

The January Charity pairs, in association with the World Bridge Federation



Wednesday 24 January 2024

Our January Charity Pairs, raises funds for UNICEF to help children in danger through the world.

They need so much help – the requirements for medicines, clean water, basic warm clothing – so much is required. Please help us raise as much money as we can – send your donations to us and we will gather them together and pass them on to UNICEF from bridge players all over the world.

Just go to : <u>https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp</u> and you will see how to do it ... there is no specified amount but we do suggest £3 per player if you can manage that !

Help us to help these children who are in such need. Please.





E/W can make eight tricks in either NT or hearts – in the latter, there is no way to collect both the three top diamonds and a diamond ruff, even if declarer, correctly, plays a low heart towards the king-jack on the first round. Meanwhile, N/S have seven tricks in a club contract and should score well if allowed to play  $3\frac{1}{2}$  undoubled. Even better, if they reach  $3\frac{1}{2}$  E/W may take the push to  $3\stackrel{\blacksquare}{7}$  and go minus, giving N/S a very good result.

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



E/W are cold for seven in any one of three denominations. After  $2NT - 3 \blacklozenge$  (transfer), East should do more than merely bid  $3 \clubsuit$ , and now reaching seven should not be too taxing. The question is, can 7NT be reached with confidence? Blackwood when holding a void is not generally

recommended, but here it is the easiest way to get there as West can count the tricks once he hears that East has three aces, two kings and, if playing key-card, the  $\mathbf{\nabla} Q$ .





If South opens INT, North will transfer and East overcall  $2 \triangleq$ . South may bid  $3 \P$  and West jump to  $4 \triangleq -$  he does have five-card support and the right shortage. After a  $1 \oiint$  opening and  $1 \P$  response, East again overcalls, this time  $1 \clubsuit$ . South makes a support double, showing three-card heart support, perhaps, and West makes a pre-emptive spade raise. If he bids only  $3 \clubsuit$ , East may pass and game is missed – East has a close decision. A more constructive raise will see game reached.

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



3NT is the normal contract. If West opens  $I^{\clubsuit}$  and East responds INT, 3NT will make easily enough. But where West opens  $I^{\clubsuit}$  and rebids 2NT over the  $I^{\clubsuit}$  response a spade lead will leave him needing to play double dummy to succeed – win the second spades, club finesse, duck a heart at some point and South can be forced to give dummy diamond winners at the end. In real life, 3NT by West will normally fail as there is no entry to the diamonds.

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



South, with no particular opening lead in mind, has no good reason to open in third seat – which leaves E/W a free run to their chosen contract. Whether West opens INT or opens I  $\clubsuit$  and rebids INT, East will raise to 3NT on the strength of the five-four shape and two well-placed tens. Declarer will duck two rounds of hearts, knock out the  $\bigstar$ A and take the club finesse for nine tricks. If he is inspired, he may pick up an overtrick by guessing diamonds, but most will make only nine.

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



With the diamond onside, there are 12 tricks in spades but only 11 in hearts because of the bad heart split. Because of the presence of the jack, a spade contract is superior in theory as well as practice, but most will find the heart fit very quickly and play there. I expect +480 in spades to be very good and +980 huge. Either 1 - 1 - 4, or 1 - 2NT (GF raise) could well see the failing slam reached. Someone will do very well to get to spades.

### Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.



This distributional deal will see many different auctions and final contracts. E/W can make  $6 \$ , double dummy, but  $6 \$  is a more likely spot if West overcalls. This can be made in two ways – lead the  $\clubsuit$ J then take finesses against the  $\pounds 9$ , or take the simple spade finesse but then pin the  $\P 10$  on the third round to create two pitches for West's spades. Of course, many E/Ws will play one of the black-suit games, while  $5 \$  doubled should be a good save, costing just 500.

## Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.



