

Extending Convention Scope

By James R. Klein

Either I am getting a little rigid or my bidding is so bad that I can't afford the luxury of exotic conventions to take care of hands that rarely come up during a session. However, the chance to expand on the treatment of a familiar cornerstone convention is quite intriguing. The Stayman convention over one no-trump is a prime example of constructive improvement in scope which accomplishes a great deal more than its primary intention of finding a 4-4 major suit fit.

Before you dismiss this idea, ask yourself some of the following questions. Have the opponents to often found the killing lead against your 1NT-3NT gambler? Do you miss your 4-4 minor suit slams and end up playing in bad 3NT contracts? Or worse, do you go down when a minor suit partial is marked? Do you miss games because you are afraid of incorrectly describing a hand with 15 to 17 points and a six card minor by opening 1NT? Do your 4-4 major suit fits frequently take as many or less than if the hand played in no-trump? In general, has your judgment been somewhat less than adequate after partner has opened one no-trump?

Without altering any of the primary meanings of the Stayman sequences, we should be able to handle minor suit slam tries which depend on finding 4-4 fits. Some of the hands referred to are shown below as examples. How would you handle the following hands if you were responding to a 1NT opening by partner?

1	2	3	4	5
♠- A 10 4 2	♠- 5	♠- A	♠- _____	♠- A 10 7 6
♥- 3	♥- 4 3 2	♥- J 10 9 4	♥- J 10 9 5 3	♥- J 10 8
♦- A Q 6 5	♦- A 10 7 5	♦- K 9 7 5	♦- A Q 6 5	♦- A Q 7 2
♣- K Q 5 3	♣- K Q 5 4 3	♣- K 9 8 7	♣- K Q 10 9	♣- K Q

Hand 1 and 4 will probably produce a minor suit slam if a 4-4 minor suit is found but each can play at other contracts. Hands 1 and 5 could be played at either a spade or a diamond slam if a 4-4 fit is found. If no such fit exists then a 3NT contract may be tried.

In order to facilitate exploration of minor suits over 1NT bids, I propose a 2 club response followed by 3 clubs as an extended Stayman asking for other suit information. Let us take a look at some sequences and their meanings.

	Opener	Bid	Bid	Responder

1.	15-17 points	1NT	2C	Bid 4 card major
	No major	2D	3C	Bid 4 card minor
	Suit is diamonds	3D	3S!	I Like Dia., S control
	Club control	4C	4NT	Keycard (Diamonds)
	1 or 4 controls	5D	6D	Slam in Diamonds
2.	15-17 points	1NT	2C	Bid 4 card major
	Have 4 Spades	2S	3C	Bid other 4 card suit

	No other	3S	3NT	To play
3.	15-17 points Have 4 Spades Have 4 Hearts	1NT 2S 3H	2C 3C 4H	Bid 4 card major Bid other 4 card suit To play
4.	15-17 points Forced response	1NT	2D thru 2NT	Four suit transfers
5.	15-17 points Have 4 Hearts	1NT 2H	2C 2NT	Bid 4 card major Invites game
6.	15-17 points no major	1NT 2D	2C 3S!	Bid 4 card major 5 Hearts, 4 Spades (Smolen)
7.	15-17 points I fit Clubs & Mini	1NT Pass	3C Pass	5-5 Minors (Weak) To play
8.	15-17 points no major I have Clubs	1NT 2D 3NT	2C 3C 4D	Bid 4 card major Bid 4 card minor Fit Clubs Kickback keycard for Clubs
9.	15-17 points Max Heart Ctrl	1NT 3H 6C	3D 4S! Pass	5-5 Minors (strong) Spade control To play

Over interference we like to use cue bids to ask for major suits. We also use Lebensohl logic where possible. Since all transfers are off when opponents are in the auction, all bids at the 2 level are to play and all 3 level bids are game forcing. 2NT by responder forces 3C and any bid less than opponent's suit is non-forcing while any other bid is game forcing showing stopper in opponent's suit. There can be more bidding combinations starting with the Stayman 2C asking bid but agreements should be discussed with partner so that standard implementation and understanding can be maintained. Here is an example that was tried in a club game. Perhaps transferring to spades might have been preferable.

10.	15-17 points no major only hearts	1NT 2D 3H	2C 3D! 3NT	Bid 4 card major Bid 3 card major Only 2 hearts or 5 2 4 2 distribution
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This is a system that should be used with a firm partnership. It is quite useful and I am sure many more sequences not discussed in this article may be discovered.