

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION♥♣



*Fourth Interclub – Heat B*

*7<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> March 2018*

*Commentary by Ian Hamilton*

**1**

♠ K107542  
♥ J764  
♦ J42  
♣

♠ A98  
♥ A5  
♦ A9  
♣ AKJ973

♠ 63  
♥ K983  
♦ KQ86  
♣ 862

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

The purists won't open a Weak 2♣ or Multi on the north hand, it having a poorish suit, plus the other major on the side, though I have personally no objection to the latter flaw.

East will bid 3NT over either, and south needs to find a diamond lead or declarer can establish a heart to go with his two spades and other winners, eleven in all.

Where north passes east does best to open 2NT, again 3NT resulting.

Should east open 1♣ game in the suit could result, and an overtrick is possible on a non-diamond lead with good guessing in hearts. Sadly, even twelve tricks will compare poorly with the no trumpers' scores.

**2**

♠ AQJ108  
♥ Q7  
♦ K98  
♣ 872

♠ 764  
♥ AJ105  
♦ AQ765  
♣ 9

♠ K93  
♥ 9432  
♦ 4  
♣ KQJ105

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

E/W should find their diamond fit after east opens the suit. North could introduce spades, which south can support.

The cards lie poorly for N/S, so they would be wise to rein in their bidding, being at risk of losing 200 in spades should east get a couple of club ruffs. The play is awkward anyway, north having no quick re-entry after ruffing diamonds in south.

Those playing in diamonds can rack up eleven tricks, with the red suit finesses working, but it is hard to see any remotely close to bidding game.

**3**

♠ A74  
♥ K76  
♦ J763  
♣ KQ10

♠ J983  
♥ J93  
♦ Q52  
♣ A94

♠ KQ1052  
♥ A8542  
♦  
♣ J87

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

With such a shapely hand south is worth a 1♠ opener, west maybe overcalling in diamonds. The end result should be south alighting in either 4♥ or 4♠.

The bad spade break complicates 4♠, declarer ruffing the opening diamond, clearing hearts then being forced again in diamonds. With east having an extra trump most will finish light, but declarer can succeed by cashing just one trump, then running hearts. East ruffs and forces again in diamonds, but has no more of the suit when he takes the club ace, declarer able to cash clubs then cross-ruff.

By contrast eleven tricks are easy in hearts, declarer ceding the club ace after ruffing a diamond, then cashing top trumps before picking up and running spades and clubs.

**4**

♠ 8  
♥ 62  
♦ A652  
♣ KQ9764

♠ J106432  
♥ Q87  
♦ 9  
♣ J82

♠ AK975  
♥ 109543  
♦ J4  
♣ A

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

We have a misfit all round, neither side having more than a 7 card fit, and the singleton club ace causing a blockage in the suit. If north overcalls west's 1♦ with a thin 2♣ south has an opening bid, and will almost certainly get N/S too high, either in no trumps or a club contract. It is little better where north and east pass and south bids 2♦, Michaels for the Majors.

North's no trump spot is held to five tricks on a dutiful diamond, though makes nine on a spade lead. 2♣ looks the spot, but a diamond lead again causes major entry problems as it does with 2♥, seven tricks the limit.

West can make eight tricks in diamonds and will rebid his suit whether east or south bid spades after a north pass. Letting west make 90 is theoretically the best outcome for N/S, but it may not happen too often.

**5**

♠ 864  
♥ Q986  
♦ AQ54  
♣ Q2

♠ AQ7  
♥ 102  
♦ J106  
♣ AKJ74

♠ J10  
♥ K753  
♦ K9873  
♣ 53

♠ K9532  
♥ AJ4  
♦ 2  
♣ 10986

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

This looks likely to finish in 1NT by west at most tables after he has opened his strong variety, alternatively rebid an Acol 15-16 NT after opening 1♣. South just might intervene with spades, and may well get raised by north if he does. 2♣ gets close, but east over-ruffs clubs, holding south to seven tricks.

