

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION ♥♣



Third Interclub – Heat B

21st - 24th January 2018

Commentary by Ian Hamilton

1

♠ 10975
♥ 9862
♦ 1083
♣ AQ

♠ A862
♥ A4
♦ AKQ965
♣ 9

♠ J
♥ KQJ
♦ 742
♣ KJ7532

♠ KQ43
♥ 10753
♦ J
♣ 10864

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	3	6	-	1	4
W	3	6	-	1	4

East has a classic reverse, opening 1♦ and rebidding 2♠ over west's 2♣ response. Showing extra values this is game forcing over a 2 level response, so west can bid 3♦, knowing it won't get passed. When east cue bids 3♠ west knows his singleton is valuable, and it is hard to see slam not being bid.

Although trumps do not divide declarer can ruff two spades in dummy, even on a club lead and trump switch, having heart and club ruff entries back to hand.

Many will be in 3NT. Here there ten top tricks, and little realistic prospect of more. It seems unjust that their score beats those making 5♦ with an overtrick.

2

♠ Q932
♥ 94
♦ 74
♣ AK643

♠ K106
♥ KQ108
♦ AK1083
♣ 5

♠ A754
♥ A7532
♦ J65
♣ 10

♠ J8
♥ J6
♦ Q92
♣ QJ9872

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

West has another near reverse into hearts after opening 1♦, but this time east bids the suit first. West is now worth at least 3♥, possibly a 4♣ splinter.

This latter just might see slam bid, though it is a well below a 50% proposition, needing the diamond finesse and the suit to play for five tricks. It also needs trumps other than 4:0 with north.

As the cards lie there is little to the play, east's spade losers going on west's long diamond winners. For the record the percentage play in diamonds is a top one, then run the knave, catering to Qx, Qxx or Q9xx with south or a singleton queen in either hand.

Will any bid the slam, and will everyone make a dozen in 4♥?

3

♠ Q1043
♥ 95
♦ Q10974
♣ J10

♠ 5
♥ AKJ2
♦ J852
♣ K983

♠ AKJ98
♥ Q86
♦ AK3
♣ A7

♠ 762
♥ 10743
♦ 6
♣ Q6542

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

West has a maximum 2NT opener, and east close to a slam invite. However, when west shows 4 or 5 spades over Stayman east would be wise to shut up shop in 3NT rather than look for a borderline slam.

In 3NT eleven tricks are possible either by ceding two spades, or by setting up a club or the diamond knave, but twelve cannot be made without defensive help. North might give up an eleventh trick on a diamond lead, but declarer will surely lose a spade finesse rather than play for the unlikely club position for his twelfth.

There is an improbable slam in hearts, via a near double dummy line. Both top diamonds can score, south not profiting by ruffing a loser. Two trumps and top spades are followed by a club established by a ruffing finesse. South ruffs north's diamond queen winner at trick 13.

4

♠ KJ986532
♥ 76
♦ 5
♣ 96

♠ A
♥ AK32
♦ AK64
♣ K752

♠ 107
♥ Q10984
♦ QJ
♣ J1084

♠ Q4
♥ J5
♦ 1098732
♣ AQ3

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	-	2	-
E	5	3	6	-	4
W	5	3	6	-	4

We have 4 possible slams in a row, albeit no more than one likely to be bid. West has the awkward 4:4:4:1 shape, 2NT probably his best opener. If north pre-empted 4♠ west has little option but to double, and north probably plays there, losing 500.

However, if E/W can somehow contrive to declare hearts twelve tricks are easy with trumps being 2:2. Two clubs in east are pitched on diamonds, and declarer needs only a club guess, which today he cannot get wrong.

Well done anyone who manages to bid and make this one. Indeed, any who get playing game in hearts at all should find themselves well up the traveller.

5

♠ KQJ652
 ♥ AKQ
 ♦ Q3
 ♣ 94
 ♠ 9
 ♥ 5432
 ♦ J9875
 ♣ Q65
 ♠ A108743
 ♥ J876
 ♦ 42
 ♣ 7

 Dealer: North
 N-S Vulnerable

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

With eight Playing Tricks north has an old-fashioned Acol strong 2♠, rarely played nowadays, most opening such hands 1♠. South will raise either to 4♠, this normally being a pre-emptive shot, and promising little except trump length.

