



Sun 30th November - Mon 1st December 2014

Commentary by Ian Hamilton

1

♠ K52
 ♥ A8
 ♦ J4
 ♣ QJ10953
 ♠ AQ987
 ♥ 1095
 ♦ 872
 ♣ 87
 ♠ J104
 ♥ QJ432
 ♦ Q10
 ♣ A64
 ♠ 63
 ♥ K76
 ♦ AK9653
 ♣ K2

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

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

If north opens 1♣ or a thin weak NT N/S are likely to bid game. In 3NT, there may be a heart lead to the king. The club ace is knocked out. Declarer makes 490 if hearts are continued. On a spade lead declarer needs the lucky diamond position to get home.

Some N/Ss will prefer the minors, and some will declare game, 5♣ being much superior to 5♦. Particularly if north passes many will not contract for eleven tricks, and will have to be satisfied with 150 or 170.

E/W will almost certainly get one or other major into the auction, and could steal the contract, though can be held to as few as six tricks in either. However, with 400+ available to N/S this could prove a decent enough result, unless doubled at the 3 level.

3

♠ AK54
 ♥ A1032
 ♦
 ♣ AKQ72
 ♠ 986
 ♥ 8
 ♦ AQ10986
 ♣ J64
 ♠ Q32
 ♥ KQJ9
 ♦ J73
 ♣ 985
 ♠ J107
 ♥ 7654
 ♦ K542
 ♣ 103

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

North's 1♣ could be passed out for plus 110. When declarer gets a top heart lead he knows to set up tricks in spades rather than hearts.

Some wests will protect with 1♦. This could well propel N/S into hearts after north doubles. Indeed, ten tricks can be made unless west leads his singleton trump. Declarer can pitch a spade on the third club, then ruff spades good. He returns to hand with the trump ace and plays winners.

2♦x could conceivably be declared E/W, though south should not pass with such weak trumps. The defence can take the first seven tricks, south pitching a spade on clubs and getting a ruff. The 500 scored beats any game - not that game is likely to be bid or made too often, though I suppose some souths will make 3NT on a diamond lead, or get 4♥ right.

2

♠ 97
 ♥ A6543
 ♦ A92
 ♣ J87
 ♠ Q106432
 ♥ J987
 ♦ K
 ♣ 102
 ♠ KJ5
 ♥ 10
 ♦ Q1075
 ♣ AK963
 ♠ A8
 ♥ KQ2
 ♦ J8643
 ♣ Q54

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

West will reply 1♠ to 1♣, and east should raise. West will gratefully pass, missing the makeable game. Declarer needs to establish clubs, rather than go for heart ruffs, or he can be held to 140.

At some tables north could protect over 2♣, but either red suit plays poorly, and minus 200 could result in diamonds. West must return a heart, not a spade, after his club ruff. Declarer cannot now pick up trumps without sustaining a ruff. Hearts play a trick better.

In practice west will likely advance to 3♣, knowing of nine trumps, and be in the same position as the other declarers trying to make 170.

4

♠ Q87642
 ♥ 85
 ♦ AK
 ♣ Q42
 ♠ 109
 ♥ A10964
 ♦ 975
 ♣ 865
 ♠ AJ53
 ♥ J2
 ♦ Q63
 ♣ J1097
 ♠ K
 ♥ KQ73
 ♦ J10842
 ♣ AK3

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

N/S may declare either 4♠ or 3NT. The fall of the 10/9 in spades means only two spade losers so declarer squeaks home in the former. A 3:3 break would also have sufficed or any other doubleton with two of the knave, 10 and 9.

In 3NT declarer can succeed by playing on either diamonds or spades, the defence unable to muster more than three major suit tricks and a diamond, or four major suit tricks, so long as declarer is careful with his entries.

This time the major suit game is the winner, the defence needing to misfire badly to allow 630 in 3NT. Playing even a 6:1 major fit is usually superior to 3NT.

5

♠ 10
 ♥ AK1062
 ♦ A6
 ♣ KJ864
 ♠ K8
 ♥ J8
 ♦ 10752
 ♣ Q10953
 ♠ AQJ965
 ♥ Q753
 ♦ 943
 ♣
 ♠ 7432
 ♥ 94
 ♦ KQJ8
 ♣ A72

Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

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

South should double when east overcalls 1♥ with 1♠. North is worth 3♣, giving south a problem. 3♦ is probably the most constructive bid, over which north may rebid 3♥, or try 3♠, requesting a spade stop. When none is forthcoming, either 4♥ or 5♣ may eventuate.

