

## A Slam Checklist

Dealer: South  
 Vul: None  
 Opening Lead:  $\heartsuit$ A

North  
 $\spadesuit$ J102  
 $\heartsuit$ A1053  
 $\diamondsuit$ KQ73  
 $\clubsuit$ 85

West  
 $\spadesuit$ Q87  
 $\heartsuit$ 9  
 $\diamondsuit$ AJ82  
 $\clubsuit$ J10732

East  
 $\spadesuit$ K96543  
 $\heartsuit$ Q  
 $\diamondsuit$ 1095  
 $\clubsuit$ 964

South  
 $\spadesuit$ A  
 $\heartsuit$ KJ87642  
 $\diamondsuit$ 64  
 $\clubsuit$ AKQ

West	North	East	South
Pass	3 $\heartsuit$	Pass	1 $\heartsuit$ ??

What do you think South's rebid should be?

When South picked up her hand she counted 17 HCP and added 3 for the 7-card heart suit. That's 20 points and she told herself that if her partner as much as bid 1NT, showing 6 points, she would jump to game in hearts.

But North held 11 support points; 10 HCP and 1 for the doubleton. Plus, he held 4 trump. This called for a limit raise to 3 $\heartsuit$  to show all that. A limit raise is invitational to game (11 or 12 points) with 4 or more trump.

Now South, who was planning to jump to game if North bid anything at the 1-level, stopped to think. Did her hand get better now that North has supported her hearts? You bet it did.

First off, there will be a very good chance that those spotty hearts will get filled in once the partnership holds 11 or more of the trump. Secondly, the singleton spade, even though it is an ace, adds a couple of points to the valuation. Those two features alone add about 5

points to the 20 points South started with when she picked up her hand. That 25, along with the 11 from North are more than the 33 needed for a small slam. The only real losers are her two small diamonds. If North has some control over these diamonds, making a slam in hearts has a high probability.

Asking for aces via a 4NT bid is NOT the way to find out about the diamond control. If North shows 1 ace, how will South know if it is the ♥A or the ♦A? If it is the ♦A that North holds, her second diamond becomes a slow loser and might well be eliminated before the opponents come to collect it. However, if it is the ♥A the initial lead will result in 2 diamond losers and the loss of the slam.

The way to find out about partner's diamond suit is to start a **control cue bid sequence**. Once the trump suit is established, a bid of another suit usually says: "I have an Ace or King, void or singleton in this suit and can handle a lead of that suit by the opponents. What suits can you say the same thing about, partner?" The agreement is that this control cue bidding will proceed up the line. Whatever suit it skipped, is the suit in which the bidder doesn't hold a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> round control.

Therefore, the continuation of the bidding might proceed as follows:

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

South starts out showing her club control by the 4♣ bid. North looks at the suit above clubs and bids a second round control with his 4♦. Now South knows that she can't lose two quick tricks on the opening lead. The only other problem she faces is that the opponents can hold 2 aces, so she bids Blackwood 4NT to check. North reports back with his 5♦ bid that he holds 1 ace. South is now confident that a small slam in hearts will make.

South has done three things:

- After the fit was found in hearts, she reevaluated her hand to ensure there were 33 or more points

- Confirmed that she has the necessary control in the vulnerable suits
- Checked to make sure the partnership wasn't off too many aces.

In the hand above, West will lead the  $\heartsuit$ A, but South will win the return, draw trump and claim. +980 for North/South.

**Use this checklist when you think that a slam is in the cards:**

**Do you have a fit and/or enough points?**

**Do you have control of all the suits?**

**Do you have enough aces?**