

## 2.9 Looking for Slam (after Stayman)

We have defined most of responder's 2<sup>nd</sup> bids after Stayman, but there are a few remaining. Consider: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ , what is 3♠, 4♣ or 4♦ ?

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ , what is 3♥, 4♣, 4♦ or 4♥ ?

There certainly is a good case for having splinters, but what is the best way to go about it? What sort of hand do we need for a splinter?

### Example 1

West 1	West 2	East	West	East
♠ A984	♠ AKJ4	♠ Q763	1NT	2♣
♥ KJ	♥ KJ	♥ AQ74	2♠	?
♦ A984	♦ A984	♦ 2		
♣ KJ8	♣ 982	♣ AQ73		

Let's suppose that you play 4♦ as a splinter in this situation. East bids 4♦ and West likes his hand. 4NT (RKCB) looks right. 6♠ is reached, making easily with West 2 but failing with West 1. What is the problem? East really needs better trumps to splinter and we need to be able to make a general slam try below the level of game. So one of these bids needs to be reserved as a general slam try (showing either no shortage and/or dodgy trumps).

One method is to use 3 of the other major as the general slam try, with 4♣, 4♦ and 4♥ (if ♠'s are trumps) as splinters. This works reasonably well, but is incomplete (no ♠ splinter if ♥'s are trumps. Also, many players are used to having 4♣ as Gerber (of course I mean RKCB).

Is there a solution? Yes, we retain 4♣ as RKCB. Our general slam try is either an ASID sequence or 4♦. We use 3 of the other major as an ambiguous splinter.

So, after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ -

- 3♠ = ambiguous splinter
- 4♣ = RKCB for ♥'s
- 4♦ = slam try, no shortage

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ -

- 3♥ = ambiguous splinter
- 4♣ = RKCB for ♠'s
- 4♦ = slam try, no shortage

## 2.9.1 Splinters after Stayman has found a fit

So we have decided upon 3 of the other major as an ambiguous splinter. Ambiguous splinters really do have an advantage over the direct splinter in that they lose nothing and do not give anything away to the defence if opener has an unsuitable hand for investigating slam. Opener can sign off in 4 of the major or ask about the shortage. The next bid up asks: -

So, after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♠,

3NT asks    4♣ = ♣ singleton/void  
                  4♦ = ♦ singleton/void  
                  4♥ = ♠ singleton/void

and after 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥,

3♠ asks    3NT = ambiguous void  
                  4♣ = ♣ singleton  
                  4♦ = ♦ singleton  
                  4♥ = ♥ singleton

In the ♠ sequence, we have a couple of spare bids (3NT and 4♠). We will use 3NT to show an ambiguous void, with 4♣ as a relay to find out where. There is no room in the ♥ sequence for something similar so the shortage may be singleton or void.

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♥ - 3♠ - 3NT,

4♣ asks    4♦ = ♦ void  
                  4♥ = ♥ void  
                  4♠ = ♣ void

### Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A4	♠ K83	1NT	2♣	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ Q1084	♥ KJ75	2♥	3♠ (1)	(2) where?
♦ KQ54	♦ 7	3NT (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) ♦ shortage
♣ KQ8	♣ AJ1062	4♥ (4)	pass	(4) not interested

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### Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ A42	♠ 3	1NT	2♣	(1) ambiguous splinter
♥ Q1084	♥ KJ75	2♥	3♠ (1)	(2) where?
♦ KQ5	♦ A87	3NT (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) ♠ shortage
♣ KQ8	♣ AJ1062	4♠ (4)	etc to 6♥	(4) RKCB. Even with this flat West hand 6♥ is fine as there are no wasted values.

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### Example 4

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter (2) not interested
♠ KQ2	♠ 3	1NT	2♣	
♥ Q1084	♥ KJ75	2♥	3♠ (1)	
♦ KQ5	♦ A87	4♥ (2)	pass	
♣ KQ8	♣ AJ1062			

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With examples 2-4 there is an alternative approach available. This is fully described later, but you could transfer to the minor and then bid 3 of the major (game forcing). The problem using the transfer to the minor method with these example hands is that when opener agrees your major then you are already at the 4 level and so you really need a better hand to venture forth opposite a possible minimum.

The splinter bids are, by definition, interested in slam.

### Example 5

West	East	West	East	(1) ambiguous splinter (2) where? (3) it's a void (4) where? (5) void ♥
♠ AJ82	♠ KQ107	1NT	2♣	
♥ J84	♥ -	2♠	3♥ (1)	
♦ KQ5	♦ A832	3♠ (2)	3NT (3)	
♣ AQ8	♣ KJ762	4♣ (4)	4♥ (5)	
		4NT etc to 7♠		

This East hand could have splintered over the 1NT directly (see section 5.4) but chose the Stayman route because of the good quality of the ♠ suit and relatively poor ♦'s. Another approach is that East could transfer into ♣'s and then bid ♠'s, we cover transfers to minors later.

