

INCREASING YOUR CHANCES

You are sitting South with this very nice 18 HCP hand. You plan to open this 1♥

S	South
♠	102
♥	AK1073
♦	A87
♣	AK7

... but before you can do this your partner opens 1♦. You should immediately be thinking slam. You are positive that slam is in the picture, but you should be making sure your bids are forcing until you can either rule it in or rule it out.

You make a forcing 1♥ and partner rebids 1♠. This is good. You need some help in spades so he has said the right thing – so far. Your next bid is significant. 3♣ would be forcing, but why not just launch in Blackwood. He hasn't shown support for your hearts so the slam will either be in diamonds or notrump. If partner shows no aces with a rebid of 5♣, you will retreat to 5♦. If he shows one ace, you will rebid 6NT and hope he has a little more than the basic minimum.

This is how the bidding progressed:

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

- (1) One Ace
- (2) One King

West leads the ♥Q and you partner tables this hand:

N	North
♠	AQ43
♥	62
♦	KQJ64
♣	85

West leads ♥Q

S	South
♠	102
♥	AK1073
♦	A87
♣	AK7

You have to count top tricks in a notrump contract. You have 10 and you need 2 more. You can get one more if the ♠K is on side but that is not enough. You will still need an extra trick from the heart suit. With the lead of the ♥Q from West, you should realize that he also holds the ♥J and a finesse of the ♥10 will not work. Therefore, hearts need to break 3-3 or 4-2 with West holding the ♥QJ doubleton. Your best shot will be to duck the initial lead and hope that West follows up with the ♥J. If West is on the ball, he will read his partner's low heart played to the trick and shift – probably to a club.

Since everything depends on the 3-3 heart break, you might as well run all the diamonds and hope someone discards a heart. When you finally lead the ♥AK, you find that the suit did break 3-3 and 12 tricks are yours without the need of the spade finesse.

This is the entire deal:

D 16	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ AQ43 ♥ 62 ♦ KQJ64 ♣ 85		P 1♦	P 1♥	
W West			P 1♠	P 4NT	
♠ K976 ♥ QJ9 ♦ 32 ♣ Q1096			P 5♦	P 5NT	
			P 6♣	P 6NT	
			D	D	
	E East				
	♠ J85				
	♥ 854				
	♦ 1095				
	♣ J432				
	S South				
	♠ 102				
	♥ AK1073				
	♦ A87				
	♣ AK7				
			6NT S	NS: 0 EW: 0	

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