



Lesson 44 Teacher's Notes

Slam Bidding (2): Asking with RKC Blackwood

Aims

- To introduce the idea of Asking for Aces
- To emphasise that, while RKC Blackwood is relatively straightforward, it is really designed *to avoid bad slams* rather than find good ones. Cue-bidding is a better tool.
- To mention Gerber and advise its use only in no-trump auctions. (We need 4♣ as a natural bid or a cue-bid in suit auctions)

Content

- 1 Remind the class about cue-bidding
- 2 Introduce RKC Blackwood, a new **convention** which gives a special meaning to the bid of 4NT. If, *after a suit has been agreed*, someone bids 4NT this is an **Ace ask**. Partner shows how many aces by responding in steps as follows:

5♣	1 or 4 aces
5♦	0 or 3 aces
5♥	2 aces without the Queen of Trumps
5♠	2 aces with the Queen of Trumps

(Point out that there is no real problem with the dual meaning of 5♣/5♦. A player who elects to ask for aces usually has at least one himself, so in practice the 5♣ reply always shows 1 ace.)

After you have asked for aces, you can ask for kings by bidding 5NT.

The responses are:-

6♣	0 kings
6♦	1 king
6♥	2 kings
6♠	3 kings

Emphasise that when you ask for kings you promise that your side has all the aces!

5NT propels your side to a small slam **whatever partner responds**. You can only want to know about kings if you are interested in a grand slam - which means you must have all the aces!

Mention that this method of showing aces is called "RKC Blackwood". There are many more variations, such as ordinary Blackwood, or Roman Blackwood.

- 3 Make it clear that this is a relatively easy convention – but also a dangerous one. You must be prepared for all the possible responses so that you do not find yourself too high when partner has fewer aces than you hoped. It is a pity to have to play in slam when missing two aces! So you can ask for aces safely only when you are fairly sure that you have a slam on.
RKCB Blackwood is a device for keeping out of bad slams. You should use cue-bids when you are not sure whether you have enough values. **Ask for aces only when you have clearly agreed a trump suit and you are sure that you have the values for at least a small slam**
- 4 Explain that 4NT may be required as a natural bid if you are playing in no-trump. Over a 1NT/2NT opening bid 4NT is "**quantitative**" – a slam try which invites partner to pass if he is minimum, and bid 6NT if he is maximum.
- 5 **In NT auctions** (and **only** in NT auctions) we can ask for aces with 4♣. This is known as **Gerber**. If you want to ask for aces **immediately over partner's 1NT/2NT opening** you can use 4♣. The responses are also in steps: 4♦ = 0 or 4 aces, 4♥ = 1 ace, 4♠ = 2 aces, 4NT = 3 aces.