

Precision Slam -- Problem

Board 17
 North Deals
 None Vul

♠ K Q J
 ♥ A K Q 6
 ♦ J 10 5
 ♣ K 5 2



♠ A 8 5 3 2
 ♥ 10 9 4
 ♦ K 6 2
 ♣ A 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣ ¹	Pass	1 ♠ ²
2 NT ³	3 ♠	Pass	3 NT ⁴
Pass	4 ♣ ⁵	Pass	4 ♦ ⁶
Pass	4 ♥ ⁷	Pass	4 ♠ ⁸
Pass	5 ♥ ⁹	Pass	6 ♠ ¹⁰

All pass

1. Precision: artificial, 16+ HCP (17+ if balanced).
2. 5+ spades, 8+ HCP, forcing to game.
3. 5-5 or longer in minors.
4. Falsely alerted as showing serious slam interest.
5. First or second round control.
6. First or second round control.
7. Last Train to Clarksville, an artificial bid saying we have a problem.
8. I do not have a heart control.
9. My hearts are great, but I have no other controls to bid.
10. Well, I could have only 8 HCP, and my ♦ K is protected from the lead.

6 ♠ by South

Lead: ♥ 8

On this deal, the Precision system easily finds the spade fit. Standard bidding would be murkier.

The "Serious 3 NT" convention is an excellent tool to help with slam bidding. However, it's better to play 3 NT as natural in competition. Suits may break badly, and the opponents might get some ruffs in a suit contract. On this deal, South would easily take ten or eleven tricks in notrump, but North thought Serious 3 NT was on.

When North mis-alerts 3 NT as showing serious slam interest, South must ignore that unauthorized information. North's 4 ♣ cue bid (intended as cooperative) must be treated as itself showing slam interest, so South cooperates with a 4 ♦ cue bid.

North has doubts about all those minor suit losers. His 4 ♥ says there is a problem that prevents him from asking for keycards. Since the partnership has shown a control in each of the minor suits, that could be the lack of a heart control. Since South has no heart control, he signs off. Since North's 5 ♥ shows continued slam interest, but no more minor suit controls, his strength must be in the majors. South proceeds to the shaky slam.

West leads the ♥ 8. Plan the play. Take plenty of time, and be specific. (West has two singletons.)

Precision Slam -- Solution

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

	♠ K Q J		
	♥ A K Q 6		
	♦ J 10 5		
	♣ K 5 2		
♠ 9	♠ 10 7 6 4	N	
♥ 8	♥ J 7 5 3 2	W E	
♦ Q 9 8 7 4	♦ A 3	S	♠ 10 7 6 4
♣ Q J 9 8 7 3	♣ 10 4		
	♠ A 8 5 3 2		
	♥ 10 9 4		
	♦ K 6 2		
	♣ A 6		

6 ♠ by South
Lead: ♥ 8

Win the likely singleton lead, and play all three of dummy's top trumps. You are now at the crossroads: you need to return to hand to draw the last trump, but you cannot afford to lead a club. You must lead a diamond now, and there is no legitimate play to win two diamond tricks outright. Play for split honors.

Lead the ♦ J to tempt East to cover from ♦ Qx. If he does, West must win the ace, or you can lead to the ♦ 10 for your twelfth trick. If East plays small on the ♦ J, the odds (because East did not cover) favor rising with the ♦ K. Draw the last trump, discarding the ♥ 6 from dummy, and play off the remaining top hearts. You know this (or the equivalent) is now the position:

♠ -	♥ -	♦ 10 5	♣ K 5 2
♠ -	♥ -	♦ Q 9	♣ Q J 9
♠ 8	♥ -	♦ 6 2	♣ A 6
♠ -	♥ J 7	♦ A	♣ 10 4

Your minor suit squeeze is now ready, but it won't operate until you lose a trick to "rectify the count." Lead a small diamond from dummy, to knock out East's now singleton ace. If East exits with a heart, you ruff, and West is squeezed immediately: any discard establishes a winner on dummy. All you have to do is to watch for the ♦ Q: if West still has it, discard dummy's ♦ 10. Cash your clubs with style, winning the last trick with the ♣ 2!

East can delay the inevitable by returning a club. Win in hand and play your last trump, to the same effect. Note that, had you earlier played a club to hand, to draw the last trump, then a club return by East would have erased dummy's entry before you got to play your ♠ 8 squeeze card.

Because all your entries to hand are precious, it's necessary to cash dummy's heart winners before leading the ♦ J from dummy. If you fail to do that, then East can again defeat the squeeze by returning a club when in.

No, I did not find this one at the table, but I did during the post-mortem. The contract is much easier to play if East takes the ♦ A early. A club opening lead should always set the contract.

- Pete Matthews Jr.