

Diamond Fit -- Problem

Board 3

North Deals

E-W Vul



♠ 10 6

♥ 8 2

♦ A Q 7 3 2

♣ A Q 5 2

West

North

East

South

1 ♦

1 ♠

2 ♠¹

Pass

3 ♦

Pass

?

1. Diamond support, invitational or better.

Take the South seat on this deal. What's your call?

Board 3
North Deals
E-W Vul

Diamond Fit -- Solution

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

NS 4♦; EW 2♠; NS 3♣; NS 1♥; Par +130: NS 3♦+1

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	2♠ ¹
Pass	3♦	Pass	?

1. Diamond support, invitational or better.

In theory, an opening hand opposite an opening hand produces a game. That's usually true when we can play notrump or a major suit, but here we know that 5♦ is the potential target. Partner could have bid 2NT, but did not. 3♦ is partner's weakest possible action. Our bid of 3♠ would show and ask for half a stopper, Q-x or J-x-x, clearly a losing call.

In situations like this, we should start by visualizing what it would take to lay down a game -- no finesses or 3-3 splits. If that is a minimum hand, then we try for game. Given two spade losers, we need ♥ A-K, ♦ K-x-x-x, and ♣ K. That perfect 13 HCP is not a minimum!

Our partnership plays heavy invites and light accepts, to reduce our frequency of going down when an invitation is refused. Partner is content at 3♦ opposite a heavy limit raise, for example, the same hand with a queen replaced by a jack. Bidding 4♦ is too likely to land us in a bad contract, whether it's 4♦ or 5♦.

Over a 4♦ invitation, North has a light accept of 5♦. South also has no spade stopper, and North sees 12 working HCP (outside of the doubleton spade). If North instead held the following hand, 4♦ (or 3NT) would be a bad contract:

♠ K 7 K Q 9 3 K J 10 5 J 9 4

Slam after Stayman -- Problem

Board 12

West Deals

N-S Vul



♠ A J 7 3

♥ J 10 7 5

♦ 6 5

♣ A 9 7

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦ ¹
Pass	2 NT ²	Pass	3 ♣ ³
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	?

1. Waiting.
2. 22-24 HCP, balanced.
3. Standard Stayman, promises a 4-card major.

Join me as South. Reasonable plans here are:

A. Try for slam.

B. Plan to bid a slam, unless we are missing two of the six key honors.

What's your choice?

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

Slam after Stayman -- Solution

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦ ¹
Pass	2 NT ²	Pass	3 ♣ ³
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	3 ♠ ⁴
Pass	4 NT ⁵	Pass	5 ♥ ⁶
Pass	5 NT ⁷	Pass	6 ♥

All pass

1. Waiting.
2. 22-24 HCP, balanced.
3. Standard Stayman, promises a 4-card major.
4. Hearts are trump; slam interest.
5. Asking for keycards in hearts.
6. Two, without the ♥ Q.
7. Specific kings? (required, to say we have them all)

Don't tell me you would pick plan A, with two *aces* and all those pushers! Nevertheless, 4 NT is the wrong answer. We have not raised hearts, so they are not trump. 4 NT is quantitative, a slam try with fewer than four hearts. Some pairs play that 4 ♣ here is Roman Keycard Gerber (RKG). That would solve our current problem, but not if we had a slightly weaker, invitational hand, or if we had a club suit to bid.

If opener had bid the wrong major, these are the standard choices:

- 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7 NT, as appropriate -- lacking hearts, we have promised spades.
- 4 ♣ or 4 ♦, a natural slam try -- this should cancel the promise of a major.

3 ♠ is available! For over 50 years, experts have used the simple bid in the other major to set opener's major as trump, and show interest in slam. If our fit were in spades, the inconvenient bid of 4 ♥ at least allows either partner to ask for keycards. We need to play this hand in hearts, as 6 NT makes only on a diamond lead or not-so-obvious endplay.

Opener jumps in front of us to ask for keycards, even with a minimum 22 count. They have all suits controlled and *all three* of the top trump honors. Opener knows that, lacking a top trump honor, we have good values.