West is unlikely to take this lying down, bidding 5♣, which most norths will double. This spot is unbeatable so long as a winning view is taken in diamonds. However, south has rather more spade length and shape than expected, and would be wise to remove the double to 5♠.

Today, north's adverse vulnerability save proves profitable, losing only 200 versus the 400 available from E/W's 5♣ game. Indeed, should north fail to cash two top hearts it comes home with an overtrick.

7

♠ J109865
 ♥ 972
 ♦ 2
 ♣ J96
 ♠ 72
 ♥ KQ10
 ♦ J654
 ♣ AQ43
 ♠ Q43
 ♥ J63
 ♦ 987
 ♣ K1082
 ♠ AK
 ♥ A854
 ♦ AKQ103
 ♣ 75

 Dealer: South
 Both Vulnerable

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

If south opens 1♦ he probably plays there, and should make eight tricks, either setting up a heart trick or getting two low club ruffs in hand.

Bidding 2NT on south's cards works better, north transferring to spades, and likely having a pot at game.

A heart lead is best. Declarer must cash top diamonds, pitching hearts, then ruff the fourth diamond high. If east over-ruffs, he can only cash two clubs and make south ruff a third with a top trump. There is a heart ruff entry to north to pull trumps.

Where east doesn't over-ruff top spades are cashed and a club loser goes on the last diamond. It is easy to err by taking top spades at the start, leaving north with three losers when east over-ruffs the 4th diamond.

6

♠ 84
 ♥ K542
 ♦ J842
 ♣ A93
 ♠ KQJ532
 ♥ QJ
 ♦ Q10
 ♣ K105
 ♠ 109
 ♥ A9873
 ♦ 963
 ♣ 872
 ♠ A76
 ♥ 106
 ♦ AK75
 ♣ QJ64

 Dealer: East
 E-W Vulnerable

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

Those playing 5 card majors N/S could have the better of this encounter, 1♦ being opened by south, and west overcalling in spades. North has good diamond support and can advance as far as 3♦, though might make a Sputnik double first, correcting clubs to diamonds. With the diamond queen doubleton this should come home, any trump promotion on a heart lead being at the expense of a spade trick.

By contrast, Acol opens a weak 1NT, west overcalling 2♠ or showing his single suiter. Now it is tricky for N/S to locate a fit, and west may be allowed to declare 2♠, which can get home if declarer makes use of his club 10, whether he or the defence lead the suit.

A nice part-score contest with system relevant to the likely outcome.

8

♠ Q73
 ♥ KJ975
 ♦ Q9
 ♣ KJ10
 ♠ AJ6
 ♥ Q1082
 ♦ K8653
 ♣ 8
 ♠ 10854
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A74
 ♣ Q7642
 ♠ K92
 ♥ A43
 ♦ J102
 ♣ A953

 Dealer: West
 Neither Vulnerable

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

Acol N/Ss could easily over-stretch to 3NT or 4♥ here, assuming north opens either a weak NT or 1♥, though the weak no trumpers really should stop in 2NT. If playing 5 card majors many will support hearts to the 3 or even 4 level with south's hand after responding 2♣, though with such a flat hand maybe trying 2NT is better.

Even taking a correct club view making more than nine tricks in hearts looks improbable, and some could be held to eight, and a certain minus.

No trumps has its chances of making nine tricks, particularly as east is unlikely to lead diamonds - where he does an inspired view is needed in hearts and clubs. A spade lead gives a trick, and a club gives away the position, so I expect some plus scores in no trumps, though there will also be those failing in game.

9

♠ J9654
♥ J42
♦ K10
♣ J84

♠ 102
♥ Q73
♦ QJ97
♣ KQ106

♠ A87
♥ K8
♦ A6542
♣ A93

♠ KQ3
♥ A10965
♦ 83
♣ 752

Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

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

Where south opens a strong NT he will declare 2♠ after a north transfer. Acol opens 1♦ and south may well rebid his 15-16 1NT, and play there, though there is a case for raising spades. 2♠ should sneak home, a heart ruffed in dummy, the defence giving up a trick if they play trumps.

1NT could succeed, west needing to lead a red suit to ensure defensive success, a heart to the 9 easiest for them, and maybe resulting in a two trick defeat.