The intervention could result in E/W playing in one of their minor suit fits, rather than selling out for plus 100. 3♦ is best, only two hearts and a trump necessarily lost.

Where E/W do get playing 1NT nine tricks are possible double dummy, but this requires the club queen to be felled. Against that, north may take the diamond ace a trick too soon, allowing four tricks in the suit. So a wide range of tricks are predicted on this one.

**6**

♠ 9763  
♥ 1076  
♦ J8  
♣ J852

♠ J5  
♥ KJ98  
♦ KQ9654  
♣ 9

♠ AKQ1042  
♥ 432  
♦ A72  
♣ 10

♠ 8  
♥ AQ5  
♦ 103  
♣ AKQ7643

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

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

At favourable vulnerability south could easily pre-empt 5♣ over east's 1♠. West is more likely to pass or try 5♦ than support spades, so the pre-empt will have done its job.

The more restrained souths could let east declare game in spades, the best spot for E/W. Defending either diamonds or spades south lets through twelve tricks unless he takes both his aces immediately.

Where south is allowed to sacrifice in 5♣ the defence need to be careful. East must play an early heart or south can ruff a spade, eliminate diamonds and may be able to end-play west, ceding only 300. However, even the loss of 500 should be a good board for N/S.

**7**

♠ K763  
♥ Q1042  
♦ 102  
♣ 1074

♠ J1042  
♥ AJ65  
♦ A86  
♣ J8

♠ Q  
♥ 987  
♦ KQ743  
♣ AKQ5

♠ A985  
♥ K3  
♦ J95  
♣ 9632

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

It is hard to see beyond west playing 3NT here after east has opened 1♦ and west has responded in hearts. West bids 2NT over east's 2♣ rebid and gets raised to game.

Presumably, north leads a spade to south's ace. Most of the world will return partner's suit, and declarer quickly claim 660 when diamonds divide.

Well done any who find the heart switch, which takes an extra trick. However, in real life there will be few wanting to lose the post-mortem by not returning spades.

**8**

♠ J8  
♥ AQ95  
♦ AQ842  
♣ A7

♠ A92  
♥ 32  
♦ J10  
♣ Q109853

♠ Q7654  
♥ 1064  
♦ 76  
♣ KJ6

♠ K103  
♥ KJ87  
♦ K953  
♣ 42

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	5	6	1	4
S	1	5	6	1	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

This hand provides an example of one of the relatively rare cases where the 4:4 fit plays better than the 5:4. N/S might very well get playing in the right fit too since south will respond 1♥ to north's 1♦ or make a Sputnik double of a thin east 1♠ overcall. Either way north will raise to game in hearts.

With both red suits breaking a club can be ditched in south and all that is required is a winning spade guess to record twelve tricks.

By contrast, in 5♦ a club must be lost unless east leads a spade, ceding a trick in the suit. On a passive lead declarer needs a winning view in spades to even make his contract, and those who do succeed get a worse score than those declaring hearts.

**9**

♠ K983  
 ♥ 97  
 ♦ AJ  
 ♣ AJ1065  
 ♠ A1072  
 ♥ K1054  
 ♦ K107  
 ♣ 94  
 ♠ Q5  
 ♥ AQJ83  
 ♦ 9543  
 ♣ Q3  
 ♠ J64  
 ♥ 62  
 ♦ Q862  
 ♣ K872

 Dealer: North  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

East will almost certainly stretch to overcall north's 1♣ with 1♥. Unfortunately, he finds west holding a middle range hand with 4 card support, and could easily get to the 3 level, whether or not south supports clubs.

When south wins the second round of clubs with the king he needs to find a diamond or spade switch, else declarer can pull trumps and play a diamond to the 10, end-playing north to cede nine tricks. Of course, double dummy south leads diamonds, gets in with a club and delivers a diamond ruff, taking six defensive tricks.

