



5th EDITION

**ROMAN
KEYCARD
BLACKWOOD**

THE FINAL WORD

EDDIE KANTAR



MASTER POINT PRESS
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I also want to thank Linda Lee, Ron Bishop, and Roy Hughes for helpful suggestions.

And I mustn't forget my wife, Yvonne, who went over every chapter organizing the headings, forcing me to shorten sentences that never ended, and ended by asking me intelligent keycard questions. We already play some of this stuff, and now maybe we can play a little more! Who would have thunk it? I just read this to her and her comment was, "‘Thunk’, after all of my corrections?"

Finally, I must tell you that Howie Weinstein, a world-class player, has moved to Los Angeles. Sort of. He lives here six months a year and happens to be a very good table tennis player so we often play... and discuss bridge during the timeouts. Naturally, I run my keycard ideas by him to see what he thinks. He has a practical approach to the game and agreed that many of the ideas were sound, but feared there could be a memory overload with a few of them. I took this into consideration. Idly, I asked him how many pages of notes he and his partner, Steve Garner, have. He said they used to have 200, but it now logs in at 350!

Eddie Kantar

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

It's been four years since the last edition of this book saw the light of day. Things have changed. Many more partnerships are playing RKB (Roman Keycard Blackwood) and I've noticed, happily, that many more strong partnerships throughout the world now use 1430 responses to keycard asks as opposed to 3014 responses. But I'm still not satisfied. I still think the optimum way to use this convention is to use both sets of responses. In fact, I'm sure of it. Knowing when an RKB ask requires 1430 as opposed to 3014 responses is basically a no-brainer as you will see in the first chapter. Once you start using both sets of responses, you'll see how much easier slam bidding can be.

So how is this edition different from the last? The asks have been simplified so that now even I can remember them! When one starts changing things to improve or even simplify, sometimes it's tough to remember the 'latest' changes. I'm sure you've been there!

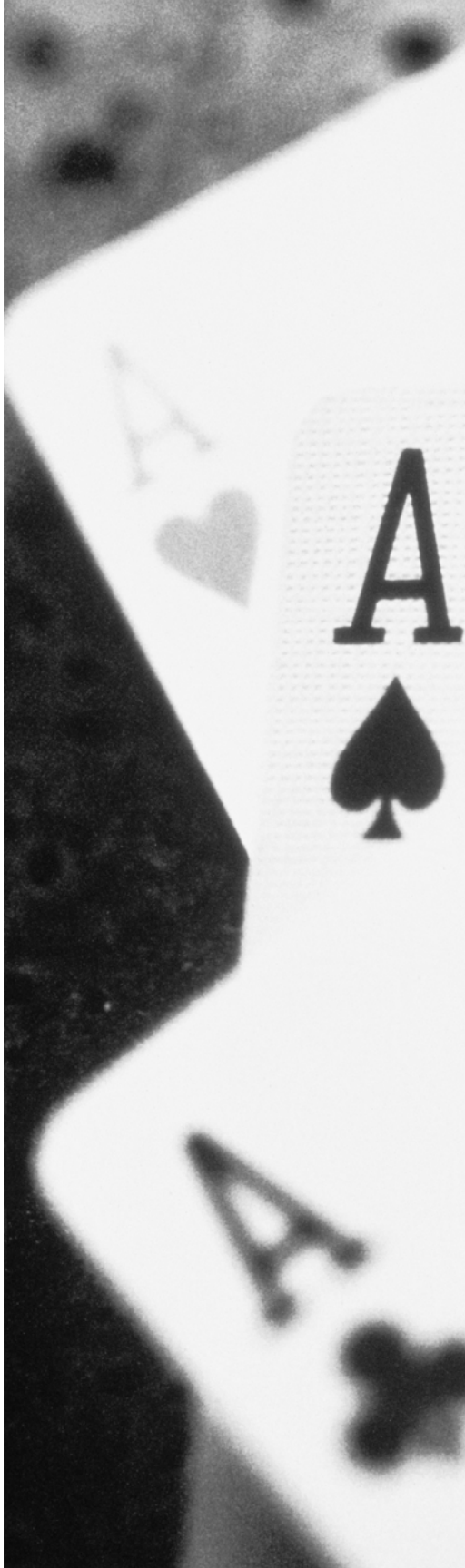
New example hands abound and some of the old ones now feature a slightly different bidding approach. (I hate to get to the wrong contract in consecutive editions!)

