

♠♥♦♣ USING THE SPLINTER ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer and this is your hand:

S	undefined
♠	AJ872
♥	QJ973
♦	
♣	A75

With 5-5 in the Majors and 12 HCP, you open the Spade suit and intend to bid Hearts twice in future rounds to show your distribution. However, over your 1♠, your partner responds 4♣.

You must alert this bid because it is a "splinter bid". Your partner is telling you that he has 4+ Spades, 13 total points (including dummy points) and a singleton or void in Clubs. That's a lot of information in only one bid. Since it has raised you to the 4-level, it is also game forcing. And there is another piece of information it provides. His hand is limited to 16 total points. If he had more, he would have responded 2NT – the Jacoby 2NT convention.

Why didn't he just bid 4♠? Because his shortness might let you reevaluate your hand to consider a slam.

How does one revalue his hand in light of this important piece of information. Looking at the hand above, you note that your 2 Club losers have now been reduced to zero. Your only probable losers are in the Heart suit, so you want to start control bidding your hands to find out if your partner has Hearts control.

If your Club suit looked like this - ♣KQJ8, you would have a duplication of values and that would pretend poorly on your chances for slam.

Any side suit bid shows 1st or 2nd round control of that suit and invites partner to bid his next controlled suit. Over your 4♦ control bid, partner rebids 4♥. This can be the ♥A, ♥K, a singleton or void in Hearts. Now you know you can't lose the first two tricks, it is time to check on key cards. Over your 4NT asking bid, partner responds 4♠. This bid claims 2 Key Cards, counting the ♠K as a Key Card. Plus, it shows the holding of the ♠Q.

You definitely have enough for a small slam. There is one more key bit of information that will allow you to bid a grand slam – partner's possession of the ♥K. You bid 5NT asking for Kings. There are two common ways of answering. The more informative is called Specific King Ask. Rather than showing the number of Kings, it asks partner to bid the cheapest King he holds. In this auction, North responds ♥6. He holds the ♥K and therefore, you can bid 7♠!

When the Declarer or his partner has shown shortness, the opening lead of a trump is the most effective. There is going to be a lot of ruffing and anything you can do to cut down the ruffs will help the defense.

West leads the ♠4 and you see this Dummy:

N	undefined
♠	KQ96
♥	AK6
♦	108732
♣	9

West Leads: ♠4

S	undefined
♠	AJ872
♥	QJ973
♦	
♣	A75

You count your winning tricks as well as your losers in a slam contract. You have only 2 Club losers. And you have 10 top winning tricks, as long as the suits break normally. Both these calculations lead you to the necessity to ruff your two Clubs in the Dummy. Therefore, you cannot afford to draw trump first. If the Spades break 3-1, you will not have the two Spades required to ruff your losing Clubs.

After winning the opening lead, you must go right to the Clubs; winning the ♣A and ruffing a Club. Return to your hand with a Diamond ruff and ruff out the second Club. Now you can lead the remaining Spade in the dummy and get back to your hand with another Diamond ruff to lead the last Spade, if necessary.

At this point, all the trump are drawn and the Hearts remain yours to enjoy.

Well done!

This is the entire deal:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">1</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">D</div>	N undefined	♠ KQ96 ♥ AK6 ♦ 108732 ♣ 9	W N E S	P 4♣ P 4♦ P 4♥ P 4NT P 5♠ P 5NT P 6♥ P 7♠
	W undefined		E undefined	♠ 1053 ♥ 102 ♦ KQ96 ♣ KJ108
	S undefined	♠ AJ872 ♥ QJ973 ♦ ♣ A75		
			7♠ S	NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<https://tinyurl.com/2jq4unhr>, 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.