Cue Bidding

	♠AK10654 ♥4 ♦62 ♣AKQ7	
♠3 ♥A865 ♦10753 ♣J964		♠Q2 ♥J1097 ♦AJ98 ♣1085
	♠J987 ♥KQ32 ♦KQ4 ♣32	

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	1♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣ (1)	Pass	4♠
All pass			

1 *Ace-showing cue bid*

We start with a hand that is tailor-made for the use of cue bidding. North is interested in slam but identifies his diamond holding as a flaw. He won't use Roman Key Card Blackwood ("RKCB") until/unless he's sure the partnership has some control in the suit. In other words, we need an ace, king, void or singleton to stop the defence cashing the first two tricks (at least). Losing two+ tricks and making slam are not compatible. South is unable to show ♦A. Further, when South bids 4♠ he also denies the ace of hearts. North now knows that the defence will take at least two tricks so it is futile to go beyond game. There are no extra points for playing in 5♠ so don't get there unnecessarily and risk a negative score.

	♠3 ♥109765 ♦AK107 ♣972	
♠Q852 ♥AK32 ♦Q86 ♣64		♠AK9764 ♥8 ♦J5 ♣AKQ10
	♠J10 ♥QJ4 ♦9432 ♣J853	

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		1♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣ (1)	Pass
4♥ (1)	Pass	5♣ (2)	Pass
5♥ (2)	Pass	5♠	All pass

1 *Ace-showing cue bid* **2** *King-showing cue bid*

When West bids 4♥ he has bypassed the diamond suit meaning he doesn't have the ace of diamonds. With East having no control in diamond he is not in a good position to use RKCB. He is still interested in slam. If partner has ♦K, especially with ♦Q (the card that would protect the holding from possible fatal attack), slam will make. He shows his continued interest in trying for slam by bidding 5♣. He hopes partner will bid 5♦ after which he'll blast 6♠. When partner shows ♥K instead (with the 5♥ bid) East knows that the defence can cash the first two diamond tricks. He signs off in 5♠.

nb: It's not always the case that a sound approach to bidding is the most successful. Cuebidding and RKCB form part of a delicate conversation with partner, a scientific approach to bidding. It is the recommended approach but does give away significant information. Here a bashers' auction could have fared better. After 1♠ – 3♠; 6♠ who, as South, wouldn't lead ♥Q? On this lead East can throw a diamond and will quickly chalk up the slam.

	♠10983 ♥AK6 ♦875 ♣975	
♠2 ♥QJ1075 ♦93 ♣J10864		♠4 ♥98432 ♦KJ1064 ♣32
	♠AKQJ765 ♥-void- ♦AQ2 ♣AKQ	

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			2♦ (1)
Pass	2♥ (2)	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣ (3)
Pass	4♥ (3)	Pass	5♣ (4)
Pass	5♥ (4)	Pass	7♠
All pass			

1 *23-24, balanced; or any game force* **2** *Relay*
3 *Ace-showing cue bid* **4** *King-showing cue bid*

Once South rebids a suit over the relay the auction becomes game forcing. North can gently raise the suit to allow for an efficient exchange of cue bids. When North bids 4♥ he simultaneously denies first round control of diamonds (ace or void). When South continues with 5♣ he's hoping North can bid 5♦, a bid that would show second round control of the suit. That would be ♦K or a singleton. If the card were the former there would clearly be thirteen tricks on top; and if the latter, South's ♦Q and ♦2 could be ruffed in dummy similarly to provide all the tricks. But North bids 5♥ to show second round control of the heart suit. That also works out well for South. With South holding a void heart this means North must hold both the ace and king of the suit (if both hands had voids, the opponents would have all the hearts but have been strangely silent). These two cards can be used to pitch South's two diamond losers.

nb: RKCB (or any form of Blackwood) shouldn't be used when holding a void – often partner shows an ace and you cannot tell which ace it is: useful opposite a side suit; perhaps useless opposite the void. Here, just to show that taking the wrong path may eventually lead to the right destination, using RKCB would work as North would show one ace and after 5N (king ask) show one king. South wouldn't mind which red suit king that was.

	♠A983 ♥J ♦1075 ♣108754	
♠Q42 ♥AK6432 ♦KQ3 ♣A		♠76 ♥Q985 ♦AJ92 ♣QJ3
	♠KJ105 ♥107 ♦864 ♣K962	

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♣(1)	Pass	4♦ (1)	Pass
5♣(2)	Pass	5♥	All pass

1 *Ace-showing cue bid* **2** *Usually showing the king as well but here showing complete control of the suit (i.e. a singleton ace or a void)*

West is pleased that partner can cover his diamond loser when he shows the ace of that suit. He would like to use RKCB but knows that the partnership could be losing the first two spades off the top; and he doesn't know whether East holds as much as the king. No, RKCB won't work her. West instead bids 5♣ to confirm that he is still interested in slam (since he's continued to bid above the game level). It's a little subtle but East can wonder "why didn't partner bid 4N? Partner knows we have control of both minors. Not bidding 4N means that partner *doesn't have a spade control*". So, whilst 5♣ tells East something, it also asks partner to bid 6♥ if holding a spade control. As East has a small doubleton in the suit, he signs off at the 5level.

