

<p><b>1</b>    ♠ 1074 ♥ 984 ♦ 1096 ♣ AR97</p> <p>Dir: N Vul: None</p> <p>♠ 8652    ♠ AD9 ♥ RF532    ♥ 107 ♦ DF4    ♦ A873 ♣ D    ♣ F842</p> <p>7    ♠ RF3 9 11    ♥ AD6 13    ♦ R52 ♣ 10653</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 1 - - - - S 1 - - - 1 E - 1 2 2 - O - 1 2 1 -</p>	<p><b>2</b>    ♠ R53 ♥ D9863 ♦ RF ♣ AD3</p> <p>Dir: E Vul: N-S</p> <p>♠ 6    ♠ ADF942 ♥ A10    ♥ R74 ♦ A985432    ♦ 76 ♣ R95    ♣ 62</p> <p>15    ♠ 1087 11 10    ♥ F52 ♦ D10 ♣ R95    ♣ F10874</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - - - - 1 S - - - - - E - 4 - 2 3 O 1 4 - 2 4</p>	<p><b>3</b>    ♠ F10965 ♥ 87 ♦ 1075 ♣ 1075</p> <p>Dir: S Vul: E-W</p> <p>♠ A873    ♠ R42 ♥ F    ♥ AD65 ♦ R93    ♦ D842 ♣ RD984    ♣ 63</p> <p>1    ♠ D 13 11    ♥ R109432 15    ♦ AF6 ♣ AF2</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E 3 3 1 2 3 O 3 3 1 2 2</p>
<p><b>4</b>    ♠ RD98 ♥ 10765 ♦ AD97 ♣ R</p> <p>Dir: W Vul: Both</p> <p>♠ F10765    ♠ A32 ♥ AF2    ♥ RD4 ♦ F43    ♦ 108652 ♣ F5    ♣ 87</p> <p>14    ♠ 4 8 9    ♥ 983 9    ♦ R ♣ AD1096432</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 3 1 2 1 3 S 3 1 2 1 3 E - - - - - O - - - - -</p>	<p><b>5</b>    ♠ 87 ♥ A87 ♦ AR863 ♣ 843</p> <p>Dir: N Vul: N-S</p> <p>♠ D54    ♠ R1093 ♥ 6432    ♥ RD10 ♦ 9542    ♥ F ♣ R2    ♣ AD1065</p> <p>11    ♠ AF62 5 15    ♥ F95 9    ♦ D107 ♣ F97</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - 1 - - 1 S - 1 - - 1 E 3 - 1 2 - O 2 - 1 2 -</p>	<p><b>6</b>    ♠ A106 ♥ 73 ♦ AR986 ♣ 1093</p> <p>Dir: E Vul: E-W</p> <p>♠ RD4    ♠ 98 ♥ R10962    ♥ A854 ♦ 75    ♥ D3 ♣ F85    ♣ AD762</p> <p>11    ♠ F7532 9 12    ♥ DF 8    ♦ F1042 ♣ R4</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - 3 - 3 - S - 3 - 3 - E 3 - 3 - - O 3 - 3 - -</p>
<p><b>7</b>    ♠ R96 ♥ RD7 ♦ ARF103 ♣ 92</p> <p>Dir: S Vul: Both</p> <p>♠ 104    ♠ 832 ♥ 9842    ♥ F105 ♦ D72    ♥ 986 ♣ AR65    ♣ D1073</p> <p>16    ♠ ADF75 9 3    ♥ A63 12    ♦ 54 ♣ F84</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 2 5 3 5 3 S 2 5 3 5 3 E - - - - - O - - - - -</p>	<p><b>8</b>    ♠ A82 ♥ 965 ♦ 82 ♣ AD865</p> <p>Dir: W Vul: None</p> <p>♠ DF93    ♠ R1074 ♥ RD10874    ♥ A2 ♦ R    ♦ F1075 ♣ R10    ♣ F73</p> <p>10    ♠ 65 14 9    ♥ F3 7    ♦ AD9643 ♣ 942</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 2 1 - - - S 2 1 - - - E - - 3 1 O - - 3 3 1</p>	<p><b>9</b>    ♠ RF1073 ♥ AF6 ♦ R10 ♣ RD5</p> <p>Dir: N Vul: E-W</p> <p>♠ AD6    ♠ 854 ♥ R92    ♥ 1084 ♦ 87    ♥ A953 ♣ 109874    ♣ F32</p> <p>17    ♠ 92 9 5    ♥ D753 9    ♦ DF642 ♣ A6</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 2 5 4 4 4 S 2 5 4 4 4 E - - - - - O - - - - -</p>
<p><b>10</b>    ♠ A1096 ♥ AF86 ♦ A ♣ D843</p> <p>Dir: E Vul: Both</p> <p>♠ 75    ♠ 8432 ♥ 1052    ♥ ♦ F852    ♦ D10763 ♣ R765    ♣ A1092</p> <p>15    ♠ RDF 4 6    ♥ RD9743 15    ♦ R94 ♣ F</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 1 - 6 5 4 S 1 - 6 4 4 E - 2 - - - O - 2 - - -</p>	<p><b>11</b>    ♠ F5 ♥ RD10742 ♦ F3 ♣ DF7</p> <p>Dir: S Vul: None</p> <p>♠ D2    ♠ R873 ♥ F3    ♥ A85 ♦ AD7542    ♦ R10 ♣ A64    ♣ 9532</p> <p>10    ♠ A10964 13 10    ♥ 96 7    ♦ 986 ♣ R108</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - - 1 - - S - - 1 - - E 2 3 - 1 3 O 2 3 - 1 3</p>	<p><b>12</b>    ♠ F4 ♥ 1093 ♦ D432 ♣ 10742</p> <p>Dir: W Vul: N-S</p> <p>♠ AD872    ♠ 1093 ♥ RD75    ♥ A862 ♦ F6    ♥ AR10 ♣ A6    ♣ RDF</p> <p>3    ♠ R65 16 17    ♥ F4 4    ♦ 9875 ♣ 9853</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E 4 4 6 6 6 O 4 4 6 6 6</p>
<p><b>13</b>    ♠ RD6532 ♥ 4 ♦ AD5 ♣ R63</p> <p>Dir: N Vul: Both</p> <p>♠ 10    ♠ AF94 ♥ 72    ♥ AF1086 ♦ 1032    ♥ 974 ♣ DF109874    ♣ 5</p> <p>14    ♠ 87 3 10    ♥ RD953 13    ♦ RF86 ♣ A2</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - 4 2 4 3 S - 3 2 4 3 E 1 - - - - O 1 - - - -</p>	<p><b>14</b>    ♠ RDF1095 ♥ AD7 ♦ 5 ♣ F84</p> <p>Dir: E Vul: None</p> <p>♠ A84    ♠ 7 ♥ 94    ♥ 863 ♦ RD93    ♥ A87642 ♣ AR107    ♣ D62</p> <p>13    ♠ 632 16 6    ♥ RF1052 5    ♦ F10 ♣ 953</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - - - 2 - S - - - 2 - E 5 5 - 2 O 5 5 - 2</p>	<p><b>15</b>    ♠ D954 ♥ R8 ♦ 643 ♣ D1074</p> <p>Dir: S Vul: N-S</p> <p>♠ RF32    ♠ 1087 ♥ 976    ♥ A102 ♦ 10752    ♥ F ♣ F2    ♣ AR9863</p> <p>7    ♠ A6 5 12    ♥ DF543 16    ♦ ARD98 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - 3 3 1 2 S - 3 3 - 1 E 1 - - - - O 1 - - - -</p>
<p><b>16</b>    ♠ 104 ♥ 10983 ♦ D105 ♣ D753</p> <p>Dir: W Vul: E-W</p> <p>♠ F97    ♠ RD83 ♥ DF2    ♥ AR6 ♦ AF8    ♥ R4 ♣ A1042    ♣ RF96</p> <p>4    ♠ A652 13 19    ♥ 754 4    ♦ 97632 ♣ 8</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E 6 3 5 6 6 O 6 3 5 6 6</p>	<p><b>17</b>    ♠ RD93 ♥ D10 ♦ R86 ♣ F1065</p> <p>Dir: N Vul: None</p> <p>♠ 872    ♠ A1065 ♥ R9    ♥ 863 ♦ F532    ♥ A107 ♣ D832    ♣ A74</p> <p>11    ♠ F4 6 12    ♥ AF7542 11    ♦ D94 ♣ R9</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N 1 1 3 1 2 S 1 1 3 1 2 E - - - - - O - - - - -</p>	<p><b>18</b>    ♠ 62 ♥ A42 ♦ ARD1082 ♣ 93</p> <p>Dir: E Vul: N-S</p> <p>♠ R73    ♠ AD1054 ♥ 86    ♥ RDF73 ♦ F43    ♥ 96 ♣ ARF54    ♣ 7</p> <p>13    ♠ F98 12 12    ♥ 1095 3    ♦ 75 ♣ D10862</p> <p>♠ ♣ ♥ ♦ SA N - 1 - - - S - 1 - - - E 2 - 3 3 - O 2 - 3 3 -</p>

RECAP: N-S-E-W Avg HCP:9.83-10.25-9.97-9.95 Bal:20-16-19-21 Voids:2-2-1-1 Singles:9-12-13-11 7+Suit:2-4-0-2

