

Spades! -- Problem

Board 10
North Deals
Both Vul



♠ K Q J 9 8 6 4
♥ A 4
♦ A K Q 3
♣ —

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

Playing matchpoint pairs, what next?

Your hand should make 4 ♠ if partner is completely broke, so you started with a strong 2 ♣ opening. The four prominent systems of responses are:

- 2 ♦ waiting, lacking either a good suit, 8+ HCP or both. Over this, 2 NT is non-forcing; with a game-forcing balanced hand, opener would have to jump to 3 NT; that bid impedes further investigation.
- 2 ♥ double-negative; opener may conceivably pass, since 3 ♥ has to be forcing; the jump to 3 NT could be necessary over the 2 ♥ response. 2 ♦ forces to game with at least a king (or two queens, for some), lacking a good suit; opener can rebid 2 NT on any balanced hand (systems on). 2 NT is positive in hearts. This common system is more effective than the prevalent system 1, but hearts can be a problem.
- 2 ♦ waiting, with Kokish 2 ♥ by opener. Over 2 ♦, opener's 2 ♥ shows either a game-forcing balanced hand or hearts. Responder is expected to bid 2 ♠, although responder might be permitted to bid a minor suit bust (last chance before 3 NT). Any third bid by opener other than 2 NT shows hearts; a rebid of 3 ♥ is not forcing. This is the author's preferred system.
- Step responses, usually showing controls (A=2, K=1): 2 ♦ = 0-1, 2 ♥ = 2, 2 ♠ = A+K, 2 NT = 3 kings, 3 ♣ = 4+, is a scheme I have played. This method can easily wrong-side the contract, and still requires a jump to 3 NT on a game-forcing balanced hand, over a 2 ♦ response.

Playing method 1, 3 or 4, the 2 ♦ responder may be broke. Over opener's natural 2 ♠ rebid, a responder who is broke rebids 3 ♣, the cheapest available suit.

For the entire auction, any new suit by opener is forcing, as opener may only need responder to pick one of two suits.

For many pairs, opener's jump rebid in a major suit says, *my suit is trumps, start cuebidding*. (A response other than 2 ♦ may prevent such a bid at the three level.) 3 ♠ is a better rebid with that agreement, but 2 ♠ was bid at the table. The auction above might occur playing any of the systems, as North has something.

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Spades! -- Solution

♠ A 7 3	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 5 2
♥ Q J 6 5		♥ 10 7
♦ 10 9		♦ J 7 5
♣ K 7 5 3		♣ Q J 9 6 4 2

♠ K Q J 9 8 6 4
♥ A 4
♦ A K Q 3
♣ —

NS 6♠; NS 6♦; NS 4♥; NS 1N; EW 1♣; Par +1430

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	6 ♠
All pass			

If partner has only the ♥ K, 6 ♠ will have a play -- bid it!

If you chose 4 NT, shame on you. What good would a one-response do you? Which ace is it? And what's trump, if you play keycard responses?

You could go slow and try for a diamond slam, but then partner might prefer diamonds on three small. No sense in muddying the waters

But we might miss a grand slam! Nope. Partner should not bid a speculative grand slam. That's why you play in 6 ♠ on this deal. (A jump to slam, eschewing Blackwood, suggests a void somewhere.) But what would partner do over 6 ♠ holding this hand?

♠ A ♥ K 9 8 3 2 ♦ 8 6 4 2 ♣ 10 9 8

7 ♠, of course. Partner would have bid the same with just the ♠ 10 instead of the ace. Opener was prepared to make 6 ♠ with the ♠ A missing, so holding it should make a grand slam.