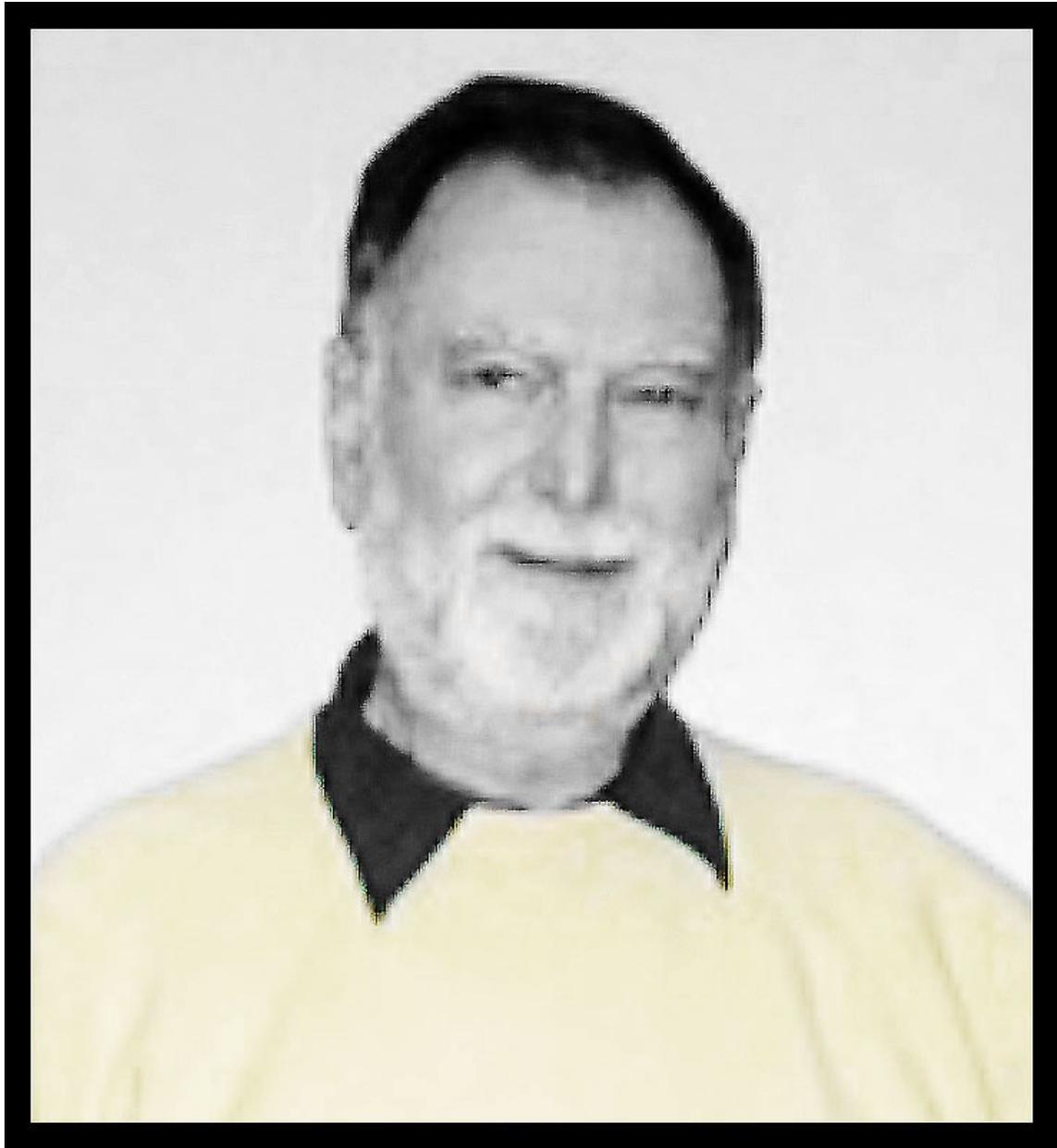# Green Aces - introduction

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Authored by: Ray Green of Brunton Bridge Club - EBU.

Ray Green

This ace and king asking method employs the useful space principle where the ace asking bid is one suit (step) up from the 4 of the trump suit. There are no ambiguous and unresolvable compressed responses, where in some circumstances such as extreme distribution or opposition preemption, you do not know whether a compressed reply is 3 or 0 aces, for example. No compression is needed when you always have the same room for responses regardless of the trump suit.

4T+1 is the ace asking bid   (eg 4NT in spades, or 4♥ in diamonds).

This means partnership discussion is needed if the trump suit has not been agreed explicitly. A few rules are:

- 1) If a suit has been agreed, 4T+1 is always ace asking, even if this is a previously bid suit.
- 2) A jump to one higher than 4 of a naturally bid suit is always ace asking: if you intended it to play, bid something else first – perhaps 4th suit forcing - and then bid that suit.

eg 1♥–2♦ (game forcing) stop 4♥ = ace ask in diamonds, whereas 1♥–2♦ (game forcing) 2NT 3♠ 4♥ = to play, because if opener wanted to agree diamonds and ace-ask he could and should have done so a round earlier.

The responses to the ace ask are based on 5 aces, with the king of trumps counting as the 5th ace. The *absolutely nothing* response (no aces, no Q of trumps) is the sign off reply of 5T. Otherwise, replies are essentially in steps 1,2,3 for 1,2,3 aces (you can count on your fingers):

- 1 step = 1 ace … but see below
- 2 steps = 2 aces
- 3 steps = 3 aces … but see below
- 4 steps = 5 of the trump suit = zilch, 0 aces
- 5+ steps = higher than 5T = 4 aces, and shows the kings as would be shown to a king ask.

If you have 4 aces, you immediately jump in reply to the ace ask, to actually give your king response. Asker would not be asking unless he was going on to ask for kings if you had 4 aces. He will have an ace himself.

The steps 1,2,3 need modification to discover the presence or absence of the Q of trumps.

The responses in full are :

- 1 step = 1+/-Q, or 0+Q, or 3-Q
- 2 steps = 2+/-Q
- 3 steps = 3+Q
- 4 steps = trumps = zilch = 0-Q
- higher = 4 aces and this is the K response.

("3+Q" => 3 aces with the Q,   "0-Q" => no aces, no Q,   "2+/-Q" => 2 aces and perhaps Q.)

Discovering What The Step 1 Means

You have asked for aces and the reply is the first step.

You may be interested if partner has 3 aces (you have 1 or 2 yourself) but then you would not be interested in 1 ace. You may be interested in 1 ace (you have 3 or 4 yourself). You can never be interested in both scenarios, so your asking bid specifies which you are asking for.

Let's put this into real suit bids to make it clearer. Spades are trumps.
4NT = ace ask. The reply is 5♣ = step 1 (0+Q, 1+/-Q, or 3-Q)

        5♦ = first step = "I am interested in the 1 ace scenario" - "do you have 1 ace?"
            5♥ = 1-Q "yes, but no Q"
            5 = trumps = 0+Q - "no" (trump sign-off = weakest bid possible)
            6♣ and higher = 1+Q and this is my K response.
OR
        5♥ = second step = "I am interested in the 3 ace scenario" - "do you have 3 aces?"
            5♠ = trumps = "no"
            6♣ and higher = "yes" 3 aces, and this is my K response

Note that asker will be going on to at least small slam if teller has the aces asked for, so if teller has those aces he goes on to give his king reply as if asked with 5T+1.

Checking For The Q On The 2 Ace Response

Let's have clubs as trumps this time. 4♦ = ace ask. Reply is 4♠ = 2 steps = 2+/-Q

> 4NT = next step "have you the Q?"
> > 5♣ = trumps = no, sorry (trump sign-off)
> > 5♥ and higher = yes, I do have the Q, and this is my
> > > K response.

Teller with the wanted answer again gives his K response. You will not ask for the Q unless you were going on to ask for Ks if partner had the Q.

King Asking

As 4 of the asking suit (4T+1) asks for aces, the same suit (5T+1) asks for kings.

Because asking for kings commits you to at least a small slam, you will never ask for kings if there is an ace missing. If you want to bid a small slam, just bid it: asking for kings will not help.

Similarly you will normally not ask for kings if the Q of trumps is missing. If capturing the Q is on a finesse, then it is not good to be in a grand slam on a 50% chance; it is better to stay in 6. However, if you know you have 10 card fit, then there is a good chance the Q will drop, or if one hand shows void of trumps, the other may be finessed, so here the Q can be ignored.

There are only 3 kings, as the king of trumps was counted as an ace. When discovering kings, often it is important to find out about a specific king (or kings), and not the number of kings. The responses to the king ask are therefore specific kings:

> 0 kings = sign off in 6 trumps
> 3 kings = bid 7 trumps
> 1 or 2 kings, bid your cheaper king suit.

