

## ♠♥♦♣ RECOGNIZING THE PATTERN ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer and this is your hand:

S	undefined
♠	5
♥	KQJ986
♦	AJ
♣	AJ53

You open 1♥ and your partner responds 1♠. The opponents are silent. What is your rebid?

You have a 6-4-3-1 hand. This is a very unbalance distribution, and you have 15 HCP. If you were weaker, you'd probably want to bid 2♣, showing your other suit. But here, your hearts are too good for that. You have a quality 6-card heart suit that is just about sufficient to serve as the trump suit, even facing a singleton from your partner. Giving yourself an extra 2 points for a 6-card suit and 1 extra point for its quality, you can show all that with a jump rebid of 3♥.

Partner's next bid is 4♣. What does that mean? He doesn't know about your four clubs. He is agreeing with hearts as the trump suit and showing slam interest. He is showing control of the club suit and asking you about control of the diamond suit. Since you have the ♣A, he must have the ♣K or extreme shortness in clubs.

You co-operate with 4♦, showing your diamond control and partner launches into regular Blackwood, asking for your Ace count. You have two Aces and rebid 5♥. Partner places you in slam – 6♥.

West's leads the ♦K and you see this dummy:

N	undefined
♠	AQJ10
♥	A104
♦	653
♣	K62

West's Lead: ♦K

S	undefined
♠	5
♥	KQJ986
♦	AJ
♣	AJ53

Not a bad dummy! Assuming the ♠K is in East, you count 3 spades, 6 hearts, 1 diamond and 2 clubs. That's 12 tricks. But the problem is that when the opponents take their ♠K, they will immediately lead a diamond to the ♦Q, leading to your losing two tricks. Even if the ♠K is in West and you take the finesse, if West holds 3 or more spades, he will eventually win his ♠K.

Is there a better line of play?

Look at the pattern of the spades. This is not an uncommon holding. AQJ(xx) facing a singleton. This is a holding that leads to a "ruffing finesse." Here's how it works.

You win the ♦A and pull trump. Then you lead your singleton spade to dummy's ♠A. Don't finesse the ♠Q. Now comes the ruffing finesse part. Lead the ♠Q. If East holds the ♠K, he is stuck. If he covers your ♠Q, you ruff in your hand and discard the ♦J on the J♠. If he ducks and plays low, you will discard the ♦J. On the other hand, if West holds the ♠K, he will win your ♠Q, but that his last trick. He will play the ♦Q which you will be able to ruff. You still get 3 spades, 6 hearts, 1 diamond and 2 clubs to score your small slam.

This is the entire deal:

11 D	N undefined	W N E S
	♠ AQJ10 ♥ A104 ♦ 653 ♣ K62	P 1♠ P 3♥ P 4♣ P 4♦ P 4NT P 5♦ P 6♥ P P
W undefined	E undefined	
♠ 8632 ♥ 72 ♦ KQ109 ♣ Q108	♠ K974 ♥ 53 ♦ 8742 ♣ 974	
	S undefined	
	♠ 5 ♥ KQJ986 ♦ AJ ♣ AJ53	6♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<https://tinyurl.com/yztdygxf>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. If you don't want to see the opponents hands, click on the white area in the South hand before you start.

Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.