

2.5 3♣ (after Stayman) - Shape Asking Relays after Stayman (SARS)

So this time we are really going to define a meaning for the sequences

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣

and, in addition, the hitherto unmentioned sequence 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣

2.5.1 Minor Suit Shape Asking Relays

We shall cover the latter sequence first, where opener has denied a 4 card major.

Hand A Partner opens a strong NT. Obviously we try 2♣, Stayman, and opener replies 2♦. So no major suit fit but you are still interested in slam, especially if there is a 4-4 ♦ fit. You could try 4NT, quantitative. Partner would then bid any minor suit that he has, but the problem is that he may pass with a minimum 15-16 points and you still want to try slam. We need an asking bid to enquire about partner's minor suit holdings.

♠ AJ108
♥ K3
♦ KQJ4
♣ KJ8

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦, 3♣ asks: -

3♦ = 5 card minor (either ♣'s or ♦'s), no 4 card minor.
3♥ = 4 card ♣'s but not ♦'s, so 3334
3♠ = 4 card ♦'s but not ♣'s, so 3343
3NT = 4 card ♣'s and 4 card ♦'s, so 2344 or 3244. (2245 or 2254 is also possible if you open 1NT with these distributions, but see below).

Now with this 3♣ ask, partner is looking for a minor suit slam if there is a fit. So, actually, there is no problem with extending these replies when you have 9 cards in the minors. A possible extension is: -

4♣ = 5 card ♣'s and 4 card ♦'s, so 2245
4♦ = 5 card ♦'s and 4 card ♣'s, so 2254

If you allow 6 card minors in your opening 1NT, then there is no way to show this. Bidding above 3NT is too dangerous as partner may only be interested in the other minor, so you have to treat a 6 card minor as a 5 carder in these replies.

Note that after a 3♥ or 3♠ reply, responder knows that opener is exactly 3334 or 3343 resp. With the 3♦ response, asker needs another relay to establish the 5 card suit: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♦, 3♥ asks: -

3♠ = 5 card ♣'s
3NT = 5 card ♦'s

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♦'s
♦ A765	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	etc (3)	(3) East knows West is 3343
♣ K94	♣ Q8			and bids on to 6♦.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ4	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) a 5 card minor
♦ A7652	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ KJ	♣ Q8	3NT (4)	etc (5)	(4) ♦'s
			(5)	East bids on to 6♦ or 6NT.

Example 3

Sometimes there is no minor suit fit: -

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ4	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) a 5 card minor
♦ A2	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ K7652	♣ Q8	3♠ (4)	3NT (5)	(4) ♣'s
		pass		(5) wrong one

After the minor suit shape ask, a bid of 4 of a minor sets the trump suit. Since it is preferable to use something lower than 4NT as the key card ask with a minor suit, we use this bid to double up as RKCB. You could play Kickback or cue bid if you prefer but that would leave less room for quantitative bids as explained later.

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A62	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) two 4 card minors
♦ A982	♦ KQJ4	3NT (2)	4♦ (3)	(3) ♦'s are trumps, RKCB
♣ A652	♣ K8	4♥ (4)	etc to 7♦	(4) 3 key cards

Example 5

As promised, East Hand L from the beginning of section 2.

West	East (L)	West	East	
♠ 976	♠ AK3	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AQ	♥ KJ73	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) two 4 card minors
♦ AJ52	♦ Q3	3NT (2)	4♣ (3)	(3) setting trumps, RKCB
♣ AJ107	♣ KQ52	4♦ (4)	etc to 6♣	(4) 3 key cards

As I said in the previous example, playing 4 of a minor at (3) to set trumps and as RKCB is very sensible.

Fit Showing Quantitatives

We have seen that it is advantageous to use 4 of the minor as RKCB. Then 4NT is obviously quantitative, but is there a minor suit fit or not? Responder knows this but opener may well need to know, especially if he fancies a minor suit slam if there is a fit.

