

The First Bridge Hand Published In *Time* Magazine

Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 5 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ 10 8 7 3 ♣ K 7 5 4 2	♠ K 9 8 ♥ A K J 5 3 ♦ Q J 9 ♣ 8 3	<div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> N W S E </div> ♠ 6 4 ♥ Q 10 9 4 ♦ A 6 2 ♣ J 10 9 6	♠ A Q J 10 7 3 ♥ 7 6 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ A Q
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West	North	East	South
	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ♦	Pass	6 ♠
All pass			

North's hand is balanced and worth 15 points – 14 high-card points plus one point for the five-card suit. However, even if the partnership uses a range of 15-17 points for a 1NT opening bid, most players prefer to open the five-card major suit with only 14 points in high cards. South's hand is worth 18 points – 16 high-card points and two length points for the six-card suit. Playing strong jump shifts, South could make a jump shift to 2♠ to show a strong hand with slam interest, but a simple response of 1♠ is forcing and leaves the partnership more room to explore for the best contract.

With three-card support for responder's suit and a doubleton club, a raise to 2♠ by North is likely to be a better choice than bidding 1NT. Once the fit is found, South is interested in investigating a slam contract. South could raise to 5♠, going beyond game to invite slam – an invitation which North should accept. However, most players are likely to bring out the Blackwood convention to check for aces. When North shows one ace with the 5♦ response, South bids the small slam, knowing the partnership is missing only one ace.

Against a slam, West has a difficult choice of opening lead. A club lead could work well if partner has the ♣A or ♣Q, but a diamond lead is less likely to cost a trick when the opponents have announced a lot of strength.

In 6♠, South starts by counting losers. There's a sure loser in diamonds and a potential loser in clubs. There are two possible ways of eliminating the club loser. Declarer can try finessing the ♣Q, hoping East holds the ♣K or declarer can try to establish an extra winner in dummy through length on which to discard the club loser. Which is better?

With seven hearts in the combined hands, the odds favor trying to establish an extra heart winner. If the ♥Q falls doubleton or if the hearts divide 3-3 or 4-2, the heart suit will provide the required winner. That should be declarer's plan (see below).

If West leads a diamond, East needs to lead a club after winning the ♦A to put declarer to the test right away. Otherwise, declarer can first try to establish an extra heart winner and, if that fails, fall back on the club finesse.

The Story Behind the Hand

This was the first bridge hand ever published in *Time* magazine. It appeared in a 1953 article the magazine was doing on a well-known Washington expert. The expert who made the headlines? None other than Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of the United States. Eisenhower held regular Saturday night games at his Washington home and his favorite partner was General Alfred Gruenther who was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe in the early 1950's.

When this hand was played, Eisenhower was sitting South with the great Oswald Jacoby as his partner. Asked about the caliber of Ike's game, Jacoby told the *Time* reporters, "He plays better bridge than golf. He tries to break 90 at golf; at bridge you could say he plays in the 70's." Eisenhower demonstrated his flair for the game by bringing home the 6♣ slam. West led a diamond to East's ♦A and Eisenhower, aware of the need to keep entries to dummy, was careful to drop the ♦K under the ace. East found the best defense by switching to the ♣J. Next, as reported in *Time*:

Eisenhower had considered the choices ahead of him: he could

- 1) finesse the ♣Q (in which case he would have been down one); or
- 2) take the ♣J with his ace, and then play out dummy's hearts, hoping for a division of the opponents' hearts that would give him at least three heart winners.

Odds were even on alternative No. 1, and were better than five to one on alternative No. 2. Ike took (the ♣J) with his club ace.

Having made the crucial decision, Eisenhower had no further trouble. He drew trumps, fortunately in two rounds, cashed dummy's top hearts, and ruffed a heart in his own hand. He got back to dummy with a diamond to ruff another heart, thus setting up dummy's last card in that suit. It was then easy to get back to dummy with another diamond in order to cash the last heart and discard the ♣Q on it.

Score: six spades, bid and made.