

♠♥♦♣ A PERFECT GRAND ♠♥♦♣

This is a deal that was recently suggested by a quiz issued by BBO. The North South hands are theirs; I've added East and West.

North opens 1♦. East passes and this is your hand. What are you thinking?

S	South
♠	KQJ763
♥	A5
♦	KQJ7
♣	J

The first thing you want to do is evaluate your hand in terms of your partner's bid. You have 17 HCP. Your singleton ♣J is worthless but you do get extra points for distribution. You aren't sure what the trump suit is, yet, so hold off on dummy points. You do have 2 quality suits – spades and diamonds. These are suits of 4 cards or more containing 3 honors. I'd say this hand is worth 19-20 points. Facing 13 points, you should be thinking slam.

You respond 1♠ and partner rebids 1NT. This shows 12-14 points, less than 4 spades and probably a balanced hand. To find out more about your partner's hand, you could use the "new minor forcing" convention. Your rebid of 2♣, the "other" minor, asks partner to bid hearts, the other major, if he has four of them; or else, bid spades, if he has 3 spades. Here, he rebids 2♠.

Okay, he has exactly 3 spades and no more than 3 hearts. Therefore, he has 7 cards in the minors and since he opened 1♦, he must have 4 or 5 diamonds. Since you know you can't have 2 quick losers in any suit, you launch into keycard blackwood, where the ♠K is the 5th keycard. North shows 3 keycards by rebidding 5♦. Now you know he has 3 aces, since you hold the ♠K. You also know that partner cannot hold the ♥K, because that would give him 15 points and he would have either opened 1NT or jumped to 2NT to show 18-19. Since he only rebid 1NT, he has no room for any kings.

Do you think you have all the information now to set the contract?

6NT looks cold. Barring a bad break in spades, you have 6 spades, 1 heart, 4 diamonds and 1 club. A 6♠ contract also looks very possible for the same reasons, but scores 10 points less. The best contract, though, is 7♦!

How can you, as North, take 13 tricks in diamonds, but only 12 in notrump or spades. That is because playing in a 4-4 fit it is often better than playing in a 5-3 or 6-3 fit. Running your solid 6-card spade side suit, you will be able to discard

3 of partner's hearts. After your first 3 spade tricks, partner will be out of spades and can begin to discard any hearts he has. Assuming the worst, he starts with 3 small hearts. The first goes on your ♥A, but the other two can go on your remaining spades. Then you will be able to ruff your losing heart, leaving you with no heart losers.

In 7♦, East leads the ♥10. This is what North, the declarer, sees when the dummy comes down:

S	South
♠	KQJ763
♥	A5
♦	KQJ7
♣	J

East leads ♥10

N	North
♠	A98
♥	J73
♦	A1052
♣	A32

There is not much to the play of this hand. North will win the ♥A and pull trump in 3 rounds, making sure he has 1 diamond left in the dummy. Now you play all your spades, discarding at least 2 hearts. When you play the ♥A, you follow with a ruff of the ♥5 and claim the rest.

Look at the entire deal:

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

<https://tinyurl.com/qswoh5z> , 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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