

Simple Slams

Chapter 12 : The Gerber and No Trump Syndrome (Part 2)

After all due consideration, you CHOOSE to bid 6NT. NOT because it's NO TRUMPS, but because you really think that this is the BEST chance of bidding and making your slam. West leads the QUEEN OF CLUBS. Great, you think, I've done well to protect the club king, but dummy turns up with the ace anyway and this is the layout:

	Dummy:	
	♠ Q 8 5	
	♥ K Q 10 8 4 3	
	♦	
	♣ A 8 5 2	
♠		♠
♥		♥
♦		♦
♣		♣
	You:	
	♠ K 7	
	♥ A 7	
	♦ A K Q 10 9 8 6	
	♣ K 7	

How, having chosen to play in 6NT AND ensured that YOU, rather than partner, play the hand, will you give yourself the BEST chance of making the slam? It LOOKS like it'll roll for fifteen tricks, but when things LOOK like that, look for the snags.

The normal inclination for most of us would be to run the lead round to our king and then immediately embark on diamonds. After all, what are the chances of the jack NOT coming down in one, two, or three rounds? And if it doesn't come down, then you can try the hearts. But, WHOA!!! If you DO find out the bad news about the diamonds and then try the hearts, how many tricks do you then HAVE? Six heart tricks, THREE diamonds, and TWO clubs. If you then set up the extra spade trick needed, what if the hand with the ace of spades has the good diamond as well? Unlucky I suppose, but a bit more thought about this possibility could have avoided it.

The ANSWER is to test the HEARTS first. WHY? Because you will know after TWO rounds if the hearts are breaking, but you may NOT know until THREE rounds whether the jack of DIAMONDS will fall. When you find THAT out, it may be too late! But having found out that the HEARTS aren't breaking, you can still try the diamond suit. If hearts DO break, then you can run them and watch the opponents squirm. If there are no diamond discards, you can then play safe and set up the one spade trick required.

Just watch your entries and DON'T try for the overtrick by running the diamonds NOW or you might end up with egg on your face despite your well thought out plan at the beginning! And watch your ENTRIES!

Yes, West had four diamonds to the jack, but hearts broke kindly. Unfortunately, I can't tell you what WOULD have happened had our particular declarer chosen to bid 6NT because she in fact had faith in her partner and bid six HEARTS. Partner duly justified this faith by careful play to make the overtrick: the club lead was won in hand, a heart led to the ace and the six of diamonds ruffed back to hand. East was hardly likely to overruff the FIRST one! Now trumps were drawn and dummy re-entered with the king of clubs and the diamonds provided more than enough extra tricks despite the (statistically EXPECTED) 4-2 break.

Look at the four hands and see how YOU would have fared. Now, be HONEST!!!!

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♠ Q 8 5

♥ K Q 10 8 4 3

♦

♣ A 8 5 2

♠ A 10 6 3

♥ J 2

♦ J 7 4 3

♣ Q J 9

♠ J 9 4 2

♥ 9 6 2

♦ 5 2

♣ 7 6 4 3

♠ K 7

♥ A 7

♦ A K Q 10 9 8 6

♣ K 7