The answer is to reserve a 4♠ bid (and sometimes 4♥) as further quantitative bids, similar to 4NT but stating that there is a fit. This is no problem as the bids would be cue bids otherwise and with minor suits as trumps it is better to have the RKCB bid at a low level.

So, basically, 4NT is quantitative with no fit and 4♠ is quantitative but acknowledges a fit. In the situations, where opener has shown both minors, then 4♥ is used to indicate the ♣ fit and 4♠ for the ♦ fit. We can also extend the principle to indicate to opener what sort of fit (4-4, 5-4, 5-3) we have. The complete scheme is as follows, where the spare bids may be used as cue bids or anything else you wish: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♥

(4 ♣'s)

3♠ is

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s

4♦ is

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 4-4 ♣ fit

4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 4-5 ♣ fit

4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♠

(4 ♦'s)

3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is

4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s

4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 4-4 ♦ fit

4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 4-5 ♦ fit

4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3NT
 (4 ♣'s + 4 ♦'s)

4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
 4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s
 4♥ is quantitative, indicating a ♣ fit
 4♠ is quantitative, indicating a ♦ fit
 4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠
 (5 ♣'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
 4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
 4♦ is
 4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♣ fit
 4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 5-4 ♣ fit
 4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♦ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3NT
 (5 ♦'s)

4♣ is
 4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s
 4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♦ fit
 4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 5-4 ♦ fit
 4NT is quantitative, no fit.

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A42	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♦'s
♦ A765	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	4♥ (3)	(3) quantitative, 4-4 ♦ fit
♣ K94	♣ J8	4NT (4)	pass	

(4) With a flat minimum, West elects to play in 4NT.

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AJ2	♥ K83	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♦'s
♦ A765	♦ Q8	3♠ (2)	4NT (3)	(3) quantitative, no fit
♣ K94	♣ AQJ8	6NT (4)	pass	

Note that East needs a better hand to invite than he had in example 6 because there is no fit. West knows there is no fit, so East must have around 17 points to invite (with a lesser hand he would sign off with 3NT at (3)). With his max and top cards, West accepts at (4).

Example 8

West	East	West	East	
♠ Q72	♠ K984	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A72	♥ KJ	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) a 5 card minor
♦ AQJ65	♦ K103	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ K9	♣ AQ84	3NT (4)	4♥ (5)	(4) ♦'s
		6♦	pass (5)	quantitative, 5-3 fit

With just a 5-3 fit, East needs a good hand (good 16 or 17) to invite slam at (5). West has values to accept and the 5-3 fit is probably superior to 6NT. The mere fact that East has invited (rather than bid slam/RKCB) means that there are not points to spare and a decent fit is usually safer. Also, of course, West knows a great deal about East's shape. He has 3 ♦'s and at least 4 ♣'s; it is quite likely that he is short in one major and there may be a ruff available.

Incidentally, West does not know that East has a 4 card major for sure. As we will see shortly responder also has to use similar SARS sequences starting with 2♣ when he is just interested in opener's minors.



Since the fit-showing quantitative bids are forcing, responder may use them to indicate the fit and then bid on over opener's reply. I won't bother to elaborate on this possible extension. Most of the time responder will either wish to use RKCB or to invite using a quantitative bid.

2.5.2 Shape Asking Relays after Stayman (SARS) – after a +ve Stayman response.

Here we cover the sequences when opener does have a 4 (perhaps 5) card major, i.e. :-

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ and 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥, 3♣ asks: - After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♠, 3♣ asks: -

3♦ = a 4 card ♣ or ♦ suit (1)	3♦ = a 4 card ♦ suit (1)
3♥ = a 5 card ♥ suit	3♥ = a 4 card ♣ suit (1)
3♠ = a 4 card ♠ suit	3♠ = a 5 card ♠ suit
3NT = 3433	3NT = 4333

(1) If you have opened 1NT on something like 4252 shape, then you can only indicate the long minor as a 4 card suit. Note that the responses in the ♠ sequence are out of order; this is a slightly better method as an eventual ♦ contract will be played by the 1NT opener.

