

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION ♥♣



First Interclub – Heat B

20th - 23rd September 2017

Commentary by Ian Hamilton

1

♠ 74
♥ A965
♦ AJ92
♣ K62

♠ AQ103
♥ J832
♦ 103
♣ J104

♠ J65
♥ KQ
♦ K54
♣ AQ953

♠ K982
♥ 1074
♦ Q876
♣ 87

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	1	3	4	3
W	5	1	3	4	3

North's weak NT is a triumph of a sort, despite being doubled by east. A low club lets north make his king, and declarer can establish diamonds for one loser. So long as dummy holds on to all its spades the defence can manage only eight tricks and a 300 penalty. Indeed, some easts may not even double, though most will.

By contrast, a 1♦ opener may see east overcalling 1NT and declaring game when west raises, maybe after a failing Stayman enquiry. A diamond lead ensures four defensive tricks so long as south carefully guards spades. Any other lead cedes 460.

This looks a good one for the weak NT (unless doubled on a non-club lead, losing 500). However, some E/Ws could miss game when east overcalls 1♦ with his heavy 2♣, and west passes, when he should perhaps raise.

2

♠ KQ63
♥ A64
♦ Q8753
♣ J

♠ J1097
♥ K1032
♦ 942
♣ 53

♠ A8
♥ Q95
♦ AJ
♣ AQ10642

♠ 542
♥ J87
♦ K106
♣ K987

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	2	-	2	1	1
W	2	-	2	1	1

East's 1♣ could run to north, whose double will fetch 1NT from south, if east hasn't tried 2♣. South's 1NT can be beaten, but not if east persists in setting up his club suit after a dutiful lead to the ace. He needs to play hearts, and west switch to a top spade if dummy ducks.

Some wests will respond 1♥ to 1♣, north either passing or doubling, and east now jumping to 3♣. This should go light, though could make if north fails to find a diamond switch when on play after a major suit lead. Certainly those left in 2♣ are strong favourites to make.

A closely fought part-score battle for a small plus.

3

♠ K62
♥ 742
♦ AJ
♣ KQ1092

♠ AQJ10
♥ 8
♦ Q109872
♣ 86

♠ 874
♥ AJ93
♦ K6543
♣ A

♠ 953
♥ KQ1065
♦
♣ J7543

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	-	2	-	-
S	3	-	2	-	-
E	-	5	-	3	2
W	-	5	-	3	2

E/W have an easy 5♦ game available, but N/S open first, making it awkward. West can double a 2♦ transfer over 1NT, at least finding the fit, if not necessarily the game. A north 1♣ will usually see south responding 1♥, allowing a 2♦ overcall, whereas an Inverted 3♣ may keep him quiet, and steal the pot.

Where E/W do elect for diamonds they could be outbid by N/S who can profitably save in hearts or clubs. The latter is easier, the defence unable to muster more than a spade, heart, heart ruff and the trump ace.

Making eight tricks in hearts is harder on a spade lead and continuation. Declarer must play only one trump after taking his pitch on the diamond ace. He then plays clubs, ruffing the diamond return and running clubs, letting east make three trumps. Otherwise he is forced.

4

♠ AQJ
♥ 10652
♦ A1086
♣ AK

♠ K83
♥ 9
♦ KJ73
♣ J8632

♠ 9765
♥ AKQ83
♦ 5
♣ 1074

♠ 1042
♥ J74
♦ Q942
♣ Q95

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	1	-	2
S	-	2	1	-	2
E	1	-	-	1	-
W	1	-	-	1	-

A 1♦ opening could easily see north in 2NT after a thin 2♦ raise, whether or not east overcalls unsoundly with hearts. Declarer can hold his losses to three hearts and two diamonds or equivalent, but could easily go light. An Inverted 3♦ raise sees the contract in definite minus territory.

An Acol 1♥ will be passed out. This looks tricky too, but if declarer keeps playing trumps he can scrape home with essentially the same losers plus the long trump.