### Hands that are definitely slamming.

Hand A	Hand B	Now we saw in the previous examples that responder's hand may be slam invitational or definitely slamming. There is, however, a problem with hands that are definitely slamming with ♠ shortage. With these hands we would be bidding 4♥ in response to partner's shortage enquiry and the problem is that he may then pass! So with these very strong hands with ♠ shortage we have to take another route. With Hand A you could either try SARS or else you could choose to splinter directly (this is covered later). With Hand B you could transfer to ♣'s (we cover this later) and then bid ♥'s or you could again choose to splinter directly.
♠ 4	♠ -	
♥ KQ107	♥ KQ107	
♦ A832	♦ A832	
♣ KJ76	♣ KJ762	

There is also a similar problem with a hand that has a ♣ void as 4♠ shows this, and partner may pass 4♠. So with a ♣ void and a slam forcing hand you also have to choose an alternative approach

## 2.9.2 4♦ - The General Slam Try

The bidding has started 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠. If responder is interested in slam in the suit then he has a number of options including key card ask, (ambiguous) splinter or ASID. Without shortage you cannot splinter, ASID may not help when you have found the fit but don't know if slam is there - you want partner to try for slam. Sometimes, with no clear course of action, it may be best to pass the buck. So we define: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥/♠ - 4♦

as a slam try in the agreed suit but usually without a shortage. It invites opener to look for slam if he has decent trumps and a non-min. If opener is interested, then RKCB (I prefer 4♠ when ♥'s are trumps) is the usual continuation.

Hand A	Hand B	Partner opens a strong NT, you bid Stayman and partner responds 2♠ (A) or 2♥ (B). There really is little point in enquiring about partner's shape (using ASID) and you have no shortage to splinter. You want to invite slam but have nothing special to say. So bid 4♦, this agrees trumps and leaves it up to partner. If he bids RKCB (I prefer 4♠ as the RKCB bid with ♥'s) then he can find out all about your hand.
♠ AJ84	♠ A9	
♥ A92	♥ KQ107	
♦ KJ9	♦ A87	
♣ A87	♣ K862	

Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) general slam try agreeing ♥'s (2) minimum.
♠ KQ	♠ A9	1NT	2♣	
♥ J842	♥ KQ107	2♥	4♦ (1)	
♦ KQ5	♦ A87	4♥ (2)	pass	
♣ AJ73	♣ K862			

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Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) general slam try agreeing ♠'s (2) RKCB for ♠'s (3) 3 key cards
♠ KQ76	♠ AJ84	1NT	2♣	
♥ KQ5	♥ A92	2♠	4♦ (1)	
♦ A106	♦ KJ9	4NT (2)	5♣ (3)	
♣ K93	♣ A87	6♠	pass	

Note that 6♠ is pretty solid whereas 6NT would be on a guess. Another testament to the good 4-4 fit.

## 2.9.3 4♣ - Gerber/RKCB after Stayman

Here we consider the sequences: -

- 1) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♣
- 2) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♣
- 3) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♣

(1) is a simple ace ask (Gerber).

(2) and (3) are RKCB.

4NT bids are quantitative.

### 2.9.3.1 4♣ - Gerber after a 2♦ response to Stayman

Much the same as the standard Gerber bid after a 1NT opening, except that responder is known to have a 4 card major.

Hand A	Hand B	Hand A first looks for a ♠ fit. With no fit, 6NT is still a good bet, but best to check on the aces. You never know!
♠ AQJ10	♠ K8	
♥ KQ6	♥ KQJ6	Hand B was looking for 7♥. You could now check on aces and try 7NT. This hand should, however, be looking for a ♣ fit and should bid 3♣ (SARS) looking for 7♣.
♦ QJ4	♦ AJ6	
♣ K73	♣ KQ109	

So, we only really use Gerber after Stayman if we have no other good 4 card suit (we would try SARS). Thus typically 4333 or 3433 shapes.

#### Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) With a good 5 card suit West elects to open and 1NT is fine.
♠ K9	♠ AQJ10	1NT (1)	2♣	(2) Gerber
♥ J109	♥ KQ6	2♦	4♣ (2)	(3) 1 ace
♦ AK5	♦ QJ4	4♥ (3)	4NT (4)	(4) glad I checked!
♣ QJ1098	♣ K73	pass		

#### Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) bid 3♣ (SARS) here and onto 7♣ when the ♣ fit is uncovered. All the aces and all the kings does not mean that 7NT is safe.
♠ AJ7	♠ K8	1NT	2♣	
♥ A72	♥ KQJ6	2♦	? (1)	
♦ K85	♦ AJ6			
♣ AJ72	♣ KQ109			

### 2.9.3.2 4♣ - RKCB after a 2♥/♠ response to Stayman

When opener acknowledges a major suit, 4♣ is the key card ask. I prefer to call it RKCB and retain the name Gerber when specifically asking for aces.

