



## The 2025 Charity Challenge Pairs

### Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March

We are raising funds for two support Charities again this year - [Mind](#), that wonderful charity supporting people with mental health problems, and [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) ... the work they do is just amazing. Please help us raise lots of lovely funds for them.

Last year you managed to raise over £5,000 each for them which was just amazing and incredibly generous of everyone. If you haven't already done so, please [click here to go to the page](#) that gives you all the information. And if you want to send a cheque or pay by bank transfer please note the change of bank account !

July sees our [Summer Charity pairs](#) for Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation and then of course there will be the [Children in Need Pairs](#) in November – well we couldn't NOT run that could we !

Do join us for some of these events if you can – it's lovely to see lots of people joining in and we love to have your company.

We do hope you have enjoyed yourselves, and you will know by now whether the commentator has got it right! We are very grateful to Mark Horton for writing the Wednesday and Thursday commentaries, to Julian Pottage who penned the one for Tuesday and to Brian Senior for starting and ending the event with the Monday and Friday commentaries.

Thank you so much for joining us and please do so again in future !

*Anna and Mark*

Board 1	♠ K743	Dealer N
	♥ A85	Vul: None
	♦ 75	
	♣ AK103	
♠ 10		♠ J986
♥ KQ109763		♥ 2
♦ K10432		♦ AQJ8
♣		♣ J762
	♠ AQ52	
	♥ J4	
	♦ 96	
	♣ Q9854	

North has a weak NT and, if that is his opening bid, there will usually be two passes to West, who will introduce the heart suit.

Some may simply overcall 4♥ as nothing is likely to describe the hand sufficiently well for East to make an informed decision – West already knows that East has fair values from N/S's lack of enterprise. Others may settle for 2♥ – whether this is strong or weak in second seat, it should be a stronger hand than 2♥ when bid in pass-out seat. East can raise that to game, despite the singleton heart, and

will be rewarded when the side-suit fit makes the contract easy.

Where North opens 1♣, the spade fit will usually be found, though if South responds 1♠ and West overcalls 4♥, North will not always be willing to be bullied into bidding two levels higher than would otherwise have been his intention.

E/W make 11 tricks in a red-suit contract, while N/S have 8 in spades, and nine if there is no club ruff, which will not often be found, so 4♠ doubled would be a good sacrifice

#### Makeable Contracts

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

Board 2	♠ J76	Dealer E
	♥ KJ1043	Vul: N-S
	♦ KQJ6	
	♣ 2	
♠ A108		♠ Q3
♥ AQ87		♥ 965
♦ 843		♦ 102
♣ A75		♣ QJ10963
	♠ K9542	
	♥ 2	
	♦ A975	
	♣ K84	

This one could go in a number of ways, depending on who opens the bidding and with what.

You wouldn't find this in any teaching manual, but at favourable vulnerability I would open the east hand with 3♣ in hope of causing problems for the opposition. Of course, it helps if partner is aware of the possibility, because if he responds 3NT he will go sailing down as there is no entry to dummy with which to pick up the clubs. But if West passes, North will double, South jump to 4♠, and it will be he who goes sailing down – the aggressive pre-empt will have done its job.

If East passes as dealer, some will open the South hand with 1♠. This will be another case of needing partner to be aware of the possibility that the hand could be as light as this. Even then, stopping short of the doomed game is not easy. I don't think this hand is worth an opening bid, especially second in hand and at adverse vulnerability.

More often than not, it will be West who opens the bidding. If with 1NT, North will overcall. Two Hearts is already too high, but if the overcall promises a second suit, and maybe even if it doesn't, South can try 2♠, and that is a much better spot, as is 3♦.

If West opens 1♣, North will overcall 1♥ in modern style, rather than double, to get the fifth heart into the game. South will respond 1♠, and North raise to 2♠.

A 1♥ opening will silence North and East's 1NT reply will sometimes shut everyone out.

If they can get to play there, West can make 3♣, East only 2♣ on a heart lead, while N/S

make 2♠ or 3♦.

