

RE-EVALUATE TO SLAM ZONE

Look at these two hands and see how you would bid them. Is there enough for slam or is game all that can be expected?

West	East
♠K1032	♠A87
♥Q1074	♥AKJ32
♦A5	♦J8743
♣A42	♣-----

Each hand holds 13 HCP when the partners pick them up. But how they change in value once they start bidding!

Here's how I would bid them. West is the dealer:

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

- (1) East has 13 HCP but can add one point for the quality heart suit. A quality suit is one of a least four cards containing 3 or more honors. Plus, he can add one length point for each 5-card suit. That's a total of 16 starting points. With two 5-card suits, he bids the higher ranking first. Besides, the diamonds are mothy and they are in a minor suit.
- (2) East's hand has just gotten a whole lot better. West has supported his hearts and now he can add to the 16 points he held on the last round of bidding, 4 more points for the void (voids are magic) and another point because of the long diamond side suit; 21 points in all! East knows there are enough points for slam, but he needs to know if there is a diamond stopper in his partner's hand. He can find out by starting a control cue bid sequence, starting with the clubs. Normally, he would start cue bidding the next higher suit – spades – but he is only interested in hearing about diamonds and if he bid his spade suit, West might bid clubs. That would be awkward. It is cleaner to jump into 4♣, showing 19+ points and club control. (Some, who use them, might read this 4♣ bid as a splinter, showing a void or singleton in the club suit. Well, let them. It IS a void and it is also a control.)
- (3) West does have diamond control and shows it with a 4♦ control cuebid.
- (4) That is all East wants to know and he launches into Roman Keycard Blackwood.
- (5) The response of 5♠ shows two aces plus the queen of trump.
- (6) East now sees all four aces and a solid heart suit. He bids the small slam he thinks he can make.

East leads the ♣J and now the problem is making the contract. Here is the complete hand. Can you count 12 tricks for East?

D 8	N North	W N E S
	♠ Q96 ♥ 865 ♦ Q10 ♣ KQ753	1♠ P 1♥ P 2♥ P 4♣ P 4♦ P 4NT P 5♠ P 6♥ P
W West		E East
♠ K1032 ♥ Q1074 ♦ A5 ♣ A42		♠ A87 ♥ AKJ32 ♦ J8743 ♣
	S South	
	♠ J54 ♥ 9 ♦ K962 ♣ J10986	6♥ E NS: 0 EW: 0

East has 2 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club trick; 9 in all. He must find 3 more. He might consider ruffing 3 diamonds in the dummy. But with only four trump in the dummy, he can only afford to pull 1 round of trump and one of the defenders might overruff him on the 3rd diamond ruff.

His only chance is if diamonds split no worse than 4-1. He can win the ♦A, then lose 1 diamond, ruff the third and fourth diamond and the last diamond is good. That's the nine original tricks, 2 diamond ruffs and 1 good diamond – a total of 12 tricks.

His first decision is what to do with the ♣J lead. He should win it with the ♣A and discard a spade from his hand. He must be sure he doesn't ditch a little diamond. Those diamonds are now gold. They are providing the 3 tricks he needs to make his slam. Now, see why we gave the East hand an extra point for the long diamond side suit?

Declarer can afford to draw 1 round of trump, using the little ♥4 in the dummy, saving those high trumps for ruffs. Then he starts right in on setting up the diamonds by leading toward the ♦A and leading the remaining diamond to his hand, won by North. North will probably lead another club which declarer tumps. Declarer leads a diamond for the first ruff. He has to remember to ruff high with the ♥Q or ♥10 in case the diamonds don't break. North discards, so the diamonds were 4-1. He goes back to his hand with dummy's final club and ruffs the diamond again with the remaining high trump. Now the remaining diamond is good in its own right, but he must now draw North's two trump. Then he is left with two good spades and the good ♦J.

If you would like to see the whole hand played out, click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/kwyhgqq> or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick.