

4NT – 1430/3014 and the Queen Ask

By Neil H. Timm

In recent weeks I have had the opportunity to discuss slam convention preferences with club members when completing a Bridge Convention Card with a potential partner since several of my long-term partners have taken ill or have passed. We are all not getting any younger.

In discussing slam conventions, I found that many in the club still play Blackwood, some play RKC 3014 while many prefer 1430 RKC. With 1430 most respond using the Last-Bid-Suit (LBS) with no suit agreement and use the bid or 4NT for all suits (Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, or Spades). After 4NT the bid of 5NT was either asking for the number of kings or for specific kings, and many were not familiar with the Queen Ask Bid, the Specific Suit Ask (SSA) Bid or the responses when their hand contained a useful void when using 1430.

Slam bidding can be very rewarding, but is one of the toughest aspects of the game. However, many hands do not even lend themselves to the 4NT bid when they contain a worthless never bid doubleton, a void or a long, broken major/minor suit because then one must bid controls (A/K) using cue bids when checking for keycards.

When I further inquired about Kickback/Redwood (3014 Kickback – a version proposed by Jeff Reuben in The Bridge World Magazine is a series of articles using his Useful Space Principle (USP) between November 1980 to April 1981 or 1430 Kickback), Minorwood/Crosswood, Exclusion Keycard Blackwood/Voidwood, Expert Gerber, Weak 1430 RKC Blackwood, Serious 3NT versus 1430/3014 Baby Blackwood, and Double Roman Keycard Blackwood (6 keycards); most had not discussed many if these conventions. While some used DOPI, DEPO, and ROPI, over interference, few were familiar with Lackwood.

Finally, in reading the recent Bridge Column in the September 13, 2026 Sunday issue of the Villages Daily Sun Newspaper, the example Plan Your Play used RKC 3014 and the Queen Ask Bid. However, the explanation for the response to the asking bid and published in the article is incorrect.

What is one to do?

My solution was to write a Bridge Tip to try to explain how 4NT may be best employed to evaluate the slam potential of two bridge hands.

Basics Responses for the 4NT ask

Blackwood: 5♣=0/4, 5♦=1, 5♥=2, and 5♠=3, Aces.

Keycard Blackwood options:

RKC 3014: $5\clubsuit=0/3$, $5\diamond=1/4$, $5\heartsuit=2$ wo Q and $5\spadesuit=2/5$ w Q, 5-Keycards

1430: $5\clubsuit=1/4$, $5\diamond=0/3$, $5\heartsuit=2$ wo Q and $5\spadesuit=2/5$ w Q, 5-Keycards

What do we observe? Blackwood only considers Aces while Keycard Blackwood (3014/1430) has 5-Keycards: 4-aces and the King of trump.

The first two keycard responses ignore the Queen (Q) of trump and reverse the keycard count responses (0/3 and 1/4) while the latter two responses are identical and provide the number of keycards without (wo) or with (w) the Q of trump.

Also observe that the two digits 30/14 and 14/30 separated by a slash (/) designate the number of keycards among the 4 aces and the King of trump, but ignore the Q of trump; however, the keycard counts are provided by the responses $5\heartsuit/5\spadesuit$ bids for 3014 and 1430 are the same.

Let's assume that clubs is the agreed upon suit and opener bids 4NT and both have an ace. After 4NT using Blackwood partner would bid $5\diamond$ and the pairs would have to play in $6\clubsuit$ (off two aces) or 5NT which may be worse. This is also the case playing 3014 since the response is again $5\diamond$; however, with 1430 one would respond $5\clubsuit$ and partner may pass. The problem is less likely to occur with diamonds because there is more bidding space.

Let's assume that hearts is the agreed suit and that opener has again one ace but partner has the Ace and KQ of trumps. After 4NT, the response now playing either 3014 or 1430 is $5\spadesuit$ and you may be off two aces bidding $6\heartsuit$ and 5NT may again be worse. In this case Blackwood works since the response would be $5\diamond$ and one may next bid $5\heartsuit$.

To make a slam you cannot afford to lose two tricks. There are 5 -Keycards and if you are missing two of them you may be losing two tricks. The purpose of Keycard Blackwood is to check that you are not missing two keycards (or one keycard and the Queen of trump) once you have determined that you are missing only one keycard **your side has the values for slam**.

No convention is perfect, but in general Keycard Blackwood is superior to Blackwood.

1430/3014? and the Queen Ask

Provided the strong hand is asking when one bids 4NT with suit agreement 1430 is better than RKC 3014. RKC 3014 may be superior if the weaker hand bids 4NT since it is more likely that the stronger hand has 0/3 keycards which facilitates the next step Queen ask bid at a lower level.

What is the Queen Ask Bid playing 4NT and 1430?

Recall that the responses of $5\clubsuit = 1/4$ Keycards without the Queen and that $5\diamond = 0/3$ Keycards without the Queen.

The NEXT step $5\diamond/5\heartsuit$.after either $5\clubsuit/5\diamond$ is the Queen Ask Bid.

Partner responses to the Queen-ask bid are as follows:

- **Without the trump Queen** → Bid **five of the agreed trump suit**
- **5NT shows the Queen** but no outside King
- **With the trump Queen and a King** → Bid:
 - The lowest **side-suit King**

The responses help determine whether a grand slam is excellent, marginal, or hopeless.

