

♠♥♦♣ USING LTC TO GET TO SLAM ♠♥♦♣

North is the dealer and opens 1♦. It's pass to you:

S	South
♠	K9832
♥	A86
♦	7
♣	9852

You hold 7 HCP and a chunky 5-card spade suit. You respond 1♠ and it's back to North. He rebids 4♣. What is this?

This is a splinter bid. It shows agreement of spades as the trump suit (4 spades) and a void or singleton in the club suit. It is also forcing to game, naturally. Because you may only have had 6 points for your bid, it tends to promise 19-21 points. It is definitely not a shut out bid. It is very strong. Your hand is now worth about 10 points, and together, you have between 29 and 31 points.

Another way of evaluating your hand when you have located a fit in a suit, is using Losing Trick Count (LTC). Missing any of the top 3 cards in a suit counts as a loser. Therefore, with no honor cards in a balanced hand, you could have a maximum of 12 losers. If partner held the same hand, he also would have 12 losers, so there are a total of 24 possible losers. If you subtract you and your partner's actual losers from 24, you should net the number of winners you hold.

A hand with 19-21 points usually has 4 or 5 losers. Your hand holds a losing trick count of 8. That computes to between 12 and 13 LTC. Subtract this LTC from 24 gives you 11 or 12 winners. Possibly enough for slam. But, there is another important fact to consider. Partner has shown at most 1 club. Therefore, your 3 losing clubs can be reduced to 1 by ruffing at least 2 club in his hand. Now, you are definitely strong enough for a slam in spades, as long as you are not missing two aces.

You rebid 4NT and partner replies 5♠. In Roman Key Card Blackwood, that is showing 2 key cards (the ♠K is counted as a key card) and the queen of trump. Since you hold the ♠K, partner must have 2 aces. You are missing 1 ace and so you settle for 6♠.

West leads the ♥Q and you see this dummy:

N North
♠ AQ75
♥ K43
♦ AKQ93
♣ 6

West leads ♥Q

S South
♠ K9832
♥ A86
♦ 7
♣ 9852

The lead of a club would have been better for the defense. When the declaring side has shown a singleton, leading that suit can sometimes save a trick. Singletons can vanish during the play, and the defender's Ace in the short suit could become useless. Here, that could almost happen, but not quite. The defenders will get their club trick.

Counting losers, you should use the North hand as the master hand, since you will be trumping in the South hand. You have 1 heart loser and 1 club loser. Your plan is to pull trump, hoping for no worse than a 3-1 split, and discard the losing heart in your hand on the 2nd top diamond in the dummy. Given that the diamonds will split normally 4-3, you should win the first heart in your hand, conserving the ♥K to return to the dummy to play the 5th diamond, discarding a club from your hand.

Counting winners, you have 4 spades, 2 hearts and 1 heart ruff, 4 diamonds and a diamond ruff – 12 tricks in total.

Look at the entire deal:

D	N North	W	N	E	S
1	♠ AQ75		1♦	P	1♠
	♥ K43		P	4♣	P 4NT
	♦ AKQ93		P	5♠	P 6♣
	♣ 6		P	P	P
W West		E East			
♠ J64		♠ 10			
♥ QJ102		♥ 975			
♦ 1062		♦ J854			
♣ K104		♣ AQJ73			
	S South				
	♠ K9832				
	♥ A86				
	♦ 7				
	♣ 9852				
		6♠ S		NS: 0 EW: 0	

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

<https://tinyurl.com/ycf5heka> , 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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