



Aug 15: 4NT after Jacoby Transfer

When Jacoby Transfer is used after partner opens 1NT or 2NT or after $2\clubsuit - P - 2x - P$
2NT

what is the meaning of a 4NT bid by responder immediately after opener accepts the transfer? Is it Blackwood, asking for Aces? Many players would answer “Yes, it’s Blackwood.” And in the eyes of most good players, those giving that answer would be wrong! “Why is that?” you ask. The short answer is because it’s quantitative. The longer answer explains why it’s quantitative and what you bid to genuinely ask for aces.

If the auction is 1NT – P – 4NT –or– 2NT – P – 4NT –or– almost all pairs play that 4NT bid as a quantitative raise, inviting opener to bid 6NT if on the top end of the range for the opening bid, or to pass otherwise. The Jacoby Transfer bid has shown a 5-card suit (yes, it could be longer, but it doesn’t have to be) and strongly suggested that suit as trump. The key phrase is “strongly suggested.” Strongly suggesting a trump suit is not the same as “setting” the trump suit. The NT opener has not suddenly guaranteed 3 cards in that suit. A golden 8-card fit is not guaranteed. A trump suit has not been agreed upon.

That being the case, and a quantitative raise still being a desirable action, and $4\clubsuit$ being available as Gerber to ask for Aces, it makes eminent sense for 4NT to be a quantitative raise. At that point opener will have 4 bids available:

- Pass with a minimum and only 2-card support in the suggested trump suit,

- 5 of the Major with a minimum and 3-card support,

- 6 of the Major with a maximum and 3-card support, and

- 6NT with a maximum and only 2-card support

Given that we’re talking duplicate, opener might opt for the higher scoring 6NT even when holding 3-card support.

It seems to me, that playing $4\clubsuit$ as Gerber and 4NT as quantitative is not only sensible, it gives you the best of both worlds.