

Confusion Key Card Blackwood (Oops, I Mean Exclusion KCB)

One of the problems associated with any kind of Ace-asking bid is what to do when you have a void. Rather than using normal Blackwood or Roman KeyCard Blackwood (RKC) one probably tries splinters, cuebids, and/or bidding around the void hoping that partner will get the proper message. Rather than go to those lengths some bridge players just go ahead and use Blackwood or RKC with a void but then they are never sure what to do when they are missing a KeyCard or an Ace. To tell the truth it rather irritates me when they get lucky and it works out for them. Of course I'm really just jealous because I KNOW it wouldn't work if I tried it.

Exclusion Roman KeyCard Blackwood (EKB) is an extension of the Roman KeyCard Blackwood convention and is a solution to this problem. The idea is to show a void while exploring for the possibility of a slam. Some bridge players still refer to this convention as Voidwood.

Instead of the normal 4NT-asking bid, KeyCard-asking is initiated by a jump to the five level in your void suit. (It's usually best that a fit has been established before trying this out!) This five-level bid becomes the KeyCard-asking bid and the responses start with the next suit up the line and include both notrump and the trump suit as possible responses. You can use either the 1430 or the 0314 version of RKC. In effect you are asking your partner to answer KeyCards but to exclude in the answer the Ace of the suit you just bid. The following example shows how it works:

| <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> | <u>Auction:</u> | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> | <u>Opener</u> | <u>Responder</u> |
| AKJ853 | Q642 | 1S | 3S (limit raise) |
| KQJ76 | A5 | 5C (1) | 5D (2) or 5H (3) |
| K4 | 10765 | 6S | |
| - | A3 | | |

- (1) KeyCard-asking excluding the club Ace
- (2) One KeyCard (excluding the Ace of clubs) playing RKC 1430
- (3) One KeyCard (excluding the Ace of clubs) playing RKC 0314

As you can see had responder not held the Ace of hearts, the answer would be zero KeyCards in whichever version you are playing.

Whenever you start to play a new convention or treatment you and your partner are likely to have a couple of disasters before you get the kinks out. The following two hands are such an indication. They occurred in a recent club game and the perpetrators were the subject of good-natured teasing at the pizza parlor later.

| | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|------|-------------------------------------|------|--------|------|
| Hand 1: | North | | Dealer: South | | | |
| | KQ852 | | Vul: None | | | |
| | A872 | | | | | |
| | 92 | | Auction: | | | |
| | 106 | | South | West | North | East |
| West | | East | 1H | 2C | 3C (1) | Pass |
| 7 | | J109 | 3D | Pass | 3S | Pass |
| J10 | | 63 | 6H (2) | | | |
| J75 | | Q864 | (1) Limit raise or better in hearts | | | |
| AKQJ873 | | 9542 | (2) Sort of a stab in the twilight. | | | |
| | South | | | | | |
| | A643 | | | | | |
| | KQ954 | | | | | |
| | AK103 | | | | | |
| | -- | | | | | |

As you can see the North-South hands are pretty icy for either 7H or 7S. So in the ensuing conversation the North-South pair discussed whether or not they were playing EKB. They agreed that they were. With that agreement now firmly in place this was their very next hand in the next round.

| | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|------|---|-----------|------|-------|
| Hand 2: | North | | Dealer: East | | | |
| | QJ954 | | Vul: North-South | | | |
| | KQ97 | | | | | |
| | AK72 | | Auction: | | | |
| | -- | | East | South | West | North |
| West | | East | Pass | 1NT (1) | Pass | 2C |
| 3 | | 862 | Pass | 2S | Pass | 5C(2) |
| 8432 | | 1065 | Pass | Pass!!(3) | Pass | |
| QJ83 | | 1064 | | | | |
| KQ103 | | AJ62 | (1) Weak 12-14 | | | |
| | South | | (2) EKB as agreed upon on previous board! | | | |
| | AK107 | | (3) Out to lunch??? | | | |
| | AJ | | | | | |
| | 95 | | | | | |
| | 98754 | | | | | |

Quite obviously this was not a huge success. But while this gave the North-South pair a zero they at least got the experience of playing EKB and now have one of their expected disasters out of the way.

There are a few cautions associated with EKB.

(1) Problems may well arise should you attempt to use EKB after minor suit agreement. Here many jump bids would be splinter bids and not EKB. Cuebidding may work better in this situation. I suggest you discuss it with your partner and perhaps postpone playing EKB over minors for awhile.

(2) After the heart suit has been agreed upon as trump, an unusual jump to 4S should likely be considered EKB even though it's not at the five level. For example: 1H – 2H – 4S.

(3) If the opponents are kind enough to double an EKB bid, there are two other responses now available. Pass = 0, Redouble = 1 and the next step = 2, etc.

(4) It is possible to use EKB after a Texas transfer but not without specific agreement beforehand.

(5) Please note that some people play different responses to the EKB bid...like 1st step=0, 2nd step=1, 3rd step=2, etc. It's always best to check with a new partner!

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