

## SLAM BIDDING SEMINAR – SUMMARY

- Slam bidding arises quite often, but no group is good at it
- We need to practice on all the examples we come across
  
- Core is some ability to estimate probability of success of slam
- It is worth bidding 40% slams – they are often allowed to make!
  
- Two requirements : ability to make 12 tricks + avoid 2 losers
  
- In NT, we need 33-36 hcp for 6N or 37+ for 7N
  - Long suits can help, but greater danger of 2 losers
  - You need 4N to invite to 6N (pass if minimum)
  - You need 5N to invite to 7N (bid 6N if minimum)
  - These can be delayed bids (eg Stayman or Transfer first)
  
- In suits, ruffing often generates extra tricks, so fewer HCP perhaps
  - Identify SLAM ZONE as “opener + opener + 2 tricks”
    - After one limit bid, the other hand can judge
  - Try losing trick count : slam zone is 12 losers
  - BUT neither approach is infallible
  
- Also key in suits is SLAM SUITABILITY
  - Probe by making a cue bid, then listen for the answer
    - Positive continues above a sign off
  - Suitable : aces not jacks, points in long suits, honours combining
  
- ACE ASKING only comes in after you know you want to bid a slam
  - Blackwood is there for slam avoidance, not slam bidding

# Slam Bidding

Patrick, March 2016

# OUR INTENT

- To get thinking straight about slam bidding
  - What is our target?
  - How do we track our progress?
- To be aware of the tools and when to use them
  - To know when slam might be good
  - To know when slam will be bad

# How good are players today?

- Club Players?

- Avoiding poor slams : very good
- Bidding good slams : 10-20% of the field

EXERCISE : hands 1-3

♠ 432

♥ KT82

♦ --

♣ AKQJ92

♠ AQJ5

♥ AJ764

♦ QJ4

♣ 4

DEALER  
WEST

0/4 bid slam

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W	E
1C	1H
3H	slam try
cooperation/ acceptance	

# How good are players today?

- Club Players?

- Avoiding poor slams : very good
- Bidding good slams : 10-20% of the field

- County Players ?

- Avoiding poor slams : quite good
- Bidding good slams : 30-60% of the field

♠ T2

♠ AK53

♥ AT93

♥ KQ2

♦ KQ9632

♦ AJT

♣ J

♣ AKQ

DEALER  
WEST

31/60 bid  
the grand  
bid slam

W	E
1D	1S
2D	slam force
....	

# How good are players today?

- Club Players?

- Avoiding poor : very good
- Bidding good : 10-20% of the field

- County Players ?

- Avoiding poor : quite good
- Bidding good : 30-60% of the field

- UK International Players?

- Avoiding poor : not so good
- Bidding good : 60-80% of the field



♠ AT4

♠ K3

♥ AKJT8

♥ 9642

♦ AQ2

♦ 985

♣ Q9

♣ AKT8

DEALER  
WEST

4/6 stopped  
in game

W

E

2N

ask

hearts

slam interest

yes please

# March 16 : Home Internationals

- Decent slam, never bid : 1 board in 160
- Poor/silly slam bid : 7
  - only 1/6 ever bid it and went down
  - but one bad slam made
- Good grand : 2
  - bid 4/6 and 1/6 times
- Good/decent small slams : 9
  - two were so-so slams
  - others bid at only 22/42 tables

# Frequency of slams

- Variable

- Bath Swiss Teams : 12 hands from 49
- Camrose : 19 (or really 12) from 160

- Averages

- slam bidding an issue on 15% of hands
- grand slam good on 2% of hands

# When do we bid a slam ?

- Two ways to win 😊
  - My slam makes
  - My slam was a good one to bid (even if it failed)
- Need to focus on the probability of success
  - Bid all the 100% slams, avoid all the 0% slams
  - Don't care which way on 50% slams
  - What about the 40% slams and 60% slams ?
    - Opening leads, and pairs differs from teams

