

Using Control Bids For Slam Exploration



Blackwood Does Not Always Work

Hand a

♠ A K J 9 6 5 3
♥ A K Q
♦ Q J 10
♣

Hand b

♠ A K J 9 6 5 3
♥ Q J
♦ A K J
♣ 3

- With either of these powerhouse hands, Blackwood could result in a disaster.
- To handle hands like this, we need to use a control bid, sometimes called a “cue bid.”

What Is A Control Bid?

- After a major suit trump agreement, a new suit bid at the three level above the agreed trump or at the four level shows a control.
- A control bid gives three bits of information to partner.
 - I have a first round control of the suit I bid.
 - I am interested in exploring for slam.
 - Requests that partner show her most convenient first round control.

Not a First Round Control Bid

You

1 ♠

3 ♦

Partner

2 ♠

- After a two level major suit agreement, this type of bid is usually a game try.

Not a First Round Control Bid

You

1 ♣

2 ♦

Partner

2 ♣

- After a two level minor suit agreement, this type of bid is showing a stopper in the suit, in an attempt to get to a no trump game.
- New-suit bids after a minor suit agreement are first assumed to be seeking a no trump game.
- It is only after the bid is past 3 no trump, that a new-suit bid is understood to show slam interest.

Control Bids After Minor Suit Agreement

North

♠ Q J 6
♥ A 10 7
♦ A Q 9 8
♣ J 9 3

North

1 ♦
2 ♥
3nt

South

2 ♦
3 ♣

Control Bids After Minor Suit Agreement

North

♠ 3
♥ A K 7
♦ A Q J 9 8
♣ K J 9 3

North

1 ♦
2 ♥
4 ♥
4 nt

South

2 ♦
3 ♣
4 ♠

Control Bids After Minor Suit Agreement

North

♠ A Q J 10 6

♥ K Q 3

♦ A Q 9 8

♣ 3

North

1 ♠

4 ♦

4 nt

South

2 ♦

4 ♥

First or Second Round Control

- Some like to play control bids at the 3 or 4 level as either first or second round control.
- Many advanced players do this.
- However, doing this can get confusing.
- I encourage you to make the first control bids to show first round control, until you become comfortable with using control bids.

Consider This Hand

North

1 

3 

South

3 

South

 J 6


 K J 9 3

 A J 8 4

 K 9 3

North

 A Q 9

 A Q 10 7 4

 K Q 6

 J 2

Rules for Control Bids

- Control bids cannot begin until the partnership has agreed on a trump suit.
- The first control bid in a suit shows first-round control of that suit.
- Controls are shown up the line starting with the most convenient.
 - By inference, if a person skips a suit, that person does not have first-round control of that suit.
- Never make a control bid unless you have a reasonable interest in slam.

Rules for Control Bids

- You can show second-round control by bidding a suit in which you or your partner have already shown first-round control.
- You can also show second round control by bidding a suit which you previously skipped when showing first round controls.

Example Hands and Bidding (1)

North

♠ A K J 8 6
♥ 4 3
♦ A K J 3
♣ K Q

North

1 ♠
4 ♦
5 ♣

South

3 ♠
4 ♥
5 ♠

South

♠ Q 10 7 3
♥ A Q
♦ Q 10 5
♣ J 10 8 4

Example Hands and Bidding (2)

North

♠ A K 8 6 5
♥ 3
♦ A K 10 8
♣ 6 4 3

North

1 ♠
3 ♥
4 ♦
6 ♠

South

2nt
4 ♣
4 ♥

South

♠ Q J 7 3
♥ A 9 8
♦ Q J 2
♣ A 8 2

Example Hands and Bidding (3)

North

♠ A K 8 6 5 2

♥ 3

♦ A K 10 8

♣ 6 4

North

1 ♠

3 ♥

4 ♠

South

2nt

4 ♥

South

♠ Q J 7 3

♥ A K Q

♦ Q J 2

♣ 8 5 3

Example Hands and Bidding (4)

North

♠ A K J 6 5

♥ Q 5 3

♦ Q J 8

♣ 6 4

North

1 ♠

3 ♥

4 ♥

5 ♥

South

2 ♥

4 ♣

5 ♣

South

♠ Q 3

♥ A K J 9 6 2

♦ 4 3

♣ A K 3

Example Hands and Bidding (5)

North

♠ A K J 6 5 4
♥ A 7 5 3
♦ 8
♣ 6 4

North

1 ♠
3 ♥
4 ♥
6 ♥















South

2 ♥
4 ♣
5 ♣

South

♠ Q 3
♥ K Q J 9 6 2
♦ Q J
♣ A K 5

Example Hands and Bidding (6)

North	North	East	South
 A K J 9 5 4	1 	2 	3 
 K 8 2	3 		4 
 A K 9	6 		
 6			
	South		
	 Q 10 8 2		
	 A 10		
	 Q 8 4 3		
	 K 5 3		

Example Hands and Bidding (7)

North

♠ A K
♥ K J 10 8 5 2
♦ A K 9
♣ 6 4

North

1 ♥
3 ♥
4 ♦
4 nt
6 ♥

South

2nt
4 ♣
4 ♥
5 ♥

South

♠ Q J 8
♥ A 9 6 3
♦ Q 8 4 3
♣ A 5

Example Hands and Bidding (8)

North

♠ J 6
♥ A K 8 7 2
♦ 9
♣ A K 6 5 4

North

1 ♥
3 ♣
4 ♥
6 ♣

South

2 ♣
3 ♠
4 ♠

South

♠ A K 8 3
♥ 3
♦ Q 8 4
♣ Q J 9 3 2

Example Hands and Bidding (9)

North

♠ A Q J 7
♥ A K Q 2
♦ A J 7
♣ Q 2

North

2 ♣
3 ♠
4 ♥
7nt

South

2 ♠
4 ♣
5 ♣

South

♠ K 10 9 8 3
♥ 7 3
♦ 10 8
♣ A K J 3

Example Hands and Bidding (10)

North



♥ A K J 8 7 5 2

♦ K Q 8

♣ A K Q

North

2 ♣

2 ♥

4 ♣

7 ♥

South

2 ♦

3 ♥

4 ♦

South

♠ A 10 9

♥ Q 9 7 3

♦ A 7 3

♣ 9 7 3