

Breakage

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 7 5 2
♥ 10 2
♦ A J 10 6 3
♣ A K



♠ A K J 10
♥ A K 9 6 5 3
♦ 4
♣ 8 4

	West	North	East	South
				1 ♥
	Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠
	Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♥
	Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♣
	Pass	5 NT	Pass	6 ♥
	Pass	6 ♠	All pass	
	6 ♠ by South			
	Lead: ♣ Q			

West leads the ♣Q, and you observe that you might have bid seven spades, as partner was unlikely to have three low hearts. Still, that is no reason to go down in a small slam. So, how do you plan to make twelve tricks once East follows to the first trick with a low club?

Solution:

After winning the first trick with the ♣K, you should cash the ace of trumps. If trumps are 5-0, you will need the hearts to be 3-2 on most layouts. As a result you will cash the ♥A and ♥K and ruff a heart with the ♠Q before returning to hand with a trump to play on hearts. All you will lose is a trump.

When both opponents follow to the first round of trumps it would be a mistake to draw a second round of trumps when the full deal is:

♠ Q 7 5 2
♥ 10 2
♦ A J 10 6 3
♣ A K

♠ 4
♥ Q J 8 7
♦ 9 7 2
♣ Q J 10 7 3

♠ 9 8 6 3
♥ 4
♦ K Q 8 5
♣ 9 6 5 2

♠ A K J 10
♥ A K 9 6 5 3
♦ 4
♣ 8 4

When two rounds of trumps are drawn, you no longer have the entries to establish the hearts when both majors are 4-1. So after cashing the ♠A, you should turn your attention to hearts at trick three by cashing the ace. The next trap to avoid is playing anything but a low heart to the next trick.

If you try to cash the ♥K, East will ruff and the contract will fail! You will be able to ruff one heart high, but East will overruff the next. The alternative would be to concede a heart trick to West. Either way, you are down.

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When you correctly play a low heart at trick at trick three, what can the defense do? You can win a minor-suit shift, return to hand with a trump to ruff a low heart with dummy's queen of trumps. With a trump still remaining in dummy, you can draw the remaining trumps, ending in hand, and run the hearts. You will make four trumps, four hearts, a heart ruff and the three minor-suit winners.

Obviously, this play will make twelve tricks when trumps are 3-2 and the hearts are no worse than 4-1 but you might like to consider how the play would go if you drew a second round of trumps and they were 3-2. It may not be obvious that the best play then is to draw a third round of trumps and to follow this with a low heart from both hands, protecting against a 4-1 break in that suit. So, once trumps behave nicely, there is no need to be greedy in a small slam by trying to cash your top hearts because you would fail in your contract when hearts were 4-1.