<p><b>19</b>    ♠ D1097    <i>Dir: S</i> ♥ R6            <i>Vul: E-W</i> ♦ AR ♣ F10843</p> <p>♠ R543    ♠ A62 ♥ D73     ♥ A105 ♦ D642    ♥ F95 ♣ 92       ♣ AR75</p> <p>13    ♠ F8 7    16    ♥ F9842 4       ♦ 10873          ♣ D6</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E 1 2 1 1 2 O 1 2 1 1 2</p>	<p><b>20</b>    ♠ 74            <i>Dir: W</i> ♥ ARD2        <i>Vul: Both</i> ♦ F4 ♣ F9432</p> <p>♠ D9653    ♠ RF108 ♥ 976       ♥ F84 ♦ 87         ♦ R1052 ♣ R85       ♣ 76</p> <p>11    ♠ A2 5    8    ♥ 1053 16    ♦ AD963       ♣ AD10</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 5 5 6 1 3 S 5 5 6 1 3 E - - - - - O - - - - -</p>	<p><b>21</b>    ♠ 972            <i>Dir: N</i> ♥ 1084         <i>Vul: N-S</i> ♦ RF953 ♣ 106</p> <p>♠ DF5        ♠ R103 ♥ 765        ♥ A932 ♦ A102       ♦ 874 ♣ F974       ♣ AR5</p> <p>4    ♠ A864 8    14    ♥ RDF 14    ♦ D6       ♣ D832</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - 1 - - - S - 1 - - - E 1 - 2 1 1 O 1 - 2 1 1</p>
<p><b>22</b>    ♠ D3            <i>Dir: E</i> ♥ 1074         <i>Vul: E-W</i> ♦ AR65 ♣ R765</p> <p>♠ 862        ♠ AF1094 ♥ ADF9       ♥ R85 ♦ D974       ♥ F1032 ♣ 108        ♣ F</p> <p>12    ♠ R75 9    10    ♥ 632 9       ♦ 8       ♣ AD9432</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 3 - - - 2 S 3 - - - 2 E - 2 1 1 - O - 2 1 1 -</p>	<p><b>23</b>    ♠ A9            <i>Dir: S</i> ♥ R9843        <i>Vul: Both</i> ♦ D10872 ♣ 10</p> <p>♠ 853        ♠ RD7642 ♥ DF752     ♥ A ♦ 6           ♥ R543 ♣ A432       ♣ F5</p> <p>9    ♠ F10 7    13    ♥ 106 11    ♦ AF9       ♣ RD9876</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 1 3 - - - S 1 3 - - - E - - - 3 - O - - - 3 -</p>	<p><b>24</b>    ♠ RD107632    <i>Dir: W</i> ♥ RD10         <i>Vul: None</i> ♦ R5 ♣ 7</p> <p>♠ F9            ♠ 854 ♥ F             ♥ 963 ♦ DF1097       ♦ A632 ♣ RD1085       ♣ F42</p> <p>13    ♠ A 10    5    ♥ A87542 12    ♦ 84       ♣ A963</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - 6 6 6 S - - 5 5 2 E 1 1 - - - O 1 1 - - -</p>
<p><b>25</b>    ♠ DF10         <i>Dir: N</i> ♥ D873         <i>Vul: E-W</i> ♦ AR9 ♣ F72</p> <p>♠ 8753        ♠ A9642 ♥ F62         ♥ AR10 ♦ DF108       ♥ 7632 ♣ D10        ♣ 4</p> <p>13    ♠ R 6    11    ♥ 954 10    ♦ 54       ♣ AR98653</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 4 - 2 - 4 S 3 - 2 - 3 E - 2 - 1 - O - 2 - 1 -</p>	<p><b>26</b>    ♠ A             <i>Dir: E</i> ♥ F953         <i>Vul: Both</i> ♦ ARF765 ♣ 93</p> <p>♠ R1032       ♠ DF9874 ♥ 102         ♥ D6 ♦ 842         ♦ 93 ♣ AR86       ♣ 752</p> <p>13    ♠ 65 10    5    ♥ AR874 12    ♦ D10       ♣ DF104</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 3 5 5 - 5 S 3 5 5 - 5 E - - 1 - - O - - 1 - -</p>	<p><b>27</b>    ♠ 1084            <i>Dir: S</i> ♥ 92             <i>Vul: None</i> ♦ 765 ♣ R9754</p> <p>♠ AR973        ♠ DF2 ♥               ♥ 1087653 ♦ RD432        ♦ AF ♣ A108         ♣ D2</p> <p>3    ♠ 65 16    10    ♥ ARDF4 11    ♦ 1098       ♣ F63</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E 3 6 2 6 3 O 3 6 2 6 3</p>
<p><b>28</b>    ♠ AD            <i>Dir: W</i> ♥ 974            <i>Vul: N-S</i> ♦ D10943 ♣ 1064</p> <p>♠ 8            ♠ 1052 ♥ RF3         ♥ 10652 ♦ A752        ♥ RF86 ♣ RD952     ♣ F3</p> <p>8    ♠ RF97643 13    5    ♥ AD8 14    ♦       ♣ A87</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - - 3 3 S - - - 3 3 E 1 3 1 - - O 1 3 1 - -</p>	<p><b>29</b>    ♠ 10962         <i>Dir: N</i> ♥ D83            <i>Vul: Both</i> ♦ 108 ♣ AF87</p> <p>♠ AD8         ♠ F43 ♥ A97         ♥ RF654 ♦ A64         ♦ 975 ♣ R1063       ♣ 42</p> <p>7    ♠ R75 17    5    ♥ 102 11    ♦ RDF32       ♣ D95</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E - - 3 1 3 O - - 3 1 3</p>	<p><b>30</b>    ♠ F10983        <i>Dir: E</i> ♥ RF853         <i>Vul: None</i> ♦ ♣ F95</p> <p>♠ RD74        ♠ 52 ♥ 102         ♥ A94 ♦ 9876        ♦ AR1042 ♣ 1043        ♣ A87</p> <p>6    ♠ A6 5    15    ♥ D76 14    ♦ DF53       ♣ RD62</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 1 - 3 1 1 S 1 - 3 2 1 E - 1 - - - O - 1 - - -</p>
<p><b>31</b>    ♠ F108         <i>Dir: S</i> ♥ D986532     <i>Vul: N-S</i> ♦ 6 ♣ A6</p> <p>♠ AD754       ♠ 3 ♥ R            ♥ AF1074 ♦ 752         ♥ AR10843 ♣ RD74       ♣ 8</p> <p>7    ♠ R962 14    12    ♥ DF9 7       ♦ F109532       ♣</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E - 5 3 2 4 O - 4 3 2 4</p>	<p><b>32</b>    ♠ 83            <i>Dir: W</i> ♥ F7            <i>Vul: E-W</i> ♦ D43 ♣ D108653</p> <p>♠ A952        ♠ RDF1064 ♥ R32         ♥ D ♦ 1052        ♥ F87 ♣ AR9         ♣ F42</p> <p>5    ♠ 7 14    10    ♥ A1098654 11    ♦ AR96       ♣ 7</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 1 3 4 - - S 1 3 4 - - E - - 3 2 O - - 3 2</p>	<p><b>33</b>    ♠ ARD9         <i>Dir: N</i> ♥ D63            <i>Vul: None</i> ♦ F106 ♣ F73</p> <p>♠ F            ♠ 76432 ♥ AF974       ♥ 1052 ♦ D753        ♥ R ♣ D105        ♣ R986</p> <p>13    ♠ 1085 10    6    ♥ R8 11    ♦ A9842       ♣ A42</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 1 3 - 2 2 S 1 3 - 2 3 E - 2 - - - O - 2 - - -</p>
<p><b>34</b>    ♠ D83            <i>Dir: E</i> ♥ D87            <i>Vul: N-S</i> ♦ 975 ♣ RD76</p> <p>♠ AR762       ♠ 105 ♥ AR         ♥ F10652 ♦ A82        ♥ RD10 ♣ F98        ♣ A53</p> <p>9    ♠ F94 19    10    ♥ 943 2       ♦ F643       ♣ 1042</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - - - - - S - - - - - E 4 4 5 5 5 O 4 4 5 5 5</p>	<p><b>35</b>    ♠ A10764        <i>Dir: S</i> ♥ 7              <i>Vul: E-W</i> ♦ F43 ♣ 8652</p> <p>♠ D3            ♠ R852 ♥ R10983     ♥ F42 ♦ A1087       ♥ 962 ♣ F4           ♣ 1097</p> <p>5    ♠ F9 10    4    ♥ AD65 21    ♦ RD5       ♣ ARD3</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N 4 2 1 4 3 S 4 2 1 4 3 E - - - - - O - - - - -</p>	<p><b>36</b>    ♠ F863            <i>Dir: W</i> ♥ AD9632        <i>Vul: Both</i> ♦ ♣ A63</p> <p>♠ D10752       ♠ AR4 ♥ 87            ♥ F ♦ 5             ♥ F109743 ♣ F10982       ♣ D54</p> <p>11    ♠ 9 3    11    ♥ R1054 15    ♦ ARD862       ♣ R7</p> <p>♣♦♥♠SA N - 3 6 - 4 S - 3 6 - 4 E 1 - - - - O 1 - - - -</p>

### Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

With the high cards evenly divided and no imposing trump fit, it's no surprise that taking as many as eight tricks will be a challenge for both sides.

If East opens his indifferent balanced 11-count, he will often silence South and E/W will buy the contract at INT, or perhaps 2♥ when West rebids or transfers to his long suit. Where East has opened 1♦ or INT, South will lead a club, and in practice might do so even where East opened 1♣. Although the hearts lie very well for East in INT, the entry position is tenuous. In theory the defense should come to three clubs, two spades, a heart and a diamond even if declarer judges exceptionally well to win the second round of clubs with the jack (where possible) to lead the ♥10. However, it's easy to see that both sides could lose one of its winners without doing anything terrible, and there will be some E/W +90s to go with the -50s.

Some South players will not consider their dull pattern sufficient warning to keep them out of the auction and they will double a minor-suit opening, which will get them to INT or 2♣ by North, both due to fail. Where East's opening bid was 1♦, West might compete to 2♦ rather than sell out cheaply, but that will turn a small plus into a small minus.

For a modest number of players, the East hand is appropriate for a INT opening, which a similarly modest number of South might double; E/W will find a way to 2♥, or perhaps to 2♠ (where West shows both majors wholesale). The play in hearts should go well for declarer, leading to +110. 2♠, almost always declared by East, is less comfortable than 2♥, but will usually lead to the same +110 and a strong matchpoint result. There might even be a few E/W pairs in two of a major doubled, with their +470s standing out on the frequency sheets.

If East does not open, South might open a weak notrump and play there, making one or two (on a

normal heart lead); +90 will be good, +120 superb. Or a hyper-aggressive West might compete over INT and finish +110. Or East, having limited his hand by passing originally, might see his glass as more than half full and reopen with a double, which will lead to +110, +50 or +100 against 2♣ (doubled), -180, or -280 against INT doubled.

That's a lot of possibilities for an apparently unsexy opening number, but plus scores should be decent for both sides and anything more substantial than +100 should score very satisfactorily.

### Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

With a lot of luck and perhaps some good guessing, E/W can make 3NT with their combined 21 HCP. Where East opens 1♠, West, looking at a hand we surely open, will usually force to game. The bidding might proceed: 1♠-2♦; 2♠-3♦; 3♠-3NT/, where 2♦ is game-forcing; or 1♠-2♦; 2♠-2NT or 3♣ (where 3♦ would be merely invitational); 3♠-3NT /. However, with prime values and the likelihood that diamonds are not going to run, West might raise to 4♣ when East bids his suit three times.

West's who content themselves with an invitational sequence, a very reasonable strategy in a fairly light opening-bid style in general but especially at Pairs scoring, will usually convince East to pass 3♦. Some of those conservative Wests will be forced by system to respond INT (forcing) to 1♠, which might bring North into the auction with an imperfect takeout double or an atypical 2♥ overcall. East will probably rebid 2♣ freely, then pass if West converts to 3♦. If West reads more into that voluntary 2♣, however, he will drive to game, and does best to choose notrump, the only one that can't be defeated legitimately.

If East opens a heavy weak 2♠, West will pass unless he has a nonforcing 3♦ available, and North will reopen with a double, 3♥, or a natural 2NT. Double will lead to West introducing his diamonds over N/S's 3♣; 3♥ might end the

auction, but West might well double for penalty rather than pass or take a stab at 4♦, and perfect defense holds heart contracts to six tricks (club lead, eventually leading to a club ruff); although West might pass out 2NT, it's more likely that he will double or bid 3♦, and if he doubles, South might not run to 3♣, which might convince West to bid 3♦ rather than double (the more lucrative decision this time).

Although most Easts will open, some will pass because they do not believe their hand appropriate for a one-bid or a favourable-vulnerability two-bid. At these tables, North will generally overcall 1♦ with 1♥, and East will bid spades twice if he can't jump to 2♣ to show the character of his hand. 2♠ might buy the contract at some of these tables.

If E/W reach 3NT, West will usually declare on a heart lead. If declarer plays North for the ♠K, he will take at least 10 tricks by leading the first diamond from dummy and ducking unless South plays the queen. If he leads the first diamond from hand or plays the ♦A, North can get out of South's way in both cases, forcing declarer to do the right thing (playing low) when the ♣J is led. Although the play is a bit awkward -- entries and the spade finesse are important issues -- it's hard to imagine West going down in 3NT.

Assuming that North leads a heart against a diamond contract, declarer can't quite get home with 11 tricks even if he wins in hand, takes the spade finesse, and ruffs the suit good. However, when he continues with the ♦A, North must be prepared to unblock the ♦K; if he does not, declarer clears trumps with the ♥K as the entry to spade winners -- North will have to cash the ♣A to hold declarer to 11 tricks.

Although it might seem that spade contracts can produce nine tricks, the defense can get around to hearts before or after taking two club tricks; now if declarer ruffs a heart in dummy the defense will promote the ♠10, and if declarer clears trumps or ducks a diamond, the defense plays a second heart to secure a third-round winner there.

Where N/S buy a doubled contract (2NT, 3♥ or 3♣) they will more often go down 500 than 200 or 800, but even if they escape a penalty double and manage to concede only -100 they may score badly if there are enough E/W pairs going down in 4♠ or 5♦ or perhaps in 3♠.

Again, there are so many different things that might happen on this one and it's not clear that clean results like +130 in diamonds and +110 in spades will yield an adequate return.

### Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

West will double South's 1♥ opening for takeout and East will choose between a minimum 2NT and a heavy INT. As East could have a bit more, West, with a decent five-card suit, some help in hearts and sharp cards, will probably raise 2NT to three. Where East contents himself with INT, South might try 2♥. West would like to take some action, but technically he's not quite strong enough for a second double, and 2NT might easily turn a small plus into a minus. If West passes, East will choose from among pass, double, and 2NT (though 3♦ could be best, it's not what his hand suggests).

Unless West leads a diamond against 2♥, the defense should be able to limit declarer to six tricks, and E/W will probably have to double to achieve any kind of score, but +300 might not be over average as many of the pairs in the popular 3NT will probably be successful.