4♥ is straightforward so long as declarer does not play for a 3:3 trump break after ruffing the second spade. He cashes two top hearts and plays winners.

5♣ looks tricky, but romps home after declarer ruffs the second spade and plays a trump to the ace. West must split the 10/9 on the second round of trumps. Declarer then takes six red winners, and either ruffs his last heart with the seven, or if in dummy, plays a spade, either way eloping with the trump 8.

7

♠ J853
 ♥ J2
 ♦ J72
 ♣ 10975
 ♠ AK94
 ♥ Q4
 ♦ 108
 ♣ KQJ42
 ♠ 62
 ♥ AK975
 ♦ K943
 ♣ 86
 ♠ Q107
 ♥ 10863
 ♦ AQ65
 ♣ A3

Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

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

If west doubles south's weak NT only 500 is forthcoming on a club lead. It needs an improbable three rounds of hearts, then a club from east to get 800.

If south opens 1♦ east likely declares 2NT or 3NT. It looks that declarer will struggle to make more than eight tricks unless he plays south for the doubleton club ace or south has kicked off with a diamond.

So it looks as if the acol N/Ss could be the losers here, likely to lose a penalty, rather than cede a small minus or even get a plus in defence.

6

♠ 7
 ♥ J853
 ♦ A1097
 ♣ AKJ9
 ♠ K43
 ♥ Q1097
 ♦ K843
 ♣ Q6
 ♠ J1052
 ♥ 6
 ♦ J62
 ♣ 107432
 ♠ AQ986
 ♥ AK42
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ 85

Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

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

It looks as if south will play 4♥ having rebid the suit after his 1♠ opener and north's 2♣ response.

Only a club lead is not helpful to declarer. A diamond lead could result in twelve tricks, declarer making two diamonds, one top trump, clubs, then cross-ruffing. West has to under-ruff once, and the bare knave makes en passant at the end.

It is possible to make 450 on any lead, but many will cash top trumps then take a pitch on the club knave. West ruffs and extracts two trumps with the queen. He may be end-played now, but the defence still take a third trick.

8

♠ 982
 ♥ AJ87
 ♦ J762
 ♣ A8
 ♠ Q73
 ♥ 10632
 ♦ 95
 ♣ Q542
 ♠ 6
 ♥ K9
 ♦ KQ84
 ♣ KJ10973
 ♠ AKJ1054
 ♥ Q54
 ♦ A103
 ♣ 6

Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

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

Most souths will get to 4♠ after overcalling the suit and north making some forward-going noise such as an unassuming cue-bid.

The defence should manage a trump and two red tricks, but could allow declarer to sneak through the diamond ten and make three heart tricks, allowing an overtrick.

Assuming east opens 1♣ some wests will have a pre-emptive raise available, finding the paying 5♠ sacrifice, which only loses 300.

The Law of Total Tricks, the sum of both sides longest fits, correctly predicts nineteen Total Tricks. So N/S should double 5♣, since if they can make eleven tricks the opponents will be 500 light.

9

♠ 432
 ♥ QJ108
 ♦ KQ10
 ♣ Q105
 ♠ KQ6
 ♥ 97652
 ♦ 5
 ♣ K932
 ♠ A87
 ♥ A3
 ♦ AJ76432
 ♣ 4

Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

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

After south rebids 3♦ over his 1♥ response north may have no satisfactory bid. He is okay if 3♠ promises a club stop and requests a spade stop, but not if methods are to show features. Many will simply bid 3NT anyway, and this makes so long as north guesses correctly on a club lead to the ace and return.

Those in 5♦ are likely to get a spade lead, and should finish two light. If this is missed declarer can take two trumps, then concede a heart.

There could be some in part-score, so there should be a spread of scores from 430, maybe even 460 N/S on a heart lead and continuation, to minus 100.

10

♠ K10
 ♥ A109865
 ♦ Q743
 ♣ 8
 ♠ Q9764
 ♥ J4
 ♦ A8
 ♣ K963
 ♠ J83
 ♥ K7
 ♦ K1065
 ♣ AQJ10
 ♠ A52
 ♥ Q32
 ♦ J92
 ♣ 7542

Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

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

After east's weak NT or 1♦ the 5:3 spade fit should be identified, many declaring game.

Declarer has no option if he has to play the heart suit himself but north may find the underlead of the ace when on lead in trumps, and some declarers will go wrong.

Note that the best play in trumps is to lead towards the short holding, playing the high honour. If this loses then lead towards the long holding and finesse the 9.

Here north's K/10 of trumps are picked up, but the play also succeeds against AK10 in north, plus the 10 or any four card holding in south.

So, in theory flat in 420, but some will be light, and others in part-score.

11

♠ 7
 ♥ K954
 ♦ QJ6
 ♣ 109732
 ♠ KQ86
 ♥ QJ7
 ♦ A8
 ♣ AQJ4
 ♠ J54
 ♥ A82
 ♦ 105432
 ♣ K5
 ♠ A10932
 ♥ 1063
 ♦ K97
 ♣ 86

Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

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

Most will play 3NT after west's 1♣ or 1♠ opener, possibly even a shaded 2NT.

Should east declare south could kick off with the spade ten, though this is dubious as west will have bid the suit. Ten tricks now eventuate. More likely is a heart from either polarity, leaving declarer unable to knock out the spade ace and cede two diamonds before the defence have too many winners.

So this looks a flattish board in 400, unless the defence errs.

12

♠ 106
 ♥ A943
 ♦ AQ3
 ♣ AQ84
 ♠ 73
 ♥ J872
 ♦ 10876
 ♣ J92
 ♠ AQJ9
 ♥ KQ10
 ♦ KJ
 ♣ K653
 ♠ K8542
 ♥ 65
 ♦ 9542
 ♣ 107

Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

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

Should north open a strong NT east is wisest to pass, not double, as his pard is bound to take out, probably into a disastrous spot. The best hope is to collect 100s in defence. Here he is rewarded when N/S find 2♠, which will go one or two light, despite east being end-played at least once. If 1NT is passed out, it could make.

Over an acol 1♥, the plan is to double, then bid NT as cheaply as possible, showing 18-19, or raise spades should west bid them. Here 2NT results, which will do well to make seven tricks.

This is definitely one best defended, with the acol N/Ss getting the better of it.

13

♠ 872
♥ A65
♦ A654
♣ 1096

♠ K103
♥ Q10732
♣ AQJ52

♠ 1093
♥ QJ842
♦ K98
♣ K4

♠ AKQJ654
♥ 97
♦ J
♣ 873

Dealer: North
Both Vulnerable

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

With no sure defensive tricks, despite a non-passed partner, east should open 4♠, he being too good for 3♠. Some play 4♦ to show this sort of hand, the theoretical advantage being the lead up to partner's putative tenaces.

Should south lead the heart queen the defence take three tricks. A diamond to the ace means north must cash the heart ace immediately or declarer's hearts disappear on dummy's clubs.

So the number of tricks taken seems to depend on the lead. Should west declare it takes an improbable diamond ace underlead to get the money, so it looks like the transfer pre-empt - the bizarrely named South African Texas - will be the winner.

15

♠ 85
♥ AK10852
♦ Q
♣ KQ97

♠ 10972
♥ J96
♦ 642
♣ AJ5

♠ J4
♥ Q3
♦ 108753
♣ 10643

♠ AKQ63
♥ 74
♦ AKJ9
♣ 82

Dealer: South
N-S Vulnerable

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

With no clear direction south should simply reply 1♠ to 1♥, north rebidding 2♣. A misfit looming, south bids 2♦, FSF, and north is maybe worth 3♥.

South will surely investigate slam now, probably using RKCB. When north shows two keys, but no trump queen, south knows it is time to shut up shop.

The defence need to be careful defending hearts. If they miss the club lead declarer cashes top trumps, and can get all his clubs away before west can ruff in - but only if he takes three spades before the last diamond.

I suspect someone will score 1430, and a few manage 680. Those in 3NT should only make 660, but that will beat most in hearts.

