

TWO CONVENTIONS IN ONE DEAL

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1		N North ♠ 7 ♥ 932 ♦ AK853 ♣ Q1092	W N E S P P P 1♥ P 2♣ P 4♦ P 4♥ P P P
	W West	♠ 1062 ♥ 1065 ♦ 76 ♣ KJ763	E East ♠ AQ943 ♥ 4 ♦ Q10942 ♣ 85
		S South ♠ KJ85 ♥ AKQJ87 ♦ J ♣ A4	4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

Look at the bidding for this deal. South is in 3rd position and is allowed to open with as few as 10 HCP as long as he is willing to pass whatever partner responds. However, this South has a big hand. There are 19 HCP. There are a few upgrades that make it worth more. There is a 6-card suit that accounts for 2 more points. The heart suit has 4 honors in it, which is worth another point. That's 23 total points. Certainly, this is worth a 1♥ opening.

North's 2♣ response is a conventional bid. It doesn't say anything about clubs. The convention is called Drury (technically, Reverse Drury). It is used opposite 3rd seat openers to show an invitational raise in the bid suit and asks if it was a full opener or a light opener. In this version of the convention, South will return to 2♥ if his opening was light. Any other bid promises a full opening. After showing a full opening, the auction continues.

Not only does South have a full opening, he has a very powerful hand. Having found a heart fit, he can add a few more points: 1 more point for the 6th heart, 2 points for the diamond singleton and 1 point for the 4-card side suit – spades. That's a total of 26 points opposite partner's known 10-12 point hand. South is thinking slam.

South can do best by describing another key feature of his hand – the singleton diamond. He can bid 4♦. This is called a splinter bid. A double jump in a new suit says he has 0 or 1 diamond and interest in slam. Usually, the responder makes a splinter bid; but when the opener makes it, it is called a "self-splinter."

North now has to make a decision based on the splinter bid. South is saying he can trump North's diamond losers, so North should make his decision whether to accept the slam invitation based on his holdings in the other three suits. Since most of North's point are in the diamond suit, they won't have any additional trick taking potential. The way North shows this, is by returning to the trump suit at the 4-level.

Now it's up to South. North's denial of the slam invitation is not a sign off bid, but merely his recommendation based on what he sees. This South shared North's opinion based on his broken spade suit and club loser. He stopped in 4♥. More on this decision later.

West led the ♦7. South counts 4 spade losers, no heart or diamond losers and 1 club loser. He can discard the club loser on dummy's good diamond. He must ruff 3 spades in the dummy unless the ♠A appears first. Then he only needs 2 spade ruffs; his ♠K will be good.

South won the lead with dummy's ♦A. He immediately led dummy's spade in order to set up the spade ruffs. East jumped up with the ♠A so he could lead his only heart and cut down on the ruffs. South won and ruffed a spade. He took the ♦K, discarding the ♣4 and led a club to his ♣A. He ruffed the next spade and got back to his hand by ruffing a club high. He pulled the remaining trump, played his ♠K and claimed 12 tricks.

Did you notice how South could have erred? Had he played both diamonds before leading the spade, West would have been void in diamonds when he later led the spade to East's ♠A. East could have led another diamond. Had South thoughtlessly trumped with a small heart, West could have over ruffed with the ♥10 and held declarer to only 11 tricks.

Let's look at the decision to stop at game level. North didn't have any high cards outside the diamond suit, but he did have a singleton spade, which was worth a whole lot in this case. Despite this bidding error by North, South should have gone on to slam just based on his 26 re-evaluated points. Of course, he has to first check for missing aces.

One final point. South has a hand that was so strong, he could have opened it 2♣. North could then have splintered himself, showing the singleton spade. He would have responded 3♠. Now South knows about North's ability to ruff his losing spades, making the decision to go to 6♥ much clearer.

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

<http://tinyurl.com/j58znok>, 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.