The 5:3 major suit fit should be the winner, though may not necessarily be in practice, as the club king lead against 1NT puts the defence on the back foot. Declarer can now intra-finesse spades - low to the 9, then run the knave, pinning the 10. This creates four spade tricks, and will result in at least seven tricks.

10

♠ AQ2
♥ A6
♦ KJ864
♣ 1097

♠ 94
♥ J10987
♦ Q107
♣ AJ4

♠ K5
♥ KQ32
♦ A95
♣ K852

♠ J108763
♥ 54
♦ 32
♣ Q63

Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

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

System could backfire here on E/W if they play a strong NT, west bidding 2♦, a heart transfer. North could double this for the lead. Whether or not north doubles east probably breaks the transfer and 4♥ is declared.

This spot is beaten on the marked diamond lead and subsequent ruff where east declares. However, west could end up declaring after the transfer break, and cannot be beaten.

Acol may well get to 4♥ as well, east opening 1♥ and trying 2NT over west's raise, west correcting to 4♥. North is unlikely to squeak at the 3 level in this sequence, and the normal spade knave lead leaves the defence helpless when clubs play for four tricks.

11

♠ K4
♥ AQJ
♦ 10875
♣ A765

♠ J763
♥ 86
♦ 943
♣ J1084

♠ 85
♥ K109732
♦ AQ2
♣ KQ

♠ AQ1092
♥ 54
♦ KJ6
♣ 932

Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

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

Where north's weak NT is overcalled 2♥ or a single suiter, south will compete with 2♠ and presumably play there. West's heart lead puts the defence ahead, and they should score a trick in each suit, holding it to 140.

After a 5 card major 1♦, and east's 1♥, south's 1♠ is forcing. South could easily raise north's 1NT rebid to 2NT, and game ensue. On a heart lead eleven tricks can be made in no trumps double dummy by playing a diamond to the knave, then running the spade knave.

However, most will play top spades, and when these don't break, need to play a club to the ace and play diamonds to make nine tricks. East ends up end-played, declarer making two diamonds and three hearts plus his black winners. Clearing spades or leading diamonds from south should result in at most eight tricks.

12

♠ J9843
♥ K108
♦ K74
♣ Q3

♠ Q
♥ 653
♦ QJ1082
♣ KJ76

♠ K72
♥ J974
♦ A109542
♣ A1065

♥ AQ2
♦ A9653
♣ 8

Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

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

North responds 1♠ to south's 1♦, and where east intervenes with clubs south can cue with 3♣, showing a sound raise to 3♠. North is borderline with his wasted queen, but those that advance to game will find their contract unbeatable, so long as they either double finesse spades or play them from the top.

E/W could well save over 4♠, and the defence can only cash four winners. Indeed, unless south find a heart switch after his spade ace 5♣x is only one light. A diamond ace lead could have a similar result, allowing the king to be ruffed out, and providing two east heart pitches. Losing only 100 will beat even the N/S part-scores.

13

♠ KQJ4
♥ K76
♦ J84
♣ AK6

♠ A975
♥ 10954
♦ 7
♣ 10954

♠ 863
♥ A
♦ A109653
♣ Q73

Dealer: North
Both Vulnerable

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

5 card majors could get lucky here, north opening a strong NT and getting to 3NT, possibly south showing diamonds on the way. East has a blind lead, and could select his better major, spades, or a club, giving declarer time to get diamonds established, and recording an overtrick.

Acop opens 1♠, south responding 2♦ and north rebidding 2NT, 15-19. Now east will not lead spades and has a 50% chance of selecting the winning heart lead. With both diamonds off-side declarer is behind in the race, and goes one light.

So the lottery effect of system could well affect results on this one.

14

♠ J105
♥ KQ
♦ 107643
♣ 1084

♠ AKQ983
♥ 1052
♦ Q
♣ A92

♠ 642
♥ AJ
♦ AK52
♣ KQ53

Dealer: East
Neither Vulnerable

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

With 17HCP south is best to double east's 1♠, despite not holding hearts. He needs a spade stop to overcall a 15-17 1NT, and there is no other sensible call.

When north responds 2♦ south can double again to show extras when east ups the ante with 2♣, few playing this as penalties. North tries 3♣, corrected to 3♦.

