

Tip of the month

This month's tip concerns **slam bidding** methods. The following hand illustrates a number of points:

North
S AKQJ642
H 2
D A643
C 3

South
S 10983
H AQ10
D 2
C A6542

When this hand appeared in a local tournament, many players sitting North opened 2S to show eight playing tricks and received a response of 3S from South. North now generally bid 4D to cue bid the ace and/or to show his second suit and many South players using the 'plain' Blackwood convention immediately investigated, found that North held only one King, and so settled in 6S. As you can see, a grand slam is almost certain. Those South players who were using Key Card Blackwood were able to ascertain that partner held the important cards SK and SQ but most still 'subsided' in 6S, fearing a heart or a club loser.

The grand slam **was** reached at two tables where advanced cue bidding produced the following sequence:

2S – 3S – 4D (1st round control) – 4H(1st round control) – 5H(2nd round control)

The 5H bid improved the value of the South cards and, holding the as yet unbid CA **and** a singleton diamond, South bid the grand slam in spades. This is not a certainty, but North should have a solid 6 or 7 card suit for his opening bid and, having taken the initiative to start a cue bidding sequence and shown second round control of hearts, he is unlikely to have two losing clubs.

What does this tell us in terms of slam bidding methods? First, simple Blackwood is not sufficient. A combination of methods is needed which allows us to find out what we need to know to be able to judge the right level of contract. If all we need to know is the presence of Aces and whether the trump King/Queen is/are held, a Key Card enquiry will suffice. In this case however, South's concern was to find out about possible losers in the side suits and the choice of a cue bid sequence was most likely to reveal the required information.

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