If East opens INT, South will double and West run, probably to diamonds. If so, North will double for penalty but South will overrule her, and wisely so as the penalty will be insufficient. After South has shown the clubs, North will try 3NT and may play there. A diamond lead gives 12 tricks, anything else 11. Then there will be those who play in clubs. West had better avoid the diamond lead, especially against slam, as declarer puts in the ten and has two diamond tricks for two discards from hand – six made.





There will be a few 4 openers but most will prefer I and East will bid 2 (weak). If South bids 3 then raises the 3 rebid to game, North may go on and get to 6. Whether against slam or game, East has no reason to lead other than a spade. With no clues, the odds are to play hearts from the top. However, the weak jump overcall is a clue, and declarer could well get the trumps right and emerge with 12 tricks. Plus 480 should be above average, but +980 will be excellent.

## Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.



South will be surprised to hear a  $1 \ge$  opening on her right. She passes, West bids INT, and North overcalls  $2 \diamondsuit$ . Two Spades would be a poor call from east now, double to show extra values being better, and collecting  $3 \oiint$  from West. North may lead the singleton spade. Declarer wins, throwing a diamond, cashes the top clubs and throws another diamond on a spade. North ruffs and there is one heart and one diamond to lose; +130. Board II. Love All. Dealer South.



I can imagine players opening at all levels from one to four or even passing the South hand. Let's say that  $I^{\heartsuit}$  will be the most popular choice; West bids  $2^{\heartsuit}$  (spades and a minor), North doubles to show values and East bids  $2^{\bigstar}$ . South may bid  $3^{\diamondsuit}$  and West either  $3^{\bigstar}$  or  $4^{\bigstar}$ . Now North bids  $4^{\heartsuit}$  and that may end the auction. There is no reason why declarer should pick up the diamonds so that will be 11 tricks for +450.

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



The popular E/W uncontested auction will begin:  $I \blacklozenge - I \blacktriangledown - I \bigstar - I NT - 2 \blacktriangledown$ . Though East can see that the  $\clubsuit K$  is facing shortage, it will be tempting to take a shot at  $4 \heartsuit$ . There are eight tricks outside clubs. Best defence is to lead a low heart. Declarer wins and leads a club towards the king. If North rises with the ace the defence can draw trumps, but now the  $\oiint J$  falls under the king and the  $\oiint I0-9$  make the tenth trick. If North ducks the club, the king wins and declarer takes two ruffs in dummy, again the game is made.



There is no reason for North to distort the hand by opening 2NT, so  $1 \clubsuit$  will be normal, followed by two passes. West is a bit good for  $1 \clubsuit$  and double is normal, over which North may redouble. East should bid  $1 \clubsuit$  now and, after a pass by South, West raises to  $2 \clubsuit$  and, maybe, North doubles for takeout, getting  $3 \clubsuit$  from South. If that ends the auction, it is down two and -200 is too much on a partscore deal – and if West takes the push to  $3 \clubsuit$  that will make except on double dummy defence.

## Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.



If East opens INT, North may overcall  $2 \ge$  and play there, down one. Where east opens  $1 \ge$  and West responds  $1 \checkmark$ , North may make a weak jump overcall of  $2 \ge$ . East will have to double that to show extra values, and West will probably respond  $3 \ge$ , ending the auction unless east is in optimistic mood and tries 3NT. Well, sometimes optimism pays, and here 3NT and  $3 \ge$  both make nine tricks so that bidding on pays a rich dividend. Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.



If North opens 1NT, East may well pass because so many play  $2 \blacklozenge$  as artificial. South transfers to hearts and now, perhaps, East competes with  $3 \blacklozenge$ . Should she play there, East should be just one down, a good save against an opposing heart contract. But South will probably bid on to  $3 \clubsuit$ . Likewise, where North opens  $1 \clubsuit$  and East overcalls  $1 \blacklozenge$ , N/S rate to play a heart partscore most of the time. here, ten tricks will be made unless the defence plays diamonds repeatedly, which eventually creates a fourth defensive winner.