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

=====

Board 3	♠ 107432	Dealer S
	♥ K	Vul: E-W
	♦ 9854	
	♣ 632	
♠ 965		♠ Q
♥ AQ964		♥ J10875
♦ J10		♦ K62
♣ Q85		♣ AJ74
	♠ AKJ8	
	♥ 32	
	♦ AQ73	
	♣ K109	

If South opens a strong NT, West is too balanced to overcall so North will get to transfer to spades. With a great fit in a completely maximum hand, South can break the transfer by jumping to 3♠ rather than settle for the requested 2♠. And that will normally be that, with nine tricks the normal outcome.

A 1♠ opening will also silence West and should see a raise from North – to 2♠ unless the partnership plays 3♠ as pre-emptive, a more common method when facing a known five-card major than when playing Acol. South can make a game try of 2NT if East passes, and North sign-off in 3♠. However, East may double 2♠ and West respond 3♥ or even 4♥, the latter if he doesn't appreciate just how light a double can be here from a hand with shortage in the opponents' suit. Three Hearts is the limit at double dummy, but a non-diamond lead may let 4♥ home.

If South opens 1♣/♦, West can come in with a 1♥ overcall, and East will make a strong raise. For many that may be a simple jump to 4♥, for others whatever bid show a constructive raise to 3♥ in the partnership methods I like

4♥ myself – keep things simple – and whether that pays off will depend on North's opening lead.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4	♠ 6	Dealer W
	♥ AQ107654	Vul: Both
	♦ 96	
	♣ 1096	
♠	Q872	♠ AJ109
♥	3	♥ K98
♦	QJ743	♦ AK5
♣	KQ8	♣ 543
	♠ K543	
	♥ J2	
	♦ 1082	
	♣ AJ72	

West is just short of opening values so North will be left to start the ball rolling with a 3♥ pre-empt.

For me, East has a clear pass now, but many will either double or overcall 3NT. The latter looks very pushy with a flat 15 HCP facing a passed hand, but there are some incurable optimists in this world. Meanwhile, I don't like double with this distribution. If West cannot do anything when 3♥ reaches him, it is unlikely that E/W should be declaring on the deal.

So, two passes to West, who has a perfect hand for a double, with short hearts, four spades, and the safety net of being a passed hand so partner cannot expect more than the hand contains.

It would not be absurd for East to pass out the double and settle for whatever penalty is available. That should collect +500 on a diamond lead and club switch, but that defence may not always be obvious, and there is a danger of declarer escaping for down one

via a club discard on the king of spades.

But West will almost always have four spades to take the risk of doubling 3♥, given how limited he is known to be. In that case, East has enough to jump to 4♠ in response to the double. Despite the four-one trump split, there is nothing the defence can do to put the game under serious pressure, and 10 tricks should be made.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5	♠ K1052	Dealer N
	♥ KQJ3	Vul: N-S
	♦ 9	
	♣ 10875	
♠	AJ	♠ 98743
♥	A76542	♥ 109
♦	AKJ5	♦ Q73
♣	J	♣ AQ6
	♠ Q6	
	♥ 8	
	♦ 108642	
	♣ K9432	

There should be three passes to West, who will open 1♥, and East respond 1♠.

West is far too good for a simple 2♥ rebid so must choose between a jump to 3♥ and a quiet 2♦. Had hearts been strong and diamonds weak, the choice might have been a different one, but on the actual hand the decision is a clear one – 2♦, and definitely not 3♦, which would be game-forcing so an overbid.

East should give false preference to 2♥ and now West can complete the picture of his hand as six-four with invitational values by raising to 3♥. East should go on to game. The ♥10 and ♥9 could be useful on a different layout, while the ♦Q is a good card, as is the ace of clubs, and if West is 1-6-4-2, so will be the ♣Q.

Today, there are three trump losers plus a

spade – or maybe club according to how the play begins – and 4♥ is down one. That's unlucky, but at least those who bid to game know that they reached the best theoretical spot. I don't know how much consolation you will take from that, or if the result is all that counts.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6	♠ Q9	Dealer E
	♥ 1043	Vul: E-W
	♦ AQ9643	
	♣ 96	
♠ J85		♠ AK1064
♥ AKQ52		♥ J97
♦ 82		♦ K107
♣ 532		♣ AK
	♠ 732	
	♥ 86	
	♦ J5	
	♣ QJ10874	

Slam is below par but not far away on the E/W cards, and in practice any one of three possible small slams will come home on a friendly lie of the cards. Very few will get to slam anyway, so those who declarer 3NT by East will score very well for their +690.

