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This Week in Bridge **(177) 5NT Choice of Slams**

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Level: 4

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General

5NT is not a common bid. We most frequently use it in Ace-asking auctions to ask for Kings. We now have another use of a 5NT bid in Grand Slam Force. But trying for a grand slam is a rare occurrence and we would like to use 5NT (specially a jump to 5NT) for another more frequently useful purpose. The modern approach is to play a *jump* to 5NT as a “choice of slams” to help up find the best small slam. Let’s see how this works.

Choice of Slam

1♠ 2♣

3♣ 3♠

5NT

In this auction, we have two possible fits. We can explore a ♠ slam by using 4NT Keycard, or we can imply weak ♠ and strong ♣ by jumping to 6♣, strongly indicating a desire to play there with something like ♣AKJx. Another option is to bid 5NT as “choice of slams” – to get input from partner about which slam to play.

Over your 5NT bid, partner can now bid 6♣ with decent ♣ (say if they made a 2/1 GF bid with ♣KQxxx or something similar) or bid 6♠ if they have good ♠ support (say Hxx or better) and not great ♣.

Example

♠ K32

♥ AK54

♦ A76

♣ Q432

Here we’re likely to choose to play 6♠ over partner’s 5NT choice of slams because we do not have very good ♣ but we do have Hxx in ♠.



Example

2NT 3♣
3♥ 5NT

This 5NT bid is also a choice of slams bid (not agreeing to ♥, and not Grand Slam Force.) Opener can:

- Bid a 4-card minor at 6♣ or 6♦ (offering along the way to 6NT possibly),
- Rebid a 5-card ♥ suit with 6♥ in case Responder has a fit,
- Bid 6♠ with 4-card ♠ support, as that appears to be why Responder bid Stayman, or
- Bid 6NT with nothing else to say.

Choice of NT Slams

5NT “choice of slams” can also be used to decide between playing 6-suit and 6NT. This kind of auction is particularly useful playing matchpoints where making 6NT when others are making 6-suit can be an excellent result.

Example

1♠ 2♣
2NT 3♠
5NT

In this case, the partnership may land in 6♣, 6♠, or 6NT, depending on Responder’s hand and what they suggest next.

Conclusion

5NT “choice of games” is a relatively simple but incredibly useful slam bidding tool. This bid is a good way to ask for partner’s input about which is the best slam to play from their perspective. In general, cooperative decision making leads to better slam bidding than just guessing when you are unsure what strain to play in. Try adding this practical problem solving tool to your slam bidding agreements with your regular partners.