

DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

There were two passes to me. I have the following:

South
♠ KJ
♥ K9753
♦ AKQ
♣ AJ3

Technically, I have 21 HCP but my holding in spades is not worth the 4 points it carries. One or both spades could easily be lost. I downgraded the hand to 19 points and opened 1♥. The opponents were silent, and my partner gave me a limit raise to 3♥. This promises 4 hearts and between 10 and 12 points. I wanted to explore slam. How would you about it?

You can find out about the ♣K without going through the Blackwood sequence. You can begin cue bidding control suits; naming suits up the line in which you hold either 1st or 2nd round control. This is an Ace or King; void or singleton. Here I bid 3♠, to show second round control in that suit. North bid 4♣. Since I held the ace, he must have either the ♣K, a singleton or void. Either way, we have clubs controlled.

You could launch into Blackwood now, but if you bid 4♦ showing your diamond control, you could find out how your partner feels about proceeding to slam. He rebid 4♥. This says he would just assume play in a game contract.

Since you have such a strong hand, you can move further to slam by finding out about his aces. If you had bid 4NT, partner would respond 5♦, showing 1 ace. This isn't good news. Unfortunately, you don't know which aces he has. If it is the ♠A you have no spade losers. If it is the ♥A, you could have two spade losers. Plus, you only have one heart honor and you may lose a heart trick.

I would suggest, after all this bidding, that you retreat to 5♥, and concentrate on taking 11 tricks.

West leads a trump and you see this dummy,

Vul: None

North
♠ 842
♥ AJ82
♦ 54
♣ K1095

West
♥ 6

South
♠ KJ
♥ K9753
♦ AKQ
♣ AJ3

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	5♥
All Pass			

Now you know why partner discouraged slam. He only had 8 HCP and 1 dummy point. You have 2 potential spade losers and 1 potential heart loser. You could also lose a club. You have three finesses that you must take; one in each of the losing suits. You start with the hearts. Play low from dummy and hope that East will put up the ♥Q. She wisely, plays the ♥10 and you find out that the hearts split 3-1 with the ♥Q off side. You can't avoid a heart loser.

After clearing the trump suit, lead a spade to your hand. If East plays low, play the ♠K. Playing the ♠J doubles the chances for failure and if the ♠Q is in West, you will lose 2 spades. East will probably rise with the ♠A on the first trick, hoping to take just one more trick to set the contract.

Now you only need the club finesse to be successful. This is a two way finesse. You have no information other than the fact that East had the honors in the spade and heart suits. You should, therefore, finesse against West. You lead the ♣3 and play the dummy's ♣9 on West's ♣7. Success!

Now you can take the remaining clubs and claim.

Here is the entire deal:

D		N North		WEST NOR EAST SOUTH	
1		♠842		P	P 1♥
		♥AJ82		P 3♥	P 3♠
		♦54		P 4♣	P 4♦
		♣K1095		P 4♥	P 4NT
W West				P 5♦	P 5♥
♠Q1093					
♥6					
♦863					
♣Q8742					
		S South		E East	
		♠KJ		♠A765	
		♥K9753		♥Q104	
		♦AKQ		♦J10972	
		♣AJ3		♣6	

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/z8mhob9>, 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.