

# Six Key Roman Key-card

## Asking for Controls When You Have a Two-Suit Fit

### A Version Showing the **Higher Queen** First

Presented by Mike Savage

When your partnership has discovered a fit in two suits, such as **1S-2H-3H-3S** or **1D-2C-3C-3D** and you want to use Roman Key-card to check for controls, the kings of both suits usually have equal importance in slam investigation. So when you ask for controls and you are playing Roman Key-card, instead of there being five controls—the four aces and the king of trumps, there are now six controls—the four aces and the kings in both of your suits.

The control-showing responses to **Six Key Roman Key-card** are the same as in 1430 (and original) Roman Key-card if you have 1-4 or 0-3 controls. It's when you have two (or five) of the six controls that diversity sets in. When you have two controls, you also show if you have the queen of trumps or not. But with a two-suit fit, which one is trumps? Which queen do you show you do have—or that you don't have?

There are many schemes to show what queens you have or don't have, devised by different experts with varying degrees of complexity. By far the simplest I have run across—not necessarily guaranteed to be the absolute best, is the following suggested by Gerry Bare:

1. Respond to **Six Key Roman Key-card** as if the higher suit of the two is the trump suit.
2. When asked for kings, treat the queen of the lower-ranking suit as a king.

Respond to **Six Key Roman Key-card** the same as with 1430 (or original) Roman Key-card when you have 1-4 or 0-3 controls but if you have two (or five) controls, presume the higher-ranking suit is trumps and show whether you have the higher ranking queen or not. If your suits were hearts and clubs, you would show you two controls and if or not, you had the queen of hearts or if your suits were spades and hearts, spades would now be the higher suit, so you would show if you had the spade queen or not. For example: **1S-2H-3H-3S 4NT-5S** = two controls and the queen of spades (may or may not have the queen of hearts). A **5H** response would have denied the spade queen (but you still might have the heart queen).

If **5NT** is now bid—asking for kings, *now treat the queen of the lower-ranking suit as a king* and you can show it at the six-level. It is recommended that you cue-bid kings up the line over **5NT**, so if you had the club king and the heart queen, you would first bid **6C** and if partner then bids **6D**, now cue-bid the heart queen. If you had no kings, but you had the heart queen, over **5NT** you would bid **6H**. Some partnerships play after showing a king over **5NT**, a bid of a suit lower than the trump suit is an asking bid, asking you to bid seven if you have the control in that suit and in the case of the above auction, if you responded **6C** or **6D**, showing that king and partner bid **6H**, he would be asking you to bid seven with the heart queen (the heart king has already been shown in the first response to Roman Key-card).

In many expert partnerships when there is a game-forcing two suit minor fit, such as **1D-2C-3C-3D** or **1C-2C** (inverted)-**2D-3D**, etc., there are *two* Six Key-card Blackwoods. Which ever minor you bid four of is **Six Key Roman Key-card** with that suit as trumps. The other minor queen can still be shown as a king later. Queen asking over a 1-4 or 0-3 response is the next higher non-trump bid. King asking is the next higher yet (**4NT**, **5C** & **5D** all should be to play). Control asking at the 4-level is a great advantage.

In those dedicated partnerships where a forcing four of an agreed-upon minor is *always* Roman Key-card when *they* have a two suit fit with a minor and a major, then for them, four of the minor is **Six Key Roman Key-card** for the minor and **4NT** is **Six Key Roman Key-card** with the major as trumps.

There are many possible agreements as to when to use **Six Key Roman Key-card**. There are other methods and approaches also. The most important agreement is to have a thoroughly discussed agreement.

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(Continued)

After finding a two-suit fit in the majors (or in some partnerships, in one major and one minor):

**4NT 5H** = Shows two of the six key-cards and denies either queen.

**4NT 5S** = Shows two of the six key-cards and the *higher*-ranking queen of your two suits.

(Some experts play that **5S** shows the *lower* ranking queen but if you use it to show the higher-ranking queen, this lets you treat the lower queen as a king—if partner asks for kings.)

Responses to 5H & 5S:

**5NT** = Asks for kings; it is probably best to cue-bid them up-the-line. When you have both queens and two controls, the other queen can now be treated as a king and you can show it after cue-bidding a king, if given a 2<sup>nd</sup> opportunity. If you have no side-suit kings but you have the lower-ranking queen; you should cue bid the queen.

**4NT 5C 5D** = Asks about the queens of both of your suits (if diamonds *isn't* one of your suits\*).

**5H** = Denies either queen.

**5S** = Shows the lower ranking of the two queens (denies the higher).

**5NT** = Shows the higher-ranking of the two queens (denies the lower).

**6C** = Shows both queens.

**4NT 5D 5H** = Asks about the queens of both of your suits (if hearts *isn't* one of them\*).

**5S** = Denies either queen.

**5NT** = Shows the lower-ranking queen (denies the higher).

**6C** = Shows the higher-ranking queen (denies the lower).

**6D** = Shows both queens.

\* If, after a **5C** response, diamonds is one of your suits, bidding **5D** is not asking for queens, but is to play. In this case, to ask for queens you must use the *next* suit that is not one of your suits (usually **5H**) to ask for queens. The same rule applies over a **5D** response to Blackwood. If **5H** is one of your suits, **5H** must be played as a sign-off and then the queen asking bid will be the next higher non-trump suit.

How to ask for kings after partner's answer to the queen-asking bid over a 5C or 5D response:

**5NT** (if available) asks for kings in your normal manner.

If **5NT** isn't available for king asking, it's probably better to use *Asking Bids* and bid six of the side suit that you want partner to have the king, in order to bid seven. If both non-trump suits are available (below your highest suit), ask for the lower king, if room allows. Partner will bid seven if he has it and bid six of the other one if he has *that* one. If there is room for only one king asking bid, the asking bid asks for either side king. Since **5NT** guarantees all six controls, partner can jump to seven with an unknown source of tricks (usually it's with extra length in their suit).

If you choose to play the simple "*Higher Queen*" approach recommended above, it should be relatively easy to remember the responses—but whatever version of **Six Key Roman Key-card** you choose to play in your partnership, you need to establish in detail the sequences in which you decide to play it.