This looks a board where any plus score could be a good result for either side.

5

♠ KQJ107
♥ A9
♦ K5
♣ AQ105

♠ A32
♥ KJ73
♦ QJ986
♣ 4

♠ 4
♥ 10862
♦ A1032
♣ K962

Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	2	3	5	4
S	5	2	3	5	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

I would open 2NT on the north cards, the end result presumably 3NT. This is held to ten tricks on an east heart lead, makes twelve on a more likely diamond, eleven otherwise, all assuming clubs are picked up.

South will be at the helm of 3NT after a 1♠ opener, 2♦ overcall, Sputnik double, and 3♦ cue by north. Again a heart is best, and takes four defensive tricks if the ace is played immediately to block the suit, if 5:2, albeit pointless with east marked with the spade ace. Ducking blocks the suit today. Most will lead a diamond anyway.

Strangely, the theoretical par spot is in spades, where the long trump protects against the second heart being cashed. This breaks (David) Burn's First Law - "when declaring a trump contract thou shalt have more trumps than the opponents". The "Law" is not infallible.

6

♠ 632
♥ 832
♦ J95
♣ Q752

♠ K1084
♥ A6
♦ 108642
♣ 93

♠ J97
♥ Q9754
♦ KQ7
♣ K4

Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	4	2	5	5
W	5	4	2	5	5

This looks like west in 3NT, after opening 1♣ or doubling south's very thin 1♥.

North is impaled on Morton's Fork at trick one. To prevent declarer making eleven tricks by setting up clubs via two finesses he must lead a diamond, the suit continued when declarer ducks. Now declarer can use dummy's entries to establish diamonds instead, also making eleven tricks.

Where south has bid or overcalled hearts the lead allows this suit to be picked up as well, twelve tricks being recorded, and a deserved duck for south for calling hearts on such a poor suit with a poor hand. In fact twelve tricks can always be made on a non diamond lead, as only one club finesse is actually needed, south's club king dropping under the ace.

7

♠ AK62
♥ Q102
♦ A
♣ QJ1054

♠ Q9853
♥ 43
♦ J3
♣ AK82

♠ 104
♥ A96
♦ 8764
♣ 9763

♠ J7
♥ KJ875
♦ KQ10952
♣

Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	6	6	2	4
S	1	6	6	2	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

This time with a point less south is certainly worth a 1♥ opener, being too weak to open diamonds and reverse into the suit, and the heart suit probably lost otherwise.

South can rebid diamonds twice after north's 2♣ then 2♠ FSF call, getting his shape across reasonably well. Most will therefore land in 4♥, the makeable red suit slams a rarity.

In any case neither 4♥ nor 5♦ would make the twelve tricks available today were either hearts 4:1 or the diamond knave not dropping.

Indeed, there could be those souths passing as opener and having difficulty getting their playing strength across, game being occasionally missed or 3NT declared, this having three top losers.

8

♠ QJ632
♥ 2
♦ J75
♣ 9542

♠ 954
♥ Q84
♦ KQ8
♣ AK106

♠ AK87
♥ A1053
♦ A1063
♣ 3

♠ 10
♥ KJ976
♦ 942
♣ QJ87

Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	5	4	4	5
W	3	5	4	4	5

Yet again 3NT will be the spot, almost certainly played by west after either his weak NT or 1♣ opener.

This should make eleven tricks when the diamonds break and the heart queen scores. It is also possible to play spades for three tricks when a top honour falls the 10 in south. The defence cannot play clubs without setting up the 10.

It will be interesting to see how many manage to play all the suits to advantage, making 460, and if any norths start with the spade queen, letting declarer make a dozen.

