

What do you call an eight card suit?

Board 5

West Deals

E-W Vul



♠ A 3
♥ A
♦ A 7
♣ A J 7 6 5 4 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♠	3 ♥	Pass	?

Deal rotated for convenience.

What do you bid on this deal from the Club Championship game on April 23, 2013?

3 ♠ -- in the old days, after partner overcalls, the cue bid of opener's suit would have been a general force. Nowadays, it promises trump support and a raise to game based on high card strength. The values range from a decent limit raise to slamming. It alerts partner that you intend to make this game on power, and that the opponents may no longer play the contract undoubled. 3 ♠ could work out OK, but with all this strength and only one heart, it seems silly.

4 ♥ -- in contrast, the raise to game shows a hand where you hope to make game, but is based at least partly on distributional strength. It's important not to make this bid when 3 ♠ would be more descriptive. Certainly, 4 ♥ is not appropriate on this deal.

3 NT -- aceless partner will usually pass this. It must be right to try for a slam, so 3 NT does not fit. 3 NT might even go down, if we have to lose the lead.

4 ♣ -- a new suit is forcing - is this your choice?

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SOLUTION: Trumps!

♠ K Q J 8 6 2	♠ 9 7	♠ 10 5 4
♥ J 8	♥ K Q 7 5 4 2	♥ 10 9 6 3
♦ Q 4 3 2	♦ K 10	♦ J 9 8 6 5
♣ 9	♣ K Q 8	♣ 10
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A 3	
	♥ A	
	♦ A 7	
	♣ A J 7 6 5 4 3 2	

NS 7N; NS 7♣; NS 5♥; EW 1♠; Par +1520

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♠	3 ♥	Pass	6 ♣
Pass	7 ♣	All pass	

Much of the time, if you bid 4 ♣, partner will then bid a red suit, and you will be none the wiser. Even on the actual cards, partner will probably content himself with a 5 ♣ raise, and you won't be sure he has the ♣ K. Be sure when you ask a question, that the answer will do you some good.

When you hold all of a resource, such as the top three trump honors, or in this case, all four aces, it will be difficult to get partner to cooperate in slam bidding. Partners sensibly like to have an ace and a trump honor for such things. With all the aces, you need to take extreme measures.

Think about how the hand will play. Partner should have the ♥ K and a way to get to it, likely the ♦ K. That would mean no side suit losers.

If partner has two small clubs, then after disposing of your losers, you lead a club to the J. This brings the suit home for one loser, unless West holds ♣ KQx - unlikely with the 2 ♠ opening. So if partner has this hand, you want to be in 6 ♣. Even if he has only one club, the slam comes in if the suit splits.

The magic happens when partner looks at his actual holding: an easy 7 ♣ bid. In fact, I hoped he would raise on ♣ Kxx or maybe Kx. The jump to slam wakes him up.

In the heat of the moment I let down our side a little. Given all I knew, I should have converted to 7 NT, for a cold top. This time, the eight card suit should not be trumps, after all. One other pair reached 7 ♣, so we had to share the honor.

- Pete Matthews