Where N/S declare clubs they might do better, nine tricks straightforward, and a chance of eliminating the red suits and playing a spade to the king. East must drop the queen or he wins the next spade to deliver a ruff and discard for a tenth trick.

**10**

♠ K63  
 ♥ KJ654  
 ♦ 7  
 ♣ AJ96  
 ♠ Q  
 ♥ Q1032  
 ♦ Q953  
 ♣ Q842  
 ♠ A109852  
 ♥ A  
 ♦ J84  
 ♣ 1073  
 ♠ J74  
 ♥ 987  
 ♦ AK1062  
 ♣ K5

 Dealer: East  
 Both Vulnerable

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

East's Weak 2♠ is not a happy spot if passed out, the defence taking eight tricks. A Multi might be more successful, west bidding 2♥ and north doubling. South could still pass east's spade correction and collect 300, but is more likely to try 3♥, hurriedly passed out.

Where east passes either north or south could open with their red suit, east overcalling 1♠. N/S are likely to finish in 2♥, which loses a spade plus either three or four trumps depending on declarer's guessing.

N/S are better in no trumps, if they can get there. Declarer needs to duck the spade queen, if led, and guess the heart position to get Deep Finesse's nine tricks. In practice, few will be in no trumps, rarely in game, and many of those who are will be light. Defending spades looks best.

**11**

♠ KJ84  
 ♥ KQJ4  
 ♦ K106  
 ♣ Q9  
 ♠ Q952  
 ♥ A  
 ♦ 9843  
 ♣ AK107  
 ♠ 3  
 ♥ 107632  
 ♦ QJ  
 ♣ J8542  
 ♠ A1076  
 ♥ 985  
 ♦ A752  
 ♣ 63

 Dealer: South  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

At love all north surely doubles west's 1♦, south bidding 1♠, maybe 2♠ if feeling optimistic. North is unlikely to advance either but may have to bid again if east protects with his club suit.

It looks like south will buy it in spades at most tables. Ten tricks look possible with an inspired view in trumps and diamonds. However, repeated club leads ensure that west eventually makes a trump, however declarer handles the ruffs and discards.

It looks like the scores will be largely N/S from 110 to 170, depending on declarer's play and the defence received, unless some east gets to establish a diamond declaring 3♣, making 110, or somebody overstretches to a N/S game and goes light.

**12**

♠ 104  
 ♥ Q53  
 ♦ J1065  
 ♣ K743  
 ♠ AQJ9  
 ♥ J1098  
 ♦ Q94  
 ♣ A5  
 ♠ K72  
 ♥ K72  
 ♦ A32  
 ♣ J1098  
 ♠ 8653  
 ♥ A64  
 ♦ K87  
 ♣ Q62

 Dealer: West  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

With a balanced 25HCP between two hands one would expect most to be in 3NT. Acoll gets there when east invites over west's weak NT. 5 card majors have to pretend to have a minor with west, and an awkward sequence could result, particularly if west's opener is 1♦.

A north club could give up an eleventh trick if the queen is furnished, whereas a diamond has little risk of doing so, and actually allows south to find a club switch, which can hold the contract to nine tricks. However, most will return a diamond, allowing declarer to set up ten tricks by playing on hearts.

Where east declares south probably leads spades, but is twice on lead later in the red suits. He needs to find the club switch first time around.

**13**

♠ A754  
♥ 92  
♦ A108  
♣ Q1065

♠ 8  
♥ K8  
♦ KQJ9642  
♣ 987

♠ KQ92  
♥ AQ7653  
♦  
♣ KJ2

♠ J1063  
♥ J104  
♦ 753  
♣ A43

Dealer: North  
Both Vulnerable

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

With a void in partner's suit east should restrain himself when west responds 2♦ to his 1♥, rebidding 2♥ rather than reversing into spades. Had the response been 2♣ it would have been a different story.