The ♥ sequence is not totally explicit and so we need another relay to establish the 4 card minor after a 3♦ reply: -

After 1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♦, 3♥ asks: -

3♠ = 4 ♣'s or possibly 2425
3NT = 4 ♦'s or possibly 2452

Example 1

West	East	West	East	
♠ K76	♠ AJ98	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A962	♥ K8	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) a 4 card minor
♦ A9	♦ KQ74	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ KQ42	♣ A83	3♠ (4)	3NT	(4) ♣'s
		pass		

With a ♠ or ♦ fit, East would be looking for slam.

Example 2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A962	♠ K8	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ K76	♥ AJ98	2♠	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♣'s
♦ A9	♦ KQ74	3♥ (2)	3NT	
♣ KQ42	♣ A83	pass		

Again, no slam with no fit.

A Word About Kickback etc.

We have seen that there are times when it is advisable to use another bid other than 4NT as RKCB. Kickback uses the suit above trumps as the key card ask, so 4NT when ♠'s are trumps and 4♠ when ♥'s are trumps etc. In our situation here we often want 4NT (and other bids) as quantitative, so we use Kickback for the majors and, in this situation, 4 of the minor as RKCB for the minor.

More Fit Showing Quantitatives

Again we have to define our RKCB and quantitative (with and without fit) bids.

Let's assume that we play 4 of the minor as RKCB and Kickback as RKCB for the majors. 4NT, if available, is quantitative without a fit and the next free bid(s) below is (are) quantitative with a fit: -

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♥
(5 ♥'s)

3♠ is
3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is
4♦ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♥ fit
4♥ is to play
4♠ is RKCB (Kickback)
4NT is quantitative, no fit.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♠
(4 ♠'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is quantitative, 4-4 ♠ fit
4♦ is quantitative, no fit
4♥ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4♠ is to play
4NT is RKCB for ♠'s

Now the above may seem strange, why would responder use SARS if he has a 4 card ♠ suit? The answer probably is that he also has a 4 card minor suit and is looking for a fit in either.

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3NT
(3433)

pass is to play, no fit
4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s (3-5 fit)
4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s (3-5 fit)
4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♣ fit
4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♦ fit
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3♠
(4 ♣'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
4♦
4♥ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4♠ is quantitative, indicating a ♣ fit
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♥ - 3♣ - 3♦ - 3♥ - 3NT
(4 ♦'s)

pass is to play, no fit
4♣ is
4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s
4♥ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4♠ is quantitative, indicating a ♦ fit
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♦
(4 ♦'s)

3♥ is
3♠ is
3NT is to play, no fit

4♣ is
4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s
4♥ is quantitative, indicating a ♦ fit
4♠ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♥

(4 ♣'s)

3♠ is
3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s
4♦ is
4♥ is quantitative, indicating a ♣ fit
4♠ is to play (probably a 4-3 fit)
4NT is quantitative, no fit

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3♠

(5 ♠'s)

3NT is to play, no fit
4♣ is
4♦ is quantitative, indicating a 5-3 ♠ fit
4♥ is quantitative, no fit
4♠ is to play
4NT is RKCB for ♠'s

1NT - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 3NT

(4333)

pass is to play, no fit
4♣ is RKCB for ♣'s (3-5 fit)
4♦ is RKCB for ♦'s (3-5 fit)
4♥ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♣ fit
4♠ is quantitative, indicating a 3-5 ♦ fit
4NT is quantitative, no fit

Example 3

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ76	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A962	♥ K8	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♠'s
♦ A92	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	4NT (3) etc	(3) RKCB
♣ K2	♣ A83	etc to 7♠		