South will normally lead a low or middle heart against East's notrump contract. Declarer lets dummy's jack hold and calls for the ♣K, which South can't afford to duck lest declarer cross to the SK to lead towards the CQ. Assuming that declarer has not played a spade, South exits safely with the ♠Q, but declarer wins with the king to play a second club; if South follows low, declarer plays ♣Q and another, forcing South to play a red suit to his great chagrin, so South must play the ♣J, a counterintuitive choice; declarer ducks, so South can exit with his remaining club; declarer can win, and continue with either the ♦K or the ♦9 (intending to pass it if not covered). South has no good answer in either case as declarer will be able to build two diamond tricks and South won't be able to get his hearts going. However, to reach this end position declarer can't afford to cash the ♠A as that would in effect force him to cash the clubs and pressure his own hand, which would force him to release a diamond and a heart and provide South with a solution regardless of whether declarer then called for the ♦K or passed the ♦9.

Although it might seem that South does better to lead the ♥K on the go, that doesn't help though it smother's dummy's jack: declarer wins and can lead clubs twice toward dummy to develop four tricks there, and will have time for a diamond and a second heart or two diamonds; indeed, South must be careful not to allow an overtrick in that variation.

When declarer leads toward dummy's clubs, South might try the effect of putting in the jack, which might once in a long while induce declarer to continue with a high or low club from dummy, neither of which succeeds as North can gain the lead to the defense's advantage.

As both the defense and declarer play can be quite complex, the notrump contracts will produce eight, nine or ten tricks, and -100, +120, +150, +180, +600 and +630, with the fate of those E/W +300s will turn on the frequency of those results.

#### Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

With the ♣J doubleton and E/W entitled to only three heart tricks, any N/S pair opting to shoot out 3NT will take at least nine tricks for a very good score. 5♣ will not fare as well unless the defenders lead a diamond (a club kills the fast entry to the North hand while diamonds are blocked), which is unlikely whether or not N/S has bid diamonds.

The fate of this deal turns on whether South forces to game after North opens the bidding or whether North takes a shot at 3NT if South chooses an invitational sequence ending at 3NT. A third possibility is that South commits to 4♣ or 5♣ himself, but that won't happen nearly as often.

As there is no technically correct sequence with these N/S cards, predicting whether 3NT or 3♣ will be more common is just a guess, but I'm inclined to believe that 3NT will be the plurality choice, with 3♣ next, followed by 5♣ and then 4♣.

The bidding might be of some interest as North could open the bidding in any of the five strains,

depending on system and inclination. Where North opens in a suit, he will have to find a rebid when South responds 2♣ and that too will cover several possibilities, including 2♦ by some who opened 1♦. Such is life in the real world, where 1♦-2♣ is a potentially awkward start for many five-card major systems. Where North rebids 2NT over 2♣, many Souths will raise hopefully to 3NT, the form of scoring influencing their choice more than their two singletons. Others will rebid 3♣ whether forcing (where the 2♣ response forced to game) or merely invitational but some will jump to 5♣.

The defense must cash three hearts and the ♠A to hold 3NT to nine tricks, and should manage that most of the time unless North has bid hearts and not diamonds; even then, East might lead the ♠A to retain the lead and better judge how to cash out.

There will be plenty of +600s for N/S, mostly in 3NT, some +630s, and the odd +660. Club contracts will produce +110, +130, +150, -100 and -200, and there will be opportunities for both sides to improve their score with a good decision in the bidding or defense.

#### Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

The bidding will often begin: 1♦-Double-1♠-Pass; 1NT-Pass-Pass. If West goes quietly, North should be able to untangle his five diamond tricks (low towards the Q10, or ace first, unblocking the ten when East follows with the jack, anticipating a third round finesse against West's guarded nine) to go with two aces for +90, and might occasionally manage an extra trick if East stays off clubs and lets declarer make a second trick in one of the majors.

However, although West doesn't have much, what he has is pretty good – two honors in partner's suits and a four-card suit in which he expects to find support. 2♥ might be cold, but if it's down one and is not doubled, it will be a good score if N/S were making 1NT, and if 2♥ is doubled and set,

perhaps -100 would be a good sacrifice against -120 or -110. 2♥ is not without risk, but it's the sort of enterprising action that characterizes pairs tournaments. It's hardly obvious for South to take further action when 2♥ comes around to him, but as he expected North to make INT and West's 2♥ is unlikely to be a universal action, South should not expect to score well if 2♥ is making, so taking some action to protect his likely equity of +90 or +120 is the indicated strategy. If South feels that 2♥ is more likely to fail, he ought to double, and if he likes West's chances in 2♥, he ought to try 2NT, hoping -50 or -100 will save some matchpoints against the -110 at 2♥. The main point is that the mathematics of such situations dictates backing one's judgment to try to improve what is expected to be a poor result for doing nothing.

Against a heart contract the defense should hold declarer to seven tricks by playing on diamonds or spades, but if North leads a trump – often best on this type of auction where the defenders need to protect their high cards from being ruffed away – declarer can come to eight winners whether North had started with a low trump or the ace, and bask in the glow of his +470.

If North opens INT, East might double and silence everyone, leading to N/S +180. Or North might escape to 2♦, which will suit South nicely whether or not E/W double it or pass it out. However, if East does not break hearts and the defense does not mess up the spade suit, E/W will finish +100 or +200 rather than -180 (in a different way). E/W might wriggle into 2♥, 2♠, or even 3♣. We've talked about what might happen in 2♥, but the equally precarious 2♠ is rather more likely to succeed .

Although bringing home 3♣ appears to be a tall order, the play might be fascinating if declarer reaches a position where South has been stripped of diamonds and clubs and has been reduced to the ♥J (a winner) and A62 of spades while East has a heart and K93 of spades, dummy the 54 of spades and two low hearts. Declarer leads the ♠K. If South wins and cashes the ♥J, the ♠2 lets declarer win dummy's five to cash the long heart, and if South exits with the ♠6 to smother dummy's five, declarer wins the ♠9 and at trick 13 takes South's ♠2 with his ♠3! If instead South ducks the ♠K, declarer exits in hearts and scores his ♠9 in the end.

It is not a sin to pass the North hand at unfavorable vulnerability despite its three quick tricks, but this will be a minority decision across the field.

If North passes, and passes again when West responds in a red suit to 1♣, E/W will probably come to rest at 1♠ and present North with a final opportunity to join the battle. Protecting with INT will work better than 2♦ if both bids were to end the auction, but it's quite possible that East will bid again, especially where West responded 1♥ to 1♣, and again, final contracts will include 2♥, 2♠, 2♣, and 3♣, E/W and 2♦, N/S, some of them doubled.

For a deal with the high cards divided evenly with no big fit for either side, it's not surprising that there will be so many different contracts and, as is usually the case on this type of deal, minus scores figure to score poorly, especially minus 100 or more.

**Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.**

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

The South hand has a poor main suit, very few honors that are in any case poorly located, and virtually no redeeming features. So why will so many South players overcall 1♣ with 1♠? Because too many have read that it's a bidder's game and that favorable vulnerability covers most sins, especially when your side owns the spade suit. Yes, a 1♠ overcall is an unsound, extreme action, but it's a jungle out there and you should not be surprised by its appearance at a number of tables in your club. On a deal where both sides can take nine tricks in either their eight- or nine-card fit, there is a premium for going plus and it might be almost as good to concede only 50 or 100 points.

Say that South resists temptation and passes East's 1♣. Over West's 1♥, North will overcall 2♦ or pass. In either case, East will raise to 2♥. Where North has overcalled, South will choose between 3♦ and 4♦. 2♠ is the sort of bid that will cause partner to wonder why you did not overcall 1♠ or a weak 2♠ over 1♣; indeed, North might conclude that 2♠ shows values in spades and a diamond fit rather than a long weak suit. West will compete to 3♥ over 3♦ but will have a real problem over 4♦ as he expected to make 3♥

but can hardly underwrite a set of 4♦ – should he double or pass? This time the winning decision would be to double. We can see that declarer can hold his losers to two hearts, a club, and a spade, but in real life declarer might lose to the ♦Q, or, if he guesses diamonds, might eliminate trumps, hearts and clubs and play ♠A, spade, succeeding when the honors are split or when either opponents started with a singleton honor or two honors doubleton. The difference between -50 and -100 might not be great when many will be conceding 140, but -300 will be a disaster.

Where North has not overcalled 2♦, he is likely to reopen 2♥ with a double, but when South's 2♠ reply pushes West to 3♥, it's hardly obvious for South to take the push to 3♠ as that might swell undo the good that North achieved by protecting a round earlier.

Realistically, the main chance for N/S to compete effectively in spades is for South to make that disgusting 1♠ overcall. Whether West tries INT, 2♥, or a negative double, his side is going to find its heart fit if North doesn't take up a fair amount of bidding space. North will surely like his hand after a 1♠ overcall, and might commit to game, but even if he does and someone finds a double, South is almost sure to get the trumps and diamonds right for -100, which might not be all that much worse than +140, as few pairs will find their spade fit.

Perhaps this discussion of 1♠ should be rated PG and parents should use their discretion in showing this page to their impressionable offspring.

**Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.**

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

Whether South opens 1♠ or passes initially, N/S should nearly always reach 4♠ rather than 3NT. If they happen to reach the five level, trying for slam, they will generally reveal the absence of club control, so the defenders will take their two club tricks but nothing else.

There are a few potential outliers, however. If

South passes as dealer, North might declare 4♠ after a transfer sequence like: Pass-INT; 2♥-2♠; 3NT-4♠ /, and East, with a blind lead, might well start with the ♥J, combining relative safety with the possibility of catching West with a useful combining honor. Now declarer can establish diamonds with a ruff for 12 tricks, but could instead take the losing ruffing finesse in the suit for 11 tricks or a straight finesse for all 13 tricks. I'd bet on 12. It's also not outrageous for East to lead the ♦9 to concede a horrific -710.

The other anomaly might occur when South opens a weak notrump and North raises to 3NT. If West leads a club and the defense does not change tack, N/S will not enjoy their score for +600. If West does not lead a club – hearts will have some appeal, with potential entries in the minors to cash a long winner or two-- N/S will chalk up +720 with the aid of the diamond finesse (best to take it on the first round in case West started with queen-fourth). Given the diamonds in dummy, West won't switch at trick two if he leads a high club.

Of course, the highly popular N/S +650 could turn out be virtually dead average, but it will be interesting to see how many of the other scenarios materialize. Here's hoping you don't need consoling in the post mortem for your unlucky choice of opening lead or systemic auction.

**Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.**

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

Perhaps a handful of aggressive North players will overcall 1♥ with 2♠, which will probably convince South to bid 2♦ over East's negative double. West started out with a good supporting hand for spades but as all of his minor-suit honors may prove worthless and his hearts might be facing shortness, bidding more than 2♠ would be injudicious. Now, when South competes to 3♣, West might compete to 3♠ on the basis of his six-four distribution, but he will surely have his reservations because of his defensive values

in the minors. If West passes 3♣ East is likely to reopen with 3♠, arriving at the “normal” contract in a more exciting way.

Where the bidding starts: 1♥-pass-1♠, some Souths will risk an unsound 2♦ or a weak jump overcall of 3♦. West will raise comfortably to 2♣ over 2♦, and although 3♣ over 3♦ will be far less comfortable, it figures to be a 90% choice at the table, as no one likes to pass with primary support. The corollary, often overlooked, is that when opener has a normal value raise to 3♣, he will have to bid game to give the competitive raise a functional range. Here, for example, East has a routine 4♠ bid if 3♣ is anywhere near a full-value raise. It’s the possibility of setting problems like this for the opponents that makes bids like a 3♦ overcall worthy of consideration.

Should both North and South pass on the first round, South will often protect with 3♦ when West raises 1♠ to 2♠. Although E/W can double 3♦ for +300 and a top, West is likely to take the push to 3♣ (or 3♥) and save N/S from their disaster.

As East will nearly always be declarer, the defense will generally have no trouble cashing a diamond and two clubs and the most common results will be E/W +140 (3♣ making) and -50 (4♣ down one), and there will be a few -100s when North gambles on a penalty double of 4♣, hoping South can contribute a trick or two to the defense after his overcall in diamonds.

Perhaps it’s a stretch of the imagination to project a few E/W +530’s when North doubles 3♣, but it’s a worldwide field and no one knows what evil lurks in the hearts of “men.”

**Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

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

Nearly every N/S pair will find a route to 3NT, the most common sequence being: 1♠-1NT; 2NT-3NT/. Where North opens 1NT, South will use his favorite version of Stayman and either commit to game or invite, and North will always accept.

