

Quantitative or Baze?

Provided by Neil H. Timm

Playing a strong NT=15-17, many partners employ a quantitative 4NT bid to invite slam even if they are 4-4 in the majors.

The problem with the quantitative bid is that it ignores the possibility of a fit in a major since it depends solely on point count, which may be inaccurate and does not allow the exchange of information. After the bid of 1NT, most employ Stayman to discover a 4-4 Major suit fit. Recall using HCP, the point range for a slam is 31-33 points.

3oM – Slam Try Bid

A commonly used approach is to employ Stayman and with a fit, a 3-level bid of the other major is a Forcing Raise with slam interest:

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠* = 4+Hearts with slam interest

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥* = 4+Spades with slam interest

Opener may sign-off in game (4M) with a poor 15/16-point hand or cue bid a control or bid 4NT as a keycard bid with trumps agreed. Without agreement, the bid of 4NT is quantitative:

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4NT

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4NT

With a fit, the following are the keycard sequences.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠* - 4♥ - 4NT

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥* - 4♠ - 4NT

The above sequence is very common but many advanced players and experts play the Baze convention with shortness somewhere.

Baze Slam Try Convention

The convention is employed after 2♣ and the bidding is:

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠-3♠*=4+Hearts, forcing raise, slam interest with shortness

3NT*= ask relay where

4♣*=club singleton/void

4♦*=diamond singleton/void

4♥*=heart singleton/void

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠-3♥*=4+Spades, forcing raise, slam interest with shortness

3♠* Next step (is it a void/singleton)

3NT*= (void somewhere)

4♣*=club singleton

4♦*=diamond singleton

4♥*=heart singleton

4♣* Next step after 3NT* (where)

4♦*=club void

4♦*=diamond void

4♠*=spade void

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥-3♠*=4+Hearts, forcing raise, slam interest with shortness

Source: <http://www.bricciyiz.biz/sec/b/Baze-Convention.aspx>

Modified Baze Convention discussed by Billy Miller in the December (2010, p.59) issue of the "Bridge Bulletin" is used with a balanced hand (no shortness).

Modified Baze Slam Try Convention

For this approach the goes:

1NT - 2♣ - 2M -

4♣ = a balanced slam try with a fit in the bid major

4♦ = a keycard bid with the agreed major

After 4♣ one may cue bid or use 4♦ as a "last train" bid to say we have game and may have slam if you are interested with a maximum and 4♥ would be a control cue bid (or vice versa per partnership agreement).

Carmichael-Baze Game or Slam Try

Robert S. Todd on his site: www.advinbridge.com/this-week-in-bridge/296 reviews this convention, which allows for both the investigation of both a game and slam after Stayman.

The bidding sequence suggested is rather involved, requiring some work, but given the frequency of Stayman after the bid of 1NT it may be worth the extra effort.

When evaluating a balanced NT hand, how do you count your points? Do you use only HCP or do you use the following method?

“STANDARD” 4-3-2-1 HLD Method

NT Contracts

Honor Values A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1

Deduct 1 point for a hand without an Ace

Deduct 1 point for a 4333 “flat” hand

Count either Length/ Shortness NEVER both. For suit length it is recommended that one add 1 point for a 5-card suits and 1 additional point for 6, 7, 8 cards provided the suit has value defined by K/QJ (3HCP).

Example:

Opener ♠AQ54 ♥K86 ♦QJ6 ♣AJ5

Responder ♠K1086 ♥AJ97 ♦A75 ♣KQ4

(1) HCP - Opener has 17HCP and Responder has 16HCP (Total= 33)

(2) HLD – Opener has 16HLD points and Responder has 15HLD points (Total= 32)

Or do you use the Optimal Point Count (OPC) method where a small slam is 32-34 points.

HONOR POINTS (H)

Ace: 4½ pts K: 3pts Q w/A, K, J: 2 pts Qxx: 1½ pts Qx=1pt

J w/A, K, Q: 1pt Jxx: ½ pts Jx=0 pts

Value of 10s vary: 10K=½, 10A=0, 10Q=1, 10J=1, 10Jx=2, 10x=0

No Aces = -1 pt (Only Opener) No Q = -1 No K = -1 (all hands) with Max = -2

3Ks = +1 pt, 4Ks = +2pts, 4Qs = +1pt

Singleton honor = -1pt Honor doubletons = -1 pt for 2 honor doubletons

(AK/AQ/AJ/KQ/KJ/QJ)

3+ Honors in 6-card suit = +2 pts or in a 5-card suit = +1 pt

These above rules apply to all contracts, Suits and NT

LENGTH POINTS (L)

5-card suit with at least a QJ/K = 1pt

6-card suit with at least QJ/K = 2 pts w/o a QJ/K = 1pt

7-card suit = 2pts for each card for 7th on (even without an honor)

DISTRIBUTION POINTS (D)

VOID = 4pts Singleton = 2 points ONE doubleton = 0 pts TWO doubletons = 1pt

4333 = -1pt

Singleton in NT contract = -1pt

The (D) values apply only to Opener's hands NT suits hands.

For the above example A=4.5 not 4.0 and K10=0.5 (10 has value)

(3) OPC – Opener has 17OPC and Responder 16.5OPC (Total=33.5)

For these very balanced hands, all three methods put us in the slam zone.

Which method did you use to reach the slam with the 4-4-spade fit? And which slam?

With a spade fit dummy/fit points now include these values for shortness using OPC:

DISTRIBUTION-FIT POINTS (F)

Number of responder trumps	4	3	2
Void	4pts	3pts	2pts
Singleton	3pts	2pts	1pts
Doubleton	2pts	1pts	0pt

How would you bid the following hand?

Let's look at an Example playing 2/1 with a 15-17 NT

Opener: ♠A65 ♥86 ♦K76 ♣AQ432 Responder: ♠98 ♥A72 ♦AQJ54 ♣K105

Count point correctly: Opener has 15OPC and Responder has 17.5OPC.

Open 1NT and not 1♣.

To succeed in bridge you must employ both the best conventions and the best hand evaluation method.

Example: Unbalanced Hand

Opener: ♠A984 ♥KJ ♦A984 ♣KJ8 Responder: ♠Q763 ♥AQ74 ♦2 ♣AQ73

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♠	3♥* fit with shortness
3♠*	4♦* singleton
4NT	5♥ two keycards
6♠	Pass

Example: Balanced Hand

Opener: ♠K108 ♥AQ54 ♦QJ7 ♣AJ9 Responder: ♠AJ6 ♥K1062 ♦A54 ♣KQ2

Opener	Responder
1NT	2♣
2♥	4♣ Balanced Hand slam try (not a splinter)
4♦*	4♠ kickback 1430
5♠ 2 with Q	6♥
6NT	Pass

Reference: Garnett, Andrew (2017) "Variable Strong 1NT: And the 2♠ Size Ask", Bridge Centric Publication.

This book teaches a variable Strong One No Trump system with 14-16HCP, 15-17HCP, and 15-18HCP ranges and utilizes a 2♠ size-asking bid which increases the number of conventions and treatments that can be played so any hand you hold becomes easier to represent in the auction. You will learn all the basics like Stayman, Jacoby transfers, minor-suit transfers, RKC 3014, and Gerber, as well as Baze, Smolen, minor-suit

Stayman, two-suited Key Card, Lebensohl and Transfer Lebensohl. Some of these conventions are advanced; this shouldn't scare you away from them. Learn and apply what you can one convention at a time and when you master that convention, move on to the next. Remember that Bridge is a game of mistakes and when anyone learns something new, mistakes will be made, conventions and treatments will be forgotten. Mistakes represent learning moments, embrace them.