hearts divide 3–1 or 4–0 and you lose a trick to the ♥Q, not only have you lost the grand slam bonus, you have also lost the small slam bonus.”

Summary

“The quality of the trump fit is important in a slam contract, since losers in the trump suit can’t be avoided. There are two standard methods for checking on trump quality:

- A jump or a raise to the five level of the agreed major suit can be used to ask partner to bid slam with good trump support, but to pass otherwise.
- A bid of 5NT can be used to ask partner to bid a grand slam, if partner holds two of the top three trump honors, but to sign off in a small slam otherwise.”

➔ “Let’s do Exercise 4 in the student text to review what we have just discussed.”

Exercise Four — Grand Slam Force

What call does West make on each of the following hands after the auction has started?

1)	♠ J 5 ♥ 9 3 ♦ A K Q 8 2 ♣ K 8 7 3	WEST 1♦ 3♣ ?	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 2♣ 5NT	SOUTH Pass Pass
2)	♠ A Q 9 3 ♥ K Q 8 4 2 ♦ J 7 3 ♣ 8 ?	WEST 1♥ 2♠	NORTH Pass Pass	EAST 1♠ 5NT	SOUTH Pass Pass
3)	♠ — ♥ A 6 4 ♦ Q 9 6 3 ♣ A K Q 10 8 2	WEST ?	NORTH	EAST 3♦	SOUTH Pass
4)	♠ A WEST ♥ A K Q J 3 ♦ Q 9 3 ♣ A K 8 2	NORTH 2♣ ?	EAST Pass	SOUTH 3♦	Pass
5)	♠ K Q 8 ♥ A 10 5 ♦ Q J 7 3 ♣ K 8 2	WEST 1NT ?	NORTH Pass	EAST 5NT	SOUTH Pass

Exercise Four Answer — Grand Slam Force

- 6♣. West has only one of the top three honors in clubs.
- 7♠. West has two of the top three honors in the spade suit.
- 5NT. West uses the grand slam force to ask if East has both the ♦ A and the ♦ K.
- 5NT. West uses the grand slam force to ask if East has both the ♦ A and the ♦ K.
- 6NT. East's 5NT is forcing to 6NT and invites partner to bid 7NT. It isn't the grand slam force convention, although it is similar in effect. West has a minimum and signs off in a small slam.

SAMPLE DEALS – LESSON 6*

General Guidelines for Teachers: Since this lesson is a continuation of slam bidding, introduced in Lesson 5, the deals will focus on the auction. Play challenges are introduced in Deals 3 and 4.

Bid and Play – Deal 1: Finding Key Cards

Guidelines for Teachers: On this first deal, a continuation of slam bidding, the focus is entirely on the auction. There are no play challenges, assuming the students reach the appropriate contract. This deal has a variation. Get the students to make the changes in their hands and replay the deal. Start with the review of slam bidding found in the general introduction to Lesson 6.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where Blackwood won’t provide the information you need to decide whether or not a slam should be bid. Let’s think about showing controls and bid this deal.”

Instructions

“North is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #6, Deal 1 — Dealer, North)

Dealer: North	♠ A K 10 8 5 3		
Vul: None	♥ —		
	♦ Q J 9 6 2		
	♣ A K		
♠ J 4		♠ 2	
♥ J 10 9 7		♥ Q 6 5 4 2	
♦ K 4		♦ A 10 7 5	
♣ 10 8 6 5 2		♣ J 9 4	
	♠ Q 9 7 6		
	♥ A K 8 3		
	♦ 8 3		
	♣ Q 7 3		

* The explanation of each deal is the same as the material in the student text. Teachers should use this information as a starting point for an interactive discussion with the students covering the main points of the hand.

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♣	Pass	4 ♥
Pass	5 ♣	Pass	5 ♥
Pass	5 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“After North’s opening bid of 1 ♠, South makes a limit raise to 3 ♠. North can see a potential slam contract, if South has either first- or second-round control of diamonds. The Blackwood convention is unlikely to do any good. If South shows no aces or one ace, North still won’t know what to do.