14

♠ 109743
♥ K3
♦ K87
♣ K98

♠ KJ6
♥ 852
♦ AQ43
♣ A75

♠ A5
♥ A97
♦ J652
♣ J432

♠ Q82
♥ QJ1064
♦ 109
♣ Q106

Dealer: East
Neither Vulnerable

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

West will declare his weak NT. East could bid a heavy 1NT or raise a 5 card major 1♦.

Against no trump or diamonds north likely leads a spade, and so east gets a heart pitch, and scores 120 or 110.

Should east declare no trump he must duck the heart queen, overtaken, and win the second round, before playing diamonds. If north now finds the club switch declarer may settle for 90, rather than risking defeat by taking the spade finesse. However, south probably gives the show away by having to discard a heart or the club queen on diamonds.

At love all N/S could get into the action in either major, and should escape for 50 or 100, conceding less than the E/W part-scores.

16

♠ 975
♥ K8763
♦ 864
♣ 42

♠ AQ83
♥ AQ1054
♦ 9
♣ K97

♠ KJ42
♥ J9
♦ A5
♣ QJ1083

♠ 106
♥ 2
♦ KQJ10732
♣ A65

Dealer: West
E-W Vulnerable

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

With game-going values east bids 2♣, rather than 1♠, over west's 1♥. South attempts to disrupt matters with 3♦, maybe 5♦. West has values for a competitive double over either, finding the spade fit.

N/S's 5♦, certainly found by some, loses only 500. Since 5♠ is unbeatable E/W do best to advance. Here the Law of Total Tricks is misleading, theoretically eighteen Total Tricks available, when there are in fact nineteen. So some E/Ws may misjudge this one and take the money against 5♦.

If east declares spades on a heart lead he must pop up with the ace or he loses a ruff and only makes ten tricks.

17

♠ K8432
 ♥ 10
 ♦ A1082
 ♣ J102
 ♠ AQ5
 ♥ Q7
 ♦ KQ43
 ♣ K843
 ♠ 109
 ♥ KJ9852
 ♦ 7
 ♣ AQ65
 ♠ J76
 ♥ A643
 ♦ J965
 ♣ 97

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

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

West transfers to hearts over east's strong NT or bids the suit over 1♦. East probably tries to declare 3NT after west shows his clubs, but most wests will insist on hearts.

As the cards lie 3NT is the winner, scoring 460. Tomorrow, south will lead from five diamonds headed by the ace, meaning 3NT can be light, even with 3:2 hearts, should declarer guess wrongly who holds the heart ace.

Indeed today, playing no trump, declarer is fortunate south's four card heart holding does not include the 10, else he would be beaten on a spade lead.

It usually pays to play the 6:2 major fit, rather than 3NT. This hand is an exception.

18

♠ AK
 ♥ Q105
 ♦ KQ8
 ♣ QJ632
 ♠ QJ7
 ♥ A3
 ♦ 542
 ♣ K9754
 ♠ 10532
 ♥ K72
 ♦ J10976
 ♣ 10
 ♠ 9864
 ♥ J9864
 ♦ A3
 ♣ A8

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

North's strong NT will see south transferring to hearts, then bidding spades. North should declare 4♥.

Acol opens 1♣, and north rebids 2NT over 1♥. South should find the same spot after 3♦, checkback, north owning up to three hearts. However, some will doubtless play 3NT.

3NT should only make nine tricks, even on a diamond lead, since west can win an early heart and a spade switch causes insuperable entry problems.

4♥ could easily go light on a club lead from either side. Declarer must pitch a club from south on a diamond, take top spades, then cross-ruff. Not obvious. 3NT looks the winner.

19

♠ 87
 ♥ 9752
 ♦ K43
 ♣ AKJ8
 ♠ KJ102
 ♥ AQJ
 ♦ J6
 ♣ Q942
 ♠ Q954
 ♥ 106
 ♦ Q1082
 ♣ 1053
 ♠ A63
 ♥ K843
 ♦ A975
 ♣ 76

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

West is likely to play his weak NT, and should go light, unless north starts with a diamond or top clubs.

A 5 card major 1♣ could be passed out, though south should protect with a double, finding the heart fit, which makes an easy 110. Some norths may bid 1NT instead, but will struggle to make 90 without help.

So this part-score hand looks to belong to N/S, 110 available, but some may only get 100 in defence, and others will let 1NT home E/W, for a poor score, or go light themselves in the same spot.

