

STARTING WITH NOTHING

You're the dealer and looking at this hand, you're tempted to tune out. Try to resist this temptation. Every hand is important, whether you are on defense or offense. But you pass this hand, as does West and your partner opens 1♣. East makes a weak jump overcall of 2♦ and it's back to you.

S	South
♠	J842
♥	7654
♦	J5
♣	K72

The only good thing about your hand is that you have two 4-card major suits. Your partner may have 4 cards in one of them and it would be nice to play at the 2-level in a major suit. Since you passed originally, you can double, letting your partner pick the suit, and he won't expect you have the values you would have if you were an unpassed hand.

West jumps to 4♦ over your double and partner doubles for take out. East passes and it's your turn. You could pass and convert the double to penalty, but you have no tricks on defense. Partner can't have diamonds, considering the opponent's bidding. He really wants you to name your best major. You bid 4♠ and West ups the ante to 5♦. Your partner carries on to 6♠ and the bidding ends there.

The bidding has gone:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♣	2♦	Dbl
4♦	Dbl	Pass	4♠
5♦	6♠	All Pass	

West leads the ♥K and you partner tables this hand:

N	North
♠	AKQ5
♥	AJ2
♦	2
♣	AQ954

West leads ♥K

S	South
♠	J842
♥	7654
♦	J5
♣	K72

You have to plan to take 12 tricks. You have 4 spades, 1 heart, and if the clubs behave, you can take 5 club tricks. You need two more tricks. If trump breaks 3-2 you can use the diamond ruff for one of the tricks. The other possibility is in the heart suit. You must make the ♥J your 12th trick. Do you think your chances are good?

They sure are. If you read the lead, West surely holds the ♥Q. He wouldn't lead an unsupported king in a slam contract (or any contract, unless his partner bid them.)

You must win the opening lead and pull trump. Then play the clubs, discarding your two diamonds on dummy's 4th and 5th club. Now you lead the ♦2 and ruff with your last spade. You are back in your hand and can lead a small heart up to the ♥J. If West takes his ♥Q you ruff his return and play the good ♥J.

Even with a hand of only five points that you thought you could sleep through, you must be alert to the possibility of making a slam!

This is the entire deal:

7 D	N North	W N E S															
	♠ AKQ5 ♥ AJ2 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ954	<table border="1"> <tr><td>P</td><td>1♣</td><td>2♦</td><td>X</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>X</td><td>P</td><td>4♣</td></tr> <tr><td>5♦</td><td>6♣</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	P	1♣	2♦	X	P	X	P	4♣	5♦	6♣	P	P	P		
P	1♣	2♦	X														
P	X	P	4♣														
5♦	6♣	P	P														
P																	
W West		E East															
♠ 97 ♥ KQ1083 ♦ A1043 ♣ 63		♠ 1063 ♥ 9 ♦ KQ9876 ♣ J108															
	S South																
	♠ J842 ♥ 7654 ♦ J5 ♣ K72																
		6♣ S NS: 0 EW: 0															

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ybq4m2r3>, 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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