Hand A	Hand B	Same hands as before. This time Hand A gets a 2♠ response to Stayman. So 4♣, RKCB, to check on key cards on the way to 6♠. Hand B discovers the ♥ fit. 7♥ is surely there if all the key cards are present.
♠ KQJ3	♠ K8	
♥ K76	♥ KQJ6	
♦ A105	♦ AJ6	
♣ KQ10	♣ KQ109	

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#### Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) RKCB (2) 3 key cards
♠ A874	♠ KQJ3	1NT	2♣	
♥ A82	♥ K76	2♠	4♣ (1)	
♦ KJ7	♦ A105	4♦ (2)	6♠	
♣ A72	♣ KQ10	pass		

Here we see the power of the 4-4 fit yet again. In 6NT we need to find the ♦Q, in 6♠ we are safe provided the trumps split 3-2. (3 rounds of trumps, eliminate ♣'s and throw in on the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of ♥'s). Another example of why you should still bid Stayman when 4333.

#### Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) RKCB (2) 3 key cards
♠ AJ5	♠ K8	1NT	2♣	
♥ A852	♥ KQJ6	2♥	4♣ (1)	
♦ K7	♦ AJ6	4♦ (2)	etc to 7♥	
♣ AJ72	♣ KQ109			

#### Example 3

West	East	West	East	(1) RKCB (2) 3 key cards (3) ♥Q? (4) no
♠ AJ5	♠ KQ	1NT	2♣	
♥ A852	♥ KJ106	2♥	4♣ (1)	
♦ J7	♦ AKQ	4♦ (2)	4♠ (3)	
♣ AJ72	♣ KQ109	4NT (4)	6♥ or 6NT	

If you don't play RKCB here then it may be difficult to establish that the ♥Q is missing. It's up to you what you play at (4) to deny the trump queen, I assume the next bid.

## 2.9.4 4NT (and 4 of the other major) after Stayman

4NT is always quantitative. We have the following sequences to consider: -

- 1) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4NT
- 2) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4NT
- 3) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4NT

also, there are three redundant sequences: -

- 4) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♠
- 5) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♠
- 6) 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♥

We shall define all of these as quantitative.

### 2.9.4.1 4NT and 4♠ after opener has denied a 4 card major

First, the sequences 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♠ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4NT.

We use the 4♦ and 4♥ bids here as Extended Texas transfers and so 4♠ is free. We shall define both 4♠ and 4NT as quantitative. Responder has one or two 4 card majors (otherwise he would not have gone via Stayman) but opener has none. Now a normal 4NT quantitative bid is 15-17 pts, so let's make it easier for opener by saying how good the quantitative bid is.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4♠ = quantitative, 15-16. One or two 4 card majors  
 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 4NT = quantitative, 17. One or two 4 card majors

Opener now has slightly more to go on. He simply uses the normal replies to a quantitative 4NT bid. I.e. sign off in 4NT, look for a minor suit fit or bid 6NT. Note that opener must have a *good* minor suit to look for a minor suit slam – responder does not have another decent 4 card suit or he would have used SARS.

#### Example 1

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16
				(2) I have good ♦'s, forcing
♠ Q94	♠ AJ76	1NT	2♣	
♥ 84	♥ A7	2♦	4♠ (1)	
♦ AKQ9	♦ J532	5♦ (2)	6♦	
♣ AJ84	♣ KQ6		pass	

West liked his hand and the ♦ suit, so he accepted the invitation but tried for a ♦ slam. East was pleased to oblige.

#### Example 2

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16
♠ J9	♠ AQ76	1NT	2♣	
♥ KJ4	♥ A7	2♦	4♠ (1)	
♦ AK94	♦ J532	4NT	pass	
♣ A984	♣ KQ6			

This time, West does not have enough opposite 15-16 and so he signs off. He would have taken his chances opposite 17: -

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### Example 3

But it's always best to look for a decent fit, here 6♦ is superior to 6NT: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 17
				(2) I have good ♦'s, forcing
♠ J9	♠ AQ76	1NT	2♣	
♥ KJ4	♥ A7	2♦	4NT (1)	
♦ AK94	♦ Q532	5♦ (2)	6♦	
♣ A984	♣ KQ6		pass	

West knows that East does not have a good 4 card 2<sup>nd</sup> suit (he did not try SARS). So there is no point in looking for a ♣ slam. The ♦ suit, however, is robust, so try it at (2).

