

♠♥♦♣ DON'T GO TOO FAST ♠♥♦♣

Your partner is the dealer on this hand. He opens 1♦. East passes and it's up to you:

S	South
♠	KQJ964
♥	3
♦	AKJ
♣	KJ5

You have quite some responder hand. You don't want to go crazy and jump into you spades. You haven't yet found a fit and as long as you keep making forcing bids, partner can't pass you. You simply respond 1♠ and see what happens.

Your partner raises to 2♠, showing 4-card support most of the time. Now your 18 HCP are worth an additional 6 points. You can count 1 point for the quality spade suit, 3 points for the 6-cards in the suit that has been supported and another 2 points for the singleton heart. You have what amounts to about 37 total points. You certainly want to be in slam.

Normally, you would start control suit cuebidding; but you have 1st or 2nd round control of all the suits. With this hand, you can jump to 4NT and find out about the 3 critical aces you are missing.

Partner responds 5♣ indicating 1 ace. That means you are off two aces and cannot make a slam. You should retreat to 5♠ and leave it there.

West leads the ♦8 and you see this dummy - plan the play:

N	North
♠	8752
♥	AKQ
♦	Q762
♣	Q2

West leads ♦8

S South
♠ KQJ964
♥ 3
♦ AKJ
♣ KJ5

This looks easy enough. You must lose a spade and a club to the outstanding aces, but that's the extent of it. You will win the opening diamond lead with dummy's ♦Q and do what?

If you proceed by rote and start the trump suit, you could be in bid trouble. When it looks too easy, pause and consider what could go wrong.

What if that diamond lead was a singleton? One of those outstanding aces is certain to be in East's hand, who can return a diamond for a ruff. This would be the setting trick. You cannot afford to let them in until you take care of the situation.

You have three top hearts in the dummy which will give you two discards from your hand. After the first diamond trick, you have just two diamonds left in your hand – the ♦AK. If you discard them before letting the defenders in, they cannot lead a diamond without you trumping it.

Let's say you discard those two diamonds on the dummy's top hearts. Then you lead a trump to your ♠K and West wins the ♠A; East follows with the ♠3. West leads a club, taken by East's ♣A. East then leads that diamond. Which spade will you ruff with? The ♠10 is still out. Don't spoil your plan by trumping low. Go up with the ♠Q. There is still the ♠J available to pull the last trump.

You made good decision to stop at game during the bidding. Don't rush the play and ruin that good bidding decision.

Look at the entire deal:

D	N North	W	N	E	S
1	♠ 8752		1♦	P	1♠
	♥ AKQ		P	2♠	P 4NT
	♦ Q762		P	5♣	P 5♣
	♣ Q2		P	P	P
W West		E East			
♠ A10		♠ 3			
♥ J9765		♥ 10842			
♦ 8		♦ 109543			
♣ 98643		♣ A107			
	S South				
	♠ KQJ964				
	♥ 3				
	♦ AKJ				
	♣ KJ5				
			5♠ S	NS: 0	EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y385u99h>, or 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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