

USING 2-WAY CHECKBACK

N	North
♠	AQJ103
♥	KJ64
♦	93
♣	AJ
[Redacted]	
S	South
♠	K5
♥	AQ82
♦	A87
♣	7653

My partner and I were using a new convention for us – Two Way Checkback.

Here's how it works. The bidding starts normally. South opens 1♣ and North responds 1♠. South has a minimum opening hand without support for spades. He rebids 1NT. This is where the checkback takes off. It's purpose is to find a proper place to play; either in spades, hearts, notrump or one of the minors. It's similar to New Minor Forcing but separates the searches between invitational and game-forcing hands. If North had 11 or 12 points, he would rebid 2♣ - invitational. Since he has about 18 total points, he uses the game forcing minor – 2♦.

Now both partners can take their time to find the best place to play and the proper level. South's first priority is to rebid partner's major if he holds three of them. His second priority is to bid the other major with four. (Some partnerships reverse these two priorities.)

Since North has only 2 spades, he rebids the other major – 2♥. At this point, North has found a fit in hearts and he confirms this by rebidding hearts. If he has only game intentions, he jumps to 4♥. If slam is in the cards, he shows this by rebidding 3♥, which in this case, North does.

South is only interested in a heart slam if his partner has clubs controlled. He can find this out by starting a control cue bid sequence. He starts from the current 3♥, and bids his controls up the line, beginning with 3♠. North shows his club control with a 4♣ rebid. Since North has satisfying South's only condition, South checks on key cards with 4NT. North's 5♦ shows 0 or 3. South knows it must be three key cards since he initiated the slam try. South also knows that he holds the two missing aces and the ♥K.

If North holds the two minor suit kings, a grand slam is possible. He asks for the number of kings outside the trump suit with his 5NT bid. North shows zero kings by rebidding 6♣. South settles for a small slam – 6♥.

Here is the total bidding sequence for Two Way Checkback:

South	North
1♣	1♠
1NT	2♦
2♥	3♥
3♠	4♣
4NT	5♦
5NT	6♣
6♥	Pass

West leads the ♣K. How would you plan the play?

Often, it is advantageous to duck the first lead and win the ♣A on the second trick. But here, there is no reason to do this. You have plenty of transportation between the two hands. If you win the opening lead, how many tricks do you have off the top?

Counting 5 spades, 4 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club, you are 1 trick short. You will need a ruff to make the slam. This should be possible by ruffing a club. However, that assumes that you don't need all of dummy's hearts to pull.

That's a good plan. Let's see how it runs. You win the ♣A. Your next decision is whether to start pulling trump. I see no reason not to. You lead a heart to your ♥A and another low heart to the ♥K. West shows out, which means East started with 4 hearts. Now you must modify your plan a little. You are still missing the ♥107 and you know they are in East.

You stop pulling trump and lead the ♣J, willing to give up that inevitable club loser. East discards on the club, meaning it was fortunate you didn't plan to win the ♣A on the second trick. You discard a diamond and West leads back another club. What do you play from the dummy?

You know that East has the ♥107 and can over ruff your small trumps. You must go up with the ♥J. Now you can lead a heart to the ♥Q8 in your hand, taking the marked finesse. You pull the last trump and all the spades in the dummy are now good.

This is the entire deal:

11		N North		W N E S	
D		♠ AQJ103		P 2♦ P 2♥	
		♥ KJ64		P 3♥ P 3♠	
		♦ 93		P 4♣ P 4NT	
		♣ AJ		P 5♦ P 5NT	
				P 6♠ P 6♥	
W West		E East			
♠ 94		♠ 8762			
♥ 9		♥ 10753			
♦ Q652		♦ KJ104			
♣ KQ10984		♣ 2			
		S South			
		♠ K5			
		♥ AQ82			
		♦ A87			
		♣ 7653			

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/yap3psze>, 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.