West will lead a club, which declarer will win

in dummy to lead the ♦K. East can take it and return a club while the diamonds are blocked, but declarer can win and play on spades for four tricks, overtaking the ♦10 to cash another diamond winner to play a second spade; he will lose a heart in the end for +430.

If East ducks the first diamond, he will probably duck the second also. If declarer does not overtake, he can come to 10 tricks in two different ways: either by leading the ♥J from dummy or by playing on spades; if West takes the ♥K declarer has two entries to develop four spade tricks, and if West ducks the ♥K, declarer simply concedes two spade tricks and loses a heart in the end; if declarer stays off hearts and plays a spade at trick four, he leads a heart to the jack when in hand with the ♣A, and concedes another spade – West is cut off from East’s ♦A but gets a heart in the end.

As it happens, the intuitive play of ducking the second diamond could lead to declarer taking an eleventh trick by overtaking to lead the ♠9: West has no good answer and declarer can take four spades, three clubs, two diamonds, and two hearts (after conceding one) – East loses his wretched ♦A.

Curiously, if East takes the second diamond to return a club, declarer might have to guess that the run of the diamonds squeezes West and discard accordingly from the North hand to avoid losing three additional tricks (two spades and a heart).

Although it might seem that North would gain a valuable tempo where he declares 3NT on a diamond lead from East, but as long as East takes the second diamond and switches to a heart or a club, declarer will not be able to avoid losing two major-suit tricks. Ducking the second diamond allows an eleventh trick if declarer overtakes and plays as described above, leading the ♠9 and using his club entry to neutralize West’s ♠Q; he can concede a heart, but East will go to bed with his ♦A.

N/S +430 will be the most common score, and those who manage 11 tricks will be well rewarded for that extra winner. Although we can see that declarer can come to 10 tricks in a variety of ways, it’s not inconceivable to negotiate only nine without doing something ridiculous, but +400 will score terribly.

There is no reason for N/S to finish in 4♣ or 4♥ or to get beyond 3NT or miss game.

**Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.**



<p>♠ 75 ♥ 1052 ♦ J852 ♣ K765</p>	<p>♠ A1096 ♥ AJ86 ♦ A ♣ Q843</p>	<p>♠ 8432 ♥ — ♦ Q10763 ♣ A1092</p>
	<p>♠ KQJ ♥ KQ9743 ♦ K94 ♣ J</p>	

Both North and South have good hands, and the heart fit should be established early in the auction, either via a conventional forcing raise or a splinter bid, not an attractive choice with a singleton ace as it could make it difficult for partner to value honors in the short suit. Indeed, South would prefer to have three low diamonds and his king elsewhere, but once he learns of the big heart fit, he might well resort to Blackwood, as North will have at least two aces for his strong response, so 4♦ is likely to do the partnership no harm this time.

Where North instead uses a customized game-forcing raise like 2NT or 3♣, South will usually have a method to show his club shortness and extra values, and North will cooperate with any slam-try plan. Some might try Blackwood, but with so many missing fillers it would usually be judicious to express interest in slam and allow South to take charge, which would usually happen on this combination.

If North for systemic or personal reasons rejects those two options, it will usually work better to respond 2♣ than 1♠, assuming North can support hearts at his second turn in forcing mode. For example, where a two over one response is either game-forcing or nearly so (responder's same-suit rebid the only exception): 1♥-2♣; 2♥-3♥. Whether South elects to show his controls by initiating a cue-bidding campaign or prefers to use Blackwood, slam will be reached easily enough.

As few pairs will stop short of slam the main point of interest will be West's choice of opening lead. Players who believe in aggressive leads against suit slams will look no further than the club suit this time, and may not be dissuaded by a natural club bid by North. Where North advertizes diamond shortness and has not implied a source of tricks, West might lead a trump to combine safety with the possibility of cutting down ruffs in dummy. A spade lead will generally have little appeal, but some might try a diamond lest declarer have a long card in a black suit that provides a discard

for dummy's singleton diamond. As only a club lead holds N/S to 12 tricks in hearts, and different auctions might point to different leads, there will be some +1460's to go with the longer row of +1430s. Plus 710 will be only marginally better than +680.

It's possible that N/S might consider it a good idea to try 6NT, a contract that E/W can defeat with a club lead. Without a club lead, there are only 12 tricks available, but +1440 will beat all the +1430s, which hardly seems fair!

**Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.**

<p>♠ Q2 ♥ J3 ♦ A Q 7 5 4 2 ♣ A 6 4</p>	<p>♠ J5 ♥ K Q 10 7 4 2 ♦ J3 ♣ Q J 7</p>	<p>♠ K 8 7 3 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ K 10 ♣ 9 5 3 2</p>
	<p>♠ A 10 9 6 4 ♥ 9 6 ♦ 9 8 6 ♣ K 10 8</p>	

North might overcall 1♦ with 1♥, but after his partner has passed as dealer, a weak jump overcall of 2♥ has more going for it. This time, East has an easy negative double, and will probably pass West's 3♦ rebid. South might reopen with 3♥ when 3♦ comes around to him although that action is far from clear-cut. 3♥ will surely be doubled by East, who expected to make 3♦ and has some equity to protect. If South risks 3♥ directly over the negative double, however, West will pass, and East's reopening double will be more cooperative; West might take it out to 4♦, which would turn a potentially significant plus into a small minus.

E/W can make 3NT because ducking one round of hearts neutralizes North's source of tricks, and there is time to establish a spade winner for declarer's ninth trick, but getting to game will take some aggressive bidding if N/S are active in the auction.

If North overcalls (only) 1♥, the bidding might continue: Double-1♠; 2♦-Pass-2NT-Pass, and West might raise to game because of his fast side trick and potential fillers in the majors – imagine East with both major-suit tens, for example.

E/W pairs who double 3♥ must defend accurately to secure a 300-point set and a good score, as one down will lose to all the 110s in diamonds. The key to the defense is building a spade trick early, before playing a second round of diamonds. Say that East leads the ♦K; what should West

play? One possibility is to overtake, but with a sure entry in clubs that seems too busy. Where their hand has shown a long suit, a practical signaling method is to treat high and low spots as suit preference and middle cards as neutral (encouraging or able to stand a switch to either side suit). The question facing West using this scheme is whether he would need the ♠K to send a neutral message about the black suits. Of course, even if West were to play (say) the ♦4, there is no guarantee that East would be able to read that as neutral with a bias towards clubs, and playing the more legible (as neutral) ♦5 might be overstating the spade holding. To that extent, East is on his own and might not always appreciate that promoting the ♥8 is integral to a successful defense. If East switches to a spade, or if he switches to a club and West wins to switch to an essential low spade, there will be time for E/W to cash their spade trick before reverting to diamonds. Declarer can neither ruff low nor high (East discards and West covers the ♥9 if it comes to that) to shut out the ♥8. If the defenders instead play three rounds of diamonds early, declarer discards a spade on the third and can avoid the trump promotion.

It's interesting to look at the position that develops after ♦K, club to the ace, shift to the ♣Q: declarer takes the ♠A and plays a second diamond himself; the defenders' spade winner lies with East and West can't both cash it and reclaim the lead to play the third diamond, so when he resorts to continuing diamonds, declarer discards his spade loser to kill the trump promotion.

**Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

With 33 combined HCP and no long suits, E/W would like to be in 6NT, but if they find their four-four heart fit or consider their five-three spade fit, they might finish in one of those strains and lose to all the pairs in notrump on a deal where there are 12 tricks available in all three realistic slams.

A sensible quantitative auction might be: 1♠-3NT; 4NT-5NT; 6NT-Pass, where the 3NT response is reserved for 4333 hands with 16-18 points and stoppers in all suits, and East's 5NT (or perhaps 5♥ to name the four-card suit) indicates the middle of his three-point range. Or over 5NT, West might bid 6♥ to suggest his distribution while accepting East's final invitation.

However, many would treat a 3NT response as 13-15 or an artificial spade raise of some sort, and East might be obliged to start with 2♣, ostensibly natural but occasionally a three-card suit (a 2♥ response would guarantee five). After a 2♥ rebid by West, system will determine whether East could force with 3♥ or 2NT, or would have to resort to a fourth-suit 3♦ or a best-guess bash at 3NT. Curiously, perhaps, deals where both partnership hands are in the 15-17 range can be particularly difficult to bid when neither hand can describe those extra values at their second turn. Here, for example, if East were to force with a natural 2NT over 2♥, covering a wide spectrum of shapes and strength, West isn't quite strong enough for 4NT and lacks the shape to pattern out; he might try 3♣, supporting East's first-bid suit, hoping to buy time and get some input from partner, but it's not going to be a comfortable auction. If, instead, East raises 2♥ to 3♥ in a style where 3♥ is stronger than 4♥ (rather than a picture bid: 2425 with concentrated strength in the long suits), West will make at least two slam tries and might even resort to Blackwood when East shows a diamond control.

6NT, 6♠ and 6♥ all turn on playing spades for four tricks, and 6♥ is the worst of the three because it will usually fail if hearts break four-one. But could it be best to play in hearts? Yes, if hearts are three-two and both spade honors are offside and declarer knows enough to take the diamond finesse (there is no reason to do this), eliminate trumps and both minors, and only then take a spade finesse, not caring whether it loses as North will be endplayed.

There are many different auctions possible and I suspect that a plurality of them will result in E/W finishing in 6♥. It's easier to reach 6NT by never mentioning hearts but many will make the winning strain choice after finding their heart fit. Few will be in 6♠.

As reaching any slam may be more difficult than it seems, there is a fair chance that the major-suit slams will score reasonably well.

**Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.**

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

If E/W do not enter the auction, N/S will reach 4♣ or 3NT on auctions like: 1♠-2♥; 2♠-3♦; 3♠-4♠/, or 1♠-2♥; 2♠-3NT; 4♠ or Pass, or 1♠-2♥; 2♠-2NT (forcing); 3♠-4♠, or 1♠-2♥; 2♠-2NT (forcing); 3NT/. Although 3NT would appear to have only eight winners, East will soon be out of exit cards and will have to concede a second heart or spade trick. Although it might seem presumptuous to project that no one will go down in 3NT, it's difficult to envision a realistic line of play that leads to five tricks for the defense. +600 figures to be a good score.

In the superior 4♠, which will probably be the more popular game contract, it would seem that declarer must lose a heart and three trump tricks, even if East does not lead the ♥A. That is not quite true, however, as 4♠ can be made with an inspired line of play that involves declarer playing only one early round of trumps, cashing three diamonds, never playing a second round of clubs, and using all of dummy's hearts to discard clubs and shorten his trumps. It's quite possible, though, that East will double 4♠ and lead the ♥A, or start a club and cash the ♥A when he wins the first trump. If declarer plays for trumps four-one because of the penalty double, he can use diamonds as entries to dummy's hearts to reduce his trumps to K 6 5 in the three-card ending with East down to J 9 4; now a low spade towards dummy's eight endplays East, telescoping his three sure trump tricks into just two. There will be some +790's, a few +620's and many more -100's and -200's.

But, of course, N/S will often not have the auction to themselves, as many Easts will overcall 2♥. If South can double for penalty, he will, but as negative doubles have become nearly universal, South will have to pass and hope for a reopening double if he wants to penalize East. Some will prefer not to risk having 2♥ passed out and jump to 3NT, which some Norths will pass while others will convert to 4♠.

In both the penalty situations, West might run to 3♣ despite his tolerance for hearts, not only because his hand should be worth much more

with clubs as trumps but also because it might not be so easy for N/S to double 3♣ with modest trump holdings. West would be right to convert to clubs because he will take seven tricks in that strain for -500 if doubled, while 2♥ doubled would normally be held to four or five tricks, down at least 800.

Any E/W penalty will be bad if more N/S's are going minus in 4♠ than plus in 3NT, but there might still be a significant difference between -500 and larger penalties.

#### Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

On a deal where it might seem that E/W would usually buy the contract in a diamond partial – though cold for game in that strain – many different things could happen.

Where the bidding begins Pass-Pass-1NT-2♠, East will use the partnership's method to try to play in 3♦, which could be a direct 3♦ or involve a lebensohl 2NT puppet to 3♣. Even if East is not able to name his suit before South or North competes to 3♠, West will like his hand enough for either minor to compete to the four-level, but might offer 3NT as an alternative en route. Or he might place East with spade shortness and take a shot at five of a minor. 3NT might well turn out golden as North is a big favorite to lead a spade honor and declarer can take the first 11 tricks. Where North does not specify his major when competing over 1NT (with an artificial 2♣ or 2♦ or conventional double), East might be able to show his suit at the two-level, giving West an opportunity to show a big fit earlier in the auction and increasing his side's chances of reaching game.

