

Preemptive Roman Keycard Blackwood (“Poor Man’s Blackwood”) (“Weak (‘Special’) Roman Keycard Blackwood”)

Although infrequent, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Partner, in 1st or 2nd seat, will open a weak 2-bid or 3-bid finding you, in 3rd or 4th seat, with a hand that, coupled with Partner, holds definite game values and a realistic possibility for a slam-level contract, as well.

“Poor Man’s Blackwood” is a convention used under these circumstances allowing Partner to seek the possibility of a Slam without bypassing the game level in the suit opened by Partner.

Following Opener’s weak opening preempt bid of **2D**, **2H**, **2S**, **3D**, **3H**, or **3S**, a response by Partner of “**4C**,” even if it is not a jump, initiates “*Poor Man’s Blackwood*.” Since Partner’s preempt is very unlikely to have more than two keycards, the responses by Opener are as follows:

The steps are easy to remember --- They are 0-1-1-2-2!

“**4D**” = **no** key cards (**0**)

“**4H**” = **one** key card (**1**)

“**4S**” = **one** key card plus the Queen of the trump suit (**1**)

“**5C**” = **two** key cards without the Queen of the trump suit (**2**), and

“**5D**” = **two** key cards plus the Queen of the trump suit (**2**)

After a response showing zero key cards, the Roman Keycard bidder may ask about the Queen of the trump suit by bidding the next step. Partner, then responds as follows: He/she,

- a) signs off in the agreed-upon suit without the Queen
- b) shows a King if holding the Queen
- c) jumps in the agreed-upon suit if he/she has the Queen with no Kings

The Roman Keycard Blackwood convention does not apply over Partner’s preemptive opening of **3C**, as it is preferable, under these circumstances, that a bid of **4C**, by Responder, remains a *natural response*; i.e., an invitation to a game contract in Clubs.

Therefore, following a preemptive **3C** opening by Partner the “*Preemptive Roman Keycard Blackwood*” initiation bid becomes “**4D**.”

Example: Partner opens **3C** in first position and catches you with the following:

AKxxx AKx KQJ Kx

You bid “**4D**” to ask about keycards and get one of the following responses:

“**4H**” shows 0 keycards - so sign off quickly in **5C**.

“**4S**” shows 0 keycards, with the Queen - again sign off quickly in **5C**.

“**4NT**” shows 1 keycard, without the Queen - either sign-off, or gamble on **6C**.

“**5C**” shows 1 keycard with the Queen - bid **6C**.

“**5D**” shows 2 keycards. A problem hand! Best chance seems to be **6C**.