3♦ can be beaten two tricks if east plays four rounds of spades as west pitches clubs. West gets the diamond knave ruff of the spade in front of north and then a club ruff. Ruffing the 4th spade high in south doesn't help.

One or even two light in 3♦ could be okay, as east can always make 3♣. The only hope of two club tricks, and five in defence, is for south to underlead his honours and hope declarer plays the percentages, running his lead to the 9. Few will declare hearts, ten tricks possible.

15

♠ 106542
♥ 62
♦ AQ1064
♣ 10

♠ A
♥ AQ985
♦ 982
♣ KQ42

♠ K983
♥ 743
♦ K73
♣ AJ7

Dealer: South
N-S Vulnerable

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

South hasn't a vulnerable opener in my view, being balanced and having only 11 HCP. However, he can double east's 4th seat 1♥, being playable in spades and both minors.

The boss suit comes into its own here, N/S able to bid up to 3♠, which loses only two trumps and two hearts. Even should south pass north might intervene over west's heart raise or 1NT response, though now diamonds could be the spot, usually making nine tricks.

Where E/W do get playing hearts or in east's rebid club suit they will usually make nine tricks also, losing only two clubs and two diamonds. It takes an unlikely two club ruffs to hold a heart contract to eight tricks.

A nice potentially competitive battle, anyone a winner.

16

♠ A10754
♥ AK
♦ KJ75
♣ Q6

♠ 2
♥ 97543
♦ A94
♣ 10953

♠ 863
♥ J10
♦ Q1083
♣ K842

Dealer: West
E-W Vulnerable

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

West's weak NT will get doubled and N/S will regret it if they double east's run-out to hearts, only five defensive tricks available, indeed overtricks possible if the defence are slow to find a diamond switch.

N/S are better advancing to 2♠ or into their 4:4 diamond fit, where an extra trick is possible, albeit for the same score. In spades declarer cannot avoid losing three trumps and two aces. On a heart least he can duck a trump, later playing the ace. When the break is revealed diamonds need played before clubs or he loses control.

Where west opens a 5 card Major 1♣ E/W will rarely locate their heart fit, north doubling or overcalling 1♠, and east too weak to bid. The same N/S contract choices should eventuate in this, yet another interesting part-score contest.

17

♠ AQJ9543
♥ 95
♦ 9
♣ KJ10

♠ 107
♥ 106
♦ K10654
♣ 9843

♠ K82
♥ AKJ32
♦ AQJ7
♣ 2

♠ 6
♥ Q874
♦ 832
♣ AQ765

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

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

Where north opens 4♠ east is best to double and, absent extreme length, west pass. 4♠x can be beaten two tricks on a club lead, diamond underlead and club ruff, but east would be wiser simply cashing out, west needing to indicate his heart length, so that east knows that the heart ace is cashing.

Where north opens 1♠ again east doubles, this time for takeout. When west bids diamonds east could raise unless north has had a belated shot at 4♠.

I can't see many losing 300 N/S in spades, so those allowed to declare diamonds below game look the E/W winners on this exhibit. Ten tricks are straightforward, despite the spade king being ruffed away. Now only two trumps need be drawn, the hearts established with two ruffs, and the last spade ruffed, 130 being scored.

18

♠ A92
♥ 75
♦ QJ6
♣ KQ654

♠ J1063
♥ Q102
♦ AK5
♣ A102

♠ Q85
♥ AJ9863
♦ 83
♣ J3

♠ K74
♥ K4
♦ 109742
♣ 987

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

West has a game invite when east opens a weak 2♥ or Multi. As east is maximum many will get to 4♥, the game essentially dependant upon the trump finesse - if this succeeds, the defence can potentially get a spade ruff or club trick, but not both.

Where east passes Acol opens west's hand a weak NT, and could manage to stay in part-score after an east transfer. 5 card majors may also stay low, west opening 1♣ and rebidding 1NT or 1♠, east rebidding his suit and west not raising.

So fortune will not favour the brave in this 50:50 game on this occasion. With the trump king wrong the defence have multiple chances to find the club lead or switch, and will rarely let it home.

