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Slam Bidding

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General

Slam Bidding is one of the most difficult parts of constructive bidding for most bridge players. Good slam bidding requires players to constantly evaluate and re-evaluate their hands based on the changing information that they receive as the auction progresses. It also requires players to think about how the play is going to go during the auction. This means that being able to visualize partner's hand (and sometimes the hands of the opponents) is vital to determining if we should bid slam or not. *A good slam auction starts long before a 4NT ace-asking bid.*

General Slam Bidding Tools and Concepts

- Keycard (Ace Asking Bids)
 - When we know that slam is a good idea, but we want to make sure we are not off two likely losers – “To keep us out of bad slams!”
 - Unilateral decision-making process!
- Control-Showing Bids
 - Find out about control of each suit.
 - Always have fit first!
 - Partnership Control Bidding style – 1st only (American), 1st or 2nd (Italian), or blend.
 - Modern Exception – in partner's suit, cuebid Ace or King, not shortness.
 - Cooperative decision-making process!
- Power (Points)
 - HCP slams are usually bid in balanced hand auctions where we cannot easily count tricks; we just know that we have enough honors to make it likely we will be able to take 12 or 13 tricks, so we bid a slam more on principle than knowledge.
 - At least 33 points for a small slam and at least 36 points for a grand slam.
- Tricks (Winners vs. Losers)
 - Most slams we bid are about visualizing tricks, counting winners (or losers).
- Evaluate and Reevaluate – what good bridge players do all the time!
- Slam tries below game show mild interest; slam tries beyond game show serious extras.



Balanced Hand Slam Auctions

- Look for fit first. If no fit, then look for slam based on strength (Power).
- Slam Bidding Tools
 - Quantitative – Invite a slam (involve partner in the decision.)
 - Gerber – Stay out of bad slams (1430 Gerber combines both Quantitative and Aces).
 - 1430 Gerber a combination of both of these.

Showing a Fit and a Good Hand After Partner Opens the Bidding with 1-Suit

- *Major Suit Fits*
 - Jacoby 2NT – Forcing Raise
 - Splinters – shortness allows us to re-evaluate our hand.
- *Minor Suit Fits*
 - Inverted Minors – Forcing Raise
 - Splinters – Shortness allows us to re-evaluate.
- Keycard Blackwood – When there is a fit, *“The trump suit King and Queen are important cards!”*
 - 4NT Keycard (1430) – 4NT is rarely a good contract to play.
 - Minorwood Keycard – 4m is rarely a good contract to play.

2/1 Game Forcing Auctions

- Location of honors
 - Fitting cards (honors) in partner’s suit take on additional value. Soft honors (Queens and Jacks) in side suits become less valuable.
- Double Fits
 - Hands with two fits take a lot of tricks, even without many HCP.
- Fast Arrival
 - Jumping to game in our suit is the weakest action in a game forcing auction and showing support at the 3-level is stronger and shows slam interest (extra values).
- Shape Showing vs. Cuebidding
 - In 2/1 GF auctions where we find a fit at the 2-level, we use the 3-level to further describe our shape and we use the 4-level to cuebid our controls. This allows for better visualization of partner’s hand.

Competitive Auctions

- Splinters in the opponents’ suit show slam interest.
- When there is no space below game, a cuebid of the opponents’ suit may be our only slam try, not promising a control in their suit.
- Find a fit and communicate that to partner first, then try for slam.
- Honors in the opponents’ suit are generally bad for slam.