“Instead, North cuebids the ♣A, showing interest in reaching slam and first-round control of clubs. South cuebids the ♥A in return. This isn’t what North was hoping to hear, but North makes one more try by repeating the club cuebid to show second-round control of clubs. South cooperates by bidding 5 ♥ to show second-round control of hearts. Neither partner, however, has shown either first- or second-round control of diamonds, so North stops in 5 ♠. South, having shown both controls and having nothing further to add, accepts North’s decision to stop short of slam.

“If North were to use the Blackwood convention, South would show one ace and North wouldn’t know whether to bid the slam. Cuebidding is the only way for the partnership to make an accurate determination of whether it belongs in a slam contract.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards in a contract of 5 ♠ by North.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“East is on lead. With all of the cuebidding in hearts and clubs, East should probably lead the unbid suit, diamonds. East should lead the ♦A. It would be risky to lead away from an ace against a suit contract.”

Suggested Play

“There’s not much to the play in 5 ♠. Declarer has to lose two diamond tricks, and that’s all.”

Suggested Defense

“The defenders should get two diamond tricks, whether or not East leads diamonds initially. That will be good if North-South reach a slam contract. If they stop below the slam level, there’s nothing the defenders can do.”

Bid and Play — Variation of Deal 1 – Finding Key Cards

Introduction

- “Let’s construct a variation of this hand.
- “From the South hand, take the ♥ A and give it to East.
- “From the South hand, take the ♥ K and give it to West.
- “From the West hand, take the ♦ K and give it to South.
- ”From the East hand, take the ♦ A and give it to South.”

Instructions

“North is still the dealer. Start the auction and let’s see how it goes this time. Stop when you reach a final contract.”

Dealer: North	♠ A K 10 8 5 3					
Vul: None	♥ —					
	♦ Q J 9 6 2					
	♣ A K					
♠ J 4		<table border="1" style="width: 40px; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 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	♠ 2
N						
W E						
S						
♥ K J 10 9 7			♥ A Q 6 5 4 2			
♦ 4			♦ 10 7 5			
♣ 10 8 6 5 2			♣ J 9 4			
	♠ Q 9 7 6					
	♥ 8 3					
	♦ A K 8 3					
	♣ Q 7 3					

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♣	Pass	4 ♦
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	5 ♦
Pass	7 ♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

“Once again, after North’s opening bid of 1 ♠, South makes a limit raise to 3 ♠. North can see a potential slam contract, if South has either first or second-round control of diamonds. Blackwood is unlikely to do any good. If South shows no aces or one ace, North still won’t know what to do.

“Instead, North cuebids the ♣A, showing interest in reaching slam and first-round control of clubs. This time South cuebids the ♦A in return. North shows first-round control of hearts, the void, by cuebidding 4♥. South shows second-round control of diamonds, the ♦K, by cuebidding 5♦. That’s all North needs to hear to bid the grand slam. The partnership doesn’t appear to have any losers in any of the suits.

“The North–South hands are identical to those in the previous hand except that South’s hearts and diamonds have been exchanged. Now North–South can make a grand slam, whereas they couldn’t make even a small slam on the previous deal. Only through cuebidding can the partnership successfully reach the best contract both times.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards. Have all tables play a contract of 7♠ by North.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“East is on lead. Despite all of the cuebids, East will probably lead the ♥A. In case North–South have had a misunderstanding, East can hope to take the first trick.”

Suggested Play

“There’s not much to the play in 7♠. Declarer should draw trumps right away to make sure that the defenders don’t get a ruff.”

Suggested Defense

“The defenders can’t defeat the grand slam in spades. East-West’s only hope is that North-South don’t reach that level, or if they do, they accidentally get to 7NT.”

Bid and Play — Deal 2: When Blackwood Won't Help

Guidelines for Teachers: On this second deal, East can visualize slam if West has first or second round control of the diamond suit... but Blackwood won't give the necessary answers unless West has an ace. There is a variation to this hand. Be sure you have the students make the suggested changes to the hands and replay the deal.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where slam would be in the picture if the partnership has control of all four of the suits.”