East opens 1♠ and, if playing Acoll, West can respond 2♥. When East rebids a forcing 2NT, West can either raise to game or, with a couple of potential weak spots, check for a five-three fit by bidding 3♠. East may cuebid 4♣ on the way to 4♠, but should settle for game if West signs off in 4♠, as he probably should with only 10 HCP and facing a balanced hand that opened at the one level.

If playing two-over-one game-force, West may start with a 1NT response and East will raise to 2NT. West may confirm the spade fit, but some will greedily bid 3NT. Now, what should West do if North leads a low diamond

against 3NT?

Playing teams, declarer can guarantee the contract by playing the seven or ten, but that gives the defence an opportunity to take two diamond tricks. At teams, that is well worth the price, but declarer needs to think about what will happen at other tables, where most pairs will find one of the five-three major-suit fits. If the ace of diamonds is onside, those in 4♥/♠ will lose only one diamond trick. Irrespective of whether there is a spade loser, those declarers will all make a trick more than the one in 3NT. Missing that overtrick will cost a lot at matchpoints so, rather than safeguard the contract, there is a strong case for declarer putting up the king at trick one. If he is lucky, he may make the same number of tricks as those in four of a major, and outscore them all.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7	♠ 8653	Dealer S
	♥ AQJ84	Vul: Both
	♦ 86	
	♣ A7	
♠ AJ		♠ K104
♥ 932		♥ 10765
♦ QJ72		♦ A43
♣ KJ65		♣ 984
	♠ Q972	
	♥ K	
	♦ K1095	
	♣ Q1032	

If West opens a weak NT, it will pay North to have a bid to show both majors in his methods. The obvious one is the popular Landy 2♣ overcall, whether other bids are natural or 2♣ is just part of Multi-Landy. Landy immediately finds the spade fit, South responding 2♠ and playing there. South should not consider bidding more than 2♠. At matchpoints we should not stretch for thin

games; the object of the overcall was to compete the partscore, not to bid games.

The defence cannot prevent eight tricks in a spade contract and +110 should score reasonably for N/S.

If West opens 1♣/♦, North will overcall 1♥, making sure that a five-three fit will not be missed. I favour a 1♠ response on the South cards rather than 1NT. A change of suit at the one level only promises four cards, and if South chooses to bid 1NT a four-four spade fit will be lost forever.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8	♠ QJ642	Dealer W
	♥ 63	Vul: None
	♦ A2	
	♣ J932	
♠ 53		♠ 10987
♥ J1095		♥ 87
♦ J10763		♦ KQ
♣ Q7		♣ AK1085
	♠ AK	
	♥ AKQ42	
	♦ 9854	
	♣ 64	

Unless North can open 2♠ to show a weak hand with five spades and a four-card or longer minor, which quickly gets N/S to their top spot – as long as South passes it out – East will get to open 1♣ and South overcall 1♥. Yes, some will prefer to start with a double, but certainly modern expert thinking allows stronger hands than this to start with a simple overcall, a subsequent double, should it be deemed appropriate as the auction develops, introducing the extra strength.

South's real problem will come when North responds 1♠ and South has to find a rebid. Nothing is ideal, given that game has to be kept in the picture when South holds 16 HCP

and a good five-card suit. And, while you may say that a 2♣ cuebid fits the bill well enough, that merely transfers the problem to North, who also lacks a really descriptive action. Given that he holds a minimum for the 1♠ bid, North should probably bid a quiet 2♥ over 2♣. Any thought of bidding NT can wait until South shows that he really is strong enough to have game in mind – if he does. After all, North pretty much denied three-card heart support when he bid 1♠, so 2♥ should not create a problem.

Sadly, while the auction to 2♥ looks reasonably well controlled, even that is too high on a trump lead to prevent diamond ruffs, and, of course, the defence can ten knock out the ♦A to prevent the long spades being of value to declarer.