East also knows what's going on of course. He knows that West will only suggest ♦'s with a good suit and so he accepts ♦'s as trumps.

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### Example 4

If opener has a reasonable 5 card suit then he bids it at the six level: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 17
				(2) I have a 5 card ♣ suit
				(3) excellent
♠ J9	♠ AQ76	1NT	2♣	
♥ K42	♥ A7	2♦	4NT (1)	
♦ AK4	♦ J532	6♣ (2)	pass (3)	
♣ AJ984	♣ KQ6			

### 2.9.4.2 4NT and 4♥ after opener has replied 2♠ to Stayman

A similar situation here, there is again no major suit fit. Opener has 4 ♠'s and responder has 4 ♥'s.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4♥ = quantitative, 15-16. Four card ♥ suit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 4NT = quantitative, 17. Four card ♥ suit.

Much the same as earlier, opener may sign off, look for a minor suit fit or bid 6NT. Again, responder is unlikely to have another decent 4 card suit as he would probably have looked for a fit via SARS.

#### Example 4

It may just be that opener has a 5 card ♠ suit: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16, quantitative
♠ AQ974	♠ J103	1NT	2♣	
♥ QJ9	♥ AK76	2♠	4♥ (1)	
♦ J6	♦ A72	4♠ (2)	pass	
♣ AJ8	♣ 96			

The 4♠ bid at (2) is best defined as a 5 card suit and offering 4♠ or 4NT as a final resting place. With a 5 card ♠ suit and a max hand, opener bids 6♠ (or 5♠ if you prefer), offering the choice of 6♠ or 6NT.

#### Example 5

Occasionally we may luck out with this use of 4♥ as a quantitative bid if opener has good 3 card support for ♥'s and goes for the Moysian fit: -

West	East	West	East	(1) 15-16, quantitative (and obviously 4 ♥'s).
♠ AK94	♠ J53	1NT	2♣	
♥ QJ9	♥ AK76	2♠	4♥ (1)	
♦ J6	♦ A72	pass		
♣ A984	♣ KJ6			

### 2.9.4.3 4NT and 4♠ after opener has replied 2♥ to Stayman

So, the two remaining sequences. But things are slightly different this time as opener may have 4 ♠'s in addition to his 4 ♥'s.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♠ = quantitative, 15-16. Four card ♠ suit.  
 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4NT = quantitative, 17. Four card ♠ suit.

In addition to the normal options (4NT, 6NT or a minor suit slam), there is also the possibility of a ♠ fit.

#### Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1064	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AK95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ A8	♦ K532	6♠	pass	
♣ J97	♣ AK6			

West has just enough to accept East's invitation with ♠'s as trumps. East did not go via SARS because his ♦ suit is a bit ropey for a ♦ slam.

#### Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ A8	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AK95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ Q876	♦ K532	4NT	pass	
♣ QJ9	♣ AK6			

West has the same values, but with no good fit there is no slam. As East did not try SARS, West knows that a possible ♦ fit would not be a good suit for slam.

#### Example 8

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1064	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AQ95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ A8	♦ K432	pass		
♣ J97	♣ AQ6			

A ♠ fit this time, but West is minimum and so no slam.

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Example 9

West	East	West	East	
♠ A1064	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) max quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AQ95	♥ 42	2♥	4NT (1)	
♦ A8	♦ KJ32	6♠	pass	
♣ J97	♣ AK6			

West has the same minimum hand, but this time East's quantitative bid shows max (17 points). West accepts because there is a fit.

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Example 10

West	East	West	East	
♠ A106	♠ KQJ7	1NT	2♣	(1) quantitative, 4♠'s
♥ AJ95	♥ 42	2♥	4♠ (1)	
♦ AQJ7	♦ K432	5♦	6♦	
♣ J9	♣ AK6	pass		

West is maximum. With good intermediates, an excellent ♦ suit and good ♠ support, the ♦ slam is worth investigating.

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## Example 11

With no  $\spadesuit$  fit, you are generally heading for 6NT and hope it makes? ...

West	East	West	East	
$\heartsuit$ A106	$\heartsuit$ KQJ7	1NT	$2\clubsuit$	(1) quantitative, $4\heartsuit$ 's
$\heartsuit$ AJ95	$\heartsuit$ K82	$2\heartsuit$	$4\heartsuit$	(1)
$\spadesuit$ AQJ7	$\spadesuit$ 432	$5\spadesuit$	$5\heartsuit$	(2) (3)
$\clubsuit$ J9	$\clubsuit$ AK6	$6\heartsuit$	pass	

After West's  $5\spadesuit$  at (2) we are heading for slam. But it does no harm for East to emphasise his good  $\heartsuit$ 's at (3). West is only too happy to oblige.