

# Blackwood: It Ain't as Simple as You Think

A Simple Convention  
that Can be Quite  
Complex

# The Blackwood Convention

- Invented in 1933 by Easley Blackwood.
- The most popular convention in the game of Bridge. And:
  - The most overused.
  - The most badly used.
- A bridge player's skill is inversely proportional to his/her use of Blackwood.

# Reasons Not to Use Blackwood

- A hand with a wide open suit (2 or more losers off the top).
- A hand that contains a void.

# Suppose You Are Dealt This Hand

♠ A K Q 10 4 2  
♥ 3 2  
♦ K Q 10  
♣ A 5

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	2nt
4 nt	

Responder 1

♠ J 9 8 5  
♥ Q J 7  
♦ A J 4  
♣ K Q J

Responder 2

♠ J 9 8 5  
♥ A K 7  
♦ J 4 2  
♣ K Q J

# Suppose You are Dealt this Hand

♠ A Q 10 9 4 2  
♥ 5 3 2  
♦ A K  
♣ A 5

Opener	Responder
1 ♠	2nt
4 nt	

Responder 3

♠ K J 8 5  
♥ J 8 7  
♦ Q J 10 7  
♣ K Q

Responder 4

♠ K 8 5 3  
♥ A K 7  
♦ 9 4 2  
♣ K 7 4

# Suppose You are Dealt this Hand

♠ A K Q 2  
♥ A K J 10 6 2  
♦ 7 5 2  
♣

Opener	Responder
1 ♥	3 ♥
4 nt	

Responder 5

♠ J 8 5  
♥ Q 8 7  
♦ Q J 10 7  
♣ A K 6

Responder 6

♠ J 5 3  
♥ Q 8 7  
♦ A K 4 2  
♣ 7 4 3

# Sometimes You Can Cue Bid With a Weak Hand

♠ K 5 3  
♥ 3  
♦ 7 5 4 3 2  
♣ K 6 4 3

North hand 7  
♠ A Q J 10 6 4  
♥ 8 7 4  
♦ A K Q  
♣ A

North	east	south	west
2 ♣	2 ♥	pass	3 ♥
3 ♠	pass	4 ♥	

# A Quick Word About Control Bids



- After a trump-suit agreement, a control bid is:
  - Any new-suit bid, at the 3-level or higher above the trump suit.
    - Example 1 ♥ ... 3 ♥ ... 3 ♠.
  - After a Jacoby 2nt, any new-suit bid, at the 3-level.
  - Control bids at the 3 or 4 level show either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> round control.
  - Control bids at the 5-level always show 1<sup>st</sup> round control or 2<sup>nd</sup> round control of a suit for which 1<sup>st</sup> round control has already been shown.



# When is 4 nt Not Blackwood?

- The clearest examples are when partner opens with a no trump bid, and you respond 4 no trump.
- This is quantitative and asks partner to bid 6 with the top of his bid and pass with less than the top.
- Partner opens with a no trump bid and you respond 5 no trump.
- Again, this is quantitative. It asks partner to bid 7 no trump with a max for his opening bid, and 6 no trump with less than a max.
- After a quantitative 4nt, the no trump opener has two choices, Pass or 6nt...

# One More Example

North	East	South	West
1 	pass	1 	pass
2nt	pass	4nt	

- North has shown 18 or 19 points
- South wants to play 6 nt if north has 19 points, but 4 no trump if north has 18 points.

# A Special Case Playing 2/1

North	East	South	West
1 ♠	pass	2 ♦	pass
2nt	pass	3 nt	pass
4nt			

- North's 4 no trump shows 18 or 19 points.
- Responder must bid accordingly.

# Consider the Following Example

North's hand

♠ Q 2

♥ A K 8 6 4

♦ K J

♣ K Q 10 3

South's hand A

♠ A K J 7

♥ J 5 15 points

♦ Q 6 5 4 3

♣ A 2

N	E	S	W
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1 ♥	p	2 ♦	p
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2 nt	p	3nt	p
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4nt	P	??	
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South's hand B

♠ A K J 7

♥ J 5 13 points

♦ A 6 5 4 3

♣ 8 2

# Consider the Following Bidding Sequences

- |           |           |                    |
|-----------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1. Opener | Responder |                    |
| 1nt       | 2 ♦       |                    |
| 2 ♥       | 4 nt      | Is this Blackwood? |
| 2. Opener | Responder |                    |
| 1nt       | 4 ♦       |                    |
| 4 ♥       | 4 nt      | Is this Blackwood? |
| 3. Opener | Responder |                    |
| 1nt       | 2 ♣       |                    |
| 2 ♥       | 4 nt      | Is this Blackwood? |

# Consider Sequence 1

Opener      Responder

1nt

2 ♦

2 ♥

4 nt

- 4nt is Quantitative
  - Shows 5 hearts
  - Inviting slam
  - Not forcing
- A direct bid of 4nt over a Jacoby transfer is always quantitative.
  - It shows exactly 5 of the major suit.
  - Opening bidder's responses:
    - Pass 4 no trump.
    - Bid 5 of the major suit.
    - Bid 6 no trump.
    - Bid 6 of the major suit.

# Examples

1nt ...pass... 2♦ ... pass  
 2♥ ... pass....4nt.. .pass

Responder

♠ K J

♥ K Q 9 8 3

♦ Q 3 2

♣ K Q 6

1

♠ A 5

♥ A 7

♦ A K J 4

♣ J 10 9 7 2

17 points

2 hearts

Bid 6nt

2

♠ A Q 7

♥ 10 7

♦ A K J 4

♣ J 10 9 7

15 points

2 hearts

pass

3

♠ A 5

♥ A 10 7

♦ A K J 4

♣ J 10 9 7

17 points

3 hearts

Bid 6♥

4

♠ A Q

♥ J 10 7

♦ A K J 4

♣ J 10 9 7

15 points

3 hearts

Bid 5♥

# Alternative to Sequence 1

Opener	Responder
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1nt

2 ♦

3 ♥

4 nt

- 4nt is Blackwood
- Super accept confirms the trump suit.

Opener's hand

♠ K J 9

♥ K Q 9 8

♦ K 3 2

♣ K J 6



# Sequence 2

2. Opener	Responder	Responder's hand
1nt	4 ♦	♠ K J 9 ♥ K Q 9 8 5 3 ♦ 4 ♣ A J 8
4 ♥	4 nt	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Texas transfer always shows 6+ hearts.</li><li>• Confirms a trump fit.</li><li>• 4nt is Blackwood.</li></ul>		

# Sequence 3

Opener      Responder

1nt          2 ♣

2 ♥          4 nt

- 4nt is quantitative.
- Partner says: “We have not found a major suit fit, but I have a slam invitational hand.”

- Remember partner is in charge.
- Partner could have:
  - Bid 3 ♥ inviting game.
  - Bid 4 ♥ signing off at game.
  - Passed, leaving you to play 2 ♥.

# What If Responder Has a Slam Invitational Hand?

- If we have a major suit fit, a 3-level bid of the other major by responder confirms a major suit fit.
- After the major suit fit is confirmed, 4nt by either player is Blackwood.
- The only reason to use this method is when the responder has a slam invitational hand.

# Example No 1

Opener      Responder

1nt

2 ♣

2 ♥

3 ♠

4 ♥

4nt

Opener's hand

♠ K J 9

♥ K Q 9 8

♦ Q 4 3

♣ K J 6

Responder's hand

♠ A Q 10

♥ J 10 4 3

♦ A K 7 3 2

♣ 2

Blackwood would  
confirm two missing  
key cards. Stop at  
5 ♥.

# Example No 2

Opener      Responder

1nt

2 ♣

2 ♠

3 ♥

4 ♠

4nt

Opener's hand

♠ K Q J 9

♥ A 8

♦ Q 4 3

♣ K J 6 4

Responder's hand

♠ A 10 7 3

♥ K 4 3

♦ A K J 3 2

♣ 2

Blackwood would

confirm one missing  
key cards. 6 ♠ would  
seem a good  
prospect.

# Final Thoughts

- Blackwood is the most common convention in bridge.
- It is also the most misused.
- The bid and treatments we have discussed today do not come up very often.
- You and your partners should review them often.