Two Spades is the top spot because it is the contract in which the spade blockage can be overcome. Only 1♥ can be made, while even 1NT can be defeated. Oh, yes, and E/W can make 1♦.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9	♠ AQ9	Dealer N
	♥ KJ2	Vul: E-W
	♦ 4	
	♣ QJ10952	
♠ J8		♠ K6
♥ Q874		♥ A95
♦ AJ106		♦ Q752
♣ A87		♣ K643
	♠ 1075432	
	♥ 1063	
	♦ K983	
	♣	

North opens 1♣ and South should respond 1♠. Yes, he has only one king, but 1♣ hardly looks like a great spot, given South's club void, and there could be game or even slam

available in spades.

West is four-four in the unbid suits and has opening values, so will probably make a take-out double, and now we come to the first contentious decision of the deal. These hands where opener has a six-card suit plus three-card support for partner and a ruffing value tend to split the field. Some players always rebid the six-card suit, while others insist that raising responder's suit is the right thing to do. Well, we can say that if responder has bid a four-card suit then rebidding opener's long suit is likely to be the winning choice, but that if responder has a five-card or longer suit the reverse will tend to be the case.

My own inclination is generally to rebid the six-card suit, and the presence of both the nine and ten of clubs in the North hand means that the suit will even play OK as trumps facing a void (just as well).

If North rebids 2♣ and is left to play there, he can be beaten but will for sure sometimes be allowed home with eight tricks. If North instead raises to 2♠, that will be a much better spot, with eight or nine tricks readily available.

But, as already mentioned, West will often double and now E/W will compete. After all, East has 12 HCP facing a take-out double. E/W's problem may be that East takes them beyond their safety level, which at least in theory is only 3♦ or eight tricks in heats or, more likely, NT.

This is quite a messy board and the key to a decent score may prove to be simply going plus.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

Board 10	♠	AQ7654	Dealer E
	♥	K8	Vul: Both
	♦	AQJ	
	♣	QJ	
♠	83		♠ 109
♥	42		♥ J10753
♦	108652		♦ 973
♣	K1082		♣ A93
	♠	KJ2	
	♥	AQ96	
	♦	K4	
	♣	7654	

N/S have 12 top tricks in a spade contract but two quick losers.

Say that South opens a weak NT. If playing simple methods, North will respond 3♠, a natural slam try, and South will be happy to co-operate. However, his 4♦ cuebid should be a big flashing red light to North. South has cuebid what must be the king of diamonds, and has bypassed clubs, so must not have either the ace or king of that suit. So North should sign-off in 4♠, and that presumably will be that. It takes some discipline to give up on slam so quickly holding 19 HCP and a six-card suit, with partner cuebidding, but partner's message is clear.

If South opens 1♣, North may make a strong jump shift of 2♠ or, with weak jump shifts becoming more and more popular, at least at tournament level, may have to start with a quiet 1♠. In either case, it should be straightforward to agree spades as trumps and begin cuebidding. While the precise auctions may vary, anyone who starts cuebidding should discover the lack of a club control and stop safely in 4/5♠.

And if someone just blasts 6♠ without doing any cuebidding? Well, East will need to be one of the many who believe in cashing an ace on opening lead to a slam, otherwise the contract will be made. I would expect slam to be made a few times and defeated a few times, but I would hope that the majority will stop in game.

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

=====

Board 11	♠ Q107	Dealer S
	♥ J1094	Vul: None
	♦ J762	
	♣ 108	
♠ K65	♠ J982	
♥ A53	♥ Q7	
♦ A54	♦ Q1083	
♣ KQ53	♣ 742	
	♠ A43	
	♥ K862	
	♦ K9	
	♣ AJ96	

If South opens a strong NT, that may end the auction, though some Wests will no doubt double. I wouldn't double myself, as West has no good opening lead, and a completely empty hand, apart from the high honours, of course. To beat INT he will need a fair bit of help from partner, and seeing the double will help declarer in the play. On the actual deal, South can always make seven tricks if he reads the hand correctly.