After 1 king has been shown asker can then bid another suit to ask if you have that one as well. The reply to this is 6 trumps as a denial, or 7 trumps as confirming that you have that second king.

Example: spade as trumps:

5NT = king ask
      6♦ = king of diamonds - (denies king of clubs, may still have king
         of hearts)
         6♥ = have this one as well?
            6♠ = no
               7♠ = yes, both diamonds and hearts

If asker needed the king of clubs, he would not have asked further but would bid 6♠.

When spades is not the trump suit, the king asking bid will actually be a suit (rather than NT), and here you show this particular king of the asking suit by bidding NT.

Example: diamonds as trumps:

5♥ = king ask
      5NT = king of hearts (Hearts is the asking suit, so 5NT shows ♥K.)
         (5♠ would show ♠K, therefore this denies spades.)
            6♣ = have this one as well?
               6♦ = no.

Note that here the king of hearts is a cheaper response than showing the king of clubs, even though hearts is higher ranking, because the asking suit king is shown by bidding NT.

In the same way, after 1 king is shown, asker can bid 5NT to ask for the king of the asking suit.

Example: diamonds as trumps again:

5♥ = king ask
      5♠ = only, or cheaper king (may still have a second)

5NT = have hearts as well?
> 7♦ = yes, I have ♥K and ♠K. (Teller, with both, worked out
> that spades was cheaper to bid than hearts.)

In that last example, asker was not interested in the club king (he either has it or doesn't need it).

He may not have been interested in the spades, either, as hearts might have been all he needed to know.

Bypassing The King Ask

If asker, on receiving the ace reply, bypasses the king ask by bidding higher than 5T+1, he is asking about the specific suit he is bidding. He is not interested in kings, but wants to know your holding in that suit: maybe he has the king and wants to know if you have the queen which will set up his long side suit.

The responses to the specific suit ask ("SSA") need to be discussed by the partnership, but the common reply is that signing off in 6T (you are already committed to the small slam) denies the queen, whereas bidding the grand slam shows it. This is all there is room for if the suit asked about is the one below trumps, but if there is more room (eg the suit is two below trumps) then more things can be shown. You could agree that step1 = just Q, step2 (6T) = just K or nothing, 7T = both K and Q.

The 6T sign-off includes the K alone, as if that was what partner wanted to know, he could have asked for kings as normal. Adopting this reply can find the grand whether partner was looking merely for the Q or actually looking for both the K and the Q.

Opposition Interference

If they bid one or 2 steps over the ace asking bid, there is no loss of information.

"Pass" = "I would have bid beneath that bid",
and "X" = "I was going to bid that. Higher bids are as normal.

eg 2-step interference,

"pass" = 0+Q, 1+/-Q, or 3-Q,
 and asker then goes "X" = "I would have bid that" meaning "I am interested in the 1-ace scenario",
or "next step" = "I am interested in the 3-ace scenario".

If they bid 3 steps over the ace asking bid (ie the suit beneath your trumps) then you do not lose any ace definition, but you do lose the ability to show the Q.

    Pass = 0 or 3 (to be resolved, don't worry!)
    X = 1
    5T = 2
    >5T = the normal response with 4

After "Pass", X asks "is it 0 or 3?" with the replies of 5T = 0, king response = 3.

Similarly if the next opponent bids over an ace response, asker has the same method of continuation:

    Pass = I would have bid less than that, eg. the 1-ace scenario ask
    X = "I would have bid that", eg. the 1-ace scenario ask, or the 2-ace
        scenario ask, or the Q ask
    Higher bids are as normal.

The same principle applies to interference over a K reply.

Green Aces - Summary

Ace Ask = 4T+1
    step1 = 1+/-Q or 0+Q or 3-Q
        first step = "interested in the 1 ace scenario"
            step1 = 1-Q
            step2 = 5T = no ace
            >5T = 1+Q and this is the K response
        second step = "interested in the 3 ace scenario"
            step1 = 5T = no
            >5T = yes, 3 aces, and this is the K response

step2 = 2+/-Q
    first step = "have you the Q?"
        step1 = 5T = no
        >5T = yes, and this is the K response
step3 = 3+Q
step4 = 5T = zilch, = 0-Q

King Ask = 5T+1
    6T = 0 kings
    7T = 3 kings
    other = that K, or the cheaper of 2 Ks   (NT substitutes for the K of
        the asking suit)
        new suit = "do you have this one as well?"
            6T = no
            7T = yes