

Board 1
 North Deals
 None Vul

♠ 9 7 5	♠ Q 10 8 6 2	♠ 3
♥ 7 6 4 3	♥ A Q J 8 2	♥ 10 5
♦ 9 3 2	♦ A 10	♦ J 8 6 4
♣ J 6 4	♣ 2	♣ A K Q 9 8 7

W	N	E
	S	

♠ A K J 4
♥ K 9
♦ K Q 7 5
♣ 10 5 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♠	2 ♣	3 ♣
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	5 ♠
Pass	6 ♠	All pass	

Auction Commentary: North opens 1 ♠; we open the higher of our two five-card suits. After East overcalls, South can cue bid 3 ♣. This cue bid shows at least an invitational hand in partner's major. It does not promise another bid. If partner has more than a minimum, they must show it. While North has only 13 HCP, they have only a 5-loser hand, so they jump to game with 4 ♠.

South, knowing that North has more than a minimum, thinks they should bid a slam if the opponents cannot cash two top club tricks. If we raise our suit to the five-level without being forced to do so, it is a slam try. We want partner to bid a slam if they have first or second round control of the enemy suit. Since North has a singleton, they bid the slam.

If the auction was more competitive, with West bidding 4 ♣ instead of passing, and East bidding 5 ♣ over 4 ♠, then the 5 ♠ bid would not be a slam try. It would merely be competitive. This bid of five of our major is only a slam try when it is unforced.

Play Commentary: East will take a top club, and North-South will take 12 tricks.

Takeaway: This 5-of-our-major bid is a powerful tool. If we don't have control of the enemy suit, we don't want to guess whether or not partner does; we want to ask them.

Board 4

West Deals
Both Vul

	♠ 7 3		
	♥ A J 8 7 4		
	♦ K J 4 3		
	♣ 8 5		
♠ A 4 2		♠ K Q J 10 8 6	
♥ 5		♥ 10 2	
♦ A Q 5 2		♦ —	
♣ A Q 7 6 2		♣ K J 10 4 3	
	♠ 9 5		
	♥ K Q 9 6 3		
	♦ 10 9 8 7 6		
	♣ 9		

West	North	East	South
1 ♣	1 ♥	1 ♠	4 ♥
4 ♠	Pass	5 ♠	Pass
6 ♠	All pass		

Auction Commentary: West's 1 ♠ bid shows at least *five* spades; with only four, they would begin with a negative double. South does well to jam the auction; with five or more card support for partner's overcall and a singleton or void, jumping to the 4-level is mandatory. West has enough strength to bid 4 ♠, and East has a problem.

Since West had enough strength to bid 4 ♠, East and West probably belong in slam so long as they don't have two fast losers in hearts. How can East be sure? When our side has the balance of power, an unforced raise to five of our trump suit is an asking bid. It asks partner to tell us whether or not they have first or second round control of the enemy suit. If they don't, partner passes. If they do, partner bids on.

On a bad day, partner will have the KJ♦ instead of the ♣A, and we will be off two cashing aces. Today is a good day.

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul

	♠ Q 8										
	♥ K J										
	♦ K J 8 4										
	♣ A K J 5 3										
♠ 10 6 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 8 7 6		♥ Q 5 3 2									
♦ 10 3 2		♦ Q 7 6									
♣ 10 8 2		♣ Q 7 6									
	♠ A J 9 7 5										
	♥ A 10 4										
	♦ A 9 5										
	♣ 9 4										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
			1 ♠								
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 NT								
Pass	4 NT	All pass									

Auction Commentary: North's 2 ♣ bid establishes a game force. South's 2 NT bid shows either 12-14 HCP or 18-19 HCP. North will assume the former, and South will make sure to bid further with the stronger hand. North knows there is no fit; South would have shown another 4-card suit or rebid spades with 6. If South has 14 HCP, slam should have a decent chance, as each side has a 5-card suit which could run. North can invite slam by bidding 4 NT. This is NOT an ace-asking bid. We must have a suit agreement for 4 NT to ask for aces, otherwise, it is *quantitative*, asking partner to bid a slam with a maximum point count. With 14 HCP, South should bid on. With less, South should pass, as they have here.

Opening Lead: ♥ 9. At least it is a sequence.

Play Commentary: It looks slightly better to play on spades before clubs. South will probably take eleven tricks.

Takeaway: It is important to develop an understanding (and discuss with your partner) when a 4 NT bid asks for aces, and when it doesn't. The rule to remember is, 4 NT is only ace-asking when our side has established a fit, otherwise, it is quantitative.