9

♠ AJ4
♥ AK1076
♦
♣ K10986

♠ 865
♥ Q4
♦ A843
♣ AJ73

♠ KQ107
♥ J9832
♦ 976
♣ 5

♠ 932
♥ 5
♦ KQJ1052
♣ Q42

Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	2	1	1	1
S	3	1	-	1	1
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

After responding 1NT to north's 1♥ opener south will try to sign off in 2♦ over the 2♣ rebid. North is unlikely to sit this, rebidding 3♣, and playing there. East's best lead is a heart won by north, who ruffs a heart low, then plays the diamond king, best covered and ruffed.

Declarer can succeed by ruffing another heart with the queen, which west must over-ruff, and play a spade. However, declarer exits in the suit, which only east can win. After cashing another spade any lead helps declarer, at most a further trump lost to west. Should west return a trump instead declarer finesses, and exits to west with his last trump. Dummy then either makes its diamonds or east is end-played in the majors.

It takes a spade lead to beat 2♦, the defence getting club ruffs and a trump promotion.

10

♠ 10
♥ 85
♦ Q105
♣ KQ108632

♠ 984
♥ QJ109
♦ 87432
♣ 7

♠ AKJ5
♥ AK742
♦ K9
♣ J9

♠ Q7632
♥ 63
♦ AJ6
♣ A54

Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	-	-	-	-
S	4	-	-	-	-
E	-	2	3	1	-
W	-	2	3	1	-

Some might overcall east's 1♥ with 1♠, but I wouldn't holding a poor suit in a defensive hand. West might well raise hearts anyway, and east bid game.

South's spade lead gives up ten tricks immediately. Any other credible lead does so too, declarer using trump entries to lead diamonds, then establishing them with a ruff. It takes a low club to north and spade switch to beat 4♥, declarer now unable to set up diamonds without sustaining a spade ruff. In practice, where south is silent, declarer will often go light by playing for the spade queen on-side, better odds than diamonds 3:3.

North could well pre-empt in clubs whether or not west raises hearts, and N/S then sacrifice over the usually making 4♥. The defence can only get three top winners, collecting 200.

11

♠ J8653
♥ K864
♦ A1082
♣

♠ K102
♥ Q10
♦ 765
♣ Q8765

♠ 97
♥ A73
♦ KJ9
♣ AKJ109

♠ AQ4
♥ J952
♦ Q43
♣ 432

Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	2	2	-
S	-	-	2	2	-
E	3	-	-	-	2
W	3	-	-	-	2

Everyone is likely to pass round to east, whose strong NT runs to north, west not quite strong enough to invite game. At love all north may well bid spades or show the majors, assuming he has the system to do so. If he doesn't 1NT makes eight or nine tricks.

Acro easts open 1♣, which west may raise to the 2- or 3-level, depending on system, alternatively try 1NT. 3♣ makes, with an overtrick if either north or south open up hearts.

With E/W making 110-150 N/S need to compete at love all, since they are only going light in 50s. Only the inverted club raise is likely to silence them. They need to go to the 3 level, where they come close to making nine tricks in either major, it needing a forcing defence to defeat either, but still a cheap save.

12

♠ 107
♥ A1094
♦ J102
♣ Q987

♠ 43
♥ QJ873
♦ K93
♣ J104

♠ KJ95
♥ K6
♦ 654
♣ AK62

♠ AQ862
♥ 52
♦ AQ87
♣ 53

Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	2	1
S	-	2	-	1	1
E	1	-	1	-	-
W	1	-	1	-	-

South will frequently end up in 2♠ here, either overcalling east's weak NT, alternatively bidding the suit over east's 1♣. In the latter case west could make a Sputnik double, east rebidding 1NT. South could now try 2♦, getting preference back to spades.

2♠ looks one light, but declarer can engineer enough dummy entries to play the spade suit twice from dummy, escaping with only one trump loser. The defence can thwart this plan by leading clubs at the start, declarer ultimately forced. However, dummy's club pips are such that the suit needs led at trick one.

This looks an interesting tussle to make a part-score, some doubtless being successful.

13

♠ K5
♥ 108743
♦ J986
♣ 73

♠ J10932
♥ J
♦ K1075
♣ 1042

♠ AQ86
♥ AKQ962
♦
♣ K85

♠ 74
♥ 5
♦ AQ432
♣ AQJ96

Dealer: North
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	5	-	-
S	-	-	6	-	-
E	2	3	-	1	-
W	2	3	-	1	-

It would be a mistake to open the south hand a Strong Two in hearts, since the spade suit could get lost. Better to open 1♥, planning to reverse into spades.

Today, west overcalls in diamonds or bids 2NT for the minors. North will jump to 3♥ or 4♥ at most tables, clearly distributional, since he has a double or cue bid available to show a high card raise.

The end result will be south having to guess what to do over east's 5♦. Most will advance to 5♥, though few will bid the slam, an easy make, dummy able to get a club loser away on spades.

Those who get sacrificing in diamonds will usually make ten tricks, for a very profitable save. It takes a heart and three rounds of spades to get a trump promoted.

14

♠ AQ963
♥ A106
♦ 109
♣ 654

♠ K5
♥ K543
♦ A643
♣ A32

♠ J1042
♥ Q8
♦ K5
♣ Q10987

♠ 87
♥ J972
♦ QJ872
♣ KJ

Dealer: East
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	-	1	-
S	1	-	-	1	-
E	-	3	3	-	1
W	-	3	3	-	1

East's weak NT will usually be passed out. South presumably leads clubs against 1NT, and must find the spade switch when he wins the diamond king to hold it to eight tricks, otherwise declarer gets at least two major suit tricks after his diamonds, scoring 150-180.

In theory, E/W are better in a red suit, since a spade lead holds 1NT. 5 Card Majors find one, east's 1♦ maybe raised by west, to the 3- level playing Inverted Minors. 3♦ could silence north, who otherwise calls 2♣, south supporting to the 3 level. Alternatively, west responds 1♥ to 1♦, east supporting over north's spade intervention.

E/W's red suit 3 level spot should make on the nose, so it is better for N/S if they can declare spades, only losing 50-100, the defence getting three clubs, and a trick in each of the other suits.

15

♠ J95
♥ KQ974
♦ 102
♣ Q95

♠ 8
♥ 82
♦ AKQ9653
♣ K104

♠ KQ1042
♥ 53
♦ J84
♣ A72

♠ A763
♥ AJ106
♦ 7
♣ J863

Dealer: South
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	2	-	-
S	-	-	2	-	-
E	-	4	-	1	1
W	-	4	-	1	1

East has an opening problem after three passes, it being likely the opponents have a major suit contract available. 3♦, the rare 4th seat pre-empt, has the best chance of buying it. This spot should lose the obvious three tricks.

Where east opens 1♦ south can double, and north jump to 3♥, over which E/W may not advance. This should go one light but needs east to switch to his singleton spade at trick 2, declarer now losing either two spades or one spade and a ruff. Otherwise, good guessing in the club suit could see declarer home.

This looks to be another competitive spot where level judgement is required, E/W scoring better by getting 130 declaring diamonds than 100 defending spades.

16

♠ 8
♥ A985
♦ AKQ105
♣ QJ7

♠ QJ743
♥ KQ7
♦ J93
♣ 83

♠ 965
♥ 64
♦ 8
♣ AK109542

♠ AK102
♥ J1032
♦ 7642
♣ 6

Dealer: West
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	4	4	1	3
S	-	4	4	1	3
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

West's 3♣ gives north a problem. A penalty double, if available, works best as the cards lie, though north needs to defend well, ducking one heart to strand the second winner in dummy, declarer then losing three spades, a club and two red suit tricks.

Some will overcall 3NT despite the spade singleton. This looks as if it will make on the nose. Better is perhaps to double, and raise south's 3♥ to game, though a spade response would require a 3NT rebid, and maybe suggests more values.

South should make 4♥, but needs to be careful where west leads a top club, then switches to his singleton. Unless declarer plays ace and another trump he sustains a diamond ruff, and goes light.

