

♠♥♦♣ DON'T DISCOUNT THE MINORS ♠♥♦♣

Your partner dealt and opened 1♥. The opponents were quiet throughout. What do you do with this hand?

| | |
|---|---------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | Q732 |
| ♥ | 8 |
| ♦ | A10 |
| ♣ | AQ10952 |

The hand holds 12 HCP but it is better than that. It features a quality 6-card club suit. If you are playing the popular 2/1 game forcing system, you want to force with 2♣ response. Yes, a 1♠ response would also be forcing, but in 2/1, I (and many others) would prefer to set the game force now and start looking for a fit and perhaps a slam. You will not miss the spade fit, because you can bid the spades later. I believe that a reverse into spades, after a 2/1 game force response, does not show extra points. It merely is showing shape – 4 spades and a longer club suit. Now partner can choose the strain.

The opener repeats his heart suit with a 2♥ rebid. This shows 6 hearts and since you are in a game force, it doesn't limit his strength. What is your rebid?

Many would bid 2NT or 3NT. This would be wrong. The correct bid is 2♠. Partner can have 4 spades and spades would be the superior contract to notrump.

Now North bids 3♣, showing a fit in clubs and denying 4 spades. Now what?

Now you can bid 3NT, knowing you are not missing a better contract in spades. However, partner now comes alive and rebids 4♣. He is showing extras, because if he had only 12-14 points, he would have passed your 3NT. This bid is not Gerber, it is natural. Now that you have found a fit, you can use Losing Trick Count to estimate your trick taking potential. You have only 5 losers; 2 in spades, 1 in hearts, 1 in diamonds and 1 in clubs. Partner's 4♣ bid showed 6 or 7 losers. So, in total you have 11 or 12 losers. Subtracting that from 24, you have 12 or 13 tricks. But before you bid slam, you must check for a spade control. Initiate this search with a control showing cue bid of 4♦. If North has the spade control, he will bid 4NT; otherwise, he will stop at 5♣.

North does bid 4NT. You are playing Roman Key Card Blackwood, your bid of 5♠ shows 2 key cards with the ♣Q. He takes you to 6♣.

West leads the ♣6. What is your plan?

| N | North |
|---|---------|
| ♠ | 9 |
| ♥ | AK10632 |
| ♦ | K86 |
| ♣ | KJ3 |

West lead ♣6

| S | South |
|---|---------|
| ♠ | Q732 |
| ♥ | 8 |
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You have 4 spades losers. You can't do anything about the first spade loser, but you would normally plan to ruff the other spades in the dummy. However, West's lead of a trump means that by the time you get to start the spade ruffs, you will have only 1 trump left in the dummy. The winner of the first spade will knock out the second club in the North hand.

Your backup plan will be to set up the dummy's hearts for spade discards. You win the first trump lead and immediately play the ♥8 to the ♥A and discard a spade on the ♥K. Then ruff the 3rd and 4th heart, using 1 trump and 1 diamond to get back to the dummy, since the clubs break 2-2. The hearts break 4-2, so you will only be able to discard 3 spades. However, your contract is safe.

I'm not a big fan of minor suit games. I much prefer 3NT if I can't find a major suit fit. But 12 tricks are 12 tricks, and a minor suit slam is often available if we look for it.

This is the full deal:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| D 1 | N North | W N E S |
| | ♠ 9 ♥ AK10632 ♦ K86 ♣ KJ3 | 1♥ P 2♥ P 3♣ P 4♣ P 4NT P P 2♥ P 3NT P 4♦ P 5♠ |
| W West | E East | |
| ♠ A102 ♥ J754 ♦ J532 ♣ 76 | ♠ KJ865 ♥ Q9 ♦ Q974 ♣ 84 | |
| | S South | 6♣ S NS: 0 EW: 0 |
| | ♠ Q743 ♥ 8 ♦ A10 ♣ AQ10952 | |

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

<https://tinyurl.com/ybrrz5wo> , 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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