

# Learning Points – High Level Slam Decision

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July 20, 2010

Slams Level: Basic/Intermediate

South Deals None Vul MPs	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	Mike
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♠	N	♠
♥	W 27 E	♥
♦	S	♦
♣		♣

♠ 10
♥ 8
♦ KQ952
♣ AKJ532
Steve

Tuesday Evening Club Game, July 20, 2010 Mr. Mike Lipp, Director. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. My partner is Dr. Mike Ma. We play 2/1 Game Force.

## The Bidding

1=1=5=6 hands like this don't happen very often. This 4 loser hand is inappropriate for a 2♣ opening (needs 4 Quick Tricks and has only 3). The key will be to communicate longer ♣s than ♦s and some slam interest. Opening 1♣ intending to bring ♦s back into the picture will show a strong playing hand like this. Besides, opening a forcing 2♣ with a minor 2-suiter makes bidding harder not easier. When you have a hand like this you know someone will be bidding the majors. In a few heartbeats West was happy to bid them both.

South	West	North	East
1♣	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	2♥ <sup>2</sup>	4♣

???

1= Michaels Cue Bid (5-5 Majors)  
2=Heart control.

West leads the ♠A

Partner contributed a cue bid, which shows a control for NT purposes (or 1<sup>st</sup> round control for slam purposes – partner will clarify later). East knew to bid immediately to the 4 level, leaving declarer with little room to act. Good preemptors know how to make life uncomfortable.

We can infer that East West have a 9-10 card spade fit. We likely have an 8 or 9 card fit or more in one of South's minors. That's 17-19 total trumps (Law of Total Tricks). Recall, the Law of Total Tricks is only an approximate guideline and says that the number of tricks both sides can take in their optimum fit is equal to the total number of trumps in their best trump suits. If EW can take only 6 tricks, then we can take 11-13 tricks – slam is definitely in the picture.

South also knows that North has ♥ values and an invitational hand. Invitational hands typically have 8 or fewer losers. With 4 losers in the South hand, the Losing Trick Count valuation suggests North South can make 24-8-4 = 12 tricks in either minor. But which one? No need to guess...

South	West	North	East
1♣	2♣ <sup>1</sup>	2♥ <sup>2</sup>	4♣
5♦	5♠	6♦	All Pass

1= Michaels Cue Bid (5-5 Majors)  
2=Heart control.

East leads the ♥K

Partner had an easy time bidding over West's continuing nuisance, clear that we would be in the best strain.

Go ahead. Ratchet up your courage and bid 5♦. This is a high reverse, showing great playing strength with ♣s longer than ♦s. Partner will know what to do.

South Deals None Vul MPs	♠ KJ ♥ AJ9 ♦ AJ764 ♣ 764	Mike
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♠ AQ964	N	♠ 87532
♥ KQ432	W 27 E	♥ 10765
♦ 8	S	♦ 103
♣ 98		♣ Q10

## The Play

The ♠A lead means declarer must find the ♣Q. West switches to the ♥K at trick 2 which North must win. The ♣4 to the ♣A (incase the ♣Q is singleton off side) sets the stage for 2 rounds of trump ending in dummy. The ♣6 shows the ♣Q from West and 12 tricks

♠ 10
♥ 8
♦ KQ952
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EW: 6♣, 6♦, 6N

fall like rain. 6♦ making 6 beat 7 other pairs. One pair made +940 on West's ♥K lead. Here's what the field did on this board:

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MPs	5.13	5.13	4.80	1.19	6.81	3.44	1.19	7.94	1.19	
Score	490	490	AVE+	420	920	440	420	940	420	

