



Two-Over-One

by Eric Rodwell

More About Showing Controls

When the partnership has agreed on a trump suit and is interested in exploring for slam, it is sometimes necessary to exchange information about specific *first-round controls*—aces and voids—and *second-round controls*—kings and singletons.

Once the trump suit is agreed, the bid of another suit initiates the *control-showing process*. It continues until the partnership returns to the agreed trump suit, jumps to slam, or bids Blackwood. The partnership can use the following guidelines:

GUIDELINES ON SHOWING CONTROLS

- 1) Once the control-showing process is initiated, partner is expected to cooperate below the game level, even with a minimum hand.
- 2) Controls are rarely shown if they take the partnership beyond game.
- 3) Both first and second-round controls can be shown.
- 4) Controls are typically shown 'up the line.'
- 5) Controls are not shown in the trump suit. Blackwood is used to check on the total number of aces and kings held by the partnership.

In the last issue, we discussed the first two guidelines. Let's consider the others.

Showing First-Round and Second-Round Controls

Although some partnerships prefer to always show first-round controls ahead of second-round controls, this wastes space, especially if a second-round control could be shown below game, while showing a first-round control would go beyond the security of game. **It is generally safe to show a second-round control below game**, because Blackwood is still available to check that the partnership isn't missing too many aces.

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ A K 8 7 4	♠ Q 3
♥ J 10 2	♥ A K Q 8 5
♦ K Q 3	♦ 5 4 2
♣ 6 3	♣ A K 8

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥★
3♥	4♣ ← Control Bid
?	

Playing 2/1, responder's 2♥ bid is a marathon bid (★), forcing to game. After hearts have been agreed, responder shows interest in slam by making a control-showing bid of 4♣. Opener now has to decide what to do.

A bid of 4♠ would take the partnership beyond 4♥, so opener does not want to do that with a minimum hand. However, if opener simply bids 4♥, responder will be worried about diamonds and will likely pass.

The auction is much smoother if opener instead shows the second-round diamond control:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥★
3♥	4♣ ← Control Bid
4♦ ← Control Bid	4NT
5♦	6♥
Pass	

Once opener shows a control in diamonds, responder can confident-

ly bid Blackwood to check for aces, knowing the opponents won't take the first two diamond tricks. Responder isn't too concerned that the partnership might be missing both first- and second-round control in spades, since that is opener's first suit.

The partnership can also reach the slam if opener's second-round control in diamonds is a singleton instead of the ♦K.

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ A K J 7 4	♠ Q 3
♥ J 10 2	♥ A K Q 8 5
♦ 3	♦ 5 4 2
♣ Q J 6 3	♣ A K 8

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥★
3♥	4♣ ← Control Bid
4♦ ← Control Bid	4NT
5♦	6♥
Pass	

If the partnership has agreed to show both first- and second-round controls below the level of game, then **bypassing a suit during a control-showing sequence denies a control in that suit**. That would keep the partnership out of trouble if these were the combined hands:

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ A K J 7 4	♠ Q 3
♥ J 10 2	♥ A K Q 8 5
♦ Q 8 3	♦ 5 4 2
♣ Q 3	♣ A K 8

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥★
3♥	4♣ ← Control Bid
4♥	Pass

By going back to the agreed trump suit over responder's 4♣ bid, opener denies either first- or second-round control of diamonds. Responder isn't tempted to bid any more, which is a good thing. The defenders may be able to take the first three diamond tricks.

Controls 'Up the Line'

Controls are usually shown 'up the line'—cheapest first. This helps conserve bidding space and allows partner to draw inferences when a suit is bypassed.

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ A 9	♠ J 2
♥ Q J 9 7 3	♥ K 10 6
♦ A K J 4	♦ Q 5
♣ 8 3	♣ A K Q 7 6 2

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♥	2♣ ★
2♦	2♥
?	

Once responder bids 2♥, the trump suit is agreed. With extra values, opener wants to show interest in slam and has a choice between showing the ♠A or ♦A. Suppose opener were to start with showing the ♦A by bidding diamonds at the three level:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♥	2♣ ★
2♦	2♥
3♦ ← Control Bid	4♣ ← Control Bid
?	

