

## Slam Bidding

Slam bidding constitutes one of the most fascinating aspects of bridge but sadly there appears to be something amiss at top international level:

*"Ironically, the history of world championship matches is studded with failures in the slam zone" - so lamented, the Official Encyclopedia of Bridge (ACBL, 5th. Edition, p.405).*

A detailed study was undertaken in order to examine the problem and find a solution if possible. Analysis revealed that the dismal performance may perhaps be attributed to one or more of the following factors:

- Unavailability of a reliable hand valuation method.
- Wide range of opening bids and hence inability to portray full or nearly full strength of the hand in a one bid.
- Inaccessibility to proper combined strength holding information.
- Limitations of some of the systems in locating key control holdings.

Slam bidding is an art. The art emanates from the bidding system itself. Just as accurate slam bidding is important, in the same way, keeping away from a bad one is equally important. One of the significant features of the Orient Bidding System is its ability to bid a vast majority of slams accurately (and stay from bad ones) under varying circumstances. The unique advantage is due to the System's modified hand evaluation method, points/strength projecting openings bids, combined strength count mechanism and its wide range of sophisticated asking bids, that may start as early as from the second round.

Following hands played in the World Championship (Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup, 1997) appear to lend support to the weakness pointed out by the Encyclopedia.

### Example 1

Board 10; Vul. All; Dir. East

*"Apparently something went wrong in the bidding mechanism here (Closed Room). West has a giant hand opposite a partner who could open the bidding. It is surprising that West was willing to stop in game"*

(WBF Daily Bulletin 3, Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup, 1997)

	North	
	1092	
	Q653	
	J43	
	□ 985	
West		East
AQ5		KJ8764
K7		A4
K		A1085
□ KQJ7643		□ 10
	South	
	3	
	J10982	
	Q9762	
	□ A2	

### Orient Bidding

West	North	East	South
		1	Pass
1NT	Pass	2	Pass
2NT	Pass	3	Pass
3	Pass	3NT	Pass
4NT	Pass	5	Pass
6	All pass		

#### Explanation:

- 1 = 14-15 points, any distribution.
- 1NT = Forcing; indicates combined strength of 25+ points and a game subject to fit.
- 2 = 5+ card natural suit.
- 2NT = Control asking in the bid suit out of AKQ. Indicates fit in opener's natural suit and interest in a slam try.
- 3 = One control.
- 3 = Check asking, first or second round.
- 3NT = Check confirming.
- 4NT = Ace asking.
- 5 = Two of the same color, either red or black.
- 6 = Final contract.

#### Justification:

Combined strength within the slam zone (31-32 points), at least 5-3 trump fit, top 3 trump controls, three first round controls and protected K and K (two red aces - responder has a black ace).

Combined strength count by Responder: 14 (opening bid) + 18 (responder) = 32-33 points at least

### Example 2

Board 93; Vul. All; Dlr. North

***"Both Easts opened with strong bids and both Wests showed good values. Yet neither team reached the laydown slam."***

(WBF Daily Bulletin 11, Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup, 1997)

	North	
	92	
	9765	
	63	
	♠ A10752	
West		East
AKJ86		Q74
4		AQ10
J7542		AKQ9
♠ Q8		♠ K63
	South	
	1053	
	KJ832	
	108	
	♠ J94	

**Orient Bidding**

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3	Pass	4♠	Pass
4	Pass	4NT	Pass
5	Pass	6	All pass

**Explanation:**

- 1NT = 20+ points, any distribution.
- 2♠ = 11+ points.
- 2NT = Balanced hand, no 5-card suit.
- 3 = 5+ card natural suit.
- 4♠ = Fit agreement + trump control asking in the bid suit out of AKQ.
- 4 = Any two controls.
- 4NT = Ace asking.
- 5 = 1 or 4 aces
- 6 = Final contract.