20

♠ KQJ96
 ♥ K5
 ♦ KQ10
 ♣ 1072
 ♠ 1053
 ♥ A62
 ♦ J985
 ♣ KJ5
 ♠ 8742
 ♥ Q104
 ♦ A64
 ♣ A96
 ♠ A
 ♥ J9873
 ♦ 732
 ♣ Q843

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

North is probably worth a strong NT, or acol 1♠, having a good suit and decent intermediates. The former will see north playing 2♥ after a transfer, the latter south declaring 1NT.

A diamond is best against 1NT. If east smoothly ducks the ace declarer may go wrong after unblocking spades and leading a heart towards dummy. West wins and plays another diamond. The defence can now make seven tricks if declarer pops up with the king.

2♥ looks doomed, with six clear losers. However, east may lead a spade, and the trump king win next. Declarer can now pitch clubs on spades, and gets home.

It looks like scores both ways here, with those in 1NT the more likely to go plus.

21

♠ 9432
 ♥ 754
 ♦ Q32
 ♣ 1065
 ♠ J1076
 ♥ Q8
 ♦ AKJ104
 ♣ A8
 ♠ AQ85
 ♥ AJ932
 ♦ 96
 ♣ 92
 ♠ K
 ♥ K106
 ♦ 875
 ♣ KQJ743

Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

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

E/W should reach 4♠ after west makes a sputnik double of south's 2♣ intervention.

Declarer can escape with only a club and a heart loser, but in practice is likely to lose to the singleton trump king.

It is hard to see many making 450 here, but who knows.

I trust nobody declares 3NT, which should go go light on a club lead, though if declarer wins then crosses to the spade ace, intending to play diamonds, the king falls, spades are run, and south needs to be careful to avoid a club/heart endplay.

22

♠ Q9765
 ♥ Q4
 ♦ 842
 ♣ AKQ
 ♠ KJ2
 ♥ K87
 ♦ 65
 ♣ J8753
 ♠ A843
 ♥ J10952
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ 109
 ♠ 10
 ♥ A63
 ♦ AK10973
 ♣ 642

Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	5	1	2	4
S	2	6	1	2	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

North should really declare 3NT, right-siding the contract should east have the heart king. In practice it proves immaterial with the king on-side and diamonds behaving.

Played by north declarer could easily get a heart lead to the king and a heart return, making eleven tricks. West is likely to lead a club, and declarer should then lose two spades in addition to the heart king.

North will frequently declare, simply bidding 3NT over the 2♦ rebid. The more technically minded may try 3♠ instead, hoping partner can show three spades. This may lead to south declaring, and maybe losing out.

With the lucky spade lie and heart position 6♦ is actually makeable, if unbiddable.

23

♠ AQ652
 ♥ 2
 ♦ 64
 ♣ K9865
 ♠ 3
 ♥ AKJ974
 ♦ KJ98
 ♣ A10
 ♠ K108
 ♥ Q103
 ♦ 10732
 ♣ J43
 ♠ J974
 ♥ 865
 ♦ AQ5
 ♣ Q72

Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

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

Even vulnerable opposite a passed partner north may overcall spades or use Michaels. So we could have a competitive hand, with E/W maybe bidding up to 4♥, and N/S venturing 4♠.

4♥ is a near certain make - indeed eleven tricks are likely on a spade lead, west ditching a club on the established king.

4♠ could get home, since west has the doubleton club ace, and there are only two other guaranteed losers. However, declarer will struggle to get to south to lead clubs from the right hand. East should get in in time to find the diamond switch.

It will be interesting to see how many make 4♠, or only concede 100-200 against the vulnerable game. Will any languish in part-score?

24

♠ AK6
 ♥ 54
 ♦ KJ863
 ♣ J85
 ♠ Q952
 ♥ AKQ73
 ♦ 105
 ♣ K4
 ♠ 104
 ♥ 1082
 ♦ AQ974
 ♣ Q93
 ♠ J873
 ♥ J96
 ♦ 2
 ♣ A10762

Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

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

When north overcalls 1♥ with 2♦ east passes, hoping for a re-opening double, duly forthcoming. South should probably redouble, looking for a better spot, and will find 2♠ or 3♣. However, the 300 or so conceded is not a huge improvement on the 500/800 2♦x can lose.