Some Easts will open a weak 2♦. West will force with 2NT and face a decision at his next turn when North's 3♠ overall comes back to him. As he can see how to make 3NT but perhaps not 5♦, West might well try 3NT, believing that North will not often lead a heart and that if he did, dummy might stop the suit. Or West might just bid 5♦, avoiding the strategy of trying to stop

on a dime at 4♦, pairs scoring notwithstanding.

If East passes, a number of intrepid Souths will open a weak 2♥ or Multi 2♦ (though perhaps not at your club), and West will double. There's no telling how many hearts North will bid, either as a natural raise or as a pass-or-correct move (or perhaps via a customized transfer after a Multi, e.g. 4♣ asks opener to transfer into his major; 4♦ asks him to bid his major), or whether East will try 5♦ directly or later, perhaps after West doubles again, or whether N/S will buy the contract in 4♥, not doubled. As it happens, hearts plays much worse than spades because East can score two spade ruffs and is likely to manage that. Spades produces eight tricks for N/S, hearts only six, and if N/S concede at least 300 they will probably score poorly as many E/W pairs won't reach a making game contract.

North might steal the pot by overcalling INT with 3♠ as East doesn't have the strength for 3NT or a negative double and 4♦ would normally be treated as forcing.

Where West opens 1♦, North will overcall 1♠ or an intermediate 2♠, and East will pick a number of diamonds that pleases him, some of which will convince West to bid one game or the other.

Where West opens 1♣, East will not often have an accurate way to describe his hand after North's overcall, and it's not hard to imagine: Pass-Pass-1♣-1♠; Pass-2♣-Pass-3♣; all pass.

Congratulations are in order to the North players who divined to lead the ♥A or ♥Q against 3NT without a heart bid from partner. Condolences to the N/S pairs who saw their opponents alight in 3NT and chalk up +460 on a spade lead.

Any N/S plus score will be terrific, of course, and as there will be plenty of E/W pairs who make a game or collect a significant penalty, the N/S's who finish -150 might fare quite well too.

### **Board 15. NIS Vul. Dealer South.**

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

The bidding will begin: 1♥-Pass-1♠ or INT-2♠; 2♦-Pass, and North will either pass or give

preference to hearts. The case for passing is that North has little to contribute offensively and is not keen to have South bid again. The form of scoring, however, justifies some risk in trying for 30 points a trick rather than 20, and the partnership might have at least as many combined hearts as diamonds (South might be five-four or six-four). Although East's hand does not merit a second voluntary action, some particularly aggressive players might not be willing to give up without a fight and will risk 3♣ or a double of 2♦, hoping for a penalty pass.

Par on this deal is nine tricks for N/S in either red suit, and E/W lack the assets to compete effectively beyond the level of 2♣, so the best those busy Easts can do is push N/S to the three-level where they might fail after accurate defense and inaccurate declarer play. The worst case scenario for E/W is quite a bit worse, as South might double 3♣ rather than commit to the three-level unilaterally, and North could pass for penalty. E/W -300 would be a disaster.

West will usually lead the ♠J against a N/S partial in hearts or diamonds. Say that declarer covers and East wins to switch to spades against a heart contract. If declarer plays low, West can win and revert to clubs, and when East takes the ♥K with the ace he can play a third club to promote a second heart trick to hold declarer to eight tricks. Declarer can avoid this by taking the ♠A and starting trumps: the defense will get only one trick in each suit. If East does not switch to spades and plays clubs at every opportunity, declarer will discard his spade loser on the third round and concede the trump promotion but not a fifth trick.

In diamonds, the spade shift at trick two won't have any effect as West has a natural trump trick and declarer doesn't need a heart ruff in dummy to establish the suit: declarer can win the ace or play low with the same effect.

It's possible that a few active Easts will trade on the vulnerability and jump to 3♣ (nominally weak) after West's pass over 1♥, hoping to give their opponents a hard time. South will bid 3♦ and at these tables, North will bid 3♥ rather than pass because that "free bid" of 3♦ covers a lot of ground. As this scenario is not often discussed by casual partnerships, there may well be some doubt about whether 3♥ is forcing, and it's possible that N/S will get too high at some of these tables.

As there won't be many +300's for N/S and virtually no +100's (South will not pass over

3♣), +140 will garner the lion's share of the matchpoints, with +110 quite a bit behind. Any E/W plus score will be well rewarded.

**Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.**

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

Whether West opens 1♣, 1♦ (some strong-club systems) or INT, it will probably take some convincing to keep East out of slam. After 1♣/1♦-1♠; INT, some Easts will raise to 6NT after checking on aces, but others will instead raise to 4NT as West could have a bit less than this decent (♠97, ♣10) 13-count. Especially where West has opened 1♣, East should consider the advantage in playing in clubs, a strain in which there might be an extra ruffing trick available. Given different systems, styles, and partnership strategies, it's not practical to project whether more pairs will bid slam than stop short.

The closest an E/W declarer will get to a count is in notrump after he starts on spades and learns of the four-two break with the length in South, and forces North to make a couple of discards, ideally without weakening West's minor-suit holdings. North is unlikely to part with a diamond and, depending on the opening lead, the auction, and which hand is dummy, might discard a heart and a club rather than two hearts (which would allow declarer to finish hearts and see the distribution in that suit). Whether a club discard from North would help declarer guess the suit or hint at a holding of two or three small will vary from one declarer to the next, but the likelihood is that defenders would try not to discard in a visible four-card suit unless they had no alternative, and where North does release a club declarer is a big favorite to get the suit right.

Pairs staying out of slam will surely finish in notrump and record +660 unhappily or +690 slightly less unhappily – anyone who guesses the ♣Q correctly in game will tell you that he would have done the same in slam, of course.

Most of the slam bidders will also choose notrump, but there will be a number of pairs in

6♣. Those who take only 11 tricks in clubs might regret not playing in notrump, where there would be more time to try for some indication about the distribution before committing to a line in clubs. Whether +1370 scores reasonably well will turn on whether there are fewer +1440's than +660's, +690's and -100's combined.

**Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.**

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

Some Norths will open their junky but intermediate-laden 11-count with 1♣, 1♦ (some strong-club systems), 1♠ or INT, any of which should silence East. The trick then for N/S will be to avoid reaching game or going down in 3♥ by misguessing at least one of the minor suits.

If North passes and East opens with one of the bids that might have appealed to North, South will overcall in hearts and North will advance with a minimum bid in notrump, or perhaps a jump in notrump after a 1♥ overcall, and the final contract is more likely to be 2♥ or 3♥ than INT or 2NT.

E/W have time for five tricks at notrump by leading or switching to clubs, but it's possible that the defense will have other ideas and allow declarer a costly ninth trick.

Declarer has some work to do in hearts and although he will usually be able to build a second spade trick while there is still a heart entry to the North hand to cash it, he will often have to guess clubs to avoid a fifth loser. West might lead a club, of course, but there will be votes for all three spade spot cards and a low diamond. It's possible that East might misjudge the spade position on the lead of the seven or deuce, but that might not spare declarer the guess in clubs. If West leads a diamond and East puts in the ten, declarer can later finesse against West's jack and might use his second spade winner to discard a club, so there is some modest danger for the defense if East underleads the ♠A when in with the ♠A and declarer plays the king to lead a low trump. The defenders must take their minor-suit aces now as a passive trump or spade exit will

lose their club trick, but as unlikely as this might seem, it will happen a number of times so N/S +170 will make the odd cameo appearance on the frequency sheet. The common results will be N/S +140, +110, and -50, however; and E/W pairs who achieve a plus will be pleased with their score.

**Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.**

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

The vulnerability will dissuade North from getting too busy and E/W will nearly always buy the contract at 4♣ after starting: 1♠-Pass-2♣-2♦; 2♥-Pass-2♣ or 3♣-Pass, with East rebidding hearts or not.

This time 4♣ will almost always fail when North routinely plays a third round of diamonds and promotes a trump trick for South. Bad luck for E/W, but -50 should be just about average.

Could there be some outliers? Perhaps where a strong-club partnership starts: 1♠-Pass-4♣ and North gambles 5♦. E/W can double that for a cool 1400 or do a bit less well by forging on to 5♣ for -100. As someone's cousin once said "You gotta give to get!"

**Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

In third position, North will open 1♣, 1♦ (some strong-club systems), 1♠ (obstructive and relatively safe), or a weak notrump. East will usually overcall INT over a suit-opening, and will double INT.

East's INT overcall should buy the contract and South will lead his partner's suit more often than gamble on his modest five-card heart suit. On the lead of the ♣Q, declarer will win the first or second club and might well try a diamond to the queen and king. North will knock out declarer's remaining club stopper and leave him with another guess. We can see that he can cross to dummy to lead towards the ♦J (he doesn't know North started with only two diamonds). North wins and cashes clubs, declarer parting with a heart, dummy retaining a low heart to protect the queen. North exits with a spade, but declarer wins and cashes the ♦J, forcing North to discard a spade or blank the ♥K, and can make his contract if he reads the distribution correctly, exiting with a spade if North kept a small heart, cashing the ♥A if North kept both spades. It's always gratifying to make a contract after a series of accurate guesses, and +90 should be a decent score for E/W as there are several ways to go down and only an obscure double dummy line (duck a diamond altogether at trick two, then duck a second diamond to North to secure two winners in that suit; even if North plays spades when he wins each diamond trick to block the diamonds for declarer, the third diamond catches North in a somewhat different pressure position in which declarer can unblock the ♦J, lead a heart from hand and play low from dummy, which will secure an entry with the ♥Q whether or not North plays the ♥K, to cash the ♦Q).

Different leads, even an unfortunate diamond won't lead to an eighth trick for declarer unless he divines to play a low diamond from both hands when he gains the lead.

Where North opens INT and East doubles, South will bid 2♥ or transfer to 2♥. West has significant values and will not give up without a fight; he will have to judge whether to double 2♥, compete to 2NT or scramble into 2♠. The clear winner will be to double 2♥, defend accurately for a two-trick set, and enjoy the considerable fruits of +300 on the score sheet. The unlikely 2♠ rates to go one down, as does the more promising 2NT.

Where East's methods do not include a natural INT overcall, he might pass North's suit opening bid and South might not dredge up a response, and West will pass also. Defending 1♣ might not seem like such a good idea for E/W, especially when they don't find one of the ways (one cute route is for East to switch to a low spade with West ducking: that could lead to East, after a second high trump, playing ♠A and a spade to

the king for a fourth-round spade ruff) to set it, but in practice there won't be much difference between -70 and +50 as both those results will be worse than +90 for making INT and better than the -100 in various different contracts. Where South responds 1♥ and North rebids 1♠, East will have his chance to bid a natural INT or double, to which West is more likely to bid INT than 2♦, both offering solid chances for +90.

Easts who double a minor-suit opening should pass when West responds 1♠ (INT would show a better hand without specific agreement to the contrary), and the likely outcome will be +80, comparative matchpoint result to be determined.

### **Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

Although N/S would have no trouble making 5♣ on the marked spade lead, and could take at least 11 tricks in hearts (12 with two finesses in diamonds to discard the spade loser after drawing trumps and before playing clubs) if they cleverly or serendipitously finished in that strain, the reality is that at pairs scoring nearly everyone will reach 3NT when South is left to open in fourth seat (INT-2♣; 2♦-3NT/ or 1♦-1♥; INT (15-17)-3NT /), which is likely to fail on a spade lead when declarer takes the straightforward line by finessing against the ♣ K. There is no apparent reason why declarer should instead play on diamonds, which happens to work this time -- one spade, four hearts, one club, and three diamonds -- especially because negotiating five club winners would secure at least 10 tricks, with chances for more in hearts and diamonds. N/S -100

If North decides to cater to a spade problem when South denies a major in response to Stayman, he might force with a natural 3♣. South will continue with 3♦ and face a decision over North's 3♥, which would imply concern about spades -- else 3NT over 3♦. If North is uncertain about 3NT, South should be too, but

his club fit and aces are positive holdings for both notrump and clubs, and South should bid 3♣ to suggest doubt about strain. North's clubs are awful in context, and might take too long to establish in notrump, so North might sensibly avoid the nine-trick game, and he might try 4♥ to emphasize his strong four-card holding. That could convince South to take his chances a trick lower than 5♣, and would achieve a real coup for his partnership, a rare +650 or +680 in a sea of -100's.