If South opens either 1♣ or 1♥, West will overcall INT. Where the opening bid is 1♣, INT will end the auction, but where South has opened 1♥ North may compete with 2♥ at this vulnerability.

The normal jack of hearts lead swiftly puts paid to West's hopes in INT, though the friendly diamond layout should see him scramble six tricks. As for South in 2♥, the good news in hearts sees that contract making exactly.

There will probably be some N/S +180s, but +110 in 2♥ should also score well.

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

=====

Board 12	♠ AJ92	Dealer W
	♥ QJ	Vul: N-S
	♦ KJ762	
	♣ 85	
♠ 64	♠ KQ1073	
♥ AK87	♥ 109632	
♦ 9843	♦ 10	
♣ AJ10	♣ 93	
	♠ 85	
	♥ 54	
	♦ AQ5	
	♣ KQ7642	

Things lie very well for E/W. So that they can make 4♥. However, it will take some pushing from N/S for them to get there, and if they don't find the heart fit early in the auction – East responds 1♠ to West's 1♣ opening then South overcalls – they might even miss it altogether and sell out to a N/S minor-suit partscore.

N/S make eight tricks in either minor against accurate defence. E/W can get either their spade trick or diamond ruff, but not both, so declarer always comes to eight tricks.

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

=====



Board 13      ♠ 104      Dealer N  
                  ♥ AK842      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ J63  
                  ♣ 973

♠ KQ82      ♠ J9765  
 ♥ Q107      ♥ 65  
 ♦ K875      ♦ A10  
 ♣ Q10      ♣ AK52

♠ A3  
 ♥ J93  
 ♦ Q942  
 ♣ J864

This one looks as dull as dull can be.

E/W have game values and a nine-card spade fit, and there is no way into the auction for N/S.

East will open 1♠ and West, unless in very pessimistic mood, will raise to game by one route or another. I suppose that a pessimist might miss game by raising to only 3♠, when East has no real business going on.

And 10 tricks looks to be the normal outcome. Even if South leads a club, dummy's ten scoring, South has a second chance to cash partner's heart winners when in with the ace of trumps. Most tables should see E/W +620, with any other result either very good or very bad.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14      ♠ QJ10843      Dealer E  
                  ♥ 9      Vul: None  
                  ♦ Q10  
                  ♣ KQ53

♠ K9      ♠ 6  
 ♥ 1086      ♥ 75  
 ♦ A943      ♦ KJ7652  
 ♣ J1074      ♣ A962

♠ A752  
 ♥ AKQJ432  
 ♦ 8  
 ♣ 8

This one's a bit more exciting, though the action may be over quite quickly and the number of possible outcomes looks to be quite limited.

If playing a weak 2♦, East will usually open with that, and the practical approach to the South hand is to jump to 4♥ and not bother about the spades. More often than not, 4♥ will end the auction and declarer should lose one trick in each side suit; +420.

At favourable vulnerability, West might save in 5♦, but the West hand is too balanced for this to be a sound proposition at equal vulnerability. Five Diamonds is a good save, but only because East is six-four and there is a double fit in the minors.

However, while this would be a sounder action if East's diamonds had a little more internal solidity, if a weak 2♦ is not available, or even if it is and East is feeling frisky, he may open 3♦, trading on the side-suit shape and lack of defence to the majors. Again, South will overcall 4♥, but now there is a definite temptation for West to take the save.

Minus 300 is a good result for E/W but, once in a while, South may take the push to 5♥ and now E/W are going plus on a board where they have no business going plus. Of course, that might be avoided if North were to make a penalty double of 5♦ to discourage his partner from bidding again.



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

=====

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

=====

Board 15		♠ 865	Dealer S	
	♥	Q8	Vul: N-S	
	♦	105		
	♣	A109752		
♠	AKJ32		♠	10
♥	76		♥	AK543
♦	9432		♦	KQ86
♣	K6		♣	QJ3
	♠	Q974		
	♥	J1092		
	♦	AJ7		
	♣	84		

The adverse vulnerability should keep N/S quiet as their opponents bid to 3NT, a contract in which there is quite a bit of work to do to come to nine tricks but which can always be made.

