

Learning Points – NABC Toronto A Slam from Thin Air

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Slams Level: Intermediate

♠ A1062
♥
♦ KQ2
♣ AK10972

Toronto NAP. NA Swiss Teams Qualifier. 6th round Alan Leiter is my partner. We are playing a steady team in the finals of a 4-session knockout. Alan is a Gold Life Master and we've played about 12 hands together. We use 2/1 Game Force.

←Your hand, South, Dealer, none vulnerable.

Bidding

Was 4♠ fast arrival (weak in-range) or a picture bid (no Ace but strong values and shape)? Partner's bidding could suggest an unbalanced hand with insufficient controls for a Splinter bid at the 1st turn. (A splinter bid immediately over an opening 1-bid should show 2nd round control or better in the unbid suits). Sensing partner had working values and complimentary shortness South decides to bid the slam without further investigation. Sometimes more bidding helps the defense. Yes, we might be off 2 aces, but the opponents have to find them and cash them, right? No double – East likely holds 0 or 1 Ace.

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♠!!	All Pass		

Opening Lead ♥A!!!

The Play

LHO succumbed to temptation and led the ♥A. Now the Slam has some chances. Ruffing the ♥A declarer needs a 3-2 trump break with the person holding the 3rd trump to hold 3 or 4♥s. To conserve entries declarer must play ♠A then ♠K to be in position to run ♥s next. As the ♥s run, declarer discards ♦s. When the ♥J falls on the 3rd round, declarer is home free. A 4th round of ♥s allows declarer to pitch the remaining ♦ loser. West can ruff now or later. Declarer has the rest of the tricks. *Extra Chance:* if the ♥J does not fall, declarer prevails as long as ♥s split no worse than ♥Jxxx. North has the ♣K (and perhaps a ♣ ruff) as an entry for the long ♥. This is a very lucky result. 11 more IMPs for us.

South Deals None Vul IMPs	♠ K943 ♥ KQ1098 ♦ J3 ♣ K4	← Alan
♠ QJ5 ♥ AJ5 ♦ 10984 ♣ 1085	N W E S	♠ 78 ♥ 76432 ♦ A765 ♣ J6
Steve →	♠ A1062 ♥ ♦ KQ2 ♣ AQ10972	

Post Mortem

West should not be so hasty to lead the Ace of North's long suit, especially on this auction. If ever there was a time for leading the unbid suit it is now. We must lose the ♦A and ♠Q. Note no other loser is likely. Declarer runs ♣s pitching ♥s for 11 tricks.

Any votes for a Limit Raise by North? North's hand has 6 losers – 2 tricks too strong for an invitation. North should insist on game. I do like partner's immediate jump to the ♠ game as fast arrival - helps show lower end of range with good support. Partner bid descriptively. Note if South uses RKB, the defenders will learn they have 2 Aces, and we would stop in 5♠.

South had no choice but to discard 3 ♦s and hope the distribution was kind. Sometimes you have to bid 'em to make 'em. When you bid 'em, play 'em like you got 'em!

Learning Points

1. Be sure you talk about major suit raises, fast arrival, and picture bids with partner so that distributional inferences are available to you.
2. Sometimes chance reward the foolish. Make what you can with what you have.

Keywords: Make a slam missing 2 Aces and the Trump Q