

BIDDING A SLAM ON 29 HCP

You are dealt the following hand as South:

South
 ♠ 42
 ♥ KQ653
 ♦ AJ6
 ♣ A54

Your partner opens 1♠. The opponents are silent and you respond 2♥. Partner rebids 3♦ and you show your balanced 15 points by bidding 3NT. Partner takes you to game in 4♥. What would you do now?

Partner could have rebid 1NT originally if he was a minimum balanced hand, but he didn't. His 3♦ rebid shows an unbalanced hand and his 4♥ bid shows at least 3 hearts. He probably has a 5=3=4=1 shape. The singleton club will take care of your club losers. If he has the A♠ and A♥, you could make a slam. You should find out about the aces by bidding 4NT.

You hear that he has two aces and you ask about kings by bidding 5NT. He shows just one ace and you should retreat to 6♥.

West leads the 8♥ and you get a look at your dummy:

	North ♠ AKJ93 ♥ AJ4 ♦ 10953 ♣ Q	
West ♥ 8	East	
	South ♠ Q6 ♥ Q108 ♦ J52 ♣ KJ763	

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♦	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

Dummy's hearts were very nice but his diamonds could have been better. The shape is what you expected, but you sure would have preferred the ♣Q to be the ♦Q. You should count losers first. You see no spade or heart losers. You have 2 club losers; one can be trumped in the dummy with the ♥4.

Perhaps you can get another club discard from an extra spade. The diamonds will require a lucky finesse.

Win the first trick in the dummy in order to save the low heart to ruff a club. Then play the ♥J. Unfortunately, West discards on the second heart. So the hearts are 4-1. That isn't such bad news. You can still pull all the trump, and West's shortness in hearts makes it probable that he is long in spades. If he has a lot of spades, he has more places to hold the ♠Q. If the spade finesse is successful, you'll surely be able to discard the second losing club.

Come back to your hand with dummy's ♣Q. East should cover and you will win the ♣A. Now ruff the losing club with dummy's preserved ♥4, and come back to your hand again with the ♦10. East will cover with the ♦Q, but you win the ♦A. Now pull the last two trump and lead a low spade to dummy's ♠J. The finesse will work and you will be able to discard your last club on the ♠K. Then lead a diamond, which will be won by West's ♦K. Whatever he returns, you will trump with your last heart. Your 12th trick will be the high diamond.

I admit, it was lucky that East played his ♦Q on the first diamond lead, but he had a doubleton and often, that is the best play – getting out of partner's way if he can win the ♦K later.

Here is the entire deal:

D 1	N North	W N E S
	♠ AKJ93	1♠ P 2♥
	♥ AJ4	P 3♦ P 3NT
	♦ 10953	P 4♥ P 4NT
	♣ Q	P 5♦ P 5NT
		P 6♠ P 6♥
W West	E East	
♠ Q8765	♠ 10	
♥ 8	♥ 10972	
♦ K874	♦ Q2	
♣ 1097	♣ KJ8632	
	S South	
	♠ 42	
	♥ KQ653	
	♦ AJ6	
	♣ A54	
		6♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

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