West will open 1♠ and rebid the suit over East's 2♥ response. Unless playing a system in which the 2♠ bid is unlimited, East can simply close proceedings with a jump to 3NT now.

With hearts bid by declarer, South has no particularly attractive lead open to him. With neither minor offering much potential, South may well settle for a passive jack of hearts, and may find himself still on lead to trick two.

A club opening lead, or switch, may give declarer cause for concern, but North has no entry to the long clubs even if they do get established.

If East introduces the diamonds at his second turn, there is a danger that West will raise, and none of the possible suit-contract games should be allowed to make.

Board 16		♠ Q9732	Dealer W	
	♥	K84	Vul: E-W	
	♦	A10		
	♣	Q72		
♠	106		♠	J85
♥	A97653		♥	10
♦	Q75		♦	KJ984
♣	A6		♣	J1095
	♠	AK4		
	♥	QJ2		
	♦	632		
	♣	K843		

Should West open the bidding and, if so, with 1♥ or 2♥?

I don't think the hand is worth a one-bid with an empty suit and 3-2-2 shape in the side-suits – I would open 1♥ if the hand was 1-6-3-3, so you could say that I think it is close to being a one-bid.

So what about opening 2♥? Some will say no, too many points – particularly when vulnerable 10 is not too many for me. Others will point to the empty suit, nothing to back up the ace. The combination of high point-count and weak main suit (so good defence) is a more compelling argument, but still, the side that opens the bidding tends to have an advantage more often than not. I think these decisions are best made by simply doing what one is most comfortable with. Yes, some things will work out better than others at any given time, but when it comes to pre-empts, have a personal or partnership style and stick with it until you convince yourself that it needs to be changed.

On this deal, a 2♥ opening may silence everyone. South is too balanced to double and too weak to overcall 2NT, while North has to find an overcall on a flat 11-count with a weak suit. And, if he does, won't South drive

to a hopeless game? This looks to be a very good layout on which to have opened a weak 2♥.

But if West opens 1♥, North has an easy 1♠ overcall. South can cuebid 2♥ to show a constructive spade raise, and North will rebid a discouraging 2♠. If South passes that, N/S are exactly where they want to be.

And if South isn't yet satisfied and bids on over 2♠? South's best option is to try 2NT to offer a choice of contracts. North may raise to 3NT, hoping for a little more from partner. Even 2NT should be one too high. N/S need to stop in 2♠ to score very well.

#### Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	-	2	I
S	2	-	-	2	I
E	-	2	-	-	-
W	-	2	-	-	-

=====

Board 17	♠ A65	Dealer N
	♥ 8	Vul: None
	♦ 8764	
	♣ KJ976	
♠ J7	♠ KQ1043	
♥ AJ1063	♥ 54	
♦ AK93	♦ QJ52	
♣ Q8	♣ 52	
	♠ 982	
	♥ KQ972	
	♦ 10	
	♣ A1043	

Only West holds a genuine one-level opening hand, and when there are three passes West will open 1♥ then rebid 2♦ over the 1♠ response. Will East raise to 3♦ or just pass out 2♦? That looks to be a close decision but, at a form of scoring that doesn't pay a premium for reaching thin games, the risk of turning a plus score into a minus suggests that passing will be the long-term winning option. As it turns out, 3♦ can be made, so the bidding decision may not be all that important – West cannot really go on over

3♦, despite having some extra values, so it should end the auction.

The compromise of giving false preference to 2♥ to give opener a third chance works out very badly on this deal due to the bad heart break, which should see 2♥ easily defeated.

Some Easts will be able to open 2♠, weak with spades and a minor. West should forget about game and pass in reply – there is no safety at the three level if West is tempted to explore game possibilities. Indeed, after a diamond lead it is possible to beat even 2♠.

And then we come to South, third in hand and non-vulnerable. Surely a fair number of Souths will open a shaded 1♥, or even 2♥. That may see West overcall 1NT, North compete with 2♣, and East compete with 2♠ – or perhaps invite game in spades. The Lebensohl sequence of 2NT followed by 3♠ does that, showing five spades and invitational values. South can compete in clubs, and there are simply too many possible auctions to look at them all.

