

Deal 1

North Deals	♠ K 6 5 4 2
None Vul	♥ A K 8 7 4
	♦ A
	♣ K 3
♠ A 9 8	♠ Q J 10 7 3
♥ Q 5 2	♥ J 3
♦ 9 7 5 4	♦ 8 6 2
♣ Q 10 6	♣ J 9 5

¹⁷ 8 5 10	 ♠ — ♥ 10 9 6 ♦ K Q J 10 3 ♣ A 8 7 4 2
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West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥
Pass	4 NT	Pass	6 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

6 ♥ by North
Lead: ♠ Q

South's 6 ♥ response to Blackwood showed one Ace and a ♠ void. North is to play 6 ♥. East leads the ♠ Q.

Losers: ♠ = ?? ♥ = 1 ♦ = 0 ♣ = 0
Total = 1 ??

Of course you ruff the ♠ in dummy. East wouldn't underlead an Ace at a slam contract, and since you have a certain trump loser you cannot afford to lose a trick to West's ♠ A.

Dummy has some great ♦s, but you can't expect to run them unless you have pulled all the trumps. But if you play ♥ A K 4 the defenders will take their trump trick and immediately set the contract with the ♠ A. There IS a way around the problem.

First off, you must get a 3-2 split in trumps because if they don't split 3-2 you will have two trump losers. So you assume that they are split just like you need them to be.

At trick two you duck a trump. That's right, you lose a trump trick early. Since you have to lose a trump sometime, you do it at a time when the defenders can't hurt you. So a defender wins the trump trick, but now a ♠ play won't hurt because dummy still has a trump to ruff with! In fact, whatever they play next you will win, pull the outstanding trumps, then run dummy's ♦ suit.

for the full deal.

When you have a trump loser but still need to pull their trumps, it may be better for you to lose an early trump trick rather than a later one.

Deal 2	♠ 6 5		
West Deals	♥ 5 4 3 2		
None Vul	♦ Q 2		
	♣ K Q 9 7 3		
♠ A K Q	♠ 7 4 2		
♥ A K 9 8	♥ Q J 10 7		
♦ A 10 8 6 3	♦ 5		
♣ 5	♣ A 8 6 4 2		
	♠ J 10 9 8 3		
20 7	♥ 6		
6 7	♦ K J 9 7 4		
	♣ J 10		
West	North	East	South
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
6 ♥ by East			
Lead: ♠ J			

Agreed that the bidding wasn't much. The final contract is still a good one. East is to play 6 ♥. South leads the ♠ J.

Losers: ♠=0 ♥=0 ♦=0 ♣=4 Total = 4

There really aren't 4 ♣ losers since they can be ruffed in dummy. In fact you should see that this is an ideal cross-ruff hand, ruffing ♣s in dummy and ♦s in your hand. Since neither hand can be over-ruffed you expect to make all 8 trumps.

Remember, when playing a cross ruff, you need to take any side suit winners first, otherwise a defender may be able to discard that suit while you are ruffing. So you win the ♠ A, then take the ♠ K, then . . . what?

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Well, if you win the ♠ Q, then the two Minor suit Aces, you'd be set up to cross-ruff the hand out for all 13 tricks. But here's what might happen if you try.

North might ruff the ♠ Q. OK, no disaster yet. But he might then play a trump. Your slam is now kaput. You can no longer make 8 trump tricks and will end up down 1.

The answer is to not be greedy for that overtrick. With South's opening ♠ lead there is an indication of possible length there. So, realizing that North could be short in the suit, take just the 2 ♠ tricks that you need for the slam, then play your Minor Aces and start the cross-ruff.

Don't jeopardize your contract trying to take too many.