

Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKC), Part 7

Exclusion

We present here the seventh in an occasional series on Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKC). --Steve & Kitty Cooper

We've been saying all along that RKC is both powerful and complicated. As if to prove our point, in a recent Spring Nationals one of the best pairs in the world (Bobby Levin and Steve Weinstein) were on the team that won the premier event, the Vanderbilt Teams, despite using RKC to bid a grand in the final off the ace of trumps. And they won two IMPs for doing so! (The pair in the other room had

a different keycard accident and bid the same grand, but Lew Stansby, looking at the ace of trump and on lead against 7NT if the enemy ran, doubled.)

When great players such as these have a keycard accident you can be pretty sure one of two things has happened: one of them had a void which the other didn't expect or one of them thought that there were two relevant suits whose kings counted.

We will discuss the latter problem in the next installment; today we look at what to do when you have a void and want to ask for keycards.

When you have a void and ask for keycards you want to tell partner not to count

the ace of your void when telling you how many keycards he has. The reason should be obvious – if we're missing one keycard you'd like to know that it's the ace of the suit you're void in before you decide to bid a grand; if we're missing two keycards you want to know that if one of them is the ace of the suit you're void in before you bid a small slam.

The Rule

Here's the black letter rule: Once we have a known trump fit, so that a jump to 4NT would be RKC, a jump above 4NT tells partner to exclude the ace of this suit when answering how many keycards he has. For example, if our suit is spades ... say that the bidding has begun 1♠ - 3♠ ...

a bid of five of a minor or 5♥ tells partner not to count the ace of the minor/hearts; that ace is said to be excluded, so bridge players refer to the jump bid of 5m/♥ as "Exclusion."

There aren't really too many complexities here. It's best to play that a bid is exclusion only if it's both a jump and above 4NT, so that an auction such as 1♠ - 2♥ - 4♦ is not exclusion (assuming that you're playing two over one game forcing it should be a splinter in support of hearts).

There is one special case: 1♥ - 3♥ - 4♠ - it seems to fit the criteria to be exclusion in spades but isn't. For now, please just take our word for it.

Up next: Double RKC.

Basic Bidding I: Hand Evaluation



By Kitty Cooper & Steve Cooper
ScoreCard
D17 Editors

As requested at a recent novice lecture, we are rerunning our bidding series aimed at newer players. --Kitty & Steve

First you need to evaluate your hand to see if it's worth an opening bid. For this you need to count your points starting with your high card points, using the classic 4-3-2-1 count. Subtract a point for a singleton honor lower than ace.

Next count your distributional points – add a point for every additional card after the fourth one in your long suits. This means that a five card suit is worth one extra point and a six card suit is worth two extra points.

Notice that no points are added for short suits when deciding to open. Although we can use them as an adjustment factor,

they are not a source of tricks unless we have a big fit with partner's suit. More on that in a future article in this series.

Basic point count does not provide a complete picture. We recommend the following adjustments: add one point for every two plus factors in your hand, and deduct one point for every two minus factors using the following table.

Plus Factors	Minus Factors
Good supporting intermediates	Short honors
Shortness (in suit auctions)	4-3-3-3 distribution
High cards in long suits	Lots of queens and jacks
Mainly aces and kings	No aces

Let's look at some of these factors individually.

If you are playing in notrump, do you think KJ32 is worth the same four points as KJ109 when partner has two small cards? The first holding will take two tricks

only 25% of the time, while the second holding is a sure thing for two tricks. This is an example of the importance of supporting intermediates.

Now let's look at why short honors are a negative factor. Suppose you're playing in one notrump and dummy has no entries other than ♠Axxxx. Would you rather have ♦KQx or just ♦KQ? The lack of a small card means that you cannot run the suit; short honors can cause you transportation problems when playing a hand. Another problem with short honors is that they are wasted if partner is also short in that suit. Would you rather have AKx or just AK when partner has QJ?

When the opponents bid and raise a suit you know you have just one loser in their suit with a singleton, but with a doubleton you expect to have two.

At the beginning of the auction, therefore, you know a singleton or void is worth something, but the current system of counting points doesn't evaluate it. Try using the plus factor adjustment to give shortness some weight.

If you hold a suit of J7652, you are not as happy to open it as a suit of AK765. That's because it's easier to set up a long suit when you have high cards in it than when you don't. Also if you bid that suit, you will be happier when partner leads it if you have high cards there.

Therefore having high cards in your long suits is another plus factor. The purpose of counting your points is to evaluate your hand's trick-taking potential to get to the right contract. The guidelines of 26 points for game and 33 points for a small slam work very well on balanced hands.

For unbalanced hands, once a fit is established controls plus tricks are what really matter. Therefore more adjustments need to be made in order to improve the accuracy of point count, and these will be covered later in this series.

Remember: point count is not a complete evaluation of your hand. Use plus and minus adjustments to arrive at a more accurate hand value.



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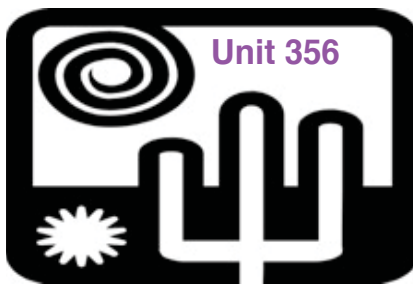
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Unit 356

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1:30 p.m. Stratified pairs (single session)
Stratified 199'er pairs (single session)
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