Knowing you have the 5 Keycards, the bid of 5NT becomes the King Ask. Do you respond with the number of kings (excluding the trump king) or the specific lowest ranking king? Playing 1430 the 5NT bid is most often the Specific King Ask (SKA) since you may also make a second asking king asking bid for a grand slam.

Having the Queen of trump after bidding 4NT, after partner's response may SKIP the Queen Ask steps of 5♦/5♥ and bid any next higher suit instead, the bid becomes the Specific Suit Ask (SSA) or a 3rd round control asking bid.

After 5♣ (skip 5♦) 5♥, 5♠, 6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠ is SSA.

After 5♦ (skip 5♥) 5♠, 6♣, 6♦, 6♥, 6♠ is SSA.

Lacking a control (xxx) sign-off at the 6-level or pass the 6-level. With Axx, Kxx, Qxx, xx, or x, jumps to the 7-level in the trump suit.

Last-Bid-Suit (LBS)

The bidding goes:

1♠ - 4NT? Is 4NT Keycard Blackwood or Blackwood playing LBS?

The bidding goes:

1♠ 2♥
2♠ 4NT?

Playing LBS, is it Keycard Blackwood for Spades not Hearts? The LBS is Spades and not Hearts! Or is it simply Blackwood?

The bidding goes:

1♣ 1♥
2♣ 4NT?

Playing LBS, is it Keycard Blackwood for Club or merely a natural bid?

Using either 1430 or KCB 3014, the 4NT bid is Never used using the LBS when openers response is weak or artificial - it is just Blackwood.

In the above examples, 4NT is Blackwood.

For more on the 4NT bid follow the Link:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/ocala/The%20meaning%20of%204NT.pdf>

1430 Kickback with Suit Agreement

When spades are the agreed upon suit, 4NT is 1430. However, using Jeff Reuben's USP for all other suit agreements, one should use 1430 Kickback Asking Bid where the next suit bid becomes the 1430 Keycard Ask.

For Clubs, 4♦ = 1430, for Diamonds, 4♥ = 1430, for Hearts = 4♠ becomes 1430. Why? It keeps the 1430 keycard responses at a lower safer level.

Example for clubs agreed 4♦ = 1430.

1430 Responses are simple: 4♥=1/4, 4♠=0/3, 4NT=2 wo Q and 5♣=2/5 w Q, 5-Keycards

Some may also use 1430 Kickback with the LBS instead of Blackwood.

Of course, there are several excellent books by Master Point Press that address slam bidding, a few that come to mind include Eddie Kantar 's (2008, pp. 244) on Roman Keycard Blackwood and more recent books by Patty Tucker (2014, pp.162) on Slam Bidding Conventions, and Robert Munger (2019, pp.96) on Kickback.

Queen Ask Example from the Daily Sun Newspaper

The Bidding;

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♠	Pass
6NT	All Pass		

East-West vulnerable and South Deals

		♠	Q108		
		♥	108		
		♦	8764		
		♣	8765		
♠	97642	N W E S		♠	Void
♥	J42			♥	Q97653
♦	3			♦	K952
♣	QJ102			♣	943
		♠	AKJ53		
		♥	AK		
		♦	AQJ10		
		♣	AK		

Opening Leads Queen of ♣

The article correctly states that the 5♦ bid asks for the Queen of trump, but incorrectly states that the 5♠ response shows the Q – it denies the Q. The bid should have been 5NT shows the Queen and denies a side King and South would correctly bid 6NT!

After the bid of 5♠ showing NO Queen and NO side King, the bid would bid 5NT and not 6NT.

Because of the layout of the cards with two successful finesses the 6NT contract succeeded with the bidding error!

Slam Bidding References

Kanter, Eddie (2008), “Roman Keycard Blackwood – The Final Word, 5th Edition, Master Point Press.

Tucker, Pattyn (2014), “Slam Bidding Conventions”, Master Point Press.

Munger, Robert (2019), “Kickback – Slam Bidding at Bridge”, 2nd Edition, Master Point Press.

Final Note – On Wednesday September 16, 2026 the Daily Sun had another Slam Hand example which I would Like to discuss.

North-South vulnerable South deals

		♠	K986		
		♥	QJ7		
		♦	753		
		♣	A86		
♠	5	N W E S		♠	2
♥	109863			♥	AK542
♦	KJ82			♦	1096
♣	972			♣	J1-54
		♠	AQJ10743		
		♥	Void		
		♦			
		♣	AK		

The Bidding;

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
6 ♠	All Pass		

The paper claimed that South did not have a clear-cut bid so just bid the slam.

This is not the case. Two options come to mind, a series of cue bids or Exclusion Blackwood.

Cue bidding Option

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	5 ♣	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	5 ♠	Pass
6NT	All Pass		

Exclusion Blackwood (This option needs to be discussed since there is no standard to the way the convention is played, some play 1430 Exclusion and others may just use simple steps).

A Jump bid to the 5-level initiates the Convention which asks about keycards for the agreed upon suit excluding the 5-level suit bid (e.g. hearts). If you use stems (0, 1, 2, 3, etc.), one would bid

6♣ = 2 keycards, if you used 1430 you would bid 5♥ to show 2 Keycards. I would bid 6♥ = 2 keycards without the Q.

For more options follow the links:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/ocala/Void.pdf>

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/ocala/Introduction%20to%20Slam%20Bidding%20Techniques.pdf>