

**Board 10**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

# Missed Slam -- Problem

♠ K  
♥ A J 9  
♦ K Q 5 2  
♣ A K 7 4 3



♠ A 7 5  
♥ K 7 6 3 2  
♦ A J 9 4  
♣ 8

West	North	East	South
	<i>Andrew</i>		<i>Pete</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
2 ♠	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	
4 ♥ by South			
Lead: ♠ Q			

Preempts work! We failed to find one of the routes to the good slam on this hand. If you don't care why, skip to the bottom. This is a play problem.

Andrew chose a strong reverse at his second turn. Had the overcall been 1 ♠, Andrew would have had an automatic support double, showing 3-card heart support. Without support doubles, that double shows a good hand, often with three hearts. That's what the double of 2 ♠ would mean; I would again cue bid 3 ♠. When Andrew bid 4 ♥, definitely with three hearts, it would be keycard time.

Over 3 ♦, there was a chance that if I bid 3 ♥, I would play there; so I cue bid 3 ♠. (At after a 2-level reverse, we would play my 2 ♥ as showing five cards, but non-forcing. This is a fine, non-standard agreement.)

A better choice than 3 ♠ would have been 4 ♦, surely forcing (or perhaps 5 NT, pick a slam). I was deterred, because sometimes people bid a chunky minor suit fragment, perhaps with ♦ K-Q-5 and ♣ A-K-7-4-3-2. I should have done it anyhow. Then when partner volunteered 4 ♥, I would have believed him, and asked for key cards. Andrew bid 4 ♥ because he had planned to all along, bidding out his shape. However, I feared he bid it because I coerced him with 3 ♠. If he held ♥ A-9, for example, that was plenty high in hearts - but 6 ♦ would have been an even better contract.

Instead of passing 4 ♥, 5 NT would have been much better by me. If Andrew picked clubs, I would convert to diamonds, and Andrew would either pass or convert to hearts. While we both had better choices along the way, I think the clearly worst call was my pass of four hearts. Bad things are more likely to happen when we are in uncharted waters.

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So here we are in four-only-hearts, playing matchpoint pairs. Plan the play.

**Board 10**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

# Missed Slam -- Solution

		♠ K	
		♥ A J 9	
		♦ K Q 5 2	
		♣ A K 7 4 3	
♠ Q J 10 9 3 2			♠ 8 6 4
♥ 10 8			♥ Q 5 4
♦ 8 7			♦ 10 6 3
♣ Q J 6			♣ 10 9 5 2
		♠ A 7 5	
		♥ K 7 6 3 2	
		♦ A J 9 4	
		♣ 8	
West	North	East	South
	<i>Andrew</i>		<i>Pete</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♥
2 ♠	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	
4 ♥ by South			
Lead: ♠ Q			

The heart slam is not cold. Having missed the slam, our best hope for a good score is that slam goes down. We have eight side-suit tricks, so the entire play revolves around the five potential heart tricks.

Some declarers may cash the ♥ K and lead a trump toward dummy, planning to finesse. If East started with ♥ Q-10-x-x, those declarers go down in slam. West preempted, so that is quite possible.

We can hold the trump losers to one, if West started with the singleton ♥ 8, 10 or Q. We win the ♠ K and lead the ♥ A. East plays small, and West does play the eight! Now we lead the ♥ J, and run it when East again plays low.\* West contributes the 10, and we take all the tricks. We did not beat any slammers, but our +710 beat almost everybody else, for a 51% score.

\* In my short time in graduate school at Johns Hopkins, several rules were attributed to a fellow I never met. Thompson's third rule was, *never cover with the queen of trumps*. Covering here can never help, because partner's lone remaining heart will appear on this trick. Declarer could be fishing, having started with ♥ K-10-7-6-3-2; covering would give the show away. Of course, never say never: East makes the obvious cover from ♥ Q-10-x.