West is best to pass this, though some will rebid their suit, east probably trying 3NT now. In theory this is beaten, but it requires a passive heart lead to guarantee it, unlikely to be found, though declarer could still go wrong in the endgame.

Defending hearts again a heart lead is best, else declarer gets at least one diamond trick in dummy, plus a ruff. On the trump lead nine tricks are possible, but it requires a succession of throw-ins in the black suits to succeed double dummy. I would be happy to go plus.

**14**

♠ K103  
♥ A65  
♦ AJ10  
♣ A1053

♠ AJ  
♥ K10832  
♦ KQ97  
♣ KQ

♠ Q9764  
♥ 4  
♦ 8652  
♣ 976

♠ 852  
♥ QJ97  
♦ 43  
♣ J842

Dealer: East  
Neither Vulnerable

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

At love all an element of poker occurs when west's 1♥ is overcalled 1NT and passed round. Who has 3-4HCP? If east, west should double, otherwise he should bid 2♦ and hope pard has a few bits and pieces. As Clint Eastwood might ask - are you feeling lucky?

Double could do okay, east removing to 2♠, managing seven tricks, and losing 50. However, the 2♦ bid could well steal the pot. It can escape for a loser in each of the plain suits, and two in trumps, actually going plus.

Certainly, E/W don't want to let north declare 1NT, where he finds clubs lying nicely, and the defence unable to garner more than five tricks, ceding 120.

Where E/W do advance it is hard for N/S to get to their other making spot, 3♣.

**15**

♠ A109  
♥ QJ83  
♦ A74  
♣ AQ5

♠ J5  
♥ AK1065  
♦ 10832  
♣ K7

♠ K8642  
♥ 9  
♦ 965  
♣ 10832

♠ Q73  
♥ 742  
♦ KQJ  
♣ J964

Dealer: South  
N-S Vulnerable

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

West's 1♥ again gets overcalled 1NT by north. 3NT should eventuate when south has an invite, and north a maximum. East's best lead is a passive diamond, in contrast to #4, when unusually the singleton in partner's suit got the money.

Declarer can use dummy's entries to pick up four club tricks when west has the doubleton king, plus can make one or two hearts and an extra spade, losing no more than three tricks in the process.

Will this be flat at 630 N/S? Somehow I doubt it.

**16**

♠ A104  
♥ 5  
♦ 98753  
♣ 10862

♠ 9652  
♥ J1073  
♦ KQ  
♣ KJ4

♠ KJ8  
♥ Q62  
♦ 1042  
♣ AQ93

♠ Q73  
♥ AK984  
♦ AJ6  
♣ 75

Dealer: West  
E-W Vulnerable

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

East has a poor, balanced weak NT or 1♣ opener. Few souths will intervene over 1NT, and are unlikely to beat it, though the improbable start of a diamond does. Most easts will manage seven or eight tricks.

Where east opens 1♣ south overcalls 1♥ and it is west who may declare 1NT, though some will make a Sputnik double instead, again putting east in charge.

Where west declares a diamond lead is possible, like #15, preferable to the singleton in partner's suit. With the 10 visible in dummy south shouldn't squander his knave, leading back the 6, not his highest. North later gets on lead in spades to cash his diamonds for one off.

However, in practice N/S pluses look a rarity, few beating 1NT.

**17**

♠ K5  
 ♥ K  
 ♦ K10754  
 ♣ J8532  
 ♠ J107  
 ♥ QJ82  
 ♦ A2  
 ♣ KQ109  
 ♠ A942  
 ♥ A1053  
 ♦ 83  
 ♣ A76

 Dealer: North  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

East's weak NT could be passed out, unless west has garbage Stayman at his disposal, in which case 2♥ could be the spot. Some north's may have a mechanism to show a minor two suiter, but are liable to end up declaring clubs a level too high if they do.