Over a 1 NT opening, three of the other major will always be available to set trumps, when 2 ♣ Stayman discloses a fit. RKG can make sense here; it can be part of a method called Baze. Many experts now play reverse Baze, where 4 ♦ asks for keycards, 4 ♣ is a balanced slam try (with an intervening "last train" bid always available), and three of the other major is a slam try with an unspecified singleton or void (see *EZ-Expert Bidding Tools*).

One Heart - One Spade -- Problem

Board 23

North Deals

Both Vul



♠ K Q J 10 6 3 2

♥ K Q

♦ Q 8

♣ K 4

West	North	East	South
	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	?

Join me as South, with this self-supporting spade suit.

Auctions that start {1 ♥ - 1 ♠} are *hard*. That's why we promise a 5-card suit or longer for 1 ♠ response, when we hold game-forcing values. (With only four spades, we force to game with a 2/1 response in our better minor. The one-heart-opener's primary duty is to bid 2 ♠ over the minor suit, on any hand containing four spades.) *

This is one of the rare hands where a strong jump shift response of 2 ♠, which few pairs play, would be better. That could be a strong Soloway jump shift, or a more complicated Tucker "two-over-one in spades" jump shift.

A more likely approach is to play that a 2 ♠ response is invitational with a good 6-card suit (letting us play a refused invitation at the two level). Playing that way, our jump to 3 ♠ *right now* would be forcing! **

Unfortunately, we are playing none of these. How would you go about landing in our best spot?

* This method, recommended by nine-time world champion Lynn Deas, is not standard. The author does not know whether Deas also made it opener's priority to bid 2 ♠. See *EZ-Expert Bidding Tools*.

** The author finds that 2 ♠ and 3 ♣ are highly useful as invitational jump shifts. (Invitational jumps into other suits have problems and/or less value.)

Board 23
North Deals
Both Vul

One Heart - One Spade -- Solution

♠ —		♠ 8 7 5 4
♥ 10 8 6 5		♥ 9
♦ K 7 4 2		♦ J 9 3
♣ Q 9 7 5 3		♣ A J 10 8 6
	♠ K Q J 10 6 3 2	
	♥ K Q	
	♦ Q 8	
	♣ K 4	

NS 6N; NS 6♠; S 5♥; N 4♥; E 3♣; NS 2♦; W 2♣; Par +1100; E 7♣×-4

West	North	East	South
	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	3 ♣ ¹
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	4 ♠
Pass	4 NT ²	Pass	5 ♣ ³
Pass	5 ♥ ⁴	Pass	6 ♠ ⁵

All pass

1. Forcing, likely contrived.
2. Asking for keycards in spades.
3. 1 or 4 keycards (1430 response).
4. Do you have the ♠ Q?
5. Yes; you must bid a grand slam, if "we have them all."

When opener rebids their major suit over a 1 ♠ or 1 NT response, *all the bad hands pass*, even with a void. It makes sense that we can bid 2 ♠ to insist on playing there instead, even opposite a void; 3 ♠ shows the same suit, but invites a raise to 4 ♠. 2 NT is a natural invitation to 3 NT. 3 ♥ invites 4 ♥.

That leaves 3 ♣ and 3 ♦, both of which are forcing. They have to cover most deals where we want to explore for slam in either major; also possible are strong, wild hands where responder has 5+ cards in a minor, with at least as many spades. (With only 5-5, the author likes a response at two of the minor, especially in clubs.)

The correct bid is 3 ♣, because we have a club control. We plan to jump to 4 ♠ next to show a great suit and slam interest.

Since North has not denied three spades, they must not bid 3 ♠, so bid 3 ♦ next. We follow through with 4 ♠. (Maybe 3 ♠ should be forcing, but it's ignominious to play a slam hand in a partscore!)

With three aces and a club control, North has no trouble driving to slam. Jumping to 6 ♠ would be fine, but we would have a grand slam if the king of clubs were the ace (the ♦ Q is surplus).

The jump to 6 ♠ is my "grand slam picture jump" aka "grand slam demand," based on the huge ♥ K-Q. Only partner knows whether a keycard is missing.