



Marty Bergen  
www.martybergen.com

# Better Bridge with Bergen

♠AK854 ♥— ♦AQ5 ♣AK1076.

Here are my thoughts on the possible choices:

Double. If I were sure that my partner would bid something, I would seriously consider this call. Although double shows a good hand that is short in hearts, there's a good chance that partner will pass. Defending 4♥ doubled might be our best spot, but when I picked up these cards, hearts was not the trump suit I had in mind.

What about 4♠? This bid has two serious flaws. The first is that spades might be the wrong suit. If partner is short in spades, we could find ourselves going down in 4♠ while cold for slam in a minor. In addition, an overcall of 4♠ hardly does justice to this monster.

What else is there? Although 5♣ might be your best contract, it makes no sense to attempt to score a game by taking 11 tricks at the five level when you had the chance to bid game at the four level.

So let's talk about the magic of voids. What does this mean? Hands with a useful void take a lot of tricks. It's like playing with a 30-point deck. When you have a void, the 10 HCP in that suit (in effect) don't matter, so you can bid and make game or slam with fewer points than normally needed. When the void is in the opponents' long, strong suit, that's even better.

With that in mind, what did I do? I bid 5♥, a Michaels cuebid. Although partner might hate both my suits and have nothing, my experience told me to be aggressive based on the void.

How did it work out? Partner's hand was:

♠10 ♥J75 ♦KJ972 ♣J843.

Partner bid 5NT to ask for my minor, and 6♣ turned out to be the correct contract.

I don't know about you, but I do believe in "magic."

The setting: A prestigious international tournament in 1997 with IMP scoring. Both sides are vulnerable. Your hand is:

♠K1095 ♥— ♦109643 ♣KJ82.

At most tables, the auction proceeded:

West	Partner	East	You
		Pass	Pass
1♥	2♣	3♥ <sup>(1)</sup>	?

(1) Preemptive.

What's your call?

You have terrific shape and excellent support for a partner who made a vulnerable overcall at the two level. You are perfectly willing to get to 5♣, not to mention that you have no interest in defending if they get to 4♥.

Remember: For every 20 hands you play, you rate to get only one void — and sometimes it will be in partner's suit. Therefore, when you pick up a void and it is in the opponents' suit, you should regard it as heaven-sent, say "thank you," and seize the moment with an aggressive bid.

If you appreciate the magic of voids, you'll bid 4♥. Partner has:

♠A2 ♥Q1065 ♦A ♣A10765.

and will jump to 6♣ and make it. Eight expert pairs held this hand, and only three of them bid 4♥. If you did well done!

## These are the 10 Commandments of good slam bidding:

1. Never forget the magic of voids.
2. High-card points are *not* the key.
3. He who knows, goes (or stays).
4. He who doesn't know, invites.
5. KISSing is fun — being tortured is not.
6. Don't fall in love with your hand.
7. Greed is a terrible thing.
8. The length and strength of your trumps is often crucial.
9. You can't bid 'em all.
10. Know when to say no.

Are these the only commandments that apply to slam bidding? Of course not. Keeping these in mind, however, will go a long way towards helping you improve your understanding of this complex topic.

We will discuss these in the next few issues. If you carefully read the columns that follow, you will take a big step towards bidding more good slams and avoiding bad ones.

## The magic of voids

A reader asked what I would bid with the following hand after right-hand opponent opened 4♥: