

GETTING TO THE PERFECT SLAM

West passes and your partner opens 1♣. How do you feel about this hand?

S	South
♠	AK94
♥	73
♦	AKQ103
♣	A4

With 21 HCP and partner opening, you should feel great! You have no idea where you should be playing, but you definitely know you must investigate slam. The weak spot in your hand is the heart suit. If you are off the ♥AK, you could lose the first two tricks.

The first response you should make is 1♠. You start by showing a 4-card major because that is the safest place to play. But that's not the only place. Your response of a new suit is 100% forcing, and it allows you to get more information from your partner.

North raises your spade bid to 2♠. Support of your major adds 2 or 3 more points to your hand. Make another forcing bid of 3♦. This is a long suit game try and North rebids 4♥. This is just what you wanted to hear. If you bid 4NT now you will find out if partner's heart stopper is the ace or not.

The bidding progresses:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	5NT ⁽²⁾
Pass	6♥ ⁽³⁾	Pass	7NT ⁽⁴⁾
All Pass			

- (1) South is playing Roman Key Card Blackwood (1430), where 5♣ shows 1 or 4 keycards, using the ♠K as the 5th keycard.
- (2) Since you have the ♠K, the 1 key card must be the ♥A. Your 5NT bid is asking for kings. A grand slam is not out of the question.
- (3) This is a 3rd step response, showing 2 kings.

- (4) You can “see” 11 top tricks, counting only two from the spade suit. You can expect at least one more in spades and another somewhere else in partner’s hand. This is one time it is more probable that you will make 13 tricks than only 12. In one way, a spade grand is safer than notrump. You might need to ruff a heart to get the extra trick. In another way, notrump is safer. You know you have two stoppers in each suit, but you have no protection against an opening lead from West into a void by East. All in all, I would go for the higher scoring notrump grand slam.

West leads the ♥Q. Plan the play:

N	North
♠	J1083
♥	AK5
♦	92
♣	KQ85


West leads ♥Q

S	South
♠	AK94
♥	73
♦	AKQ103
♣	A4

You have 10 top tricks. It is obvious that you need the ♠K to be with East. Assuming it is on side and the suit breaks no worse than 4-1, you are still one trick short. You need the diamonds to behave. You could hope for a 3-3 split in diamonds. This is only 35%. But the ♦J could appear under the ♦AKQ. Also, running all the spades might give the opponent with the long diamonds the opportunity to discard one to two.

Win the ♥A and lead the ♠Q. Holding your breath, you see this hold. Finish all the spades and notice that West has discarded two clubs and a diamond. Now try your diamonds from the top and success! West was 4-4 in the minors but elected to shorten them and guard the ♥J.

This is the entire deal:

	N North ♠ J1083 ♥ AK5 ♦ 92 ♣ KQ85	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>2♠</td> <td></td> <td>P</td> <td>3♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>4♣</td> <td></td> <td>P</td> <td>4NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>5♣</td> <td></td> <td>P</td> <td>5NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>6♥</td> <td></td> <td>P</td> <td>7NT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		W	N	E	S	P	2♠		P	3♦	P	4♣		P	4NT	P	5♣		P	5NT	P	6♥		P	7NT
		W	N	E	S																						
	P	2♠		P	3♦																						
P	4♣		P	4NT																							
P	5♣		P	5NT																							
P	6♥		P	7NT																							
W West ♠ 7 ♥ QJ109 ♦ J875 ♣ J1093	E East ♠ Q652 ♥ 8642 ♦ 64 ♣ 762																										
S South ♠ AK94 ♥ 73 ♦ AKQ103 ♣ A4	7NT S NS: 0 EW: 0																										

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

<http://tinyurl.com/yclg3row>, 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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