Clearly, the second half of the book dealing with RKB asks after minor-suit agreement requires a certain amount of expertise. When you start flirting with keycard asks that start as low as 4♣ or 4♦, and could be 4♥ or 4♠, you and your partner must be in sync. The good news is that 4♣ and 4♦ dominate minor-suit keycard asks and give you more bidding space for further asks. Our formerly beloved 4NT is now demoted mainly to major-suit agreement auctions.

So how can you best use this book? If you don't have a regular partner, you can't; don't even try. You can learn the asks and responses backwards and forwards, but if your partner isn't secure with them, multiple disasters are in your future. Let's assume you have a willing and expert or near-expert partner, what should you do? You should each have a copy of the book and a red pencil. You want to underline the agreements that you decide to play. Nobody is going to want to play everything suggested here. In fact, if you play half of what is suggested, I will be flattered. The idea is to pick and choose and use what blends in with your methods. As is mentioned in the book, 'Even a bad agreement is better than no agreement'. Much better.

I feel much more confident about slam bidding after having written this book, and I hope you will as well. Keycard comments and questions (easy ones that I can answer) can be sent to me at kantarbridge@gmail.com.

Eddie Kantar



THE BASICS

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

TWICE THE FUN — TWO KEYCARD ASKS!

You and your partner have agreed upon a trump suit and someone wants to ask for aces. Not just aces any more! From now on you will be asking for *keycards*. What is a keycard? The four aces and the king of the agreed suit are keycards. Suddenly there are *five* keycards. And let's not forget the queen of the agreed suit, but we'll save that for the next chapter.

Now that you have five keycards to deal with, how do you answer a Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKB) ask? Assume that the ask is 4NT, which is what it will be after major-suit agreement. After minor-suit agreement, you don't want to know what the ask is just yet.

Throughout this book we will be using two sets of responses to an RKB ask: 1430 and 3014. There is good reason to do this, as you will see.

RESPONSES TO A 1430 ASK

These are the responses you will be using most of the time. Think 'fourteen-thirty'.

- 5♣, the first step = 1 or 4 (the 'fourteen')
- 5♦, the second step = 3 or 0 (the 'thirty')
- 5♥, the third step = 2 (or 5) without the queen of the agreed suit
- 5♠, the fourth step = 2 (or 5) with the queen of the agreed suit.

Note: If you have '2' keycards without the queen, but know that your side has a ten-card trump fit, respond 5♠, telling partner you have the queen. If partner has the queen, partner won't think you are lying, but rather that you know of a ten-card trump fit.

RESPONSES TO A 3014 ASK

These are the responses you will be using after you, the opener, have shown a strong hand and partner asks *you* for keycards. Think ‘thirty-fourteen’.

- 5♣ = 3 or 0 (the ‘thirty’)
- 5♦ = 1 or 4 (the ‘fourteen’)
- 5♥ = 2 (or 5) without the queen of the agreed suit.
- 5♠ = 2 (or 5) with the queen of the agreed suit.

As you can see, the 5♥ and 5♠ responses are the same, but the 5♣ and 5♦ responses are interchanged. So what’s the big deal? The quick answer is that using both asks increases the number of 5♣ responses, responses which *greatly* simplify further asks, particularly the queen-ask.

Note: A ‘5’ keycard response (meaning the asker didn’t have a single keycard!) is so rare that it will not be included in any further listing. Also ‘2’ without the queen or ‘2’ with the queen will be referred to as ‘2 without’ or ‘2 with’.