17

♠ J10432
♥ K1082
♦ 86
♣ 52

♠ AK95
♥ 54
♦ KQ1042
♣ Q7

♠ 7
♥ QJ93
♦ A53
♣ AJ1063

♠ Q86
♥ A76
♦ J97
♣ K984

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	4	2	1	4
W	4	4	2	1	4

West will be at the pilot in 3NT here, a spade doubtless going to the queen and king. Declarer must take his club finesse now, whilst dummy still has a diamond entry, else a south duck, then a losing finesse leaves the clubs dead, and declarer light.

Upon winning the club king few souths will find the winning play of cashing two hearts, holding 3NT to 430. A perfectly reasonable spade return lets declarer make eleven tricks.

This looks likely to be pretty flat in 460 E/W.

18

♠ A
♥ A10863
♦ 953
♣ A1042

♠ 975
♥ KQ9
♦ AQJ84
♣ K8

♠ KJ10843
♥ 5
♦ K762
♣ J7

♠ Q62
♥ J742
♦ 10
♣ Q9653

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	-	4	-	-
S	4	-	4	-	-
E	-	3	-	2	1
W	-	3	-	2	1

N/S have game or part-score in hearts, but the strong hand is in last seat, where he may have difficulty getting into the auction. E/W have a save in spades against the game, or undoubled against the part-score. An east Weak Two or Multi gets E/W to game in spades, likely silencing north. 4♠ is two light on a diamond lead, south getting two ruffs, but may escape for down one.

North can bid 1♥ over west's 1♦ opener where east has passed, south raising after east introduces his spades. E/W may still outbid hearts, but some will get declaring the suit N/S, and can hold their losers to three.

North may pass over a west strong NT. East now transfers to spades, passing west's completion. It is now very hard, if not impossible, for south to protect. So north must bid over 1NT to get a decent score.

19

♠ 5
♥ 2
♦ J10987
♣ J109432

♠ A102
♥ KJ83
♦ Q532
♣ A5

♠ J983
♥ AQ764
♦ 6
♣ 876

♠ KQ764
♥ 1095
♦ AK4
♣ KQ

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	2	-	-	-
S	1	2	-	-	-
E	-	-	4	2	3
W	-	-	4	2	3

South's 1♠ could get passed out, unless west doubles, or east makes a thin protective 2♥ bid. Either will locate E/W's heart fit, and they could declare game, an easy make when south has both spade honours.

A south strong NT is much more likely to keep E/W out of the auction, particularly if north can transfer to clubs or use Stayman, then bid 3♣. This spot can be two light on a diamond lead, but could easily only lose 50, or even sneak home if declarer gets his heart loser away on the spade king.

This is another example, like #3 and #18, where opening the bidding first can make it difficult for the opponents to get to their best scoring spot. E/W can not be seriously faulted for passing out 1♠, which should go two light for a paltry 100.

20

♠ 9764
♥ KJ73
♦ KJ85
♣ 5

♠ J832
♥ 62
♦ Q2
♣ J8643

♠ Q10954
♥ 10973
♣ K972

♠ AKQ105
♥ A8
♦ A64
♣ AQ10

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	5	4	6	5
S	3	5	4	6	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Best methods will have south opening 2♣, and rebidding 2NT (23-24) over north's 2♦. A 2NT positive by north cramps the auction, and makes it awkward for south to show his values.

Stayman should see the spade fit found, and north will certainly contemplate slam when he has shortage, four card support, and the partnership 31-32 HCP.

Unfortunately for declarer the trump break means a trick must be lost, but both club losers can be ruffed in north, and the diamond position sees twelve tricks recorded.

Some may try the Grand, which needs only trumps to behave, plus one of the red knaves to score, best being to try to ruff down the heart queen, and when that fails test diamonds. Unlucky today, falling at the first fence.