Where east opens 1♣, passed round, north is best to pass it out, but could still go plus if he tries 1♦, east doubling and E/W advancing to 2♥ after south tries 1♠. E/W cannot avoid six losers in hearts.

East will usually make 1NT, it taking a diamond lead from south to beat it double dummy. A finesse of the club 9 is needed, and maybe of the spade 8. In practice some may not manage the seven tricks possible.

So scores likely both sides of the traveller.

**18**

♠ A3  
 ♥ Q1042  
 ♦ AJ1096  
 ♣ 75  
 ♠ KQ98765  
 ♥ 97  
 ♦  
 ♣ AJ93  
 ♠ J102  
 ♥ KJ  
 ♦ KQ742  
 ♣ KQ4  
 ♠ 4  
 ♥ A8653  
 ♦ 853  
 ♣ 10862

 Dealer: East  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

Whether east opens 1♦ or a strong NT it is unlikely to change the final contract of 4♠, though east could declare after a transfer.

Declarer has ten solid tricks, but the overtrick hinges on the heart guess, unless south solves it at trick one by leading his ace.

Where west declares, after east has opened 1♦, nobody will lead the diamond ace and cede a dozen, will they?

Otherwise, the heart guess is needed when north switches to the suit after winning his trump ace. Should he fail to do so a heart is pitched on the fourth club, and west's second is ruffed in dummy.

**19**

♠ KJ732  
 ♥ 9  
 ♦ J93  
 ♣ A753  
 ♠ Q96  
 ♥ 862  
 ♦ 10765  
 ♣ Q108  
 ♠ 10  
 ♥ AKQ3  
 ♦ AK842  
 ♣ J64  
 ♠ A854  
 ♥ J10754  
 ♦ Q  
 ♣ K92

 Dealer: South  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

Despite east having a reversing hand it is N/S who can make game, and they could get there when south doubles east's 4th seat 1♦, though a spade part-score looks more credible.

Should south overcall 1♥ instead west might pre-empt in diamonds, stealing the part-score for E/W. Indeed even a 2♦ raise might do so, though south could double at his 3rd turn, getting spades into the picture.

E/W's diamond contract is straightforward, losing just a trump, spade and two clubs. Where N/S declare spades ten tricks are possible with clubs 3:3, two diamond ruffs available in south. It needs a winning view in trumps.

However, even nine tricks in spades N/S looks a good board for them.

**20**

♠ 87  
 ♥ 54  
 ♦ AQ1062  
 ♣ 10632  
 ♠ KJ95  
 ♥ 976  
 ♦ 43  
 ♣ AK87  
 ♠ AQ10  
 ♥ QJ83  
 ♦ K85  
 ♣ QJ4  
 ♠ 6432  
 ♥ AK102  
 ♦ J97  
 ♣ 95

 Dealer: West  
 Both Vulnerable

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

This looks like everyone's favourite contract again when east either opens a strong NT or rebids his 15-16 variety after west responds 1♠ to his Acol 1♥. The bidding should stop south starting with top hearts, which allows ten tricks, instead starting with a diamond, or better, leading passively.

On a passive lead declarer needs to be careful if he runs all his black suit winners, on which he must throw a heart and a diamond. Should he now play a heart south can make four heart tricks, winning the first and leading a diamond to north for another heart through.

Declarer is maybe better playing on the red suits earlier, succeeding when the diamond ace is onside or the defence slip up, allowing a heart trick. He does risk extra undertricks when the diamond ace is wrong, however.

**21**

♠ Q985  
♥ AKQ4  
♦ 74  
♣ J108

♠ AK1062  
♥ J97  
♦ AJ98  
♣ 3

♠ J43  
♥ 105  
♦ KQ1062  
♣ AQ6

♠ 7  
♥ 8632  
♦ 53  
♣ K97542

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

If north's weak NT gets passed to west he will surely introduce his spades, or spades and a minor playing Cappelletti/Pottage. This could be enough to propel E/W into the spade game. Should they not bid game they are better passing out 1NT, where they can collect 200-300.