19

♠ 6
♥ AK7
♦ K97
♣ AK10862

♠ K32
♥ Q96542
♦ A65
♣ 7

♠ 9754
♥ 10
♦ 8432
♣ QJ54

♠ AQJ108
♥ J83
♦ QJ10
♣ 93

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

Holding a good suit, intermediates and 11HCP south is just about worth a 1♠ opener. With a misfit north would be wise not to get too excited, simply responding 2♣, then signing off in 3NT over the 2♠ rebid. The odd slam will be missed this way, but a lot of minuses avoided.

The same spot should be reached where west is the opener with a thin Weak Two or Multi, north doubling then bidding no trumps when south bids spades. Where south and west are silent, north likely opens 1♠ and rebids 2NT over south's 1♠, raised to game.

Eleven tricks are possible by playing on spades and diamonds and double finessing hearts, running the knave, which pins the 10. This might happen when west has opened and east leads the suit, teaching west to have a better suit. Playing on clubs means 430 at best.

20

♠ QJ93
♥ AQJ83
♦ 3
♣ KQ6

♠ K7
♥ K10942
♦ Q6
♣ J1073

♠ 52
♥ 765
♦ 9752
♣ A842

♠ A10864
♥
♦ AKJ1084
♣ 95

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

We could have a few misfortunes here, north opening 1♥, and reversing into spades over south's 2♦. Some will get now to the spade slam, failing to establish that two Key Cards are missing, and being fortunate that one is the trump king, so that the slam is an even money affair.

South's heart void no great asset opposite north's suit. He is best simply to raise to 3♠, forcing after the two level response and reverse. If north now uses RKCB rather than cue-bidding clubs the 50:50 slam might be avoided.

So I expect a fair few light in slam, it being a rarity where east leads a heart or west fails to switch to clubs when he takes his trump king, either of which lets it through.

21

♠ J107543
♥ 86
♦ K82
♣ Q5

♠ K2
♥ Q109
♦ Q10654
♣ K97

♠ AQ98
♥ K753
♦ 3
♣ AJ83

Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

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

Like west #19 I don't advocate a Weak Two or Multi on the north hand, but some will disagree. South will drive to the spade game in either event, succeeding when two of the three relevant finesses succeed, a 50% chance.

After two passes and a south 1♣ he has enough to raise north's 1♠ response to 3♣, a 4♦ splinter being excessive. North should then obey the maxim that "when partner raises your 6-card suit - bid game".

There may be a few missing 4♣, but some could make up for this in part by recording eleven tricks where east either leads a club or fails to cover the queen.

E/W actually have a profitable sacrifice available in diamonds, but few will manage to get into the auction.

22

♠ Q102
♥ 1073
♦ Q842
♣ A108

♠ AK97
♥ AKQ65
♦ 6
♣ Q93

♠ J853
♥ 9
♦ KJ
♣ KJ7642

Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

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

When east opens 1♥ some souths will make a weak jump in clubs on south's cards. West has just enough to support at the 3 level, but would only raise to 2♥ over a simple 2♣ overall.

A 3♠ continuation over west's 3♥ is a clear slam try, and west could co-operate, his singleton club, four trumps and diamond ace surely all working. Where west has simply raised to 2♥ east's 2♠ is only a game try. West has enough to accept this, but no more.

In truth, I doubt many slams will be bid, and 6♥ is no walk in the park when two rounds of clubs shorten dummy. Declarer can succeed by setting up a diamond via a ruffing finesse and ruffing two clubs and a spade - an unlikely line, south required to have a singleton trump allowing the diamond to cash when north has to follow.

23

♠ K8
♥ 102
♦ Q873
♣ KJ962

♠ QJ9753
♥ J6
♦ K1042
♣ A

♠ A102
♥ AQ73
♦ J6
♣ Q1084

♠ 64
♥ K9854
♦ A95
♣ 753

Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	2	2	5	4
W	1	2	2	5	4

This looks to be a universal 4♠ after west has opened the suit and east has responded 2♣. Whether west rebids 2♦ or 2♠ east should bid the spade game.

After a club lead trumps can be picked up, and the fate of overtricks depends on the diamond guess. Those going up with the king can ruff a diamond in dummy and dispose of the other on a dummy heart after a losing finesse.

So it looks like little but 620s and 650s on the traveller.