Now it becomes awkward to show the ♠A, since that would take the partnership beyond game. Opener doesn't have enough extra strength to take over and bid Blackwood. But if opener bids 4♥, responder can't go any higher with nothing in spades.

It is much more efficient if opener starts showing controls as cheaply as possible:

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♥	2♣ ★
2♦ ← Control Bid	2♥
2♠ ← Control Bid	3♣ ← Control Bid
3♦ ← Control Bid	4NT
5♥	6♥

By going up the line, opener has shown both the ♠A and the ♦A by the time the auction is at only 3♦. There's plenty of room left for further investigation below game, although by now responder knows opener has spades covered and can take charge, using Blackwood to check on the total number of aces before bidding to slam.

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ 6 4	♠ K 8 5
♥ K Q 9 8 7 3	♥ A 10 6
♦ A Q 5	♦ K J 10 8 3
♣ J 3	♣ K Q

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♥	2♦ ★
2♥	3♥
4♦ ← Control Bid	4♥
Pass	

After hearts are agreed, opener expresses interest in slam by making a control-showing bid of 4♦. Responder has a lot of extra values, but can draw the inference that opener has neither the ♠A nor ♣A, since opener bypassed both suits. Responder settles for game.

Combining Control-Showing Bids with Blackwood

Since control-showing bids pinpoint specific aces and kings, why is there a need for Blackwood?

- Controls are not shown in the trump suit. So Blackwood may be needed to make sure that the partnership holds the ace and/or king in the trump suit.
- Since a control-showing bid may show either first- or second-round control, Blackwood may still be needed to ensure the partnership has enough aces to bid slam.

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ K Q 10 7 6 3	♠ J 9 8
♥ 4	♥ K Q 10 6 5
♦ Q J 5	♦ A K 3
♣ A K J	♣ Q 4

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥ ★
2♠	3♠
4♣ ← Control Bid	4♦ ← Control Bid
4NT	5♦
5♠	Pass

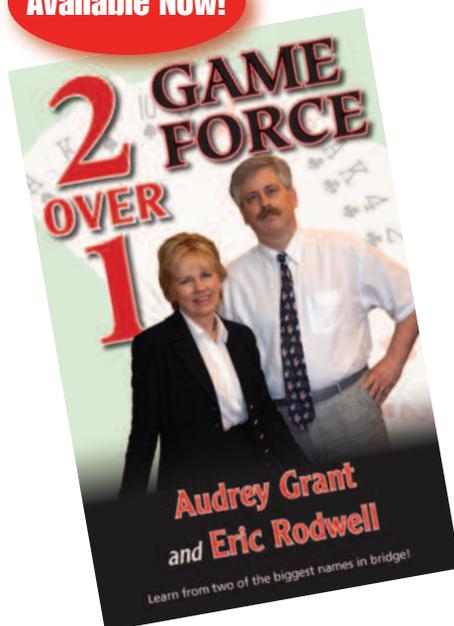
After spades are agreed, opener can't bid Blackwood right away with no control in diamonds. So opener starts a control-showing sequence. Once responder shows a control in diamonds, opener can now bid Blackwood to check on aces. When responder shows only one ace, opener signs off in 5♠. If responder also held either the ♠A or ♥A, the partnership would get to slam.

OPENER	RESPONDER
♠ A K J 8 5 3	♠ Q 7 2
♥ A	♥ K Q J 8 6 4
♦ 8 3 2	♦ K Q
♣ A K 9	♣ Q 6

OPENER	RESPONDER
1♠	2♥ ★
2♠	3♠
4♣ ← Control Bid	4♦ ← Control Bid
4NT	5♣
6♠	Pass

Here responder shows a second-round control in diamonds after opener bids 4♣. Opener now knows the partnership has a control in diamonds, and wants to be in at least a small slam. If responder has the ♦A, opener can visualize a grand slam. Opener uses Blackwood to find out whether responder has the ♦A. When responder shows no aces, opener settles for a small slam. ♠

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