

# Learning Points – A Working Points Slam

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Slams Level: Basic / Intermediate

Tuesday Night Club Game, May 24, 2011 Mr. Michael Lipp, Director. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. Pat Dutson is my partner. We play 2/1 Game Force Hardy Style.

East Deals None Vul MPs	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		♠ ♥ ♦ ♣
♠ K82 ♥ AKQ654 ♦ KJ7 ♣ J		N W 14 E S	♠ AJ64 ♥ J9 ♦ AQ32 ♣ 862
Pat			Steve

Here's a great hand that illustrates the value of Working Strength (aka working points). When you have a good trump fit and a singleton opposite 3 or 4 small, all your strength is working in the other 3 suits. Think SLAM.

## The Bidding

East's 1N is a common approach hiding the 4 card ♠ suit were 1N to be the limit of the hand. New minor forcing enables EW to find a 4-4 ♠ fit if game is in the picture. Hiding your pattern can be important against high level players. Bidding NT with a hand resembling NT shape just makes common sense. When bidding this way, a 1♠ bid would show an unbalanced hand implying a singleton or void (a semi-balanced 5422 pattern is possible). South's delayed 2♣ intervention either shows a hand too weak to open or a long suit too weak to preempt to the 3-level. West's 3♣ cue bid is game forcing and asks about ♣ control initially. East cannot bid NT so he supports ♥s rather than introduce ♠s at the 3-level. Partner would have bid 3♠ game forcing instead of the cue

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

- 1= Treatment – rebid 1N with all balanced hands. 1♠ rebid promises a singleton or void.
- 2= No ♣ stop for NT. Support partner rather than rebid ♦ or introduce ♠.
- 3= Kickback RKB for ♥s
- 4= 2 Keys w/o the ♥Q

West leads ♣5

bid if s/he were interested in a ♠ fit. West employed kickback – 4♠ is the Roman Keycard Ask instead of 4NT – this allows finding the trump Q and still stopping in 5♥ if necessary. When using this approach, 4N becomes the ♠ control bid! With 2 Keys opposite and no ♣ wastage, bidding 6♥ was a snap!

Working points with no wasted values in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit often produces

slams. Look for a singleton opposite no wasted HCPs (K or Q). Total your points in the other 3 suits (16) and add them to partner's points in those 3 suits (12 + as partner is known to hold nothing in ♣ – if he did he would bid 3N!). Does 28 HCP make a small slam? Conventional wisdom (Goren) says 33 HCP is sufficient for a small slam as long as we aren't missing 2 fast tricks in one suit. Well we own 3 suits. We will get our tricks from the other 3 suits. ¾ or 75% of 33 is 24.75. We should be able to make a small slam with about 25 HCP in the 3 remaining suits as long as our losers in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit are held 1 and opponents cannot cash more than 1 fast trick.

Contract	Scores		Matchpoints	
	N-S	E-W	N-S	E-W
4♥ W		480	5	1
4♥ W		480	5	1
4♥ W		480	5	1
4♥ W		510	2.5	3.5
4♥ W		510	2.5	3.5
6♥ W		980	1	5
6♥ W		1010	0	6

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♠ K82 ♥ AKQ654 ♦ KJ7 ♣ J		N W 14 E S	♠ AJ64 ♥ J9 ♦ AQ32 ♣ 862
	♠ 53 ♥ 73 ♦ 854 ♣ K107543		EW 6♥; 6♦; 5♠; 1N; 1♣

## The Play

The ♣5 fetched the ♣A but 12 tricks were for the taking. Since declarer could pitch a ♠ from hand on the long ♦ no ♠ finesse was

necessary. Never take unnecessary finesses. Without a ♣ lead declarer can make 7 via the ♠ finesse..

## Post Mortem

This slam is sounder than most with a 100% line of play once the ♣A is taken. Working strength and the value of useful shortness (shortness opposite weakness) is a major plus when valuing your hand.

From a losing trick count perspective the initial LTC is 5 for West and 8 for East. That means initially that EW hold a combined 13 losers and stand to make 11 tricks in ♥s. However the ♦J is a winner in this hand set. Better to value West as 4.5 Losers (and upgrade once you know partner holds the ♦AQ). East shows 8 losers but the ♠J is worth ½ a loser if partner holds a cover card in ♠s. Value East as 7.5. The total is now 12 losers meaning we stand to make 12 tricks.

*Never take a practice finesse.* The ♣ lead clears your one loser. You must take the rest of the tricks. Don't take the ♠ finesse, as you can pitch a ♠ on the long ♦. Without a ♣ lead, you can drop the ♣J on the long ♦ and take the ♠ finesse *for a free chance at an overtrick*. When you have a free chance at an overtrick (no cost to your contract) a finesse is no longer just practice!

## Learning Points

1. When your side has a good trump fit and all your points are concentrated in 3 suits with no more than 1 loser in the 4<sup>th</sup> suit, think small slam if you hold 25 or more HCP and are not missing 2 quick losers off the top.
2. Kickback RKB is a useful gadget, but before you adopt it make sure you try it in different situations. You might find some situations confusing. Like adopting any new treatment, be sure to consider most of the ramifications before you make a change.
3. Bid your working point slams! Use Losing Trick Count to help guide your decisions. Be sure to assess the LTC value of your Jacks!

*Keywords: Working Strength, Useful shortness, Rebid 1N holding 4 spades with a balanced hand*