21

♠ 9
♥ 7543
♦ Q643
♣ A875

♠ Q1075
♥ J962
♦ KJ5
♣ 42

♠ KJ62
♥ A
♦ A987
♣ K963

♠ A843
♥ KQ108
♦ 102
♣ QJ10

 Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	1	2	-	4	3
W	1	2	-	4	3

It could be a problem for E/W to find their spade fit when south doubles east's 1♦ opener. South is thin for the double, but does have both majors. West could easily simply support diamonds rather than bid 1♥, over which east is able to introduce his spades.

Ten tricks can be made in spades, but it requires south's diamond 10 to be pinned, so 140 looks more realistic.

Defending diamonds, the club queen will often be led, and north err by winning his ace. Even though north can now get a spade ruff, declarer can establish his club 9 with a ruff and could also pick up trumps without loss, making 130. A spade ace lead can get five tricks N/S.

N/S are unlikely to get playing in hearts, but where they do, could manage eight tricks for a decent board.

22

♠ QJ
♥ KQJ4
♦ 8654
♣ KQ4

♠ 7
♥ A109873
♦ Q97
♣ J93

♠ K9543
♥ 652
♦ A2
♣ 652

♠ A10862
♥
♦ KJ103
♣ A1087

 Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	4	2	4	4
S	4	5	2	4	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

What do you respond to 1♠ with the north hand? The correct bid is perhaps 2♦, though some will simply bid 3NT. 2♦ gets raised, and south will hardly stick the retreat to 3NT holding a heart void. There is every chance of 5♦ resulting, beaten on a heart lead from east, he winning his trump ace on the first round, and repeating the lead. South must ruff twice, the result being west makes the trump queen and heart ace. Even when 5♦ makes it scores less than 3NT.

There could also be those in 4♠, and many will be defeated. However, declarer can establish two heart tricks, throwing three diamonds, twice finesse trumps and cash three clubs. An exit with the last diamond sees east forced to let south make all his trumps. Playing the winning 13th club first lets east ruff, and now it is south who is later endplayed in trumps, one light.

23

♠ 64
♥ KJ643
♦ QJ4
♣ AQ3

♠ KJ52
♥ AQ102
♦ 103
♣ K62

♠ 10983
♥ 987
♦ K976
♣ 97

♠ AQ7
♥ 5
♦ A852
♣ J10854

 Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	3	2	1	3
S	4	3	3	1	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

N/S have a thin 3NT here, but may not be able to reach it, west opening his weak NT, and neither north nor south having enough to double or soundly overcall. 1NT goes badly light, but not by 600.

Where west opens a 5 card major 1♣ north can overcall in hearts, and south bid no trumps. Some souths will have opened a thin 1♣, north hardly stopping short of game now, even should west make an off-shape double.

Defending 3NT west is a bit stuck on lead, a low heart or diamond 10 best, but a spade more likely selected. With all the finesses working 600 or 630 will result.

So the west weak NT could well be the winner, and yet another demonstration of the advantage of opening first, both with south's thin opener and west's weak NT.

24

♠ AJ7
♥ Q762
♦ Q7
♣ Q1083

♠ Q96
♥ AKJ10
♦ A4
♣ K965

♠ K1083
♥ 4
♦ K862
♣ A742

♠ 542
♥ 9853
♦ J10953
♣ J

 Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	3	4	5	4
S	4	3	4	5	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

3NT will be the spot again, almost certainly by west after either his strong NT or Acol 1♥ opener, north doing best to lead a minor.

Declarer can establish a third heart trick, but to get a good board needs to find the spade knave. It is marginally better to play north for this, it possible to pick it up thrice guarded, whilst felling a possible singleton with south. Playing south for the knave a first round finesse is needed to cater for south length, the result the possible loss to a north singleton.

So I expect a fair few 430s on the card.