Some Norths will open 1♣, 1♦ (some strong-club systems), 1♥ or INT. 1♥ has a real chance to work beautifully, of course, but the minor-suit openings should stand some chance of avoiding 3NT. After 1♣-1♦; 1♥-1♠ or 2♣ (fourth suit) North will have a tough bid if he's expected to have something in spades to bid notrump; whether he rebids his very weak clubs, gives preference to diamonds, or improvises with 3♥ (perhaps the right system bid!), South will be thinking about slam and might not settle for 3NT. At some of these tables the trick will be to stay out of 6♣ (or a less likely 6♦), but going down in slam might be just about average if nearly everyone fails in 3NT. How curious!

To take 11 tricks in diamonds, it's essential to finesse against the king and ten of diamonds, then finish hearts to pitch the spade loser whether or not East ruffs in.

I'm looking forward to seeing how many N/S pairs avoid 3NT and how many of those pairs finish in hearts.

### **Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.**

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

Where East opens 1♣, South really ought to pass, but some will prefer to double despite the risks, and North might compete to 2♦ over West's INT or 2♣. If East is willing and able to make a cooperative penalty double, he might like his prime cards enough to do that and could

finish +200 for his enterprise. Where East's system or style dictates a 1♦ opening, South has a straightforward takeout double, and West will often volunteer INT to buy the contract there. If West passes instead, North might take a calculated shot by passing South's double rather than guess which three-card major to bid. East won't sit for 1♦ doubled, though, and E/W are likely to wriggle into INT on this more arcane route.

Where South doubles East's (11-14) INT opening, E/W can double a 2♦ escape for +200 or sit for INT doubled for +180 or +280, and it's not inconceivable that the final contract will be INT redoubled for +560 or +760. Whether E/W can achieve one of these wonderful results will turn not only on their judgment but also on whether East's INT was 11-14 or 14-16 and whether their methods permit them to play in INT redoubled.

On the lie of the cards E/W can make INT by the simple expedient of ducking one or two rounds of diamonds and playing ♣A, ♣K and another club to establish a third club to go with two spades and the red aces. Curiously, declarer can take an eighth trick on a diamond lead in completely different fashion: he ducks the first diamond, takes the second (or wins any switch and cashes the ♦A himself relatively early), cashes the ♣A, and plays on spades. Thanks to the blockage in hearts, South can be endplayed to lead from the ♣Q and allow declarer to build a long heart. Declarer would only play along these lines if South squealed in the auction about his strength and approximate shape, and even then, only if looking for a top and in great form. Perhaps even more curiously, North can prevent declarer from arranging that brilliant line of play by leading ... anything but a diamond! Although declarer will have the timing to build a second heart winner, South will get around to spades in time, save an exit card in diamonds, and get him off the endplay for the third club trick.

If E/W should happen to finish in 2♥ (perhaps where East opens 1♥) they can make that easily enough by ducking one diamond and building a third club trick: +110 will be very good for E/W. Although E/W could double 2♦ for a gratifying 200-point set if the opportunity should arise, that won't be obvious.

### Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

The vulnerability might dissuade some normally aggressive East players from opening 1♠, and if East passes the vulnerability might encourage some normally conservative (OK – middle of the road) South players to open 1♣. With the points divided nearly evenly, this figures to be a competitive deal regardless of whether East, South or neither opens with a one bid (or a natural limited 2♣) or a nominally weaker action (2♠ or 3♠).

Where South opens 1♣, North might get his side to 3NT and will make it if East leads a spade other than the ace (followed by a heart switch). If East leads a diamond and declarer tries to sneak a spade past him early on, East must rise with the ace and switch to hearts, which won't usually be an easy assignment. Some fearless Wests might throw in a lead-directing 1♥ overcall, however, altering the nature of the deal significantly. North will cue-bid or bid 2♦ and East will love his hand and will compete in one way or another to the three level. That's -500 territory for E/W if someone finds a double (♦A, ♦K, two diamond ruffs, one club and a spade), which is certainly possible. Bids like that 1♥ overcall have become increasingly popular in the modern tournament game and can work very well, but they come with a price, and there's a fine line between doing too little and too much on potentially competitive deals.

Where East opens 1♠, South will choose from among Pass, 2♣ and 3♣ and West will raise to 2♠ where legal, and in turn choose between 3♣ and a negative double over a 3♣ overcall. After 2♣ North will wonder why he has such a good hand, but will he bid 3NT with only Q3 in the opponents' suit and nothing in hearts when West advertizes hearts with a negative double? The winning action for North if E/W reach 3♠ is to double if he can convince South to pass it, for N/S can take six tricks with accurate defense. While +500 would be superb, of course, North could do



well simply by passing 3♣ and defending well for +200. Meanwhile, competing to 4♣ has a limited upside, even if the defense does not get around to hearts in time (a fairly normal diamond lead lets declarer discard a heart loser for +130).

So many different things might happen on this one, but if E/W secure a plus score by defeating 3NT or 4♣ or by being permitted to make a partial, or get out for -100, they will do well in the scoring. It will not be surprising if a significant number of N/S pairs make 3NT or get at least +200 on defense, so +110 (par for N/S) or +130 might not score particularly well.

### Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

♠ A 9 ♥ K 9 8 4 3 ♦ Q 10 8 7 2 ♣ 10  ♠ 8 5 3 ♥ Q J 7 5 2 ♦ 6 ♣ A 4 3 2	♠ K Q 7 6 4 2 ♥ A ♦ K 5 4 3 ♣ J 5  ♠ J 10 ♥ 10 6 ♦ A J 9 ♣ K Q 9 8 7 6
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With the high cards evenly divided and all four hands having offense-oriented distribution, there might be a lot of bidding on this deal.

After 1♣ by South most Wests will not commit a vulnerable 1♥ over (under?) call, and over North's 1♥, East will bid 1♠ or 2♠ (intermediate, weak or a bit of each). South will usually bid 2♣ if legal but will pass over 2♠. West might reasonably raise a so-called intermediate 2♣ all the way to game, but will otherwise content himself with a simple raise. If North has a nonforcing 3♦ at his disposal, he will consider using it, and if an accurate 3♦ is not available, he might try a competitive double, hardly a clear-cut action. Even if N/S have the means to reach their makeable 3♦, East will virtually always compete to 3♠, and some will bid four.

As long as declarer does not play his ♦K on the first round, he will find a route to nine tricks in spades, as he can ruff one diamond and lead low to fell the ace on the third round if necessary. The defense must switch to two rounds of trumps to force declarer to get the diamonds right; else declarer will get his diamond ruffs and take the ruffing finesse in hearts in case the ♦A were not coming down tripleton. It's possible to go down in 3♣ and for E/W to double 3♠ or (almost certainly) 4♠, so there is some scope for variation across the field.

### Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

♠ K Q 10 7 6 3 2 ♥ K Q 10 ♦ K 5 ♣ 7  ♠ J 9 ♥ J ♦ Q J 10 9 7 ♣ K Q 10 8 5  ♠ A ♥ A 8 7 5 4 2 ♦ 8 4 ♣ A 9 6 3	♠ 8 5 4 ♥ 9 6 3 ♦ A 6 3 2 ♣ J 4 2
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N/S can make 6♣, 6♥ and even 6NT, but only if North is declarer; else West can lead through the ♦K.

With West's chunky two-suiter and East's four-card fit, E/W are likely to be fairly active in the auction, especially if West is able to start with a bid that shows a weak hand with at least five-five in the minors. East will compete to 4♦ and perhaps 5♦ if that's his first opportunity to show support. Although North can get two club ruffs to hold E/W to seven tricks, 5♦ doubled would be less expensive than a successful N/S slam. For what it's worth, 5♣ is just as bad for E/W as the long club hand gets forced too often. While -800 could turn out well, would you like to be in a position where you were counting on a majority of the N/S pairs to chalk up +980 or +990?

More often, West will not open. North will open 1♠ and over South's 2♥, West will either try 2NT, double, or judge to pass rather than tip off the distribution or encourage partner to do too much at the prevailing vulnerability. North, torn between supporting hearts and emphasizing spades, might delay his decision by using West's suits or a fancy 3NT "cue bid" (where West has bid 2NT) to try to sort out the best strain. Both raising hearts and jumping in spades should convince South to like his hand, but a simple rebid in spades would not create that level of enthusiasm.

Some Norths will open 4♣ either because their hand meets their partnership's standards for a four-bid or because they don't mind understating their strength with all the aces missing, and the possibility that preemption might help more than hurt.

Where it ends is difficult to predict because the early auction will take so many different turns, but it's not likely that 6NT by North will happen more than a few times. Although both major-suit slams will be reached fairly often, either one might be more popular.

Even if E/W compete in diamonds, West might lead the ♠K against 6♥, so reaching the “wrong” slam might not be fatal.

The handling of these N/S hands offers plenty of scope for discussion both uncontested and with obstruction.

**Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

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

Where North opens the bidding with 1♣, South’s mission will be to avoid committing to clubs despite his huge fit. This time N/S are safe at 4NT (only by North) if they go past 3NT, but there will inevitably be a number of pairs in 5♣ and a few in 6♣, both routinely down when East has an easy lead and continuation. East’s 1♠ overcall in combination with a cheap notrump bid by North should dampen South’s enthusiasm a bit as the ♠K may not be pulling its weight, especially if there is a problem in one of the red suits.

After 1♣-1♠-2♣, West is likely to risk 3♣, and will probably survive as it’s tricky for N/S to judge to double and defend - the defense can take one club, two diamonds and a ruff, and two more spade tricks for +500, better than the +430 they could achieve in their best strain. Over 3♣, North might pass, double or bid 3NT, influenced by how far South’s cue-bid forced the partnership. If North passes, South will be reluctant to try 3NT as with West on lead, scoring the ♠K will seem a distinct long shot. However, trying to stop at exactly 4♣ will not seem desirable either, and some will jump to 5♣. Some of the tigers will do better by doubling 3♣, trying for +200 or an admittedly unlikely conversion to 3NT by North. Although that sort of double seems extreme with seven-card support for opener’s suit, it reveals the lengths to which an enterprising pair might go to avoid four or five of a minor when 3NT or a vulnerable penalty are still in the picture.

Some Norths will begin with 1♦, following their system or catering to a possible opening-lead issue. After 1♦-1♠, Souths with an invitational jump to 3♣ at their disposal and those willing

to devalue the ♠K enough to settle for a weak jump to 3♣ will prefer that action to a simple but less specific 2♣. West might not be so quick to compete to 3♣ whether 3♣ is invitational or weak, and North will pass 3♣ or bid 3NT.

Where North opens 1♥, South will bid 2♣ and choose how to reopen when 2♠ comes around to him, the possibility of a heart fit being a systemic inconvenience. Regardless, his hand is mainly clubs, and 3♣ will often end the auction, although East might reopen with 3♣ and present his opponents with an opportunity to improve their score by doubling for penalty.

Where North opens a weak 1NT, South will most often raise to 3NT if East does not enter the auction. However, East is likely to bid something, showing spades or a two-suiter that includes spades. That might not dissuade South from bashing 3NT, and some of them will deny a spade stopper while others will show one – it’s that sort of hand. Others will settle for a competitive or invitational sequence.

Apart from the N/S pairs collecting +500 or +800, those who manage +430 in notrump will score very well. If there are enough pairs going down in 5♣ (or 6♣), those who go plus in club partials might not fare too badly.

**Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.**

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

If East is unwilling to open a vulnerable weak 2♠, N/S will usually coast into 4♥ uncontested. A popular auction will be 1♥-2♦; 2♥-3♣ (splinter); 4♥ /, although it’s better not to have a singleton ace for a splinter raise as partner will mis-value the king, perhaps fatally. In systems where a two-over-one is forcing to game (or nearly so), North might raise a 2♥ rebid to 3♥ rather than splinter. South, with reasonable hearts and a potentially important ♦Q, might feel he’s slightly too strong to sign off at 4♥, but with no black-suit controls and only five hearts, he should settle for 4♥.

Some Norths will prefer to start with an artificial game-forcing raise to get the four-card support

across immediately. In most rebid schemes South will soon show a minimum with no short suit and North should not go past 4♥.

Another approach with the North hand is a strong jump-shift, Acol-style, an attractive plan if North's rebid would show four-card heart support. N/S should be able to stay out of slam after this start.