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



Four Hearts is an excellent contract on the E/W cards, only defeated by the four-nil trump split. Fortunately for E/W, it is very unlikely that they will reach game on their limited values, and nine tricks are secure for +140. Meanwhile, N/S may compete in diamonds, but repeated trump leads can hold declarer to just the six trump tricks, North's major-suit high cards proving to be so much waste paper.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.



Where South opens INT in third seat West, with a good club lead, should double. North will run to  $2^{\diamond}$  and East compete with  $2^{\blacklozenge}$ . When that gets back to North, she should compete with  $2^{\bigstar}$ . East may double that – it goes one down – but West has too much in hearts and will bid  $3^{\blacklozenge}$ , ending the auction. With neither North nor South able to lead diamonds effectively, declarer will establish clubs on which to pitch losers from hand, making +140.

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



While the South hand is a little good in high cards and poor in spade quality, a 3♠ opening is the best option. West cannot come in but, when it comes round to East, she has a maximum pass and ideal shape for a take-out double. Partner cannot expect more for this action so will not get over-excited. In practice, West may pass and collect +500 on defence, or bid 4♥, which makes +420 despite the bad trump break. Five Club sis also cold for E/W. Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.



South opens  $I \blacklozenge$ , middle of three touching four-card suits, and North responds  $I \clubsuit$ . East will think herself too strong for a spade overcall so will double and South raise to  $2 \clubsuit$ . Whatever North may do now, and the double fit may encourage her to bid on as a two-way shot, expecting one side or other to be making something, East will have to follow through with a spade bid. That should get West to support to the game level and  $4 \clubsuit$  is made by careful play.

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



If West opens INT, East will transfer and N/S cannot safely get involved. Though  $2\P$  can be made double dummy, this involves an implausible play in hearts so the normal result should be down one. Where West opens I $\blacklozenge$ , North will overcall and South raise to  $2\clubsuit$ , probably via an unassuming cuebid of  $2\diamondsuit$ . The normal diamond lead should see this contract too go one down. Two Spades is unbeatable if played by South, but that is not really possible.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.



The suit is poor but East has a weak  $2 \triangleq$  opening, non-vulnerable. South will overcall  $3 \P$  and West jump to  $4 \triangleq$ . North will have a tough problem. If she passes, it takes three rounds of diamonds to promote a second defensive trump trick to beat the contract – and South rates to lead a heart. If North bids  $5 \P$ , East should double and even a spade lead is good enough for two down and +500. North does no better to double as South, short of passing and leading a diamond, has no winning option.

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



If West opens INT she may well play there – after all, which of North and South has a bid? That is terrible for N/S as INT is cold for seven tricks on a spade lead and eight on a heart lead. Meanwhile, N/S are cold for +140 in a heart contract. Where West has to open  $I \clubsuit/\clubsuit$ , North will double and the heart fit is found. Even if E/W compete to  $3\clubsuit$ , they are down a trick, but more likely South will play in  $2\P$  or  $3\P$  for a useful score. Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.



Should West overcall bid  $2^{\clubsuit}$  over South's  $1 \triangleq$  opening? It is not for me, with that weak suit and minimum values when vulnerable, but it may work out very well if he does so, as North will bid  $3^{\diamondsuit}$  and South, a reluctant 3NT, down one. Without the overcall, North bids  $2^{\diamondsuit}$ , South rebids  $2^{\heartsuit}$ , and now North bids  $3^{\diamondsuit}$ , invitational. South, with no diamond fit and no club stopper, should pass that and N/S get a solid +130.

# Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.



Most roads lead to +120 for N/S. If North opens INT, East will pass and South scrape up a Stayman response, trading on her two potentially valuable tens. When she follows up with 2NT, North should pass and make eight tricks on the low spade lead. Where North opens  $I \blacklozenge$ , East will overcall and South bid INT, ending the auction – same lead, same outcome.



When North opens INT, she will usually play there. A heart lead gives the ninth trick for an excellent +150, anything less may save one or more tricks. If North opens I $\blacklozenge$ , South bids INT and plays there. the spade lead holds her to seven tricks. A I $\blacktriangledown$ opening from North may get a INT response, but my preference is to raise to 2 $\blacktriangledown$  when I have honourto-three and a weak side doubleton. West doubles, which charms East not in the slightest. She probably bids 2 $\bigstar$ , which is down one. If North doubles, that is +200.

# Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.



N/S can make a lot of tricks in no trump – probably ten, though 11 is possible going all out for tricks. Would you open  $2\P$  as West? The suit is horrible and you are vulnerable, so nobody could say that to pass was wrong. If West passes, I would open a weak no trump as North – I $\P$  works better if partner responds I $\P$ , but I wouldn't like to hear a  $2\P$  response. If West opens, North doubles, South bids  $3\P$ , and N/S will need to guess well to survive. Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.



South opens  $1 \triangleq$  and West has a borderline  $2 \P$  overcall, only a good option because of the vulnerability. If East makes the simple raise to game, a spade lead sees the contract down two. East may look at her spade holding and try 3NT instead. A diamond lead means that is defeated, but if South leads a spade 3NT can be made quite easily by leading the  $\Phi Q$  to establish extra club tricks. If East plays  $4\P$ , after a balancing INT overcall and transfer, a diamond lead gets it two down again.

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



South opens  $I \triangleq$  and North will just scrape up a INT response. North will surely pass and non-forcing rebid – I would not give false preference with such a weak hand should South try 2 $\checkmark$ . All the obvious three games can be made, simply by knocking out the  $\clubsuit$ A and taking the spade finesse. getting to game is therefore a good idea, with  $4\checkmark/\clubsuit$  outscoring 3NT. What should South rebid? Very tough, with maybe 2NT the best compromise.



N/S can make 6NT or, indeed,  $6 \pm$  or 7. Of those, only 6NT is likely to be bid. How is it made? Declarer wins the passive lead, picks up the diamonds and cashes all his minor-suit winners. Then he plays four rounds of spades and West is endplayed. I agree – not very likely. North should upgrade the good 22-count to a 2 $\pm$  opening and 2NT rebid. That may get South to explore a minorsuit slam if she has the methods, but most will stop in 3NT or 4NT.

### Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.



If South scrapes up an opening bid, not absurd when non-vulnerable, there are many possible outcomes. Most, however, will pass, and West will open 1 $\blacklozenge$ . When East responds 1 $\clubsuit$ , West will stretch slightly to a 2 $\P$  reverse, paying tribute to the partial spade fit. If East now bids 2NT, West should pass, trusting partner to have rebid a five-card spade suit, but 1 suspect most will get to 3NT and find that, even if they misguess the diamonds, they make it. Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.



West should open  $1^{\bullet}$  – these handtypes are notoriously difficult to develop if you open  $2^{\bullet}$  – and east may make a pre-emptive raise to  $4^{\bullet}$ . The practical shot is for West to just bid  $6^{\bullet}$  now. The heart slam goes down, in theory, but North has to find an opening lead and a club looks awfully tempting, does it not. That gives the third club trick and three spade discards from dummy.

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



I like opening at the four level with 7-4 hands, but here the spades are just too weak so I would vote for  $1 \bigstar$ . It hardly matters, as all sensible roads seem to lead to  $4 \bigstar$ . Over  $1 \bigstar$ , South bids  $2 \blacklozenge$ , then  $3 \checkmark$  over the  $2 \bigstar$  rebid – yes,  $2 \bigstar$  is plenty once we have decided to bid constructively. North, for all the double club stopper, should not bid 3NT as this kind of hand belongs in a suit contract. North should rebid  $3 \bigstar$  and South will raise to game, where ten tricks is the normal outcome.