In the slam zone - balanced hands - Summary Sheet

The Blackwood convention

Many club players will bid 4NT – asking for aces – whenever they have hopes of a slam. However, it should not be your first thought.

On 2 balanced hands, with little hope of significant extra tricks from long suits or ruffing, you will need to make tricks with your Queens and Jacks. 4NT Blackwood will only tell you about the 8 tricks available in Aces and Kings – and frequently just the 4 Aces.

Instead, you should base your bidding on the total combined points and this is achieved using quantitative raises.

Quantitative raises

Once partner has made a natural bid in no trumps he will have shown a specific point-range. You can then deduce a range for the combined point-count between the two hands.

Critical totals

The critical totals for the two balanced hands combined are:-

Less than 25 points	part-score	pass
25 – 32 points	game	enough for 3NT
33 – 36 points	small slam	enough for 6NT
37+ points	grand slam	enough for 7NT

And if you can't be sure of the total

Might be 25 points	bid 2NT	partner will raise to 3NT if maximum
Might be 33 points	bid 4NT	partner will pass if minimum, or bid 6NT if maximum
At least 33 points, might be 37 points		
	bid 5NT	partner will bid 6NT if minimum or 7NT if maximum

Note that in the above 4NT is quantitative – not Blackwood.

Typical sequences

The above will apply, for example, in each of the following uncontested sequences: -

1NT - ?
2NT - ?
2C, 2D, 2NT, ?
2C, 2D, 3NT, ?

Recommended

is that you should also play sequences such as
1NT, 2C, 2H, 4NT
and
2NT, 3H, 3S, 4NT
as quantitative in the same way.
(You will have to find another way to agree partner's suit in these examples and show a slam interest. It might involve a made-up bid of four of a minor.)