Some aggressive Wests will double 1♥ for takeout, which might convince East to bid 4♣ either immediately or later. That would give N/S an opportunity – though not such an easy one -- to double for an 800-point set and a top, as this time West has an easy club lead against a heart contract and any N/S pair reaching slam is sure to be defeated.

Where East opens 2♠, South might not risk 3♥ or an obscure takeout double, and West will raise to 3♣ or 4♣. North might not love doubling either of those raises, but will probably bite the bullet and do so rather than overcall in diamonds or pass. Although South does best to pass a double of 4♣, he might consider +800 less likely than +650 or a slam and take out the double to 5♥, or perhaps to 4NT, intending to convert five of a minor to 5♥ if his partnership treats that as stronger than a direct 5♥.

It won't happen often, but there will be tables where E/W steal the pot by buying the contract at 4♠, not doubled. And not troubled!

**Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.**

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

With the ♣K in front of the queen (if it comes to that) and nothing but good things happening in spades and diamonds, E/W can make 6♣ or 6♦ and might well bid slam even though South opens in front of the big hand.

1♥ will be considerably more popular than a somewhat esoteric weak 2♥. West will overcall 1♠, double, or show a two-suiter – either spades and a minor (2♥) or spades and diamonds (3♣ or 3♦ or 2NT, depending on the flavor of the month in different venues).

After 1♠, East will raise to 2♠ or cue-bid 2♥ or perhaps jump to 2NT where that is the partnership action to show a three-card limit raise. West will make a minimum bid or jump in diamonds, or jump in hearts to show slam interest with short hearts (perhaps specifically a void), and East should be pleased to cooperate with an immediate slam try or commit to slam if West goes past 4♠ after starting with a minimum bid in diamonds.

Where West starts with a cue-bid that does not specify his minor or his strength, different Easts will settle for 2♠, jump to 4♣, choose an invitational sequence, or cue-bid to show strength. Those who bid only 2♠ expect their partner to bid again with a strong hand and stay low with a weak one, and may belong to the school that medium-range hands should instead start with an overcall. Whether West continues over 2♠ with 3♦, 3♥, or something else, East should make a slam try, perhaps by cue-bidding hearts if nothing else is available. Where East shows a better hand in response to 2♥, West might simply bid six, but he should probably show his minor in case diamonds proves a superior strain for six or seven even with a five-three spade fit.

It's common for partnerships who name their minor with their initial action to reserve the two-suited bid for sound hands, so East will always drive to game and should suggest suitable values for slam in the process; West will do the rest, but must be careful not to get carried away and bid seven, which can't quite be made despite the three-three diamond break.

Where West doubles 1♥, East might gamble a penalty pass rather than respond INT, but that will work badly as South will come to five or six tricks and E/W will not get adequate compensation for game, not to mention slam (if many were settling for +480).

It's not completely clear how to play 6♣, whether West or East declares on a heart lead. Trumps might be four-one or diamonds four-two (worse might be insurmountable) and if declarer gives up the lead the West hand will be forced again, in which case he might have to refrain from drawing trumps, cash as many minor-suit winners as possible, and try to scramble most of his trumps separately. Although it might not seem like the natural play, leading towards the ♣Q at trick two retains some flexibility. North goes in with the king and might well continue hearts, ruffed in West. On the actual layout, declarer can play ♠A, ♠Q, unblock the ♦Aj and ♣Q, lead the ♠j to

the king to draw North's last trump and claim the remainder with minor-suit winners. If declarer decides that North has more spades than South – perhaps four of them (South is known to have five hearts and presumably at least two cards in each minor) he might cash the ♠Q, ♣Q, ♦A, and overtake the ♦J to cash the ♣A and continue diamonds, playing North for specifically 4234 shape, eventually over-ruffing North in diamonds, with the ♠2 remaining to lead to West to draw North's last two trumps. That would be a really big position for declarer to take, and only someone looking for a top might consider it.

**Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

West will open 1♣, or perhaps 1♦ (strong club systems or to show nine of his cards after a 1♠ response) and East will occasionally pass but more often will respond in a red suit or perhaps raise 1♦ to 2♦. Some South players will jump to 4♣ in all those scenarios, but others will settle for 1♠ or perhaps an intermediate jump overcall. West might show heart support where that is a possibility, and North might deem his spade holding at least as useful as jack-third and support his partner even where South has not implied more than five cards in his suit. If North does not support spades early, he will do so when South repeats his suit. Although there will be some pairs who languish in 1♠ or a level higher – theoretically the winning strategy this time – 4♣ will be the people's choice by a wide margin.

If E/W defend perfectly, South can be held to nine tricks in spades, but that might not always happen, although declarer's best technical line of play (win the club lead, use dummy's two spade entries to take two heart finesses – low to the eight, then later low to the queen – succeeding if either the ♥K or ♥J10 are onside) should make the defense less challenging than it might be if declarer were to spurn the heart plays and run his trumps.

We can see that E/W should be able to avoid crashing their club honors when that would

make a difference, but if that suit doesn't get cleared up early on, West might discard three clubs and allow declarer to build a second club winner.

With the ♣10 in dummy, East should not play the ♣J at trick one on the ♣K lead that in some partnerships could be from ace-king or king-queen. Declarers who elect to duck West's high-club lead will reveal the honor position to the defense, as he would take the trick if he had both the ace and jack to guarantee a second club trick in combination with dummy's ten. In that scenario, West will continue with a low club, and when East does not discard a club at one of his earliest opportunities, West should place declarer with the outstanding club.

If any N/S pair finds a way to reach the impregnable 3NT, we'd love to hear about it as they might be eligible for the Best Bid Hand of the Year award! That stellar feat won't earn them a top, though, as there will be more than a few N/S +620's when the defense slips.

**Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.**

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

Although the South hand is no thing of beauty, most will open 1♦ in third seat in case the lead matters (and North in strong-club systems credits South with a suit where he might not have one).

West will choose between INT and a takeout double, the former usually leading to East steering his side to 2♥, perhaps via a transfer, duplicating what would happen if South passed in third seat (South doubling a transfer to hearts would not affect the outcome of the auction).

Where West doubles 1♦, North might try 1♠ or INT, and some Easts will volunteer 2♥ while more conservative players will not, although it's dangerous not to act while the price is right. If East passes, South is likely to do the same (after North's initial pass), leaving West to decide

whether to risk another call. West will do best to pass out INT and set it two or three tricks for an excellent score. However, passing out 1♠ will not work as well, as the defense will be tricky and declarer will take six or perhaps even seven tricks. Sparing partner that type of decision highlights the importance of bidding 2♥, at least over North's 1♠.

Although it looks as if there are only eight winners in hearts or notrump, this is one of those hands where both defenders will come under some pressure in spades, and as long as declarer ducks one round of diamonds and plays South for the ♠K, he will be able to either score a third spade trick or a timely club trick.

Say that West declares 2♥ after a notrump overcall and transfer. North leads the ♦10 and South does best to overtake, tempting declarer to win the ace, which would benefit the defense significantly. But let's presume that declarer ducks and South switches to a club, North winning cheaply and exiting safely with a diamond. West wins, and plays the ♥A, on which South should drop the ten, which can't hurt and might convince declarer that he was dealt queen-ten doubleton – not you, of course! Declarer continues with the ♥9, in turn tempting West to cover with queen-eight-deuce remaining, and finesses the jack when North contributes the eight, and cashes the ♥K, South discarding a diamond or a club. Then, if West played the ♣K on the first round, declarer continues trumps and South will find that he has no good options and either will be endplayed in one minor or the other or will be squeezed in diamonds and spades (if he discards clubs and declarer exits in clubs, letting North take two more club tricks. If instead North refrains from cashing his third club trick and exits with the ♠10 or ♠9, declarer plays low from dummy, wins in hand and endplays South in diamonds to lead from the ♠K into declarer's split tenace.

The difference between +110 or +120 and +140 or +150 will swing a large number of matchpoints, although none of those scores will stand up against the E/W pairs who record +200 or more defending INT or 2♦ (or 2♠). The unfortunate E/W pairs who manage only +100 (or worse) selling out to 1♠ will resolve to have East compete in hearts the next time they face this type of situation.

**Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.**

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

The bidding will often begin: INT-Pass-Pass, to North, who should feel no remorse in protecting, especially if his partnership has a way to show both majors wholesale, as most do these days. The main danger in taking any action is not incurring a penalty at the two-level but that South, who is marked with at least an average hand, might expect more from North and do too much. Some risks are worth taking, however, and competing at the two-level with five-five in the majors at this vulnerability is one of the basic tenets of an effective strategy for competitive bidding at any form of scoring. Whether South settles for 2♥ or tries for game, N/S should not get higher than 3♥.

Where East opens 1♦, West will respond 1♠ or raise to 2♦ more often than he passes; East will rebid INT (15-17) over 1♠; that is likely to come around to North, who would like to show both majors although he has no security that he will find an eight-card fit. For some, 2♥ would send that message as one-suited hands willing to reopen in an auction where the opponents have not implied a fit would overcall immediately. It would seem that 2♥ would end the auction, but it would not be outrageous for West to gamble 3♦, hoping to avoid a double. That would expose his side to a horrible -300 if South doubles 3♦ and the defense gets around to clubs early enough, but only -100 and a very good score if 3♦ is passed out. Bridge is a game of inches. Where West raises 1♦ to 2♦, North might risk a light overcall, double, or two-suited bid and East will not quit short of 3♦. What happens after that is difficult to predict.

N/S will have no trouble taking eight tricks in hearts but it's the struggle for the ninth that will be the central issue. Let's look at what might happen where South declares after North's conventional 2♣, 2♦ or double. West might lead a trump to protect his spades and if the defenders can arrange three rounds of trumps, declarer will lose only two spades, the ♣A and the ♥A. Better defense, though it might not seem that way, is for West to lead a diamond, forcing

dummy. Declarer's logical continuation would be to pass a spade equal as East will often hold at least one of the honors doubleton. West wins and forces North again. Declarer can start on clubs or cross to the ♠A first, but when East takes his ♣A (say on the second round) he won't have an effective counter as declarer will be able to cash a second club winner and ruff another diamond in North and be in a position to scramble enough of his trumps separately to come to nine tricks. If West switches to the ♥10 upon winning his spade honor at trick two, East ducks, and in some variations declarer must finesse the ♣9 on the second round of the suit to come to nine tricks. For example, East ducks the ♣K and declarer cashes the ♠A before leading the second club; if declarer plays the jack East wins and plays a third club and suddenly declarer can't effectively play a trump (East wins and plays the ♦A), or a club (West ruffs), or a diamond ruff to play a spade (East discards).

If North passes out INT, South might lead a reasonable but fatal diamond and allow E/W to record +90, but most other leads and accurate defense should set INT for a pyrrhic victory, as +50 won't be adequate compensation for +110 or +140.

Competition is good, Grasshopper, but greed (getting too high in hearts trying for game) is not always good, Wall Street notwithstanding.

**Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.**

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

There's a lot of distribution around the table, and while there's no telling how active N/S will be at adverse vulnerability, they are clearly outgunned and will incur some significant penalties if they stretch a bit to compete. For example, North might think his seven-card suit gives him some safety in overcalling 1♠ with 2♥, but East has a penalty double and though he might have to pass and wait for West to reopen with a double, most E/W pairs given the opportunity will try to defend 2♥ doubled, which figures to cost N/S a mere 1100 points. And if South runs to 3♣ he

might scrape together as many as six tricks but won't much enjoy the fruits of -800.

Where N/S show more restraint and remain silent, East will have to decide whether to bid out his lengths accurately or whether to treat his hand as if it were five-five and start with 2♥ to be sure of getting his fifth heart into the mix. Some probable auctions:

- (1) 1♠-2♦; 2♠-3♥; 3NT /,
- (2) 1♠-2♦; 2♠-3♥; 3NT-4♥; 5♦/,
- (3) 1♠-2♦; 3♦-3♥; 3NT-4♥; 4♠-5♣; 5♦/,
- (4) 1♠-2♥; 2♠-3♦; 3NT /,
- (5) 1♠-2♥; 2♠-3♦; 3NT-4♦; 4♥ /,
- (6) 1♠-2♥; 2♠-3♦; 3NT-4♦; 5♦/.