When responder bids 5♣ or 5♦, there is some ambiguity in the answer. However, the alternative keycard holdings for each of these responses differ by 3. It is assumed that a player of your caliber will know from the bidding which number partner has. If your partner has trouble differentiating, gin rummy is a viable option.

1430 OR 3014?

OK, let’s say there has been suit agreement and you decide to ask for keycards via 4NT. How do you know which ask you are making? And equally important, how does partner know which set of responses to use?

There are two rules which determine which ask it is:

- (1) When the *opener* asks, it is always a 1430 ask. Is that easy enough?
- (2) When the *responder* asks, it is also a 1430 ask most of the time. Only if opener has shown ‘extras’ does it morph into a 3014 ask, an ask that generates many 5♣ responses.

The following bids indicate that the opener has shown extras:

- a. Any opening bid that immediately shows extra strength such as 1♣ or 2♣, artificial and strong, an opening bid of 1NT (15-17 or stronger), or a natural 2NT opening bid.
- b. A jump shift, a jump raise, a splinter jump, a jump in the original suit, a jump in notrump or bidding two suits and then making a third-round jump. ‘Fast arrival’ jumps are not included in this category.
- c. A reverse after a *one*-level response.

Your entire bridge life you have played these bids as showing extras, so there is nothing new here. If the opener doesn't make any of the listed opening bids or rebids, the opener is considered to have a minimum opening bid and responds 1430 to an RKB ask.

EXTRAS OR NO EXTRAS?

Inevitably sequences may pop up that a pair might wish to add to their extras list. Go for it! Here are a few teasers:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♦
2♠/3♣	3♠
4♠	4NT?

Is opener showing extras by bidding 3♣ (called a 'high reverse' by some) after a *two-level* response, particularly after a game-forcing two-level response? If the answer is an *unqualified* yes, 4NT is a 3014 ask. If the answer is 'it may not', then 4NT is a 1430 ask.

In a similar vein:

Opener	Responder
1♠	2NT (Jacoby)
3NT/4♣/4♦	4NT?

Is opener showing extras after any of these rebids? If the answer is 'yes', 4NT is a 3014 ask. If the answer is 'maybe not', then 4NT is a 1430 ask.

When the opener asks (always 1430), the assumption is that the *opener has a decent hand* and *rarely, very rarely*, will have fewer than two keycards. Therefore, a 5♣ response to a 1430 ask, showing '1' or '4', will show '1' 98% of the time. (If opener does ask with '1', opener must have the agreed suit queen as well.)

What about when the responder asks and gets a 5♣ response to a 3014 ask? A 3014 ask means a strong hand is being asked, so clearly '3', not 'zero' keycards are being shown. Similarly when the response is 5♦, '4' is light years more likely than '1'.

WHEN OPENER DOES THE ASKING (THINK 1430)

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♣
2♥	3♠
4NT?	

3♠ is a splinter and 4NT is RKB, hearts agreed. Since opener is asking it is *automatically* a 1430 ask.

ADVANCED

SLAM BIDDING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

This is the fifth (and according to the author, the very last – but don't hold your breath!) edition of what is acknowledged to be the definitive book on a convention used by every serious player. Completely revised and updated from its previous version, this edition contains even more leading-edge ideas, and is full of examples, quizzes and practice hands. A must for the tournament player.

Features include:

- Why you should play 1430 *and* 3014 RKB responses, and when
- The extensions of RKB: the queen-ask, the specific king-ask, and more
- How to handle voids, as asker or responder
- RKB in minor-suit auctions
- 60 practice hands for you to bid with your favorite partner
- and many more

This is the only book that explains every facet of one of the most popular conventions in modern bridge.



EDDIE KANTAR (Santa Monica, California) is one of the most popular and prolific bridge writers in the world. A winner of two World Championships and member of the Bridge Hall of Fame, his previous books include *Modern Bridge Defense*, *Advanced Bridge Defense*, and the hilarious *Kantar on Kontract*.