Example 4

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A962	♥ K8	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) a 4 card minor
♦ A962	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ K2	♣ A83	3NT (4)	4♦ (5)	(4) ♦'s
		etc to 7♦.		(5) RKCB

Sometimes you may not be looking for slam, but just the best game: -

Example 5

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AQ962	♥ KJ3	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) 5 ♥'s
♦ Q62	♦ KJ94	3♥ (2)	4♥	
♣ Q7	♣ 98	pass		

SARS is not just used to establish a fit, it is also uncovers possible weakness (shortage) in a possible NT contract: -

Example 6

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ6	♠ AJ108	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AQ96	♥ KJ3	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) a 4 card minor
♦ Q652	♦ KJ94	3♦ (2)	3♥ (3)	(3) which?
♣ Q7	♣ 98	3NT (4)	4♥ (5)	(4) ♦'s
		pass		(5) with a ♣ weakness, East goes for the Moysian fit .

Note that East cannot use 4♥ as a quantitative bid here as it is needed to sign off.

The following example is from a recent (2004) club competition. A hopeless 6NT was reached at 7 of the 9 tables where it was played. Let's have a look at how we handle it using SARS: -

Example 7

West	East	West	East	
♠ AJ92	♠ Q8	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ AK103	♥ J7	2♥	3♣ (1)	(2) 4 ♠'s
♦ A93	♦ KQJ42	3♠ (2)	3NT (3)	
♣ 109	♣ AQ42	pass		

East has a slam invitational hand, and would investigate slam if a 5-4 or 4-4 minor suit fit was found. With no such fit there is no slam (5-3 is probably not good enough), so a quiet 3NT at (3) is very prudent. An invitational 4NT (4♦ in our system) would be an overbid at (3) with no fit. Even if East did overbid with a quantitative 4NT (4♦), West, with a complete mis-fit and little in the way of minor suit honours, should pass (bid 4NT).

Another way of bidding this hand is to transfer into ♦'s and then bid ♣'s (we cover this later) but you are then at the 4♣ level and I would prefer a stronger and more shapely hand. I would only look for slam if there is a 4-4 ♣ or 5-4 ♦ fit, and the way to discover that is via SARS.

So, we don't actually need a 4 card major to bid SARS. More of this in the next section.

Summary

It is fairly plain that SARS and the fit Showing quantitatives work very well. We keep the RKCB bid at or below the Kickback level and the Fit Showing quantitatives fill up most of the remaining bids admirably, but are there any drawbacks?

The Down Side?

Just one really. We frequently use 4-of-the-minor as RKCB and that is very sensible as it is just one bid below the safe Kickback threshold, but occasionally we will thus be bidding RKCB with an outside weak suit (not a recommended practice).

This certainly is a negative factor, but most of the time it will work out OK and there is no guarantee that an alternative approach (cue bidding) will work out any better as you are already rather high. I believe that the gains made by using RKCB at a low level and the gains from using Fit Showing Quantitatives more than outweigh any negative results from occasionally using Blackwood with a weak suit. And remember, the Blackwood bidder is usually responder and partner has opened a strong NT and so usually has a holding in the weak suit.

Basically, you cannot have everything. If you wish your RKCB bids to be at or below the Kickback level then you may occasionally have to bid RKCB with a weak suit outside.

2.5.3 Minor Suit Stayman.

There are various versions of minor suit Stayman. Perhaps the most common is 2♠ as this bid is redundant when you play major suit Jacoby transfers. Let's just have a look at this 2♠ as minor suit Stayman; opener responds 2NT with no 4 card minor and 3♣/♦ holding a 4 card minor (if both, he bids his best one?). Woefully inadequate! There is no mechanism to show both minors and what if opener has a 5 card minor? Yet this is the choice of many experts! I think that we can certainly find something far better! Read on.

Another, somewhat antiquated, but more accurate version is the Sharples 4♣/♦ after Stayman. We, however, wish to retain the traditional 4♣ Gerber bid and so we utilise our 3♣ asking after Stayman (SARS) as a substitute for Minor Suit Stayman. Thus our original 2♣ bid may not contain a 4 card major if we subsequently bid 3♣.

