

## Key Card Blackwood

By Bill Voedisch

We often hear “Do you play 14-30?” as opposed to “30-14,” a question dealing with the first two responses to 4NT if the partnership is playing “Key Card Blackwood” in a suit contract. In this system the K of trump counts as a 5<sup>th</sup> Ace. Many players however do not realize there are other aspects to this system, such as:

- Showing the Q of trump
- Asking for the Q of trump
- Showing specific Kings at the 6 level

### Key Card Blackwood

The partnership has agreed upon a suit. For responses to 4NT we are playing “14-30” as opposed to “30-14,” which basically means that the 5C response shows 1 or 4 key cards and the 5D response shows 3 or zero. (NOTE: The Robots on BBO play 30-14 where 5C shows 3 or zero key cards and 5D shows 1 or 4.)

The Key Card responses then to 4NT are:

- 5C = 1 or 4 key cards, the K of trump counting as a 5<sup>th</sup> Ace or “Key Card”
- 5D = 3 or zero key cards
- 5H = 2 or 5 key cards without the Q of trump
- 5S = 2 or 5 key cards with the Q NOTE that 5H and 5S show 2 **or** 5 keycards.

### Asking for the Q

The next step is asking responder for the Q if responder bids 5C or 5D. If the suit is spades everything is easy. Over either 5C or 5D the 4NT asker bids the next highest suit asking if responder has the Q of trump. If they have the Q they bid their lowest K below the trump suit at the 6 level. This is known as bidding “specific kings” and NOT the number of kings.

If responder does not have the Q they return to the trump suit, in this case 5S.

If responder has the Q but they hold no K below the agreed upon suit, the bid 6 of the suit.

What if the trump suit is hearts and to 4NT responder bids 5D? Now the next highest suit is hearts. The 4NT bidder can’t ask for the Q unless they have a really strong hand, and they are

interested in a grand slam. Here if the asker bids 5S they are asking for the Q. If responder has the Q they bid their lowest K below the heart suit at the 6 level.

If they have the Q but no lower K, they bid 7 of the agreed upon suit. Trust partner to have the rest of the hand covered.

#### 5NT asking for Kings

If the asker bids 5NT it is asking for kings, NOT the number of kings but again, responder's lowest K below the trump suit at the 6 level. Again, this is bidding "specific kings."

#### The Final "Ask"

Either because of a "Q ask" or in response to 5NT, responder bids 6C, his lowest K below the trump suit. If the asker now bids 6D this "asks" for the K of dimes. "Partner, you have the K of clubs, do you also have the K of dimes?" If responder has the K of dimes they bid 7 of the agreed upon suit.

If they don't have the K of dimes, the bid 6 of the suit.

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**DANGER:** Do NOT bid 4NT Key Card Blackwood if the trump suit is hearts and you hold *only 1* Key Card. If partner responds 5S showing 2 with the Q, you are forced to bid 6H off 2 key cards.

Ooops!