Instructions

“East is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E-Z Deal Cards: #6, Deal 2 — Dealer, East)

Dealer: East														
Vul: N-S														
		♠ J 4												
		♥ 8 6 2												
		♦ A K 5												
		♣ Q 10 7 5 4												
♠ 9 3			<table border="1" 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 K Q 8
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♥ J 10 4 3					♥ A K Q 9 7 5									
♦ 6 4 3					♦ Q J									
♣ K J 9 2					♣ A									
		♠ 10 7 6 5 2												
		♥ —												
		♦ 10 9 8 7 2												
		♣ 8 6 3												

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

“With 25 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card heart suit, East starts with a strong conventional (artificial), 2♣ bid. West makes a

waiting bid of 2♦, and East rebids 2♥ to show a strong two-bid. With good support and the ♣K, West raises to 3♥, leaving room for East to explore for slam.

“With two potential diamond losers, East should not bid Blackwood. Unless West shows an ace, East still won’t know whether the partnership belongs in slam. West might have the ♦K, and slam would be a good venture. East starts by cuebidding 3♠. Without an ace to cuebid, West signs off in 4♥. East makes one more try by cuebidding 5♣, still hoping West has something in diamonds. With three low diamonds, West signs off again in 5♥. Now East has nothing further to say.”

When everyone understands the proper bids, have the students play out the cards in a contract of 5♥ by East.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“South is on lead and would start with the ♦10, top of a sequence in the unbid suit.”

Suggested Play

“If South leads a diamond, there’s nothing much to the play. The defenders will take the first two diamond tricks, and declarer will take the rest. East’s spade loser can be ruffed in dummy or discarded on dummy’s ♣K.

“If South doesn’t lead a diamond, East can take 12 tricks by discarding one of the diamond losers on dummy’s ♣K.”

Suggested Defense

“A diamond lead prevents declarer from taking 12 tricks. Other than that, there’s nothing the defenders can do. If East-West reach a slam, however, finding the diamond lead will be critical.”

Bid and Play — Variation of Deal 2 – When Blackwood Won't Help

Introduction

- “Let's construct a variation of this hand.
- “From the West hand, take the ♣K and give it to North.
- “From the North hand, take the ♦K and give it to West.”

Instructions

“East is still the dealer. Start the auction and let's see how it goes this time. Stop when you reach a final contract.”

Dealer: East	♠ J 4				
Vul: N-S	♥ 8 6 2				
	♦ A 5				
	♣ K Q 10 7 5 4				
♠ 9 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A K Q 8
N					
W E					
S					
♥ J 10 4 3		♥ A K Q 9 7 5			
♦ K 6 4 3		♦ Q J			
♣ J 9 2		♣ A			
	♠ 10 7 6 5 2				
	♥ —				
	♦ 10 9 8 7 2				
	♣ 8 6 3				

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

“The bidding starts the same way. With 25 high-card points plus 2 length points for the six-card heart suit, East starts with a strong, conventional (artificial), 2♣ bid. West makes a waiting bid of 2♦, and East rebids 2♥ to show a strong two-bid. With good support and the ♦K, West raises to 3♥, leaving room for East to explore for slam.

“Once again, with two potential diamond losers, East doesn’t use the Blackwood convention. East starts by cuebidding 3♠. Without an ace to cuebid, West signs off in 4♥. East makes one more try by cuebidding 5♣, still hoping West has something in diamonds. Having denied first-round control of diamonds with the earlier 4♥ bid, West can afford to show second-round control of diamonds by bidding 5♦. This is all East needs to hear to bid the slam. East knows that there isn’t a grand slam, since the partnership must be missing the ♦A.”

When everyone understands the proper bids, have the students play out the cards in a contract of 6♥ by East.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“South is on lead and would start with the ♦10, top of a sequence in the unbid suit.”