### Post Mortem

Opponents did well to cash their ♠A. If they don't, they don't get it. It is surprising to find so few pairs in slam. 2 did well to get to NT. The Losing Trick Count is a valuable tool for determine the level you should be at, once you have found a trump fit. Notice you can anticipate the Losing Trick Count possibilities with trick-rich 1=1=5=6 hands like these since the odds are you will have an 8+ card fit. Some pairs might choose to open 1♦ and jump shift to ♣s. More comfortable at assuring we play the right 5 level strain, but wrong on shape and loser inferences. On this hand you would not have had the chance. The high reverse tells partner you have few losers (only 2 in the majors since partner knows you have a 5-6 hand). 2 pairs found their NT game. No one found the NT slam. Partner agreed he could have bid NT as well, but thought getting to a small slam was worth most of the HCP. Note, if partner pass throughout this auction, I will rebid 5♣ over 4♠, since I now think a sacrifice is valuable. I have to give up on finding ♦s opposite a passed partner.

This hand prodded Mike and I to talk about how to bid over Michaels Cue Bids showing both majors. There are 2 schools of thought: 1) Show NT stoppers immediately since NT is the highest paying game available (majors are out of the picture), or 2) show minor suits immediately, looking for NT later. In this kind of situation, there is no clear advantage to either approach – one will work as well as the other. The key is to agree with partner what the likely sequences are after their Michaels Cue bid. We chose to use MOM or Mi/Mi (See table). Partner would have had to choose between 2N or 2♥ (showing GI+ and ♦s) at his 1st turn over West's 2♣ bid.

Assume the bidding is 1♣- 2♣ to responder (♦s by analogy). Here's a comparison of 2 common approaches:

	Cue Bid NT Stoppers (Hardy Style)	MOM or Mi/Mi (Michaels over Michaels – aka Unusual over Unusual)
2♦	Weak to play	Weak to play
2♥/♠	Major stopped for NT /other not, GI+	2♥ GI+ in other minor (5+ cards) 2♠ GI+ in partner's minor (5+ cards) Tends to be balanced hand. <i>Others might switch meanings of these bids.</i>
2N	Both majors stopped, GI	Both majors stopped, GI
3-7 ♣	To Play (Preemptive)*	To Play (Preemptive)*
3-7 ♦	3D Natural GI+, all else to play	To Play (Preemptive)*
3♥/3♠	Singleton Splinter for partner's minor	Singleton Splinter for partner's minor
3N	12-15 HCP Major stoppers. To play	12-15 HCP Major stoppers. To play
4♥/4♠	Void splinter for partner's minor	Void splinter for partner's minor
4N*	RKB (Quantitative if Minorwood is on)	RKB (Quantitative if Minorwood is on)
Double	Usually Hxxx or better in one or both of the majors and GI+, or a balanced hand wishing to penalize the opponents at the 2 level.	Usually Hxxx or better in one or both of the majors and GI+, or a balanced hand wishing to penalize the opponents at the 2 level.

\*Must decide if 4 of opener's minor is Minorwood in this auction.

GI = Game Invitation; GI+ = Game Invitation or better. Hxxx means Axxx, Kxxx, or Qxxx.

With length in one of their majors and a distributional hand, it's better to declare than defend. Responder will look to support partner's minor first or establish the other minor as an option, then prepare for NT or a penalty double later. This is a matter of partnership preference, so be sure to agree before you embark.

### **Learning Points**

1. Plan your bidding before your opening bid. Sometimes a strong 2♣ is not best. Think about rebid issues.
2. Open 2-suited hands with 4 Losers at the 1 level if you lack 4 quick tricks. Life is so much easier that way.
3. Use a high reverse to show playing strength and 5-6 pattern (1<sup>st</sup> suit is longer). This means a Jump shift always shows equal length or 6=5 (higher ranking suit longer).
4. Prepare for defending opponent's 2-suit cue bids. Be sure to discuss how you handle Minorwood in competition if you play this convention.
5. Take the extra chance to cash a high card in a suit where you must find the Queen. You might catch a singleton!

Keywords: High Level Reverse, Open 1 with 4 losers and less than 4 Quick Tricks, Bidding after their Michaels Cue Bid