If, instead, West used RKCB over 4♦ he would reach 6♥ as East would have provided the "right" answer. East would show one key card. With West holding three key cards and no worry about the queen of trumps (because of the ten card fit) there would be only one missing key card (out of the six). The "right" response would get us to the wrong contract.

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♠9
♥AQ9763
♦84
♣AKQ10

♠KQ543 ♠J1082
♥102 ♥K
♦963 ♦KJ107
♣J82 ♣9543

♠A76
♥J854
♦AQ52
♣76

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	1♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♣(1)	Pass	4♦(1)
Pass	4N(2)	Pass	5♥(2)
Pass	6♥	All pass	

1 *Ace-showing cue bid* **2** *RKCB* **3** *2 of the 5 "aces" without the queen of trumps*

North won't use RKCB until he knows that the partnership has some control in the diamond suit. Once South cue bids 4♦ the preparatory cue bidding has paid off and North will bring RKCB into play. With South showing two key cards and North holding two key cards plus the queen of trumps, North knows the partnership is missing just one key card. This is our default setting for committing to a small slam so 6♥ is reached. In the play East may lead ♠J. Declarer wins and runs ♥J since, if West has all three trumps, they can be picked up without loss. Here that's unlucky as it loses to the singleton king. Declarer has one more chance, namely the diamond king being with East so that ♦Q can be successfully finessed. That works and declarer is rewarded. A good slam making when at least one of two finesses work (about a 75% chance). Those who drop ♥K will make all thirteen tricks.

♠10
♥Q98754
♦J985
♣104

♠J7643 ♠AKQ8
♥K ♥A62
♦Q2 ♦A10
♣AQJ65 ♣K983

♠952
♥J103
♦K7643
♣72

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		2N(1)	Pass
3♥(2)	Pass	4♦(3)	Pass
4N(4)	Pass	5♣(5)	Pass
5♦(6)	Pass	6♣(7)	Pass
7N	All pass		

1 *19-20* **2** *Transfer, 5+spades* **3** *Ace-showing cue bid agreeing spades* **4** *RKCB* **5** *1 or 4 of the 5 "aces"* **6** *♠Q?* **7** *Yes and ♣K*

East's 4♦ is an advance cue bid – here a bid at the 4level that implicitly agrees West's suit, spades. It paves the way for partner to make a try for slam. Here bidding 4♦ is very useful for West as it covers West's control-less diamond holding. With the other side suits controlled West introduces RKCB. The ambiguous 5♣ response is easily solved as East must have 4 "aces" for the 2N opening bid. West knows all key cards are held and can ask for the queen of trumps. When partner shows that card plus the king of clubs West can count thirteen top tricks – five spades, two hearts (ace and king), one diamond (ace) and five clubs. Possession of ♣K has rendered the club suit as good as solid for five winners. Had East instead shown ♦K West would have signed off at the 6level knowing that a grand slam would depend on a successful club finesse – not good odds.

♠J1094
♥92
♦KQJ
♣QJ102

♠Q52 ♠3
♥AJ8 ♥107654
♦107654 ♦A982
♣98 ♣654

♠AK876
♥KQ3
♦3
♣AK73

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
			1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣(1)
Pass	4♠	All pass	

1 *Ace-showing cue bid*

This deal has some similarity to board 1 but here South, unlike North on that board, has controls in all of the side suits. South could blithely invoke RKCB but that would be a mistake. Here South makes a cue bid in clubs and when North returns to 4♠ he knows partner has no red suit ace. The 4level is enough. If RKCB were used North would reply 5♦ (0 aces, as holding 3 is impossible with South holding that number). That would lead to a scary 5♠ which would fail because of the bad, but realistic, spade break.

The intelligent use of the cue bid has kept the partnership at a low level.

	♠1065 ♥J92 ♦Q963 ♣632	
♠AKQ4 ♥Q76 ♦AK ♣KQ84		♠J983 ♥AK84 ♦542 ♣A7
	♠72 ♥1053 ♦J1087 ♣J1095	

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
2♦ (1)	Pass	2♥ (2)	Pass
2N(3)	Pass	3♣ (4)	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣ (5)	Pass
4♦ (5)	Pass	4♥ (5)	Pass
4N(6)	Pass	5♥ (7)	Pass
5N(8)	Pass	6♦ (9)	Pass
7♠	All pass		

1 *23-24, balanced; or any game force* **2** *Relay* **3** *23-24* **4** *Stayman* **5** *Ace-showing cue bid* **6** *RKCB* **7** *2 of the 5 "aces" but no ♠Q* **8** *Any side-suit kings?* **9** *Yes, 1*

We see another use of an advance cue bid (see board 6) where a new suit at the 4level implicitly agrees the last bid/shown suit. With no control in the heart suit West uses RKCB only after East has shown the ace in that suit. It may seem unnecessary to use RKCB as West "knows" East holds two side suit aces (via the 4♣/4♥ cue bids). But what if one of those bids was showing a first round control of the other variety? In other words a void. Then the situation would not be so good. 4N provides a very useful check. As East's hand is unlimited West should squeeze as much information out of partner as possible. West realises that if East holds the king of hearts there will be thirteen tricks – four spades, three hearts, two diamonds, three clubs with either the small club being a winner or being ruffed in dummy. When West bids 5N it is really asking for ♥K as West holds the other side suit kings. With East giving a positive response the grand slam is reached.