

Ignorance -- Problem

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

♠ K 10 6
 ♥ A 4
 ♦ 5 2
 ♣ A K J 9 4 3



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
?			

Join me for this disaster. See if you can bid better, with choices at every turn.

1. Do you agree with my opening 1 ♣ bid? Or would you make the "value bid" of 1 NT? Either is reasonable, so I'm not taking complaints yet.

2. Encouraged by my spade fit, I chose the jump rebid at 3 ♣. The 1 NT opening seems better than a mere 2 ♣ rebid at this point. Nevertheless, 2 ♣ has merit, because it usually provides a 6-card suit, a powerful asset that will encourage partner to try for 3 NT. 2 ♣ would only provide five cards on hands where 1 NT is not acceptable, for example:

♠ 6 ♥ A J 4 2 ♦ Q 5 2 ♣ A Q J 9 3 [singleton prevents 1 NT]

♠ 6 ♥ A Q 2 ♦ J 8 5 2 ♣ A Q J 9 3 [diamonds too weak to open]

♠ 10 6 ♥ A Q 4 2 ♦ 5 2 ♣ A Q J 9 3 [when a 2 ♥ reverse, or 1 NT opening or rebid, do not appeal]

3. Really, really wanted to bid 3 NT, but had to show spade support with 3 ♠.

4. Wish I had opened 1 NT. What now?

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♠ J 3		♠ A Q 8 4			
♥ K Q 10 5 2		♥ 8 6 3			
♦ 7 6		♦ A K 10			
♣ 10 8 6 2		♣ Q 7 5			
♠ K 10 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ 9 7 5 2
N					
W E					
S					
♥ A 4		♥ J 9 7			
♦ 5 2		♦ Q J 9 8 4 3			
♣ A K J 9 4 3		♣ —			

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♣	Pass
?			

I passed and made seven for a bottom. (Looking at only the East-West hands, the desired contract is 6 NT.) Partner and I each picked a pro to ask about this. Anything responder bids over 3 ♣ is unconditionally forcing to game.

Steve Gladyszak said he plays 4 ♣ as Minorwood in this situation (asking for keycards in clubs). Partner and I were playing Kickback, instead. 4 ♦ should ask for keycards; once partner raises clubs, we are not playing this hand in diamonds. Partner is slamming, but lacks a heart control. Holding the crucial ♥ A, asking for keycards is correct. If this logic does not appeal, then cue bid 4 ♥. Do not pass! And do not bid 5 ♣, which will muzzle partner.

What if partner held something like this?

♠ Q 9 8 4 ♥ 8 6 3 ♦ K J 3 ♣ Q 7 5

Opposite a jump rebid, the queen of partner's suit is the best card in the deck. This hand is surely worth a try for 3 NT, but how do you know if hearts are stopped?

The answer to that is, you can't. The try for 3 NT is to bid 3 NT and try to make it. If hearts are wide open, maybe they won't be led, or maybe the suit will split 4-4.

This situation is not something you can figure out at the table. Guides such as "game over slam" won't help. You just have to know that responder's 3 ♦ is forcing to game, and therefore, 4 ♣ is a slam try. Now I know. (Yes, 3 ♦ was forcing to game 60 years ago -- now I know again.)

Ah, yes. Had I opened 1 NT (15-17), we would surely have nestled in 3 NT. Partner would not try for slam with a flat 15-count. So my auction was perfect, up to the point where I passed 4 ♣, snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.