

Hearts then spades

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Partner opens 1NT showing 15-17 hcp and you hold this:

♠T954
♥Q
♦AQ963
♣J93

How do you propose to bid the hand?

Well, obviously the first step is to bid 2C Stayman, hoping that partner will show 4 spades (or 4+ if you open 1NT with a 5-card major and a balanced hand, which you should). However, partner rebids 2H. Now unless you are playing extended Stayman (which you shouldn't, because it ruins some constructive sequences, as well as "garbage" Stayman escape sequences) you don't know whether partner might also have 4 spades. What next?

You can show you have 4 spades and give partner the choice about what to do in one of two ways. If you bid 2S over partner's 2H, you are showing exactly 4 spades and an invitational hand. That might be appropriate for this hand with 9 hcp, because while ♥Q is probably useful given that partner has 4 hearts, you don't have extra playing strength if partner doesn't have 4 spades. After a 2S rebid by you, partner can look at her hand and decide what's best. Then again, if you're feeling optimistic, you can bid 3NT over 2H. This shows exactly 4 spades and a game-forcing hand without 4 hearts. How does partner know you have 4 spades on this auction? Because if you didn't have either major, why would you bother to bid 2C in the first place? You'd just bid 3NT directly ...

In fact 4S was indeed the best contract on this deal, from Wednesday 12 August:

BD: 7	♠AKJ8	Dlr: S
	♥A842	Vul: ALL
	♦T8	
	♣KQ7	
♠62		♠Q73
♥K9765		♥JT3
♦J		♦K7542
♣AT862		♣54
	♠T954	
	♥Q	
	♦AQ963	
	♣J93	

