



TIPS FOR USING (OR NOT USING) ROMAN KEYCARD BLACKWOOD

by Spike Lay

1. When you initiate RKC you are in control. If you ask and find out you are off 1 keycard, don't sign off unless you are also off the queen of trumps.
2. Play 1430 rather than 0314. The reason is that you are more likely to want to continue if partner has 1 rather than none. For example, let's say you hold $\spadesuit KQx$ $A10xxx$ A $AKQx$ and the bidding proceeds:

You	Partner
2♣	2♦
2♥	3♥
4NT	5♦ (one keycard)
??	

If partner has xx KQx $Qxxx$ $Jxxx$ you want to be in slam, but what if he has xx Kxx $Kxxx$ $Jxxx$? If you were playing 1430 his response would have been 5♣ and you could bid 5♦ to ask about the queen of hearts.

3. Don't start RKC if you are worried about losing 2 fast tricks in a side suit. Try cuebidding instead. Say you hold, $\spadesuit AQxxxx$ Qx Axx Ax . You open 1♠ and partner responds 2NT which you play as a forcing raise in spades. Don't jump into RKC; you might be off 2 fast heart tricks. Bid 3♠ and hope that partner will cuebid the ace of hearts if he has it. Notice that RKC won't help unless partner shows 2 keycards. Say you bid 4NT and he bids 5C (1 or 4). He might have $KJxx$ xxx $KQxx$ Kx or $Kxxx$ Kxx $KQJx$ xx . On the first hand you are off the ace and king of hearts, but on the second you are cold for slam.

4. Don't give up on grand slams so easily. If you ask for and find out that you have all the keycards and the queen of trumps, let partner know by bidding 5NT to ask for kings. The 5NT bid guarantees all keycards and invites partner to bid seven if he has a surprise for you.

5. For example,
you hold Kxx xx xx AKQJxx. The bidding goes:

Partner	You
1♠	2♣
2♠	3♠
4NT	5♥(2 without the queen)
5NT	??

Bid 7♠ (or 7NT if you are really greedy). You have a source of tricks that partner doesn't know about. You probably have 15 or 16 tricks off the top. Partner has promised that you aren't missing any keycards or the queen of spades. He probably has something like AQJxxx AKx Axx x.