**Justification:**

Combined strength within the slam zone, at least 5-3 trump fit, top 3 trump controls and three first round controls.  
 Combined strength count by opener: 20 + 11 +1 point for the fifth spade = 32 points at least

### Example 3

Board 38 ; Vul. E/W; Dir. East

**"No opposition bidding but ..... still missed the cold grand slam"**

(WBF Daily Bulletin 12, Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup, 1997)

	North	
	Q	
	J2	
	AK1094	
	♠ J10873	
West		East
A1084		KJ6
10965 43		AKQ7
-		7652
♠ AQ2		♠ K4
	South	
	97532	
	8	
	QJ83	
	♠ 965	

#### Orient Bidding

West	North	East	South
		1	Pass
1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♠	Pass	3	Pass
4♠	Pass	4	Pass
4NT	Pass	5	Pass
5	Pass	6	Pass
7	All pass		

#### Explanation:

- 1 = 16-17 points, any distribution.
- 1NT = Forcing; indicates combined strength of 25+ points and a game subject to fit.
- 2NT = Balanced hand, no 5-card suit.
- 3♠ = For majors.
- 3 = 4-card in the bid suit.
- 4♠ = Trump control asking in hearts.
- 4 = 0 or 3 controls out of AKQ.
- 4NT = Ace asking.
- 5 = One or 4 aces.
- 5 = Ace identification asking.
- 6 = Ace of .
- 7 = Final contract.

**Justification:**

Final combined strength count within slam zone (37+ points), 6-4 trump fit, top three trump controls and all first round controls. 6 confirms presence of top three trump controls.

Combined strength count by responder (first round): 16+10 = 26-27 points (4-level play).  
Final count: 26 + 7 for void + 3 for extra trump support +1 for all first round controls = 37-38 points

**Post-mortem**

What would have happened if East had AKQ instead of AKQ? The contract of 6 (partnership would stopped there) would have been doomed! No system is or can be perfect and Orient Bidding System is no exception either. However, this does not take away the usefulness and accuracy of the Combined Strength Count mechanism. If AKQ were with East, void with West would not have been working (wasted values). The final count, in which case would have been less 8 points (7 for the void and one for 'all first round controls') giving a net combined strength count of 29-30 points. This is good enough for a 5-level contract which would have made with hearts divided as in the actual hand).

**Example 4**

Board 5 ; Vul. N/S; Dlr. North

*"A number of teams around the room reached a poor slam on this one"*

(WBF Daily Bulletin 9, Bermuda Bowl and Venice Cup, 1997)

	North	
	K6	
	K9852	
	A1098	
	□ K5	
West		East
543		1087
AQJ7		643
K7642		J5
□ 6		□ J10943
	South	
	AQJ92	
	10	
	Q3	
	□ AQ872	

**Orient Bidding**

West	North	East	South
	1	Pass	1NT
Pass	2	Pass	2
Pass	3	Pass	3NT
All pass			

### Explanation:

1 = 14-15 points, any distribution

1NT= Forcing; indicates combined strength of 25+ points and a game subject to fit.

2 = Natural 5+ card suit.

2 = 5+card natural suit and no 3-card support in opener's suit.

3 = No 3-card support in responder's suit, 4+ second natural suit.

3NT= Final contract

### Justification:

Combined strength sufficient for maximum 5-level contract. No 5-3 or 4-4 fit for suit contract.

Combined strength count by responder:  $14 + 15 = 29-30$  points.

### NOTE

In examples 1 and 2, the first round combined strength count mechanism, based on the point showing opening bids, enabled the partnership to know that they were in the slam zone. Thereafter, it was simply a matter of locating a fit and key controls. In example-3, slam level was not known until the final count (after addition of values for void). In example-4, no slam was contemplated because of the near misfit hand. Singleton heart with South represents possible wasted values for suit contract. Moreover, the combined strength count is insufficient for 6NT play.

The Orient Bidding System has fully defined, documented and numerically referenced bids and as a result there is rarely any confusion in bidding. This fosters greater partnership understanding and harmony.