

THINK BEFORE YOU SETTLE

East passes and you open 1♠ with this hand

South
 ♠ AK8543
 ♥ 4
 ♦ Q
 ♣ Q8652

Your partner responds 2♦ and you rebid your six card spade suit. He jumps to 3NT. What should you do?

Your partner's two over one response and his jump to 3NT shows a strong hand. But the prospects of a game in notrump are dim. You might be only able to contribute 2 tricks in notrump. Rather than make the thoughtless "pass" it would be better to show your second suit. If you rebid 4♣, your partner will be dissuaded from notrump and can take a preference of the two black suits.

Over your 4♣ he rebids 4NT. You fear that he is trying to insist on a notrump contract and is not bidding Blackwood. On the other hand, you know he doesn't know the extreme distribution that your hand holds. Say you ignore his desire and respond to a Blackwood invitation, showing 2 keycards, the Ace and King of trumps. He will rebid 5♠ to retrieve some sanity. Maybe you should pass him. Even if you miss the slam, most of the others playing this deal will probably be in 3NT and your score making 5♠ will be better.

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

After the lead of the ♥Q, you see this dummy:

	North
	♠ Q10
	♥ AK5
	♦ 98742
	♣ A104
West	
♥Q	
	South
	♠ AK8543
	♥ 4
	♦ Q
	♣ Q8652

This isn't a bad dummy at all. What is your plan?

You have no spade or heart losers. You can discard the losing diamond on the ♥K. Your only work will be to play the clubs correctly.

Start by winning the ♥A and discard the ♦Q on the ♥K. Now draw trump. Unblock the ♠QJ and trump a diamond to clear the suit. It's time to play the club suit. Lead the ♣2 to the dummy, finessing the ♣10 if West play low. West actually plays the ♣J on the first club. Win the ♣A and lead the ♣4 to finesse the ♣8 if East plays low. Now you can give up a club to the ♣K for your spade slam: made but not bid.

Incidentally, 3NT would have been set by three tricks.

Here is the entire hand:

14 D	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ QJ ♥ AK5 ♦ 98742 ♣ A104	P	2♦	P	1♠
W West		P	3NT	P	2♣
♠ 9762 ♥ QJ1063 ♦ J65 ♣ J		P	4NT	P	5♥
		D	5♠	D	D
	S South				
	♠ AK8543 ♥ 4 ♦ Q ♣ Q8652				
		5♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0			

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

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