# Probability of Success

- Very difficult
  - Even the computers cannot do it
- Can be estimated roughly
  - And you need to be able to do that
    - after the event
    - (sometimes) even during the bidding

♠ KQJ95

♠ AT86

♥ K

♥ A7

♦ AT52

♦ KQJ4

♣ AK6

♣ Q83

DEALER  
WEST

Chance of 7N success = 100%

♠ KQJ95

♠ AT86

♥ K

♥ A7

♦ AT52

♦ QJ94

♣ AK6

♣ Q83

DEALER  
WEST

Chance of 7N success = 50%

♠ QJ975

♠ AT86

♥ K

♥ A7

♦ AT52

♦ QJ94

♣ AK6

♣ Q83

DEALER  
WEST

Chance of 7N success = 25%

Chance of 6N success = 75%



♠ AK32

♠ Q654

♥ K3

♥ A7

♦ Q654

♦ AK32

♣ AK6

♣ Q83

DEALER  
WEST

Chance of 7N success = 45%

Chance of 6N success = 89%

3-2 break comes 67%

# How good is this 6♠ slam?

♠ KQ432

♠ JT65

♥ 52

♥ AQ

♦ AK

♦ QJT9

♣ AKQJ

♣ T98

DEALER  
WEST

heart lead 50%, others 99%

# What does a “good” slam need?

- Winners
- Avoidance of losers
- How well can we know the answer?
  - winners is judgement & experience
    - our own and that of others
  - losers we can quite often highlight
- answer = to some extent, but not perfectly

# How many winners have we?

- Counting High Card Points
  - generally 33 and 37 are key numbers
- Sources of extra tricks
  - long suits
  - trumps suits and ruffs
    - 4-4 fits
    - other situations

# No-trump Slam Bidding

- Importance of 4N / 5N as quantitative
  - both are key to avoiding guesswork
    - don't take charge unless you are really sure ...
  - after a NT rebid as well as after a NT opener
  - and after Stayman or Transfer or Checkback
  - and even sometimes as the first mention of NT
    - after 1S-2H-3D with T2-AJ982-K2-AQT2

# No-trump Slam Bidding

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  - and even sometimes as the first mention of NT
    - after 1S-2H-3D with T2-AJ982-K2-AQT2
- Long suits can compensate for HCP
  - carefully, as 2 losers is a more likely problem now
  - and playing in the long suit might not have 2 losers

# Extra Tricks from Trumps

- Expect every 4-4 fit to generate a trick
  - so small slam might make on 30 HCP
- If two ruffs available, that is 2 extra tricks
  - might make on fewer HCP
  - spotting this is where Splinter Bids help a lot
- Also useful - ruffing a side suit good

# Hand Evaluation in Trumps

## Two Approaches

- Rule of thumb : opener+opener+2 tricks = 12
  - if you show support in a given range ...
  - .... then partner can tell
- Losing Trick Count (LTC)
  - another (useful) evaluation method
  - makes adjustments for ruffing values



# Is this a minimum opener ?

First in hand

♠ AJ652

♥ KQ32

♦ Q2

♣ 32

just worth 1S

♠ AQJ65

♥ KQ32

♦ 32

♣ 32

almost 1  
trick better

♠ AQJ65

♥ KQ432

♦ 2

♣ 32

almost 2  
tricks better

# How good are these hands ?

Partner opens 1S

♠ KQ87

♥ A63

♦ J32

♣ Q32

worth 3S

♠ KQ87

♥ A6

♦ 432

♣ QJ32

happily get to  
the 4-level

♠ KQ87

♥ 6

♦ 432

♣ AQJ32

better still

# Hand Evaluation in Trumps

- Rule of thumb : opener + opener + 2 tricks
  - you might not know but
  - any LIMIT RAISE means that someone can tell

# Examples of limiting your hand

## After partner opens 1S

- Min raise = 2S
- Invite raise = 3S
- Min opener = 3S...4H
- Opener + trick = 2N

## After you open 1D-P-1S-P

- Min raise = 2S
- Opener + trick = 3S
- Opener + 2 tricks = 4C...4S

*Know these and stick to them*

*(pre-emptive raises can break the pattern)*

# Hand Evaluation in Trumps

- Rule of thumb : opener + opener + 2 tricks
  - LIMIT RAISE => partner can tell
  - other times need special arrangements
    - in conventions like Jacoby ...
    - game forcing situations get tricky
- Losing Trick Count (LTC)
  - another (useful) evaluation method
  - makes adjustments for ruffing values

# Losing Trick Count (LTC)

- Needs a trump fit (in your best suit?)
- How many of AKQ will you lose tricks to?
- With 3 in the suit
  - 3 losers : Jxx or worse
  - 2 losers : one of A/K/Q
  - 1 loser : two of A/K/Q
- With 2 in the suit
  - 2 losers : Qx or worse
  - 1 loser : one of A/K
- With 1 in the suit
  - 1 loser : unless it is A

**BUT**  
AJT and Q32  
count the same,  
adjustments ...

# Applying LTC

partner opens 1S

♠ KQ87

♥ A63

♦ J32

♣ Q32

8 loser hand

♠ KQ87

♥ A6

♦ 432

♣ QJ32

7 loser hand

♠ KQ87

♥ 6

♦ 432

♣ AQJ32

6 loser hand

# How does LTC work?

- Once you have a fit
- Minimum opener averages 7 losers
- Opener + opener makes 4M usually
  - 14 losers => subtract from 18 => 4 level
- Opener + opener + 2 tricks = slam
  - 12 losers => subtract from 18 => 6 level
- Three hands from the introduction ...



# EXHIBIT 1

♠ 432

♥ KT82

♦ --

♣ AKQJ92

♠ AQJ5

♥ AJ764

♦ QJ4

♣ 4

DEALER  
WEST

bidding of 1C-1H  
now apply LTC : West 5 losers  
now apply LTC : East 6 losers

# EXHIBIT 2

♠ T2

♠ AK53

♥ AT93

♥ KQ2

♦ KQ9632

♦ AJT

♣ J

♣ AKQ

DEALER  
WEST

bidding of 1D – 1S – 2D  
now apply LTC : East 4 losers  
now apply LTC : West 6 losers

# EXHIBIT 3

♠ AT5

♠ K3

♥ AKJT8

♥ 9642

♦ AQ2

♦ 985

♣ Q9

♣ AKT8

DEALER  
WEST

once heart fit is found ...  
now apply LTC : East 6 losers  
now apply LTC : West 8 losers **OOPS**

# Knowing Combined Strength

- Once one hand limits itself in any evaluation
  - (something needed to judge game calls too)
  - ... the other hand now knows (about the zone)
- If neither can limit itself
  - this is unusual (say 1D-2S-3S)
  - new conventional gives an answer (another day!)
  - (make a try and a minimum will reject the try)

# Once in Slam Zone - Slam Suitability

- Try AK98765 – K2 – K2 – K2
  - opposite QJT – QJT9 – QJT – QJT
  - opposite 432 – A543 – A43 – A43
- “Slam Suitable” means
  - points in the right suits
  - more aces than quacks
  - good combinations within a suit

# Ask Partner about Slam Suitability

- If evaluations say you are in slam zone
  - you often still need to be slam suitable
- If that matters (it often does) then ask partner
  - make a try and a slam-unsuitable will reject

**MISSING THIS STEP IS THE MOST  
COMMON MISTAKE I SEE**

# Asking about Slam Suitability

- Two parts – both partners involved
  1. Raising the question
  2. Giving the answer
- Raise the question by probing
  - must allow for a rejection
  - integrated with checking on losers – next item!
- Answer affirmatively -go beyond the sign-off

# Common Slam Tries

- Suit had been explicitly agreed
  - over major, any non-trump bid
  - over minor, any bid beyond 3N
- Suit has not been explicitly agreed
  - unnecessary jump in a new suit (1H-1S-2H-4C)
  - bid of an illogical new suit (1H-2N-3H-4C)
  - NT then Stayman then the other major
  - (some special arrangements also needed)



# THE EXTREME EXAMPLE

♠ AK98765

♠ QJT

♥ K2

♥ QJT9

♦ K2

♦ QJT

♣ K2

♣ QJT

DEALER  
EAST

after 1N opener  
2H(transfer)-2S(accept)-  
4C(slam try)-4S(nothing to cue)-P

# THE EXTREME EXAMPLE

♠ AK98765

♠ 432

♥ K2

♥ A543

♦ K2

♦ A43

♣ K2

♣ A43

DEALER  
EAST

after 1N opener  
2H(transfer)-2S(accept)-  
4C(slam try)-4D(cue)-4N-3aces-7N

LET'S PLAY SOME HANDS NOW

♠ 4

♠ J632

♥ AKQ84

♥ J632

♦ AKQ96

♦ 72

♣ T7

♣ AKQ

DEALER  
LEFT

---

W

E

1H

3H

3S

4C

4N

one ace

6H

---

♠ 4

♠ J632

♥ AKQ84

♥ J632

♦ AKQ96

♦ 72

♣ T7

♣ AKQ

DEALER  
LEFT

## THE PLAY

draw trumps, but keep one to ruff  
a diamond if needed

♠ QJT76

♠ K8

♥ AK65

♥ QJ943

♦ AQ4

♦ K97

♣ 3

♣ A96

DEALER  
LEFT

---

W	E
1S	2H
4C (splinter)	4D (cue)
4H (option to stop)	4S (cue)
4N	one ace
6H	

♠ QJT76

♠ K8

♥ AK65

♥ QJ943

♦ AQ4

♦ K97

♣ 3

♣ A96

DEALER  
LEFT

## THE PLAY

draw trumps, knock out the ♦ A

♠ AT8

♠ KQJ63

♥ 87

♥ AK3

♦ AJ7

♦ KT4

DEALER  
LEFT

♣ AK863

♣ 94

---

W	E
1C	1S
1N	2D (gf checkback)
2S	3S
4C	4D
5C	6S



♠ AT8

♠ KQJ63

♥ 87

♥ AK3

♦ AJ7

♦ KT4

♣ AK863

♣ 94

DEALER  
LEFT

## THE PLAY in 6S

Take one heart ruff while drawing trumps, try ruffing third club, if they don't break, try diamond finesse.

## THE PLAY in 6N

11 top tricks, so duck a club in case they break, then cash winners in spades and hearts, test clubs, else diamond finesse using counts in other suits as guidance.

♠ AQ62

♠ KT95

♥ Q873

♥ AK4

♦ 98

♦ AKQ7

♣ AJ8

♣ 97

DEALER  
LEFT

---

W	E
1N	2C
2H	4N
5S	6S
P	

---

♠ AQ62

♠ KT95

♥ Q873

♥ AK4

♦ 98

♦ AKQ7

♣ AJ8

♣ 97

DEALER  
LEFT

## THE PLAY

draw trumps (AQ first), but  
arrange either a club ruff or  
diamond ruff if they break 4-1

# Asking for Aces

- Why ask for aces
  - SLAM AVOIDANCE ONLY
- It should always be the last step
- NEVER a slam try mechanism

# TONIGHT'S KEY MESSAGES

## 1. ASK PARTNER'S OPINION

- unless you know it all already !

## 2. TRUMP FITS OFFER MORE SLAMS

- (match-points can distort this a little)

## 3. ACE ASKING IS SLAM AVOIDANCE

- do it as the last check

Various examples available courtesy of Andrew Kambites.  
Will get these to web site and send out links.

**THAT'S ALL WE HAVE TIME FOR**