

# Learning Points – Finding a Sound Slam in Competition

By Steve Moese. Edited by Mike Purcell

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Slams Level: Basic / Intermediate

South Deals EW Vul MPs	<p>♠</p> <p>♥</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♣</p>	Ron
<p>♠54</p> <p>♥J</p> <p>♦AK854</p> <p>♣AKQ62</p>	<p>N</p> <p>W 6 E</p> <p>S</p>	<p>♠</p> <p>♥</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♣</p>
Steve	<p>♠</p> <p>♥</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♣</p>	

Tuesday Night Club Game, August 16, 2011, Mr. John Altman, Director. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. Ron Babcock is my partner. We play Precision.

*Congratulations to Mr. John Altman. John directed his 1<sup>st</sup> game (an NAP Qualifier) and the field was kind enough to put him through his paces. John's poise, empathy and knowledge of the rules means the CBA has a great new director – and a Junior at that!*

Bidding slams is more than counting HCP. A clear view of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> round controls and total tricks available offer best results. Getting to a sound slam in a competitive auction is often difficult. The matchpoint rewards are often great.

South	West	North	East
1♠	2N <sup>1</sup>	3♠	4♠!
5N <sup>2</sup>	Pass	6♣	All Pass

South leads ♠K

1= Unusual Notrump for 2 Lowest; split range 7-11 or 16+ HCP  
2=Pick a Slam!!

competitive (with game-going values use a convention called Unusual over Unusual – see below). Partner's 4♣ cue bid is a game force – either a safe sacrifice against their possible game in ♠s (unlikely), or a hand with a good fit for one or both minors. Either way, partner must be showing an 8-loser hand.

Our total loser count looks to be 8+4=12. Therefore we stand to make 24-12 = 12 tricks in a minor suit contract. But which one? That's easy. Let partner choose! West's 5N is "Pick a Slam" – here focused on the minors. This is NOT the grand slam force because EW have not yet agreed a suit!

	Scores	MPs
	NS	EW NS EW
4♣ W	170	4.5 0.5
4♣ E	170	4.5 0.5
5♠ x N	500	3 2
5♦ W	620	2 3
5♦ W	640	1 4
6♣ W	1370	0 5

## The Play

After losing the 1<sup>st</sup> trick and ruffing the ♠ continuation, declarer draws trumps and checks ♦s just in case they split 4-0. Holding all the interior spots in ♦, declarer simply cashes a high honor from dummy – the hand with 2 high honors. That preserve all finesse chances against a possible ♦J632. When ♦s behaved, 6♣ came home for a top!

South Deals EW Vul MPs	<p>♠ AJ1073</p> <p>♥ Q62</p> <p>♦ 32</p> <p>♣ 983</p>	Ron
<p>♠54</p> <p>♥J</p> <p>♦AK854</p> <p>♣AKQ62</p>	<p>N</p> <p>W 17 E</p> <p>S</p>	<p>♠ 9</p> <p>♥ A753</p> <p>♦ Q1097</p> <p>♣ J1074</p>
Steve	<p>♠ KQ862</p> <p>♥ K10984</p> <p>♦ J6</p> <p>♣ 5</p>	<p>NS: 2♥ 1♠</p> <p>EW: 6♣♦, 2N</p>

## Post Mortem

Relying on tricks instead of HCP plus distribution, EW were able to judge a small slam was more than likely. Do not miss the power of complementary singletons in the major suits. This distribution is often overlooked. Complementary singletons help eliminate 4 losers when the hands are combined.

South's opening bid is light even by Rule of 20 standards. If you play this approach you might find yourself too high at times. Passing then entering the auction later is often better with these hands. We recommend the rule or 22:

**# of cards in your 2 longest suits + HCP + Quick Tricks  $\geq$  22** to open.

### Unusual over Unusual

When opponents interfere with an Unusual NT at the 2 level, this is a very useful convention to separate weak or competing actions from responder's invitational or better hands.

For 1♠-2N, responder now bids:

- 3♣ – an invitation or better for partner's suit (here ♠s).
- 3♦ – a GF hand in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit (here ♥s).
- 3♥/♠ – to play – simply competing
- 3N – Values and minor suit stoppers to play NT opposite a minimum opener. Denies a ♠ fit.
- 4♣/♦ – Splinter for partner's suit.
- 4♥/♠ – to play
- 4N – RKB for ♠s.
- 5♣/♦ – Exclusion Keycard Blackwood – tell me about keycards outside this suit. Confirms partner's suit as trumps.

### Options:

You can assign the focus of the 3♣ and 3♦ bid as you see fit. Some tie ♣ to ♥s (or the lower ranking suit) and ♦ to ♠s (or the higher ranking suit) regardless of opener's suit. Some tie ♣ to support and ♦ to GF in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit. Some tie ♣ to the 4<sup>th</sup> suit and ♦ to support in partner's suit. Be sure to agree!

For 1♣/♦ – 2N, Be sure to agree which suits are shown. Then be sure to adjust your Unusual/Unusual responses accordingly. If 2N shows minors, then bid as above. If 2N shows the other minor and ♥s, then the artificial bids with good hands are the other minor and ♥s. Be sure to iron out these details with your partner.

*Steve's law: rare agreements show up most often when you haven't talked about them!*

### Learning Points

1. Rule of 22: # HCP + # Cards in 2 longest suits + 2 or more Quick Tricks  $\geq$  22 then you open a 1-bid!
2. Get to tricks you can win from HCP and distribution as soon as you can in an auction. The losing Trick Count is a useful guide once you've found a fit.
3. Play Unusual over Unusual – you will suffer less from their interference if you do.
4. Getting to slam when opponents open and raise is rare indeed.

*Keywords: Split range 2-suit bids, Invitational Cue bid, 5NT Pick a Slam, Unusual NT, Unusual over Unusual, Rule of 22, Losing Trick Count.*