

### 37. Trying for 6NT when you shouldn't

You can make a small slam in a suit contract without a huge number of high-card points — when your partnership have a big fit and lots of shape eg voids. However, 6NT is a different proposition. Unless you have a long suit, you'll need 33 high-card points between the partnership. Don't try for 6NT if you know your combined values do not reach 6NT.

Partner has opened 2NT (20-22 balanced). What do you respond with these?

♠AJ5    ♠AJ5    ♠AJ5    ♠A5  
 ♥Q97    ♥Q97    ♥Q97    ♥J9  
 ♦K86    ♦986    ♦Q86    ♦1086  
 ♣K732    ♣K732    ♣K732    ♣AQ9732

With the first, jump to 6NT as 33 partnership points are present. With the second, settle for 3NT — do not even try for 6NT when you know for sure the partnership cannot hold 33 points. With the third, invite the notrump slam by bidding 4NT. The fourth is a different beast because of the fifth and sixth clubs. These cards are probably each worth a trick, so you're worth slam (despite not necessarily holding 33 points). I'd choose 6NT over 6♣ to make partner declarer.

#### What Happened

After North's optimistic slam invite, South had to declare a near-hopeless 6NT. He garnered only his nine top tricks.

#### What Should Have Happened

You stop in the laydown 3NT then give a virtuoso performance, capitalising on a miracle layout. Winning ♣Q lead with ♣K, you watch East discard (♥3). At trick two, you lead ♦10, East covering

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠AK4  
 ♥KJ4  
 ♦1092  
 ♣AK62

♠Q93  
 ♥97  
 ♦87  
 ♣QJ10985

N
W
E
S

♠10865  
 ♥108653  
 ♦QJ53  
 ♣-

♠J72  
 ♥AQ2  
 ♦AK64  
 ♣743

#### What Happened

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	4NT(1)	Pass
6NT(2)	end		

(1) Should not invite slam — the partnership cannot (quite) hold 33 points.

(2) Correct to accept as he is maximum.

Contract: 6NT, Opening Lead: ♣Q

#### What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	3NT	end

Contract: 3NT, Opening Lead: ♣Q

with ♦J, you winning ♦K and noting West's ♦7.

You cross to ♥J and lead ♦9, covered by ♦Q and ♦A, noting West's ♦8. You lead ♥Q to ♥K and lead ♦2 to East's ♦3 and your ♦4, then cashing ♦6, felling East's ♦5.

Despite your 1.6 per cent luck in diamonds, you still have only 11 tricks. But after you cash ♥A, ♠A and ♣A, West is reduced to ♠Q9 and ♣J. You exit with a club and await his spade lead, holding ♠K4 in dummy and ♠J7 in hand. You run his ♠9 to your ♠J and cross to (♠Q and) ♠K. You win 12 tricks but so don't want to be in 6NT.

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