

## ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD & DOPI

By Maritha Pottenger

For more precision in bidding good slams (and avoiding bad ones), it is helpful to use Roman Key Card Blackwood. If you and your partner agree to play RKC, then when you use 4NT to ask for Aces, your partner responds in terms of 5 key cards: the 4 Aces and the King of trump. Note: **you MUST have trump agreement to use this bid.** As an example, 1S-P-3S-P-4NT. The agreed upon suit is spades. So answer 4NT in terms of the 4 aces and the King of spades. Some people make an agreement that jumping to 4NT agrees to the last bid suit as trump. [This is NOT standard. Standard would be that there is NOT suit agreement, so 4NT is REGULAR BLACKWOOD—no Key Cards.] 1H-P-1S-P-2D-4NT. The last-bid suit is diamonds, so that is the agreed-upon trump suit ONLY IF YOU AND YOUR PARTNER AGREE TO PLAY IT THAT WAY. You will answer in terms of the 4 aces and King of diamonds.

The step responses are as follows:

**5 clubs (first step):** 1 or 4 key cards  
**5 diamonds (second step):** 0 or 3 key cards  
**5 hearts (third step):** 2 or 5 key cards WITHOUT the queen of trump  
**5 spades (fourth step):** 2 or 5 key cards WITH the queen of trump

*Please note: some people use a different system of RKC, in which they reverse the meaning of the first and second steps. Check this out with your partner when you agree to put RKC on your convention card!! The steps as listed above are called “1430” or “fourteen-thirty” whereas the people who reverse the steps play “3014” or “thirty-fourteen.”*

Also note: if an answer of two key cards and the queen of trump (5S) will take you too high (if, say your trump suit is hearts and you wanted to sign off in 5H), you cannot afford to ask. Don't bid 4NT!

If the trump suit is hearts or spades, **you can ask about the trump queen** if your partner makes the cheapest possible response. For example: 1S-P-3S-P-4NT-P-5D-P- 5 hearts (the cheapest possible bid you can make) asks partner if s/he has the trump queen. Without it, partner should sign off in 5S. With it, partner should bid 6S. (Some people also show the number of kings “along the way” since they are bidding 6S anyway.) Another example: 1H-P-4NT-P-5C (showing 1 or 4 key cards)-P- 5 diamonds (cheapest possible bid you can make) asks partner to bid 6H with trump queen and to sign off at 5H without the trump queen. (6C would show King of clubs and queen of trump; 6D shows King of diamonds and queen of trump.) **If you have a known 10-card fit, you may say you have the queen even when you don't (as queen is very likely to fall)!**

Note: **You should not be using this ace-asking sequence (or any other) when you have a void.** Figure out some way to start a cue-bidding sequence!

### COPING WITH INTERFERENCE OVER YOUR ACE-ASKING SEQUENCES

Sometimes the opponents get in your way when you are asking about Aces. The most common system to cope with that is to bid what is called “**DOPI**” at the 5 level (and DEPO at the 6 level). DOPI is an acronym for “Double” with 0 aces; Pass with one ace (hence the name DOPI), and bid up the line thereafter. If partner asks you for aces and they bid 5D, double with zero aces, pass with one, bid 5H with 2 aces and bid 5S with 3 aces.

**When opponents interfere at the six level (or past your trump suit at the 5 level), go to DEPO:** double with even and pass with odd. Double shows 0, 2 or 4 aces. Pass shows 1 or 3 aces.

Some people agree to use DOPI principles with Roman Key Card steps--provided there is at least ONE suit between 5 of your trump suit and the opponents' bid. So, when in hearts, if opponents bid 5C, DOUBLE (1<sup>st</sup> step) is 1 or 4 Key card; 5D (2<sup>nd</sup> step) is 0 or 3 Key Cards; 5H (3<sup>rd</sup> step) is 2 or 5 without the queen and 5S is 2 or 5 with the queen of trumps. If opponents bids are just below 5 of your trump suit, or higher, you use DEPO and double with 0, 2, or 4 and pass with 1, 3, or 5.