

**Crossruff
by Roger Lord**

Dealer: North

Vul: Both

	North		
	♠ A1084		
	♥ 5		
	♦ A7632		
	♣ AK6		
West		East	
♠ ---		♠ 7653	
♥ J64		♥ KQ1072	
♦ KQ985		♦ 104	
♣ Q8532		♣ 109	
	South		
	♠ KQJ92		
	♥ A983		
	♦ J		
	♣ J74		

North	East	South	West
1 Diamond	Pass	1 Spade	Pass
3 Spades	Pass	4 Hearts	Pass
4 Notrump	Pass	5 Spades	Pass
5 Notrump	Pass	6 Spades	All Pass

Contract: Six Spades

Opening Lead: Diamond King

Observe the auction conducted by a practiced pair. After North opened one diamond and South responded one spade, North jump-raised to three spades, non-forcing and invitational. South accepted via a control bid of four hearts, showing the heart ace plus extra values in a try for six spades. North held the other aces, but there was a hole in his trump holding. Four notrump asked for key cards; five spades confirmed two keycards (the heart ace and the trump king with spades as trumps) as well as the trump queen.

When North bid five notrump, not only was he asking for kings (outside of trump), but also he was guaranteeing that the partnership held all keycards. Furthermore, the bid invited South to bid a grand slam if South assessed his values to be greater than previously announced. Having no king and judging that he had described his hand sufficiently, South signed off at six spades. Incidentally, the pair's agreement was that South would show his cheapest king, not the number of kings he held—that is why six spades denied a king.

What would be your plan to make six spades with the lead of the king of diamonds?

Any combination of pulling trumps with or without trying to set up the diamond suit would fail. You need to crossruff, and you need trumps in both hands to do so. However, if you enact the ruffing part of the crossruff too soon, you will endanger a defensive ruff when you get around to cashing high cards. In this case, if you start ruffing prematurely, East will discard a club when dummy's third diamond is ruffed, and East eventually will be able to ruff dummy's second high club.

The best play for six spades is a standard crossruff maneuver—cash the “plain suit” top cards immediately. Win the diamond ace, cash the heart ace and the club ace and king, then proceed with the ruffing. Notice that after you manage to ruff one diamond and one heart with low trumps, the rest of your trumps are impervious to being overruffed. When you finish ruffing, you can count 12 tricks—four top tricks, four diamond ruffs, three heart ruffs, and the remaining high trump. You will graciously concede trick 13 to the defenders.