

READING THE TEA LEAVES

East deals and passes. Your turn with this hand:

S	South
♠	AJ
♥	2
♦	AK10865
♣	K542

You have 15 unbalanced points and a good 6-card diamond suit. You open 1♦ and hear your LHO overcall 2♥. This is a weak jump overcall and is equivalent to a weak 2 opening. Your partner responds with a negative double and it's back to you.

His double of a 2-bid could be as weak as 8 points, up to an unlimited number of points. He is probably showing spades and maybe clubs. Spades definitely don't turn you on, but clubs might serve as a playable suit. If you do the minimum thing here, bidding 3♣, you would be showing a hand worth up to about 15 points. But this hand is too strong for that action. You can add 3 points for that quality 6-card diamond suit. You must take stronger action. One of the easiest things to do is to cue bid 3♥. This is forcing, of course, and usually indicates a lack of hearts. It asks partner to describe his hand more fully.

Over your cue bid, partner bids 3♠. He did not bid 3NT, so he doesn't have enough in hearts to withstand a heart "attack." Now is the time to show the focus of your hand – diamonds. Your return to your original suit, 4♦, after your strong cue bid, is a mild slam try.

Partner bids 4NT, asking for key cards. You have three – two aces and the king of diamonds. You answer 5♦. He puts you in 6NT.

N	North
♠	KQ53
♥	KQ7
♦	Q92
♣	AJ9

East leads the ♥9

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♥	2
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West wins the opening lead with a ♥A, but the next 12 tricks are yours. It is interesting that without the heart lead you can take all thirteen tricks. West's overcall, asking for a heart lead was the key factor in keeping their side to a score of only -1440!

This was a bidding sequence where both partner's are aware of the extras in their hands that often lead to slam. Both North and South were reading the tea leaves, so to speak.

This is the entire deal:

10	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ KQ53 ♥ KQ7 ♦ Q92 ♣ AJ9	2♥ X P 3♠ P 4NT P 6NT	X	P	P
W West			E East		
♠ 6 ♥ AJ10654 ♦ 743 ♣ Q107			♠ 1098742 ♥ 983 ♦ J ♣ 863		
	S South				
	♠ AJ ♥ 2 ♦ AK10865 ♣ K542				
					6NT N NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y9wut8lq>, 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.