

♠♥♦♣ PRECISE BIDDING TO SLAM ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer, sitting North:

N	North
♠	A1085
♥	AQJ
♦	A
♣	KJ832

You have 19 HCP and open 1♣. Your opponents are silent (for a change) and partner responds 1♥, and it's back to you.

Whenever you hold a hand of more than 15 or so points, it is wise to think about slam right from the beginning. Your mindset should be, "convince me that we should not be in slam." That way, you won't be finding yourself in game contracts taking 12 tricks.

You want to give partner some idea of your strength. One way is to jump shift to 2♠. This shows a hand of 19-21 points, with a 4-card spade suit, and it is 100% forcing for one round. Here, partner rebids 3♥, and you can show delayed support for his hearts. This bid tends to deny 4 hearts but should promise 3 hearts and shortness somewhere. That is exactly what you have. Now partner bids 3♠. What does this mean?

If partner had 4 spades he would have supported them rather than bidding his diamonds. He's heard your heart support, so you can assume he has set the trump suit and is now cue bidding for controls in the side suits, in preparation for a slam try. He starts with the next suit up from hearts where he has control. You have controls in all of the suits, so you should bid 4NT.

You are asking for key cards, where the aces and the king of hearts are the 5 controls you are asking about. He responds 5♣, showing 1 control; either the ♥K or the ♣A. You don't care which control it is; you put the contract at 6♥.

West leads the ♦Q, and you lay your hand down. Take over for your partner and plan the play for 12 tricks.

N	North
♠	A1085
♥	AQJ
♦	A
♣	KJ832

West leads ♦Q

S South
♠
♥ K8432
♦ K10763
♣ Q107

First, notice the South hand and think about the bidding. He has only 8 HCP but he does have a known fit in hearts and after his suit is supported he can add 5 points for the void. Now he has 13 points and with you showing 19 or more, he is pretty sure there are enough points for slam. Thus, the start of his cue bidding controls.

There are several ways of playing the hand. Assuming all the suits break reasonably, you have 1 spade, 5 hearts, 2 diamonds and 4 clubs, once you knock out the ♣A. You can afford to win the ♦A, pull trump and play the clubs until someone takes the ♠A. When I played it, I ruffed 3 spades before pulling trump.

This hand came up at a sectional tournament that I played in last week. Of the 12 times it was played, only 2 pair played in a slam; one in 6♥ and one in 6♣. It played in 4 hearts 9 times, only twice taking 12 tricks. One time it was played in 3NT making only 3. I think it took a slam mindset to explore for the big bonus.

Look at the entire deal:

D 1	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ A1085 ♥ AQJ ♦ A ♣ KJ832		1♣	P	1♥
			P	2♣	P
			P	3♥	P
			P	4NT	P
			P	6♥	P
W West		E East			
♠ KJ762 ♥ 105 ♦ QJ85 ♣ 96		♠ Q943 ♥ 976 ♦ 942 ♣ A54			
	S South				
	♠ ♥ K8432 ♦ K10763 ♣ Q107				
			6♥ S	NS: 0 EW:	

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

<http://tinyurl.com/yyrygkxg>, 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.