

## A King plus three Courtiers could do it:

 AQ432
 AKQ853

 K5

You are West, holding this major powerhouse. South, the dealer, passes. What do you bid?

### Thoughts:

With no help from partner or the opposition, you have around 3 to 4 losers in the hand. An opening bid that would reflect this is a strong 2C. Those who consider that the bidding won't die since you have a highly distributed hand with "only" 18 HCPs might open 1H preparing to make a jump bid in spades on the next round to show distribution and force to game.

A 2C opening could work but you are using up a lot of bidding space and there is a widely held view that one doesn't open 2C with a powerful 2-suiter because of the difficulties of conveying your extreme distribution in the bidding space left available.

A more left field but effective approach is to recognise that you are the captain who will place this contract and ask yourself what suit do you really need help with in order to make a slam prospective. You have a void in diamonds, any club lead would run up to your KC. Your heart suit is nearly self-established. The answer clearly is spades. Perhaps astonishingly, partner only needs the KS plus three rags support to make slam a proposition because it is likely that you would be able to ruff one of your clubs in dummy after discarding dummy's clubs on your hearts. An opening bid of 1S would assist to resolve if there is any fit in that suit.

As you can see from the full hand below, an opening bid of 1S will get a response from partner (for example, 3S) that will show a minimum of 3 x spade support and 10-12 points. This is more than enough to investigate whether a slam is on, maybe even a grand slam.

Standard techniques to ask for Aces or Key cards cannot ascertain whether partner holds the AC rather than the AD. A control cue bid of 4D will now get a 5C control cue response from partner advising you to sign off in no more than 6S. In response to an Exclusion Blackwood bid of 5D over a 3S response, partner will deny holding an Ace outside the diamond suit, again denying the AC.

If you had opened 2C, you should get to a 6H contract but with less assurance as far as a fit and required controls and more on the basis of combined points. If you had opened 1H partner might bid 2 of a minor or 2NT. You could then jump and reverse into 3S showing a strong and distributional hand but it will be hard for partner to bid a spade slam when they find you are missing 2 x Aces or 2 x Key Cards. A Key Card enquiry by responder might just get you there if you have an agreement that a response of 5NT shows 2 x key cards plus a void BUT ONLY if you respond 5NT in preference to a safer 4S which would show 2 x Key Cards and the QS.

The hand came up in a BBO session.

BOARD 7					
BD: 7	♠ 9 ♥ T62 ♦ AQJ62 ♣ T763				Dlr: S
					Vul: ALL
♠ AQ432					♠ KJ7
♥ AKQ853					♥ J7
♦					♦ K975
♣ K5					♣ QJ84
	♠ T865 ♥ 94 ♦ T843 ♣ A92				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	4	-	6	5	5
W	4	-	6	6	5

  

		7	
18			11
		4	