South is wiser trying to play in clubs rather than risk lots of undertricks in 1NT. A south 2♣ Stayman followed by 3♣, if this sequence is played as a weak club takeout, may keep everyone quiet. An alternative 2♠ club transfer lets west double, but may make the spade game tricky to bid, as west's high card values are unclear to east.

A north 5 card major 1♠ is presumably overcalled 1♦. When south jumps in clubs it is hard to see the E/W spade fit coming to light, a diamond part-score more likely, in this offering with lots of possible results.

**22**

♠ A42  
♥ KQ103  
♦ Q108  
♣ Q63

♠ J10963  
♥ J752  
♦ 53  
♣ 102

♠ Q85  
♥ A9864  
♦ KJ92  
♣ 4

♠ K7  
♥  
♦ A764  
♣ AKJ9875

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	4	-	1	5
S	6	4	-	1	5
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

Unlike #13 south is strong enough to open 1♣ and reverse into 2♦ despite north responding 1♥, his void. Playing Lebensohl north can now give 1 round forcing 3♣ preference. With a poor hand north bids 2NT, commanding a passable 3♣. If not playing this north must use 2♠, FSF, south rebidding clubs.

I can see a few getting to the club slam, though most will be in 3NT, making a straightforward eleven tricks.

Declaring clubs, where west leads a diamond, this can be ducked to rectify the count, and dummy's trump entries allow a heart to be set up with a ruffing finesse. Trumps produce a double squeeze, nobody able to guard spades, east keeping diamonds and west the heart knave. On a non-diamond lead east can be end-played in diamonds. A good one to bring home.

**23**

♠ A1096  
♥ A  
♦ 8432  
♣ A1064

♠ QJ4  
♥ J63  
♦ KQ9  
♣ J875

♠ K53  
♥ KQ52  
♦ J10  
♣ KQ32

♠ 872  
♥ 109874  
♦ A765  
♣ 9

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

When east doubles north's 1♦ south can jump to 3♦, a sound raise to 2♦. This likely silences everyone, and a grand cross-ruff ensues, even on a trump lead, south ruffing three clubs and north two hearts.

Where east passes south may try 1♥, but ends up giving preference to diamonds. Should E/W get involved they might manage to buy it in 3♣, which could escape for one light, might even make.

This hand neatly demonstrates the power of aces and shortage. N/S have only 16HCP and eight trumps, but have all four aces. and cannot be beaten in 3♦. Despite 24HCP and no opposing long suit E/W cannot do better than make 2NT on a diamond lead - and they are unlikely to get there.

**24**

♠ KJ3  
♥ AQ762  
♦ 2  
♣ QJ76

♠ 6  
♥ J9  
♦ A9643  
♣ A10943

♠ 10987  
♥ 1053  
♦ Q87  
♣ K82

♠ AQ542  
♥ K84  
♦ KJ105  
♣ 5

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

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

Long suits and shortage are also relevant in this hand, where N/S could end up in 4 of either major. It looks as if there are ten major suit winners, plus a diamond or a ruff available, only two aces lost.

However, a defensive ruff is possible where hearts are declared, eleven tricks only there if two rounds of trumps are pulled then diamonds guessed, it being fortunate west has only two trumps.

Declaring spades an unlikely low club to the king and one back forces south to ruff. He only makes eleven tricks by pulling one trump, then playing diamonds. He accepts the second force, then plays hearts through east to regain control, finishing in a cross-ruff, again being fortunate east has the three card heart holding. Will many be held to ten tricks on either defence?

