



Should North South play in diamonds that will just lose 3 aces. The pairs who did best on the board were allowed to play in 5♦x for -100. But that means if East West do bid 6♥ it's worthwhile North South even bidding to 7♦ as it will go for a penalty of -500 which is still less East West can make just for playing game! See advanced section for more on this.

### *Key points to note*

- Slam bidding requires an appreciation of how well hands "fit" together as well as a source of tricks (and of course not two top losers!)
- Queens and jacks in partner's suit are great assets when your side is playing the hand, so is nothing in a suit where partner has shortage as no honours are wasted.
- The unusual NT overcall showing both minors is a valuable competitive weapon that can make life hard for the opponents and help your side find a good save.
- With enough shape, it can still be effective to sacrifice even at the 7 level! The key is for your penalty to be less than the value of the opponent's game.

### *More advanced*

North's bid over 1♠ is largely a question of style and partnership agreement. Some pairs prefer to bid to show the 55+ shape regardless of strength. That can certainly allow them to get into the auction and pre-empt high quickly to make it very hard for the other side. On the other hand it can also make it hard for partner to know what to do because he doesn't know how strong the 2NT bidder is. That is why some pairs prefer to reserve 2NT for weak or very strong hands but not intermediate ones like this one. That tends to help partner judge better what to do e.g. bid to your own contract or take an effective sacrifice. Intermediate hands tend to have more defence in them so you don't always want to push on over their contract as it might be going off. But of course that method also has some downsides. Firstly, as here, it leaves more room for the opponents. Secondly it runs the risk that the auction may be too high for North to safely introduce his 2nd suit by the time it comes back to him. That's less of a concern on this particular hand as North is so shapely so, with the favourable vulnerability, he is happy to bid himself a 2nd time at the 5♣ level.

After a 4♦ splinter from West, if East has the chance he should probably use blackwood. Usually blackwood is not a good move when you have a void or when you have no control at all in a suit. That's because, with a void, partner holding the ace of that suit might be useless and you don't always know where partner's key cards are. When you have 2 or 3 small in a suit the risk is that you might be off the AK of that suit. But here East can be fairly confident West must have a club control. He knows West can have at most ♠AK, ♥Q and hardly anything in diamonds (it's not usually a good idea to splinter with a singleton honour as it misleads partner). That's only 9 points and yet West not only opened the bidding, he jumped to game. He has to have something good in clubs to be able to do that.

But it's not likely in practice East will get the chance because surely North, with his extreme shape, will come back in again. There is every chance of finding a good sacrifice in either minor and the vulnerability is very much in his favour to do that.

In fact even if East West do reach 6♥ it's actually in North South's interest to sacrifice in 7♦! They have 3 losers which is only -500. That is what we call the "par result" – basically the score that arises when both sides do as well as they theoretically can in the bidding. It certainly won't be obvious to do that on this hand – although if South knows North is at least 5-5 in the minors he will know they have almost no defence so it will become more tempting.

It's worth observing that the same features which make the East West hands fit well together also apply to the North South hands – they have no wastage in spades, a strong trump fit and South's soft cards in clubs fill that suit nicely. Only the ♥Q in the opponent's suit is potentially wasted.

In practice for a sacrifice to have a chance of scoring well at matchpoints it needs to be going for a penalty less than the value of the opponent's game (even if they can make slam for 1430 typically not many pairs will bid it so -800 will still score poorly because most pairs will be scoring 680 – this hand is a typical example of that).

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