Actually, our SARS scheme is a definite improvement on 2♠ Minor Suit Stayman as it allows us to find minor suit fits after trying (and failing) to find a major suit fit. Also, SARS enables us to establish partner's shape much more closely.

Bidding Stayman and subsequent Shape Asking Relays with no 4 card Major

Hand A Partner opens a strong NT. You want to be in slam, preferably in a minor suit if there is a fit. 4NT, quantitative, would find the fit, but only if partner does not pass. With this slam forcing hand we need to have some form of Minor Suit Stayman. The solution? Bid 2♣ anyway and then ask about partner's shape by bidding 3♣ next turn.

♠ AJ8
♥ K3
♦ KQJ4
♣ KJ84

Example A.1

West	East	West	East	
♠ KQ7	♠ AJ8	1NT	2♣	(1) minor suit shape?
♥ A42	♥ K3	2♦	3♣ (1)	(2) 4♦'s, so 3343
♦ A1065	♦ KQJ4	3♠ (2)	etc. (3)	(3) and onwards to 6♦.
♣ A95	♣ KJ84			

No problem. There is also no problem if opener does have a 4 card major, we simply employ the Shape Asking Relay. Partner may assume that we have the other major, but that does not matter, we are the Captain: -

Example A.2

West	East	West	East	
♠ K1072	♠ AJ8	1NT	2♣	(1) shape?
♥ A42	♥ K3	2♠	3♣ (1)	(2) 4♦'s
♦ A1065	♦ KQJ4	3♦ (2)	etc (3)	(3) with the fit established, East bids on to 6♦.
♣ A9	♣ KJ84			

After a 3♣ shape ask, asker often finds a fit; and if there is or is not a minor suit fit this is always established below the level of 3NT (a big advantage over Sharples 4♣/♦). When no fit is found, then asker can always sign off in 3NT. A bid of the minor shown agrees trumps and is best used as RKCB. 4NT is invitational, and we have our Fit Showing Quantitatives to indicate if there is a fit or not.

Obviously this knowledge of whether there is a fit is extremely useful for opener in deciding if he should push on or not.

Now quite a lot of new stuff here and it certainly needs clarifying with examples.

Hand B I came across this hand in a British magazine's bidding quiz. You were asked the correct bid after partner had opened 1NT. Now actually the problem involved a weak NT opening (12-14) and so I have adjusted this hand slightly by 3 points (the ♠J was the ♠A) so that now partner opens a strong NT (15-17).
 ♠ J4
 ♥ K73
 ♦ AQ42
 ♣ KQ76
 What do you do? The recommended bid was 3NT. The author stating that 'You have a balanced hand with no four card major, and therefore little prospect of playing in anything other than a no-trump contract. You are very strong, but do you have enough for slam?'. I have adjusted the author's comments for a strong NT opening:

To be fair, the system used was not sophisticated, with no mechanism for finding a 4-4 minor suit other than a quantitative 4NT, which may be too high. We however, can do much better than the recommended 3NT bid as we can establish any minor suit fit below 3NT.

West	East	This was the complete hand shown in the solutions. The recommended bidding being 1NT – 3NT – pass.
♠ A7	♠ J4	The author went on to say 'With balanced hands you should aim for 33 points to be able to make a small slam. You have 15 and your partner's maximum is 17, so your maximum combined total is 32: not usually enough for a slam. Settle for 3NT.'
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	
♦ KJ105	♦ AQ42	
♣ J105	♣ KQ76	

As I said, the bidding quiz scenario had a limited bidding system, so this statement may be true in context; but it is not true if you have our more sophisticated system to find 4-4 minor suit fits below the level of 3NT.