25

♠ Q65  
♥ QJ932  
♦ 87  
♣ QJ4

♠ K84  
♥ 6  
♦ A10965  
♣ 10986

♠ 72  
♥ A10854  
♦ Q2  
♣ K753

♠ AJ1093  
♥ K7  
♦ KJ43  
♣ A2

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

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

Playing 5 card majors north raises south's 1♠ and has to decide whether or not to advance over south's 3♦ game try. The optimists will go on, but they perhaps shouldn't, being all queens and knaves. The singleton heart lead rapidly vanquishes 4♠.

Acoul is less likely to get overboard, south opening 1♠ and rebidding 2♦ over north's 1NT. Many will pass the 2♠ preference, which could be based on a doubleton.

Occasionally, south will try 2NT over the spade preference, conceivably being raised to game. Even on a heart lead declarer is very stuck for north entries and will struggle to make even seven tricks. North is better to confirm his tripleton spade support by reverting to 3♠, which should come home so long as diamonds are guessed correctly.

26

♠ Q752  
♥ Q5  
♦ AQ72  
♣ K73

♠ A9  
♥ KJ107  
♦ K1083  
♣ 862

♠ 864  
♥ 642  
♦ 9654  
♣ QJ4

♠ KJ103  
♥ A983  
♦ J  
♣ A1095

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

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

After 1♣, 1♦, 1♥ a 1♠ bid by north should be natural, not FSF. South can raise and the 4♠ game be reached.

However, 4♠ is no picnic, despite eleven tricks possible by finessing diamonds and leading to the heart queen, getting a club away in north on the heart ace, then cross-ruffing.

Some will be in 3NT after south bids 1♠ and north thinks it is FSF. They could easily get a good board, it needing a diamond lead from east to hold it to nine tricks. So the best theoretical spot may not necessarily get the best score since many in 4♠ will only have 620 on the card, or worse, be light.

27

♠ 643  
♥ 732  
♦ 7  
♣ 976432

♠ Q107  
♥ A1098  
♦ Q52  
♣ KJ10

♠ KJ952  
♥ K5  
♦ J943  
♣ 85

♠ A8  
♥ QJ64  
♦ AK1086  
♣ AQ

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

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

South's 2NT will not be a success, though it needs a spade lead to beat it by four tricks. The more normal heart allows declarer time to get a heart trick, even if east switches to spades at trick two.

Where south opens 1♦ east presumably protects in 4th seat with 1♠, and south likely doubles. Now E/W are forced to declare their spade part-score, since N/S cannot be denied eight tricks in clubs.

E/W can make 2♠ despite adverse diamond ruffs, but are better in defence against south's 2NT, unusually at love all, where declaring, even if light, is usually best. Of course that is only because 2NT is the wrong N/S contract, 2♣ only reachable where south opens 1♦ and east protects.

28

♠ AK943  
♥ 108  
♦ 9  
♣ J8754

♠ J107  
♥ K9432  
♦ KJ4  
♣ A2

♠ 62  
♥ 765  
♦ Q1065  
♣ KQ63

♠ Q85  
♥ AQJ  
♦ A8732  
♣ 109

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

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

North might stretch to a vulnerable 2♠ overcall of west's weak NT, assuming that shows spades and a minor. Unfortunately, he finds south with an opening bid, and could well get raised to game. Doubtless someone will make ten tricks in spades, but establishing the club side suit with dummy being over-ruffed will be a struggle.

A north Michaels is again likely to get N/S too high but should north overcall a west 1♥ with 1♠ south may be more circumspect facing the level overcall, and ought to stop in part-score, out-bidding east's heart support if need be. Indeed, should E/W get to the 3 level in hearts it is possible to get six defensive tricks after diamond ruffs, a 300 penalty if doubled.

So again we have judgement and technique required, something of a theme on the set, hopefully enjoyed.

Ave HCP	N 10.04	S 9.93	E 10.00	W 10.03	Balanced	N 14	S 14	E 12	W 13
Voids/singletons	N 1/9	S 2/10	E 1/10	W 1/10	7+ suit	N 0	S 2	E 0	W 2