

# play bridge

*A section designed with the newer player in mind.*

One of the best things we have done to improve our club in the past year is to add a dealing machine. We produce duplicated deals for every session. The obvious advantages are that all sections play the same hands and that hand records are available after each session.

If you play in a club or attend a tournament that produces hand records, you should always pick up a copy after the session. You and partner can determine where you could have improved your results.

The other day, a student, clutching a hand record, approached me and asked, "How should we bid board 12?"

Before reading on, decide how you and your partner would bid these hands.

*North*

♠ Q 8 7 5  
♥ 10 4 3  
♦ 7  
♣ A Q 8 6 4

*South*

♠ A K J 10 4 3  
♥ A 5  
♦ A J 9 8 4  
♣ —

Their auction was simple: 1♠ by South, 2♠ by North and 4♠ by South. South has 17 high-card points; North has eight. Yet they missed a grand slam! Both of these hands require evaluation, not just counting points.

After the 1♠ opening, North needs to reevaluate in terms of dummy points. With four trumps and a singleton, the hand is worth 11 support points. This hand is attractive because the honors are in the same suit, and it is the long suit.

Look at:

♠ Q 7 6 5 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ Q ♣ A 9 8 6 4  
and

♠ Q 7 6 5 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ 7 ♣ A 9 8 6 4.

Both of these hands contain the same shape and high-card points as the North hand shown in the bidding diagram, but are not nearly as appealing.

If North is a conservative bidder and bids only 2♠, however, South should not rush to bid game. South should rebid 3♦, which is interpreted a help-suit game try. (In fact, South is always going to game and still has some interest in slam.)

Once North–South agree on a major suit, and a new suit is introduced, the meaning is, "If you can help with my losers in this suit, we might have game." It doesn't have to be a five-card suit or even a four-card suit. It asks partner to focus on his holding in that suit. High cards and/or shortness are two holdings North might have to accept the game try and jump to 4♠. The worst holding in the help suit would be three low cards — no high-card help and no shortness.

With the given hand, North should jump to 4♠ over the 3♦ rebid. (Those of you who like to cuebid might realize that North could bid 4♣ over the 3♦ try; this is an acceptance of the game try and shows the ♣A.) The 4♠ reply by North means he has a useful diamond holding and that is good news for South. At this point he might jump directly to slam because he will usually have only one loser.

Suppose over the 1♠ opener, North correctly evaluates his hand and jumps to 3♠ (instead of bidding



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2♠), showing four trumps and 10–12 support points; it is time for South to assess. As declarer, he needs to focus on losers. Once partner has shown four-card support, this becomes a three-loser hand. If partner can cover the heart loser and has only two diamonds, the hand will produce 12 tricks. This means that opener could make a slam opposite:

♠ 9 8 6 5 ♥ K 8 6 ♦ 6 2 ♣ 10 8 6 4,  
with normal breaks in spades and diamonds.

How South proceeds may depend on system and style. Some Souths would simply conclude the auction with 6♠. The more scientific bidders might try 4♦ and then cuebid the ♥A if partner shows the ♣A. Once the partnership is at the game level, new suit bids are control bids for slam. When the partnership is below game, the help-suit principle applies.

It would take a fairly experienced partnership to bid a grand slam on these cards. Reaching 6♠ would be a very good result, however, because the point counters add 17 and 8 and are lucky to get to game! □

*Notes from ACBL Accredited Teachers*