

West	East
1♠	3♠
4♣	4♦
4♥	4♣

West starts a cue-bidding sequence with 4♣ and the next two bids establish that every side suit is controlled. East now must judge his hand. He knows that West will not be balanced (even a 19 point 4-3-3-3 or 4-4-3-2 hand does not justify a slam try after the auction starts 1♠ – 3♠). East is looking for useful cards within the context of the 10-12 points he has already shown. Some of his queens and jacks are likely to be wasted opposite shortage, so he indicates no enthusiasm with 4♣. West has had enough also. 4♣ was no more than a mild slam try; if East isn't interested, West will feel he has done enough.

Tip: When considering a slam, try to involve partner's judgement.

I end this article with a well bid slam, calling for good judgement from both players:

Layout E			
♠ K Q 5 4		♠ A 10 6 3 2	
♥ A K 7 6 5		♥ Q 10 8	
♦ A 4		♦ 5 3 2	
♣ 7 5		♣ A 6	

West	East
1♥	1♠
3♠	4♣
4♦	4♣
4NT	5♥
6♣	

East knows that the partnership has only roughly 26-27 points but his values are excellent, particularly a holding of ♥Q-10-8 in West's suit. East is using the cue-bid of 4♣ as a mild slam try as well as showing first-round club control. West couldn't be better! Immediately he hears 4♣ West envisages a slam, but 4NT would be premature: 4♦ allows for the possibility of partner taking control and bidding a grand slam. East bids 4♣ to show that 4♣ was only a mild slam try, but now there is no stopping West.

Note that if you swapped East's red-suit holdings, he would have no reason to suggest a slam. A simple 4♠ over 3♠ would end the auction. □

Top Table

Peter Crouch

PETER CROUCH has won most of the major national competitions more than once, and was in the Open team that finished fourth at the European Teams Championships last June. In 1993 he also acted as coach to both the Open and Women's England teams. In 2012 Peter finished runner-up in the Spring Four-somes, won Crockfords, came second in the Premier League and won his fourth Gold Cup.



When did you start playing bridge?

I played whist from about 5, so was used to cards at an early age. I learnt the rules of bridge at 15 but didn't really start playing until I went to university at Canterbury.

How often / where do you play?

I used to play very rarely during the week, maybe a couple of times a year. I started playing with my 16-year-old daughter Ellie recently and we have been playing more regularly at local clubs.

I don't play many congresses but as the children are getting older I expect to turn out a bit more often.

Do you always play with the same partners / team-mates? What do you expect of them?

I am currently taking a break from national bridge but hope to be back playing in the autumn. Generally I tend to play teams with regular partners but I enjoy pairs with a variety of different partners. Recently I have played most major events on the Allfrey team; the post-mortems and inevitable ribbing that goes along with it all add to the enjoyment as well as being instructive. I think it is important to have supportive team-mates when inevitably I do something stupid.

What do you do for a living?

I work three days a week as Finance Director of a city Fund Management company and one day a week as Finance Director for a new startup PR company in Clapham as well as doing occasional consultancy work. I am very fortunate that everybody I work for is very flexible with my bridge demands.

What are your favourite bridge books?

I read a lot of bridge books and magazines, and I would say that the most useful and entertaining are reports of high class matches, especially those by Eric Kokish and Edgar Kaplan, and the World Championship books edited by Brian Senior. I also enjoy bridge humour and books that bring something new to bidding theory, from Norman Squire to Andrew Robson and Oliver Segal.

What are your hobbies?

I love to play most sports; I am a keen golfer, used to play five-a-side football until recently when I cracked a rib, and play badminton and tennis when I can fit it in. I enjoy watching most sports as well.

What do you like and what would you change in bridge?

I would start congresses earlier and play straight through with small breaks, maybe 11am to 7pm, then go out and eat and go through the hands. What I think is very good about the game is that there are so many different levels at which to compete: there is really something for everyone – from the pleasure my Mother gets from bidding and making a slam in a friendly competitive environment to winning the major competitions.

What's the bridge success (so far) closest to your heart?

I can't point to any one in particular. I suppose winning a close match when I have been behind is a great feeling, but I also enjoy the thrill my daughter gets when we win a local duplicate. I tend to remember my losses rather than my wins.