Suggested Play

“After South leads a diamond and North takes the ♦A, there’s nothing to the rest of the play. East’s spade loser can be ruffed in dummy or discarded on dummy’s ♦K.”

Suggested Defense

“There’s nothing the defenders can do to defeat 6♥. If East-West get to 6NT, instead of 6♥, the slam can be defeated by leading a club.”

Bid and Play — Deal 3 – Cuebid Controls on the Way to Blackwood

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal provides an excellent example of an endplay. It is unlikely that many of the students will spot the winning line of play the first time through. Declarer must plan ahead and strip out a side suit to be successful. On the actual lie of the cards, partially stripping out the diamond suit will suffice, but the students should be shown how to make sure that West has no diamonds left before being endplayed.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where Blackwood takes a back seat in the auction, but eventually provides a perfect method of gathering the information the partnership needs to get to slam.”

Instructions

“South is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #6, Deal 3 — Dealer, South)

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

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone. South first by-passes Blackwood to show a club control, and then switches to Blackwood to check on aces.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	4 ♦	Pass	4NT
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	6 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

“South doesn’t have quite enough for a strong two-bid, so South settles for an opening bid of 1♠. After West’s pass, North makes a limit raise to 3♠, and East passes. South is interested in slam, but can’t use the Blackwood convention with two low diamonds. If North were to show one ace, South couldn’t be sure that the partnership isn’t losing the first two diamond tricks. Instead, South shows some interest in slam by cuebidding 4♣ to show first-round control of clubs.

“With an excellent hand for the limit raise, North cooperates by cuebidding 4♦ to show first-round control of diamonds. South could continue by cuebidding 4♥, but that won’t accomplish very much. Cuebidding won’t tell South whether the partnership has the ♠A, since spades, the agreed trump suit, is the suit used to sign off with. Instead, South can revert to the Blackwood convention, now that North is known to hold the ♦A. The partnership can’t be losing the first two tricks in diamonds. When North shows two aces in response to the Blackwood convention, South simply bids the small slam.

“There isn’t much point in looking for a grand slam. North, having made only a limit raise, can’t hold enough in high cards. Even if South were to bid 5NT and North showed one king, South would settle for a small slam. In fact, South might have jumped to 6♠ directly over the 4♦ cuebid. If the partnership is missing the ♠A, North is likely to have enough high cards elsewhere to give slam at least a reasonable chance of success.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, let the students play out the cards in a contract of 6♠ by South.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“West is on lead against 6♠ and will start with the ♥K, top of touching cards from a broken sequence.”

Suggested Play

“Declarer has two potential losers — one in hearts and one in clubs. One possibility is to take the club finesse. That has a 50% chance of success. There’s a much better option, however, once West leads the ♥K. West’s lead of the ♥K indicates possession of the ♥Q. Since declarer has the ♥J, West can be put back on lead later in the play with that card. If declarer can arrange things so that West is forced to lead a club at that point, there will be no need to rely on the club finesse.

“Declarer starts by winning the ♥A and drawing the opponents’ trumps, which takes only one round with the ♠K. Declarer now goes about eliminating the diamond suit from the North and South hands. Dummy’s ♦A and ♦K are played, and a third round of diamonds is ruffed. Declarer crosses to dummy’s ♠A and ruffs dummy’s last diamond, leaving the following cards in the North–South hands:

NORTH

♠ 10 8

♥ 7

♦ —

♣ 9 7 3

SOUTH

♠ Q J 7

♥ J

♦ —

♣ A Q

“Now the time is ripe to lead the ♥J, putting West back on lead. That will eliminate the remaining hearts from the North–South hands. West will be left with nothing but losing choices. If West leads a club, it will be right into declarer’s ♣A and ♣Q. If West leads another heart, declarer can ruff in dummy and discard the ♣Q from the South hand. Whatever West does, declarer makes the contract without relying on the club finesse.

“This line of play is known as a strip and end play. Declarer first strips West out of any useful options by drawing trump and eliminating the diamonds. Then declarer throws West on lead toward the end, forcing West to lead a club — or give declarer a ruff and a sluff. Declarer has to visualize the possibility and then bring it about.”

Suggested Defense

“The defenders cannot do anything to prevent declarer from making the slam, if declarer finds the winning line of play. Even if West initially leads a spade or a diamond, declarer still can play the same way — eliminate the spades and diamonds and then play the ♥A and ♥J to end play West. This is declarer’s best line of play, since, even if East were to hold the ♥K or ♥Q, declarer could still fall back on the club finesse as a second chance.”

Bid and Play – Deal 4 – The Grand Slam Force

Guidelines for Teachers: This deal offers a couple of challenges for declarer. The first involves a standard safety play in the trump suit. In addition, declarer must be careful to combine suit establishment with safety when handling the trump suit. It would not be surprising for most declarers to get tangled up with entries in the play, so be sure to walk slowly through the recommended line of play.

Introduction

“Let’s play a deal where the Grand Slam Force asks the question that partner must answer in order to set the contract.”

Instructions

“West is the dealer. Take your hands and start the bidding. Stop when you have completed the auction.”

(E–Z Deal Cards: #6, Deal 4 — Dealer, West)

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

Suggested Bidding

When it appears that all of the tables have completed the auction, review how the bidding should have gone.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♥	Pass	5NT	Pass
7♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

“West starts with a weak 2♥ bid. East can visualize a grand slam, if West holds a six-card suit headed by both the ♥K and the ♥Q. West should be able to take 13 tricks by establishing the spade suit or ruffing diamond losers in the dummy. East uses the grand slam force to find out whether partner holds two of the top three honors in hearts. With both the king and the queen, West accepts by bidding 7♥. East–West reach the grand slam in three bids.

“West shouldn’t try to bid the grand slam in notrump. If the spades don’t break — as on the actual deal — there may not be 13 tricks in notrump.”

When everyone understands the proper bids and the final contract, the students can proceed to play out the cards in a contract of 7♥ by West.

Suggested Opening Lead

“Turn up all of the cards and put each hand dummy style at the edge of the table in front of each player. Let’s review the play and defense.

“North is on lead and will probably start with the ♣K, top of the broken sequence in clubs.”

Suggested Play

“Outside the heart suit, declarer has three diamond losers and one club loser. Provided the missing spades divide no worse than 4–2, declarer should be able to establish the spade suit and use it to discard all four losers.

“The first challenge is the trump suit. There will be no difficulty drawing the missing trumps, if they are divided 2–2 or 3–1. Declarer should, however, guard against the possibility that the missing hearts are divided 4–0. Declarer does this by winning the ♣A and then leading up to the ♥K. If both opponents follow suit, declarer can simply finish drawing trumps. If North were to show out on the first round, declarer could play a heart to dummy’s ♥A and take a finesse against South’s ♥J.

“On the actual deal, South shows out on the first round of hearts. Declarer leads the ♥10 now to trap North’s ♥J. If North plays low on the ♥10, it wins the trick, and declarer can win the third round of hearts with dummy’s ♥A. The remaining challenge is to return to the West hand to draw the last trump. Declarer accomplishes this by playing one high spade from dummy and then leading a low spade and ruffing it. This has a two-fold purpose. It is the safest way to return to the West hand, since North will only be able to overruff when holding a singleton spade. At the same time, it helps to establish dummy’s remaining spades as winners, when the missing spades are divided 4–2 and not 3–3.

“Once in the West hand, declarer plays the ♥Q to draw North’s remaining trump. Declarer can now cross to dummy with the ♦A and take the remaining spade winners, discarding the club and diamond losers from the West hand.

“The unfortunate trump break makes the play even more challenging than the bidding!”

Suggested Defense

“There’s nothing the defenders can do, if East–West reach the grand slam in hearts and declarer safely negotiates the pitfalls. If East–West bid 7NT, the defenders can defeat that contract. Declarer can’t untangle the heart suit in a notrump contract. With the 4–2 spade division, East–West will probably be defeated five tricks in notrump.”