

A SLAM IN HAND

There are 2 passes to you with this South hand:

South
 ♠ AKJ864
 ♥ AK107
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 103

Although you have only 15 HCP, your beautiful major suits easily lead to an upgrade of at least 3 more points. Your partner makes a jump raise to 3♠ in spite of the 2♣ overcall by West. You are very interested in slam but you need to find out if partner has a stopper in clubs. You wouldn't want to lose the first two clubs. You can find out by bidding your own controls up the line; skipping clubs because you don't have clubs controlled. If your partner also lacks a club stopper, he will return to 4♠. This is the bidding so far:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
2♣	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♦

Partner has a club control and launches into a Blackwood sequence. You are playing Roman Key Card Blackwood, where the king of trump counts as the "fifth" ace. You show your three aces by rebidding 5♦. Partner raises you to 6♠.

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
2♣	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5 ♦
Pass	6 ♠	All Pass	

West leads the ♣A and switches to the ♦3. You see this dummy:

	South
	♠ 7532
	♥ J95
	♦ AQJ108
	♣ 8
West: ♣A	South
	♠ AKJ864
	♥ AK107
	♦ 6
	♣ 103

North's hand isn't as good as you had hoped. How do you plan to make your slam contract?

You have 10 spades so you can expect the three outstanding spades to break 2-1 for no spade losers. You have a certain club loser, given the lead and two probable heart losers. How can you eliminate those two heart losers?

The answer is in the diamonds. If the 7 outstanding diamonds break 4-3 and the $\heartsuit K$ is in the hand with the three diamonds, then the 4th and 5th diamonds will offer a place to discard the two losing hearts. It will take some luck, but it is the only option to make your contract.

The first decision is whether to take the diamond finesse. West switched to the $\heartsuit 3$ at trick two. Was he lead away from a king? Probably not. You can't afford to take a chance on losing a second trick. You take the $\heartsuit A$ and lead the $\heartsuit Q$. If East puts the $\heartsuit K$ on this card, your worries are over. He doesn't though and you can't guarantee that East does hold the $\heartsuit K$. You trump it high with the $\spadesuit 8$. You don't want to use your little spades because you will need them later as entries to the dummy. You pull one round of trump with the $\spadesuit A$ and both opponents follow suit – West dropping the $\spadesuit Q$. Now you ruff your remaining club with dummy's $\spadesuit 2$ and lead the $\heartsuit J$. Again, East plays low and you ruff with the $\spadesuit J$. This time, West plays his $\heartsuit K$. So, West did lead away from his king – you could have finessed that first diamond lead. No matter, your plan is working.

It's time to make the last trip to the dummy to enjoy those two good diamonds. But first you must pull the last trump with the $\spadesuit K$. East plays the $\spadesuit 10$ and you lead the carefully preserved $\spadesuit 4$ to the $\spadesuit 7$ in dummy and discard the two losing hearts on the $\heartsuit 108$.

Setting up a 5-card suit is a common way of disposing of losers. One thing you need is enough entries to the dummy. The second requirement is plenty of luck!

Here is the entire hand:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;"> 1 </div>		N North \spadesuit 7532 \heartsuit J95 \diamondsuit AQJ108 \clubsuit 8		<table border="1" style="font-size: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>1\heartsuit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2\clubsuit</td> <td>3\clubsuit</td> <td>P</td> <td>4\heartsuit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>4NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>5\heartsuit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>6\clubsuit</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		W	N	E	S	P	P	P	1 \heartsuit	2 \clubsuit	3 \clubsuit	P	4 \heartsuit	P	4NT	P	5 \heartsuit	P	6 \clubsuit	P	P
W	N	E	S																						
P	P	P	1 \heartsuit																						
2 \clubsuit	3 \clubsuit	P	4 \heartsuit																						
P	4NT	P	5 \heartsuit																						
P	6 \clubsuit	P	P																						
W West \spadesuit Q \heartsuit Q642 \diamondsuit K53 \clubsuit AKJ96		E East \spadesuit 109 \heartsuit 83 \diamondsuit 9742 \clubsuit Q7542																							
		S South \spadesuit AKJ864 \heartsuit AK107 \diamondsuit 6 \clubsuit 103																							
				6 \spadesuit S NS: 0 EW: 0																					

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/qyk6d6y> , copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the “Next” button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on “Play” you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.

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