

Exclusion Blackwood

 bridgebum.com/exclusion_blackwood.php

Exclusion Blackwood (aka Voidwood) is a variation of Roman Keycard Blackwood. It may arise when a player wants to ask for key cards while holding a void. The convention was created by the late American world champion Bobby Goldman.

After a trump suit is agreed, jumping to another suit at the 4- or 5-level says "Partner, I have a void in this suit. I'm interested in slam, and I don't care if you hold the ace of this suit. Please show me how many key cards you hold excluding this ace."

For example:

Opener	Responder
1♥	3♥
4♠	

Here, 4♠ shows a spade void. It asks partner to show key cards excluding the spade ace.

Another example, this time at the 5-level:

Opener	Responder
1♠	3♠
5♦	

Opener's 5♦ bid shows a void in diamonds, and asks responder for key cards excluding the diamond ace.

Responder's Bids

Exclusion Blackwood uses step responses. The specific steps depend on whether the partnership employs 1430 RKC or 0314 RKC. If playing 1430, the responses are as follows.

Overcall	Meaning
1st step	1 or 4 keycards
2nd step	3 or 0 keycards
3rd step	2 keycards without the trump queen
4th step	2 keycards with the trump queen

If playing 0314 RKC, then the 1st and 2nd steps are simply flipped.

Examples of 1430 step responses:

Opener	Responder
1♥	3♥
4♠	4NT

4NT is the 1st step available, and therefore shows 1 or 4 key cards.

Opener	Responder
1♦	3♦
4♥	5♣

5♣ is the 3rd step available, so it shows 2 key cards without the trump queen.

Asking for the Trump Queen

After hearing partner's reply, it is possible to ask her for the trump queen. This is done by making the cheapest bid outside of the trump suit. For example:

Opener	Responder
1♣	3♣
4♠	4NT
5♦	

Partner's 4NT showed 1 or 4 key cards. The 5♦ bid is the cheapest rebid outside the trump suit (clubs).

Partner's responses to the queen ask are the same as regular RKC.

Response	Meaning
Bidding the trump suit	No trump queen
5NT	The trump queen, but no side kings (the king of the excluded suit doesn't count)
Bidding any non-trump suit	The trump queen AND the king of that suit

Examples

The following examples assume a 2/1 game-forcing system with 1430 RKC.

West	East
♠ A43	♠ —
♥ AKQ932	♥ JT8
♦ 53	♦ AKJ842
♣ 87	♣ AKQ3

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♦ (1)	2 ♠
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♠ (2)	Pass
5 ♥ (3)	Pass	7 ♥	All Pass

1. Game-forcing
2. Exclusion Blackwood
3. 2 key cards with the queen of trumps

West	East
♠ AKT982	♠ J65
♥ KQJ	♥ A52
♦ AKQ5	♦ 97
♣ —	♣ Q9532

West	North	East	South
2 ♣ (1)	Pass	2 ♦ (2)	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
5 ♣ (3)	Pass	5 ♦ (4)	Pass
5 ♥ (5)	Pass	5 ♠ (6)	Pass
6 ♠	All Pass		

1. Strong, artificial
2. Waiting
3. Exclusion Blackwood
4. 1 or 4 key cards
5. Do you have the queen of trumps?
6. No

In Competition

Partnerships should discuss Exclusion Blackwood in competition. For example:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥	3♠
4♠			

Is 4♠ simply a cuebid showing a 1st-round control? This warrants discussion.

Another possibility is that the opponents double or overcall the Exclusion Blackwood bid. In that case, response treatments like DEPO, DOPI and ROPI must be used.

An example of DEPO in action:

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	3♥	Dbl
4♠	5♣		

Over 5♣, responder's pass shows an odd number of keycards (1 or 3).

Other Considerations

Lastly, it's worth agreeing whether to use Exclusion Blackwood in conjunction with cuebids or splinter bids. For example:

Opener	Responder
1♥	2♥
4♣	

Is 4♣ a splinter? Since 5♣ could theoretically be used as Exclusion Blackwood, it may be possible to play both conventions. Again, this needs partnership agreement.

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