25

♠ J8765
♥ A
♦ Q95
♣ Q1064

♠ 93
♥ J432
♦ J872
♣ A32

♠ AQ104
♥ 987
♦ A1064
♣ 85

♠ K2
♥ KQ1065
♦ K3
♣ KJ97

 Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	-	2	2	2
S	4	-	2	2	2
E	-	1	-	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

When north responds 1♠ to his 1♥ Acol souths can rebid 1NT, whereas 5 card majors must rebid 2♣, north maybe raising. The Acol sequence shouldn't get overboard to 3NT, north passing 1NT, knowing of 24HCP maximum, whereas 5 card majors might, particularly if south has opened an off-shape strong NT rather than 1♥.

South's no trump contract should be held to eight tricks, unless west leads the diamond 2 and east supplies the 10, letting declarer make an extra diamond along with three clubs, three hearts and a spade.

3♣ loses the obvious three tricks, with little scope for more or less since declarer needs dummy's 4th trump to ruff hearts good, so cannot use it to ruff a diamond, even if he sneaks the king then gets dummy's away on hearts.

26

♠ J1087
♥ 9
♦ Q10432
♣ J74

♠ KQ3
♥ KQJ
♦ AKJ9
♣ 1082

♠ A9542
♥ 106
♦ 5
♣ A9653

♠ 6
♥ A875432
♦ 876
♣ KQ

 Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	1	-	3	4
W	4	1	-	3	4

South has a defensive hand, not ideally suited to 3♥. I would open a Weak Two, vulnerable. Over 3♥ west will bid 3NT, which east should pass. Over the lower pre-empt or Multi west doubles and then bids 2NT, showing 18-20.

3NT should make 630, even a disastrous spade knave or diamond lead not giving declarer tricks he couldn't establish by setting up clubs.

Where east insists on spades he can only make nine tricks, having to lose two clubs, a trump and the heart ace unless north is on lead and selects a diamond.

27

♠ KQJ9
♥ KJ63
♦ 106
♣ K84

♠ A83
♥ Q1082
♦ Q
♣ AJ1062

♠ 76
♥ A75
♦ J8753
♣ 953

♠ 10542
♥ 94
♦ AK942
♣ Q7

 Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	3	1
S	-	2	-	3	1
E	2	-	1	-	-
W	2	-	1	-	-

North should double west's 1♣ at love all, though a 1♠ overall works better, since south will respond 1♦ to the double. North has to pass this unless playing "equal level conversion", where a 1♥ bid doesn't promise extra values, just suggests an off-shape double. In these circumstances the spade fit could be found.

Spades can make nine tricks on a cross-ruff with good guessing in the red suits, but may well only make eight in practice. Where south is in diamonds it is difficult to avoid the loss of three aces and two trumps.

It looks like spades the winner here if N/S can get playing the strain.

28

♠ 9874
♥ Q
♦ 874
♣ AJ873

♠ AJ5
♥ AKJ86
♦ K103
♣ 65

♠ 1063
♥ 10952
♦ J92
♣ 1094

♠ KQ2
♥ 743
♦ AQ65
♣ KQ2

 Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	2	-	1	-
S	2	2	-	1	-
E	-	-	3	-	-
W	-	-	3	-	-

West's Acol 1♥ comes to south who is too strong for a protective 1NT, and hasn't a heart stop, so must double, north bidding 1♠ or 2♣. South may try with a 2♥ cue bid, but will give up in 2♠ or 3♣ when north has no heart stop. Sadly, even this may be too high.

A few easts will have a weak 3♥ pre-emptive response available. If south doubles this he is really in trouble.

Where west opens a strong NT south is probably best to pass and hope to beat it, which he should do on a club lead.

So, again we have a hand where system and opening position may well dictate the outcome, something of a theme on the set, which it is hoped proved enjoyable, especially if you like playing or defending 3NT.

Ave HCP	N 9.82	S 10.11	E 9.86	W 10.21	Balanced	N 11	S 11	E 11	W 17
Voids/singletons	N 2/13	S 4/9	E 1/13	W 0/7	7+ suit	N 1	S 1	E 1	W 1