

WHAT IS THAT XX CARD FOR?

East is the dealer and opens 2♠. This is the “weak two” which shows less than an opening strength hand and 6 good spades. What would you do with this hand?

S	South
♠	AJ9
♥	874
♦	AQ64
♣	KQ6

You have 16 balanced HCP and you would have opened 1NT had you been the dealer. You can still overcall notrump as long as you have a stopper in their bid suit. Here, you may even have two spade stoppers. You have an easy 2NT overcall. West passes and your partner responds 4♦. This is a transfer bid. It is called the “Texas Transfer” and, of course it is game forcing. North must know that there are enough points for game and there are at least 8 hearts between you. Therefore, he must have 6 hearts since he can only count on you to have 2 hearts. Normally, you accept the transfer even if you have only 2 cards in the suit. You actually have at least a 9-card heart fit. The advantage of the Texas Transfer is that it keep the opponents out of the bidding. If you allow them to share information at the 2-level, they might find a sacrifice in spades.

After you bid 4♥, North’s next call is 4NT - Blackwood. He is asking for aces. You have 2 aces so your rebid is 5♥. West suddenly comes alive and doubles. This must be a penalty double since he knows that East’s only suit is spades. North passes the double. What’s going on here? West could have waited until we got to 6♥ for his double. He must be pretty sure of himself. When North passes a freely bid approach to a slam contract, it is called a “forcing pass.” You cannot pass out this bid of 5♥ doubled. You must either bid 6♥ or redouble. Which would you do? The answer requires a little knowledge of scoring. Making a small slam, non-vulnerable, is 980. If it gets doubled and you make it, you get 1210. Making 5♥ redoubled is 1200. So it only 10 points less than making 6♥, as long as it gets doubled. On the other hand, it is easier to make 5 than 6. Even if you don’t take the overtrick, your score for just making 5♥ redoubled is 1000 – more than making an

undoubled small slam. 6♥ undoubled scores only 980. This may seem confusing, but the bottom line leads to pulling out that blue XX card and re-doubling 5♥.

West leads a low spade and you see this dummy:

N	North
♠	4
♥	AJ10652
♦	K75
♣	A32

♠3

S	South
♠	AJ9
♥	874
♦	AQ64
♣	KQ6

This looks better than you expected. You can trump your two losing spades in the dummy. You have no club losers and if the diamonds split 3-3, there are no diamond losers. Even if they don't split, you can trump the last diamond in the dummy. Your only problem is in the trump suit. It should be obvious that all four missing hearts are in West. That has to be the reason for his odd double of 5♥. You must win the ♠A in your hand and lead a heart up to the dummy. West should hold the ♥KQ93 and you will cover whatever he plays to the trick. He will probably start by playing the ♥3. You can afford to cover with the ♥10. This will win. East discards a spade. Now come back to your hand with a club and lead another heart up to the dummy. This time, West will split his honors and you will win the ♥A. Now come back to your hand with a diamond and lead your third heart. If West plays low, insert the ♥J. If he goes up with the ♥K, let him win it and pull his ♥9 when you get back in. He will only get 1 heart trick and you will score 1200 points.

This is the entire deal:

6	N North	W N E S
	♠ 4 ♥ AJ10652 ♦ K75 ♣ A32	♠ 2 ♥ 4 ♦ 4NT ♣ P P X P P XX
W West	E East	
♠ 853 ♥ KQ93 ♦ J32 ♣ 1087	♠ KQ10762 ♥ 1098 ♣ J954	
	S South	
	♠ AJ9 ♥ 874 ♦ AQ64 ♣ KQ6	
		5♥xx S NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/h8e5q2f>, 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. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.

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