24

♠ K32
♥ AQ1087
♦ J105
♣ A8

♠ J765
♥ 632
♦ 62
♣ QJ107

♠ 10984
♥ K9
♦ Q743
♣ 963

♠ AQ
♥ J54
♦ AK98
♣ K542

Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

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

South is a bit short of ammunition for slam when north has a weak NT, albeit maximum with a 5 card major. Today, there are useful fillers, the diamond 10,9,8 uniting to produce four tricks in the suit, and the heart 10 protecting against a 4:1 break.

Despite the heart finesse losing there are twelve tricks in hearts or no trumps. At Pairs, south should probably prefer no trumps, the likelihood being of either eleven or twelve tricks making in both spots.

As it is slam is on one of two finesses succeeding, a 75% probability, despite only 31 HCP and one 5 card suit. Indeed, the fourth diamond isn't even needed. Whether many will identify the meshing values and bid the excellent slam in either denomination is another matter.

25

♠ A652
♥ J
♦ AQ102
♣ 9853

♠ KJ983
♥ K8654
♦ 63
♣ 10

♠ Q
♥ AQ10973
♦ 984
♣ J72

Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

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

Where north opens 1♦ east could use Michaels, and can make or get close to 2♠. I suppose south should pass, but a raise to 3♦ seems not unreasonable. This also gets close on cross-ruff lines, but should be one light.

Where south opens a Multi or a Weak 2♥ that looks the final resting place. Despite the 5:1 break declarer can get home, losing only two trumps and three clubs, but could easily go light.

West could get to open 1♣ in 4th seat and may raise east's 1♠ after south has overcalled in hearts, alternatively pass, south playing his 2♥.

With many contracts struggling to make this looks like a part-score battle where one might be best defending.

26

♠ 8653
♥ 843
♦ K98
♣ QJ6

♠ Q10
♥ AKQ2
♦ Q753
♣ K73

♠ AK97
♥ J10
♦ AJ642
♣ A10

Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

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

South has no sensible bid over an east strong NT, which is presumably passed out. On a low diamond lead east's queen can be picked up, plus north lead a club through the queen - a three trick set resulting.

Where east opens an Acol 1♥ south can double and raise spades. North is unlikely to advance, so the spade part-score will score 140-170, the latter possible if diamonds and clubs get similarly picked up.

A few souths will get to 1NT after overcalling a 1♦ opener. The same nine tricks are available.

This looks like a bad one for the E/W strong no trumps, losing 200-300 on a part-score hand.

27

♠ 1098742
♥ K95
♦ J102
♣ 10

♠ A5
♥ Q10
♦ Q8
♣ AK87632

♠ KQ63
♥ J43
♦ 9765
♣ 54

Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	3	6	1	6
W	7	3	6	1	6

After 1♥-2♣-2♦ East's best shot is probably a fourth suit forcing 2♠, over which west will own up to club support. East is now away to the races, and might well get bidding the club slam. However, he may not be able to establish the presence of a red suit king, and be confident enough of a spade singleton to bid the Grand.

In all probability there will be many in 3NT. If the spade lead is missed there are thirteen tricks via a double squeeze, north having to hold the heart king, south a diamond, so nobody guarding spades. Otherwise, it is only the dozen, unless south pitches a diamond.

With few, if any, bidding the Grand Slam in clubs those in 6NT+1 will be at or near the top of the traveller.

28

♠ Q86
♥ AJ10
♦ Q652
♣ A97

♠ AJ53
♥ K765
♦ 8
♣ K1086

♠ K92
♥ 983
♦ 1094
♣ QJ52

Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

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

North's weak vulnerable 1NT passed out on the minority of the points looks iffy, but it could easily be allowed to make on a spade lead, though declarer has to play a diamond from dummy after setting up and cashing his clubs. If he plays a heart north gets squeezed on east's last spade. However, most will make at least six tricks.

E/W do better when north opens 1♦, as east doubles and west passes for penalties. On a trump lead west needs to watch the pips, but can make four trumps to go with at least one trick in each other suit - and a 200+ penalty. West could bid 1NT instead, and may well make, north unlikely to play clubs early enough.

So concludes another closely contested part-score, with several outcomes possible, a frequent occurrence on this set after a wild start. Hopefully they were enjoyable.

Ave HCP	N 9.93	S 10.11	E 9.82	W 10.14	Balanced	N 14	S 13	E 9	W 11
Voids/singletons	N 0/8	S 1/9	E 2/14	W 2/13	7+ suit	N 2	S 0	E 1	W 1