



Ken Rexford

**VARIABLE
KEY CARD
BLACKWOOD**

AN HONORS eBOOK FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

Text © 2012 Ken Rexford

All rights reserved

Honors eBooks is an imprint of Master Point Press. All contents, editing and design (excluding cover design) are the sole responsibility of the author.

Master Point Press
331 Douglas Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5M 1H2
(416) 781-0351

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

ISBN: 978-1-55494-529-0

Layout and Editing: Ken Rexford
Cover Design: Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	7
Variable Key Card Blackwood Opposite Limited Partners -- WKCB.....	13
When Does Weak Key Card Blackwood Come Up? 15	
Opposite a Passed Hand	15
Opposite a Preempt.....	16
Opposite an Otherwise Limited Partner	16
Opposite a Fast Arrival Bid	16
Advanced -- Cuebidding Limitations Already Set 17	
Expanding WKCB to include Three Key Card Option?	17
Using Weak Key Card Blackwood	19
Basic Replies Without Maximum Holding	19
Continuation if Showing 0 Key Cards (5♦ Reply).....	22
Alternative #1: Inverting 5NT and Fast Arrival	23
Alternative #2: Specific Kings Directly	24
Alternative #3: Ultra-Weak Replier	24
Alternative #4: Showing a Void.....	26
Asking for the Trump Jack?.....	27
Continuation if Showing 1 Key Card (5♣ Reply).....	28
Specific Request for an Ace plus the Trump Queen	29
Asking for the Trump Jack?.....	31

Continuations After Two Key Cards but No Queen -- 5♥ or 5♠	31
Replying with the Maximum Holding (Two with the Queen).....	33
Using WKCB When Spades Not Agreed -- Kickback WKCB	35
The Basic Answers "Kicked Back"	35
Hearts Agreed.....	36
Diamonds Agreed -- Kickback Version.....	36
Clubs Agreed -- Kickback Version.....	37
Diamonds Agreed -- 1-2-4 Version	38
Clubs Agreed -- 1-2-4 Version.....	38
Optional: The Specific Kings and 5NT "Kicked Back".....	39
Hearts Agreed -- 4♠ Kickback Reply with Two and the Queen.....	40
Diamonds Agreed -- 4♥ Kickback Reply with Two and the Queen	40
Clubs Agreed -- 4♦ Kickback Reply with Two and the Queen.....	41
1-2-4 Reply with Two and the Queen	41
Auctions for Discussion	43
Examples With Passed Hand Responder	43
Example 1-1	44
Example 1-2	47
Example 1-3	49
Examples After Preempts	51
Example 2-1	51

Example 2-2	54
Example 2-3	55
Examples if Partner Otherwise Already Limited ..	57
Example 3-1	57
Example 3-2	59
Example 3-3	60
Example 3-4	61
Example 3-5	63
Examples After Fast Arrival.....	64
Example 4-1	64
Examples After Cuebidding Has Already Set Limitations.....	66
Example 5-1	66
Variable Key Card Blackwood Opposite Very Strong Partners -- SKCB	71
When Does This Come Up?.....	75
Opposite a Strong Opening Bid.....	75
After A Strong Rebid.....	76
After a Strong Jump Shift by Responder.....	76
After a Strong 1NT Opening and Super-Accept ...	76
After Serious 3NT	77
After Promising a Solid Trump Suit.....	77
After Already Cuebidding Two Key Cards	78
Example 6-1	78
Example 6-2	80
Opposite a Weak Partner	80
Using Strong Key Card Blackwood.....	83

After Three Key Cards (One <i>Additional</i> Key Card)	84
Optional Variation #1 -- Showing Another Major Card	84
Optional Variation #2 -- Showing Another Major Card With the Trump Queen	88
Optional Variation #3 -- Showing Two Major Cards	89
The 5♥ and 5♠ Replies	90
5♥ and 5♠ With Four Key Cards, No Trump Queen	91
5♥ and 5♠ with One Key Card	91
After Two Key Cards	92
Some Auctions with Strong Key Card Blackwood	93
Example 7-1	93
Example 7-2	96
Example 7-3	98
Example 7-4	99
Example 7-5	101
Example 7-6	103
Expanding VKCB into Other Auctions -- MKCB	105
MKCB Replies	107
Some Examples Using MKCB	111
Example 8-1	111
Example 8-2	114
Example 8-3	115
Special Considerations	119

When Ace-Asking for Minors by Two Above.....	119
Exclusion Sequences	119
VKCB Gerber?	120
Immediate-Answer VKCB	120
Handling Interference.....	121

Introduction

Roman Key Card Blackwood (and "1430" for that matter) is fundamentally flawed. We can fix it.

RKCB suffers from several flaws. First of all, it is inefficient. The structure of responses allows space to unwind hands with three key cards, four key cards, and even five key cards. This makes little sense. For one thing, in many sequences it is impossible for the person answering RKCB to have three or more key cards, with obvious examples being a hand that did not open, a preemptive hand, and a hand that made a simple non-forcing raise. Additionally, one general principle of sound slam bidding is that the stronger hand usually asks the questions, meaning that the person answering usually does not have three or more key cards. When is the last time you actually did have 3+ key cards in reply to RKCB?

A second flaw is that RKCB can be redundant. If you have already shown the diamond Ace in a cuebidding sequence, then why do you need to confirm that card as a key card in response to RKCB? With bidding space at a premium, it seems redundant and inefficient to have a slam auction where you show the diamond Ace twice.

A third flaw is more subtle, but simply put the trump Ace and the trump King are not truly equals, and yet RKCB does not allow you to distinguish which key cards you hold. Consider three possible hands responding to RKCB, with spades as trumps:

♠ A J 10 x x	♥ A x x	♦ x x	♣ x x x
♠ A K J 10 x	♥ x x x	♦ x x	♣ x x x
♠ K J 10 x x	♥ A x x	♦ x x	♣ x x x

BEYOND ROMAN KEY CARD BLACKWOOD!

Easley Blackwood introduced and developed the Blackwood Convention. Eddie Kantar then expanded the Blue Team's Roman Blackwood into the Roman Key Card Blackwood that has dominated expert circles for the past half century. *Variable Key Card Blackwood* may be the next logical step. VKCB allows partnerships to address many problems that neither Blackwood nor Roman Key Card Blackwood solves, while keeping the auction low enough to avoid bad slams. And, better yet, it is relatively easy to use.

Suppose you have enough power for slam but only the J732 in trumps, in support of partner's five-card suit. You also know that partner has only one of the top three honors. If the honor is the ace, the slam seems good. If it is the king, the slam is not so good. Using VKCB, partner can tell you which honor he has. What about holding 8732? Now you need partner specifically to have the ace and the jack. VKCB has a solution for that problem as well. In fact, you might also find out about a particular side king, all before committing to a slam and without any cuebidding. VKCB solves your problem without going past the safety of the five-level.



KEN REXFORD (Ohio) is a Master Point Press author known for his contributions to bidding theory. His first book, *Cuebidding at Bridge*, introduced the bridge world to a modern approach to Italian cuebidding. His most recent books for Master Point Press are *Modified Italian Canapé System*, *New Frontiers for Strong Forcing Openings*, *Really Unusual Notrump (R.U.N.T.)*, and *Overcalling Opponent's 1NT*.