Finally, the author adds 'In general, if you have a balanced hand you need 16 points to have a real chance to make slam in no-trumps after your partner has opened a strong NT. On this hand, your limit is surprisingly just 9 tricks after the ♠ lead'. Probably true, but why not investigate a minor suit slam if you have the tools! 6♦ is an excellent contract, requiring only a 3-2 trump break (+ chances if they are 4-1).

Let's use this Hand B in all of the following examples and see if we can get to the correct contract depending upon opener's shape and strength.

We start with the actual hand (the ♠J and ♠A are interchanged from the original weak NT deal): -

Example B.1

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ105	♦ AQ42	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(3) 4 card ♣ or ♦
♣ J105	♣ KQ76	3NT (5)	4♠ (6)	(4) which?
		6♦ (7)	pass	(5) ♦'s
				(6) quantitative, ♦ fit

(7) With a near maximum, superb trumps, decent shape and good intermediates; West has no problem in accepting the invitation.

Example B.2

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQ92	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ85	♦ AQ42	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(3) 4 card ♣ or ♦
♣ J52	♣ KQ76	3NT (5)	4♠ (6)	(4) which?
		5♦ (7)	pass	(5) ♦'s
				(6) quantitative, ♦ fit

(7) With a bare minimum, West cannot accept the slam invitation. Because of his poor holding in both black suits, he elects for 5♦ instead of 4NT.

Note that 3NT probably will not even make if the ♥'s fail to split.

Example B.3

West	East	West	East	
♠ A987	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ42	3♠ (3)	3NT (4)	(3) 4 card ♠
♣ J5	♣ KQ76	pass		

(4) With no fit, the East hand is not worth an invitation.

Perhaps a ♥ game is the best contract: -

Example B.4

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQ982	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ42	3♥ (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) 5 ♥'s
♣ J85	♣ KQ76	4♥	pass	(4) quantitative, 5-3 ♥ fit

And there may be a slam in ♥'s: -

Example B.5

West	East	West	East	
♠ A7	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ82	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ5	♦ AQ42	3♥ (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) 5 ♥'s
♣ J105	♣ KQ76	6♥	pass	(4) quantitative, 5-3 ♥ fit

And ♣'s may be just as good a suit for slam: -

Example B.6

West	East	West	East	
♠ A72	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQ82	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ K7	♦ AQ42	3♦ (3)	3♥ (4)	(3) a 4 card minor
♣ A1052	♣ KQ76	3♠ (5)	4♠ (6)	(4) which
		6♣	pass	(5) ♣'s
				(6) quantitative, ♣ fit

All in all, I think that there is more to this East hand than just selling out in 3NT (which may not even make). Don't you agree? So don't believe everything that you read in the magazines.

The bottom lines: -

Look for a fit. We really do need a good mechanism for finding slams with a fit and this concept of the Fit Showing Quantitatives really does improve slam bidding, especially with slam invitational hands.

Invitational slam bidding is an area that is grossly overlooked in modern bidding theory. One is more likely to hold a slam invitational hand than one that definitely wants to go slamming – think about it.

Minor suit slams are often overlooked in favour of less secure 6NT contracts. Perhaps a negative effect of matchpoint (pairs) scoring? It's usually best to go for the safer contract.

Points are important, of course, but the value of a fit is underestimated. The following example shows that even an excellent 17 count is not good enough opposite a respectable strong NT opener if there is no fit.

For this final example, we'll improve the East hand slightly so that it's certainly looking for slam, but have a West hand with no fit.

Example B.7

West	East	West	East	
♠ A973	♠ J4	1NT (1)	2♣	(1) 15-17
♥ AQJ2	♥ K73	2♥	3♣ (2)	(2) shape?
♦ KJ	♦ AQ42	3♠ (3)	4♦ (4)	(3) 4 card ♠
♣ J95	♣ AK76	4NT	pass	(4) quantitative, no fit

East has a maximal invitation (some would jump straight in). West has a decent hand, but with no fit there is no slam.