The money contract this time is 3NT (by West), which can produce 10 tricks on any lead (typically a heart) as long as declarer does not play for diamonds to be two-two (South dropping an honor on the first round should not affect declarer's line) and takes the spade finesse if South switches to that suit when he wins his diamond trick, then plays a high club – North, out of diamonds, must play a heart or give declarer the ♠A and a club winner, but declarer exits dummy with the ♥7, presenting North with the same three losing options! Although it might seem that negotiating 10 tricks requires some impressive and obscure play, conceding the second round of diamonds will clarify the position in that suit, and taking the spade finesse is as good a play as any; in practice, though, South will usually switch to the ♣J to the queen and ace, and North will continue clubs. Declarer has nine tricks now and will run diamonds, and reduce South to the high clubs and three spades, North to two spades and two hearts to guard against dummy's heart tenace, and the closed hand to three spades and a club. If declarer decides North has the ♠K, he can play ♠A, spade and score two more hearts when North is forced to lead from the queen; if he decides South has the ♠K, declarer can cash the ♥A to squeeze South in the black suits, and finesse the ♠Q for a spectacular 11 tricks – indeed the odds favor South (who started with more spades than his partner) holding the ♠K as the distribution should be quite clear in the endgame.

The E/W pairs in diamonds can negotiate 11 tricks if East declares and judges well in the play, usually relying on the spade finesse when the red-suit layout is revealed. If South is sufficiently inspired to challenge declarer with a spade lead, however, it will require even greater inspiration

from declarer to get home if he calls for the ♠A: spade ruff, ♦A, ♦K, then a heart, ruffed by South (best) to play the ♣J – declarer must play low from dummy, then low again on the ♣10 in order to survive. If you managed to make 5♦ that way, please let us know!

Of course, some of those declarers taking 11 tricks in diamonds will have contracted for 12 after gambling on slam once past 3NT (and 4NT) at pairs.

The (few) pairs who land in 4♥ after East started with 2♥, will not quite survive the seven-nil trump break, but on a good day, 4♥ would have been quite playable.

As the vulnerability rates to temper N/S's enthusiasm most of the time there won't be that many big penalties accruing to E/W, and as there are plenty of ways for them to go wrong on their own cards, +400 might be quite satisfactory, +430 excellent.

### Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

West will open 1NT (pick a range - any range) and East will bid 4♣ or transfer at the four-level where possible, but at the two-level otherwise. At the prevailing vulnerability, South is likely to compete to the five level under duress – possibly doubling a Texas 4♥ to show hearts, then bidding 5♦ or 4NT (6+♥, at least two fewer cards in a minor) over 4♣. West has both a good fit and ample defensive strength, and in most cases a non-maximum for his 1NT opening, so is more likely to double 5♥ than continue to 5♣, but if he has a forcing pass available and makes that choice, East is also likely to double, and N/S will lose a trump and two black-suit tricks for -100, a good save except for the fact that E/W would lose four tricks in spades, also for -100 unless South happens to double (after first doubling a transfer bid) to show a good hand and North decides four tricks might be easier than 11.

Although 1NT is a fairly attractive choice for West, many will stay within their stated range

and start with 1♣, 1♦ or 1♠, the latter sure to attract a raise to 4♣ or a very light splinter raise of 4♥. It's unlikely but not out of the question that South will sell out to 4♣ - doubled or not – at those tables, and again, E/W will do much better to double than to bid 5♣.

After one of a minor-Pass-1♠, South will bid 2♥ or 4♥, occasionally 3♥ if the partnership idea of an intermediate jump overall includes this type of hand. Someone figures to bid 4♣ sooner or later at these tables, but once in a while, 4♥ will buy the contract for a rare +420.

N/S -100 will be the most common result, but there will be some N/S +100's, and a few +200's and +500's to go with those lonesome +420's and +590's. It's difficult to imagine a final contract lower than four of a major.

### Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

With their 24 combined HCP, N/S can make 3NT if they arrange for South to declare. West must lead a club and not a heart to hold the contract else declarer can take four spades, four diamonds, two hearts (using the ♠10 to lead up to the ♥Q) and one club for 11 tricks.

Where North opens 1♣, West will often overcall after South responds 1♦. North will pass or bid 1NT and East will raise to 2♥. South can raise 1NT to two or three, but where North passed over 1♥, South will probably double 2♥ to suggest that his side has the preponderance of strength, but this time it would probably work better to bid a natural 2NT. Some Norths might pass South's competitive double of 2♥, but will regret that decision if declarer locates the ♣J early in the play and rolls home +470. Some will take out to 2♣ and judge how to continue if South tries 2NT. Others will take out to 2NT and play there for +120, but some of those will be raised to 3NT (-50). Others will take out South's double to 3♦, +110 (only on a club lead) or +130 if South passes, but +400 if South converts to 3NT.

An increasingly popular approach is transfer

responses to 1♣ (2+ cards) openings, and for those partnerships, South would respond 1♠ to deny a four-card major. That would silence East and if N/S reach 3NT from the North side (1♣-1♠; INT-3NT/), East might not lead a heart. It's interesting that on a club lead to the queen and the normal continuation of the ♣10 declarer simply ducks, and has time to develop diamonds in peace for nine tricks, but if West cunningly returns the ♣5 at trick two (hoping to give East a timely entry to attack hearts) North must play the jack and capture the king lest East switch to hearts – West's blocking ten prevents East from gaining the lead at an opportune moment!

A 1♠ opening by North would lead to 1♠-2♦; 2NT-Pass or 3NT, with East likely to lead a club and West likely to win the queen and return the ten, giving declarer +150 or +400.

If your opponents bid and made 3NT and you had no realistic chance to set it, you will be entitled to some sympathy at the bar from your more compassionate colleagues.

**Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.**

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

3NT will be the people's choice on this deal, declared by East and West. Some Wests will open 2NT, either in range (19-21) or an upgrade to 20 based on the five-card suit and controls. East will show five hearts and offer a choice of games and West will choose notrump. Where West starts with 1♠, East will respond INT or 2♥; West will raise INT to 2NT or 3NT according to system, with 2NT offering East the chance to show his hearts, perhaps via a transfer; West might not love his club stopper but rates to choose notrump rather than speculate about the quality of East's hearts. Where East responds 2♥, West will rebid 2NT or 3NT or invent a high reverse to 3♣ or 3♦, again according to system. All roads should lead to 3NT.

With West declaring, North might lead a low club, ducked to the jack; declarer will clear hearts for 11 tricks without raising a sweat. If North leads

a club honor instead, declarer on this layout can win and establish hearts and eventually lead a club to the nine for an eleventh trick, but in practice will probably duck North's club honor. If North switches to a diamond, declarer might well play on the same lines to ensure 10 tricks and find that there is no longer any chance for 11, although both defenders are obliged to hang on to two clubs: the problem is that West is squeezed before North on the last heart. Declarer can still come to 11 tricks after ducking the first club, but the winning line jeopardizes his tenth trick and requires playing for spades three-three, ducking a round after no more than one round of hearts. Clubs are frozen for the defense so declarer wins a neutral return, cashes the diamond(s) and high heart(s) and the runs spades to squeeze North between the ♥Q and his remaining club honor. In effect, a passive diamond lead requires the same obscure line of play for an eleventh trick. There will be many more +430's than +460's.

With East declaring, South has no obvious lead from a very weak hand and might well try to find partner's best suit. If he chooses a low club it's possible that declarer will call for the jack and pay heavily for that choice, but most will play with the odds (king-ten or queen-ten or only the ten are much more likely than king-queen) and play the eight from dummy. Relying on South to hold the ten after North does not play it at trick one, declarer can drive out the ♥Q and play for a second club trick himself for 11 tricks. Otherwise, East will have the same considerations as West and again, 10 tricks will be more likely than 11.

Should anyone stumble into 4♠ or 4♥, 11 tricks will be easier to negotiate as declarer can ruff out the other major, but it would take some unusual evaluation to reach a major-suit game rather than 3NT and +450 will be very rare.

**Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

Most N/S pairs will roll into 3NT after a 2NT opening or its equivalent, North showing five



spades to suggest an alternative strain.

West will almost always lead a heart around to the queen and declarer will do best to start on diamonds rather than spades. West can win the first or second round to continue hearts, or duck twice. If he wins early to continue hearts, declarer ducks the second round and has time to play on spades to build a second winner there with the ♠8 the late entry to cash it. If West ducks two diamonds, declarer turns to spades and the defense gets two diamonds and one spade but no hearts for 10 tricks.

If declarer misjudges and attacks spades early, West plays low on the first and East wins to continue hearts. East's ♠8 controls the fourth round of the suit and declarer can take only eight tricks before having to address diamonds, but West gets three hearts and the ♠A to go with the defenders' spade winner to set 3NT.

Declarer might lament his bad luck if he goes down but the best he could hope for by playing on spades would be 10 tricks, which is no better than playing on diamonds, assuming East has one spade honor and hearts are five-three, while the downside in playing spades before diamonds is painfully evident.

The defenders can hold 3NT to nine tricks on any lead but a heart, but unless South shows heart length on the bidding, West will virtually never lead anything but his best suit.

**Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

If N/S can identify or appreciate the importance of South's singleton spade they will surely find a route to 6♥, which does not require a reasonable diamond division.

West players who do not have a Polish-style weak two-suited opening will pass and North will open 1♥. Whether East passes, overcalls 2♦, or doubles will depend on style, mood, and perhaps even system strategy, and to a certain extent the same factors will affect whether South shows his

suit (when East does not), shows spade shortness, uses a game-forcing raise (or cue-bid), or simply launches into a key card ask.

In the Blackwood scenarios, North must decide whether to show his void if his methods include that option: a popular treatment is to bid 5NT over 4NT with an even number of key cards and an unspecified void, and to jump in the void (or in the trump suit if the void is higher ranking) with an odd number, but there are several different viable treatments on the market and auctions will vary accordingly.

As long as North does not show an unpleasant hand once the fit is established – and why would he? – N/S are bound to reach slam when South takes control of the auction.

Where East opted for a takeout double of 1♥, West is likely to compete to 4♠, ideally at his earliest convenience. Although even this aggressive obstruction should not derail the N/S Slam Express, it's conceivable that a few pairs will stop at 5♥ or double 4♠ and sit for it (down 1100). Might West compete to 5♣? Not very likely, but if that happens and N/S stop to double, the 1400-point penalty will fall just short of the 1430 available in 6♥.

If South has the opportunity to defend 2♦ doubled and seizes it, his side will be disappointed with their +1100. It's not often that +1100 will be a near bottom score, but that's the case on this final board of the session.

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**Eric Kokish** married Beverly Kraft, his childhood sweetheart, in 1986.

Son Matthew, two dogs: Lady (Golden Retriever) and Jackie Robinson (Black

Labrador); Kitten - called Kitten!

Residence: Toronto

Eric learned bridge at High School and has been fascinated by the game ever since. He has made his mark on bridge in several areas. He served in administration, as president of Unit 151 (Montreal); as District 1 judiciary chairman in the Seventies and Eighties, as a Canadian Bridge Federation Board member and as a member of the ACBL Goodwill Committee.

Eric is a former editor of the Unit 151 newsletter, author of a weekly bridge column in the Montreal Gazette from 1977 to 1997, has been a principal contributor to most world championship books since 1979, directs the Master Solvers Club and Challenge the Champs for the Bridge World magazine, has been editor of the World Bridge News since 1994 and has contributed to bridge magazines and bulletins around the world as well as doing VuGraph commentary at many World and

International events.

Kokish is also the author of several conventions, including the Kokish Relay and the Montreal Relay. In 1980, he won a Bols Brilliancy prize and the ROMEX award for the best bid hand of the year.

Although he has not played frequently of late, Kokish is still among the top all-time Canadian players. He has won two North American championships — the Vanderbilt Knockout Teams and the Men's Board-a-Match Teams. He has earned two silver medals in international play — in the World Open Pairs in 1978 and the Bermuda Bowl in 1995 and has finished third three times in the Rosenblum Cup.

As a coach, Kokish has earned a reputation as one of the best. His latest success was as coach of the Nick Nickell squad, which won the 2000 Bermuda Bowl in Bermuda and the 2003 Bermuda Bowl in Monaco. In the past year Eric has coached the Russian and Chinese teams and members of the Egyptian team and this year is coaching teams and pairs using the excellent play records from Bridge Base Online, which provide for a whole new and effective coaching environment.

In 1997, after several working visits to Indonesia, he was invited by the Indonesian government to coach the national teams in Jakarta, following which he and Beverly settled in Toronto.