Left alone by a disciplined north east may declare 1NT playing acol, or west 2♥ after a raise playing 5 card majors. The former makes seven or eight tricks on the normal club lead, depending on whether or not declarer risks the diamond finesse. Hearts can make ten tricks, declarer losing only a club and two spades, and should score better.

Normally it pays to be aggressive at love all playing Pairs. Not by N/S on this one.

25

♠ QJ76
 ♥ J65
 ♦ 72
 ♣ K1092
 ♠ A943
 ♥ A43
 ♦ K5
 ♣ 8763
 ♠ 52
 ♥ KQ1092
 ♦ QJ10
 ♣ AQ4
 ♠ K108
 ♥ 87
 ♦ A98643
 ♣ J5

 Dealer: North
 E-W Vulnerable

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

East is too good for a weak NT, and should open 1♥, or a strong NT. Acoll will easily find 4♥. 5 card majors may not, unless playing 5 card stayman.

Declarer should be able to make ten tricks in either denomination, but may not take the club finesse in 3NT if south has cleared his diamonds, as this risks defeat.

Normally the 5:3 major fit is superior to 3NT, but not on this hand - in theory at least. However, in practice many in 3NT will only make 600.

26

♠ AJ7
 ♥ J53
 ♦ QJ5
 ♣ J542
 ♠ 10542
 ♥ K82
 ♦ A108
 ♣ A108
 ♠ Q863
 ♥ AQ96
 ♦ K4
 ♣ K97
 ♠ K9
 ♥ 1074
 ♦ 97632
 ♣ Q63

 Dealer: East
 Both Vulnerable

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

The 4:4 spade fit is easily found via stayman over east's weak NT, or after a 5 card major 1♠. On this hand the eight card trump fit is much superior to 3NT. Declarer loses three trumps, but can pitch a club in west when hearts prove to be 3:3.

Declarer is under serious pressure in 3NT on a diamond lead, and is lucky that the spades lie such that south has only one entry - he cannot therefore both set up his suit then get in to run it.

So it looks like the 620 in spades will be a joint top, unless some defenders lead clubs defending 3NT, then fail to continue them, ceding 630.

27

♠ AQ73
 ♥ Q1082
 ♦ 109
 ♣ KJ7
 ♠ J1062
 ♥ K6
 ♦ AJ842
 ♣ A5
 ♠ K985
 ♥ A3
 ♦ Q73
 ♣ Q983
 ♠ 4
 ♥ J9754
 ♦ K65
 ♣ 10642

 Dealer: South
 Neither Vulnerable

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

North presumably doubles 1♦, and east redoubles. N/S have an easy escape to hearts, so cannot be penalised. It may prove hard to find 4♠ now, north marked with the suit.

This may be just as well for E/W as, not for the first time in this set, 3NT is in theory as good as the major fit. However, this all assumes that declarer reads the diamond position correctly after the double, and does not lose to the doubleton 10/9 in north or south's king.

I would rather be in 4♠, which cannot credibly lose more than three tricks. Those getting diamonds wrong in 3NT should be light.

28

♠ A1075
 ♥ J9
 ♦ K95
 ♣ 10543
 ♠ 6
 ♥ Q86542
 ♦ 73
 ♣ AQ87
 ♠ KJ8432
 ♥ AK10
 ♦ 1086
 ♣ 6
 ♠ Q9
 ♥ 73
 ♦ AQJ42
 ♣ KJ92

 Dealer: West
 N-S Vulnerable

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

E/W should find their heart fit whether west opens a dubious Weak two/Multi or east is the opener with 1♠. South overcalls the latter with 2♦, and west is worth a double or 2♥.

I cannot see everyone getting to 4♥, and some may languish in 2♠. A few could buy it in 3♦ N/S, but that can go 200 or even 300 light, east ruffing clubs.

This is another hand with a variety of possible outcomes, something of a theme in this set, despite it having far more balanced hands than to be expected.

Voids/singletons	N 1/7	S 0/9	E 1/7	W 1/6	7+ suit	N 0	S 2	E 1	W 0
Ave HCP	N 10.36	S 9.64	E 9.86	W 10.14	Balanced	N 18	S 12	E 15	W 14