

## Newer Players

## Ask Jerry



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**Dear Jerry,**  
**We have a history of missed slams**  
**and below is our latest miss.**

West	East
♠ K 2	♠ —
♥ A 4	♥ K Q J 6
♦ A J 10 6 3 2	♦ K 9 7 4
♣ Q J 3	♣ A K 10 7 2
1 ♦	2 ♣
2 ♦	2 ♥
2NT	3NT
All Pass	

**Among our other questions, should West have opened 1NT? And how can we reach slam after the actual 1 ♦ opening?**

**Dave**

Hi Dave,  
Good slams are reached by using your bidding to determine these three elements: power, fit, controls.

**Power:** Charles Goren suggested that a partnership typically wants to use their bidding to establish around 33 total points before considering the slam level. While it is true in suit contracts that long suits, shortness, fitting cards, etc., make this not a perfectly defined aspect, it is reasonable to keep in mind.

**Fit:** To win 12 or perhaps 13 tricks, you need to establish that there is a source of winners and, if a suit contract, a good trump suit.

**Controls:** To take 12 winners, you must have first-round control of at least three suits, and in the fourth suit at least second-round control. If you are off two aces, not a good slam. If you are off A-K in a suit, also bad.

Before I continue, Easley Blackwood and John Gerber would likely write in their graves at the use of an ace-asking

tool to propel to slam. Ace-asking should be the last act after establishing power, fit and controls.

Now to your questions. I think 1NT would have been a perfectly acceptable opening bid choice on those cards. However, the actual 1 ♦ opener should have made getting to slam easier. Let's use basic Goren point count to examine the worth of responder's hand after you open 1 ♦, which almost always shows four or more. Think of what responder knows immediately.

1) Power. With 16 HCP and a spade void, if opener does have four or more diamonds, Goren would say the spade void added 5 points to the value of his hand. 20+ support points opposite an opening bid: *Voila!*

2) Fit. Known.

3) Controls. Responder holds: first-round spade control, second-round heart control, first- and second-round club controls.

After you rebid your diamonds, responder knows you have at least five of them. If responder had a good hand opposite a four-card suit, how good is it now that at least a nine-card fit has been discovered? From this point, I'll rely on one of my Jerry-isms – "The one who knows, goes!" Responder should never allow a contract of less than 6 ♦!

How responder should continue from this point depends greatly on system and ace-asking options. In a sophisticated expert partnership, reaching a grand slam in diamonds should be achievable. Lacking the tools to diagnose that all cards are working, responder might simply leap to 6 ♦.

If you don't bid a slam on these cards, you just aren't bidding enough!

**Dear Jerry,**  
**We got a bottom board on this deal.**  
**Our hands:**

♠ Q 9	♠ 2
♥ A Q 7	♥ K 8 3
♦ K 9 8 6 4 2	♦ A 5
♣ A 6	♣ K Q J 9 7 5 3
1NT	2 ♠ <sup>(1)</sup>
2NT <sup>(2)</sup>	6NT

**1) Transfer to clubs**  
**2) Denies three or more clubs with a high honor**

**This was doubled, and we lost the first five spade tricks. How should we have bid this?**

**TT**

Hi TT,

First let me applaud opener's decision to bid 1NT. I think this was superior to describe his values and shape to opening 1 ♦ and rebidding 2 ♦ with this medium-strength hand.

One thing I strive to do is to never ask a question where I don't care about the answer. Why would I transfer to clubs? My analysis would be:

1) Power. Established: Opposite 15-17 HCP, my hand evaluates to around 16 total by adding length points.

2) Fit. Established: This seven-card suit opposite at least two clubs is a fit!

3) Controls. You have second-round spade control, second-round heart control, and first-round diamond control. The only thing that matters here is how many aces partner has, or does not have. A perfect hand for Gerber.

My suggestion:

1NT	4 ♣
4 ♠ <sup>(1)</sup>	6 ♣!
1) Two aces 🀄	