N/S can make 3♣, E/W 3♦, but there will be a fair few other contracts attempted on this deal.

#### Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	-	-	-	-
S	3	-	-	-	-
E	-	3	-	I	-
W	-	3	-	I	-

=====

Board 18	♠ 9	Dealer E
	♥ J2	Vul: N-S
	♦ AKJ987	
	♣ K1075	
♠ A5	♠ QJ873	
♥ K96543	♥ Q87	
♦ 103	♦ 2	
♣ A94	♣ J863	
	♠ K10642	
	♥ A10	
	♦ Q654	
	♣ Q2	

Most Souths will open 1♠ and most Wests will overcall 2♥.

It's quite tough for N/S to go plus from here because North has a sound opening hand facing a hand which has opened and, with a 10-card diamond fit as well, it will be natural to get to game.

If North bids 3♦ over the opposing 2♥, South can raise diamonds – possibly in the face of further competition if East bids 3♥ – and now North will go on to game. A heart lead sees 5♦ quickly defeated.

But this is matchpoints, and a few Souths will be seduced by their ten of hearts into trying 3NT rather than supporting diamonds. After all, they may be able to run partner's long diamond suit. That indeed proves to be the case, but there are no more fast tricks so a heart lead results in down two and what should be a very poor result.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19	♠ 1076	Dealer S
	♥ 976	Vul: E-W
	♦ KJ32	
	♣ AK2	
♠ AK985	♠ Q432	
♥ KJ8	♥ Q53	
♦ A1096	♦ 85	
♣ 6	♣ J987	
	♠ J	
	♥ A1042	
	♦ Q74	
	♣ Q10543	

West will open 1♠ and East raise to 2♠. A few Souths may double now, trading on their past hand status to give them protection from enthusiastic partners. Such an intervention should not affect things overmuch as North doesn't have the distribution with which to get over-excited, so West will usually get to

declare spades at his chosen level.

Where South remains silent, as at most tables, West is worth a game try. For most pairs that will be 3♦, and East will quickly decline the invitation by signing off in 3♠. West, of course, should respect East's decision.

On the face of it, there are only three losers, one in each side-suit, and some will be allowed home with 10 tricks, but there is work to do and the theoretical limit is nine tricks, which I suspect will also prove to be the actual limit at more tables than not.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20	♠ AJ6	Dealer W
	♥ KJ5	Vul: Both
	♦ J102	
	♣ QJ96	
♠ K3	♠ Q10972	
♥ A1076	♥ 9832	
♦ 9743	♦ 5	
♣ 1083	♣ A54	
	♠ 854	
	♥ Q4	
	♦ AKQ86	
	♣ K72	

If North opens a weak NT, East is much too weak to come into the auction so will pass and South will raise directly to game. A spade lead to the king and ace leaves declarer with no winning option.

If declarer wins and plays on clubs, East may well duck once, but if declarer plays a second club East can win and try a heart, as the only chance to get partner in to lead a spade through declarer's presumed jack. That will lead to down two. East will, of course, switch to a high heart to make it clear that he is not interested in the suit and wants partner to switch back to spades if he wins the trick.

Declarer had the option of ducking the ♠K at trick one, and even ducking the spade continuation. That would make the contract if West held both the missing aces. Equally, winning the first trick makes the contract when it is East who holds both aces. Winning immediately is the better shot because it leaves open the possibility of a misdefence.

If North opens 1♣, East is still a little short of having a 1♠ overcall, so will pass. South responds 1♦ then raises North's 1NT rebid to game, and the same contract is reached, but with the defenders knowing a little more about the opposing hands.

Three No Trump down two should be a common result, but some will no doubt be allowed to make nine tricks.

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

=====

Board 21	♠ Q105	Dealer N
	♥ AK10654	Vul: N-S
	♦ Q75	
	♣ 7	
♠ KJ4	♠ 73	
♥ J3	♥ Q97	
♦ J82	♦ AK1096	
♣ KQ843	♣ A105	
	♠ A9862	
	♥ 82	
	♦ 43	
	♣ J962	

North will open 1♥ and most Easts will overcall 2♦. That should shut out South, and now East can respond with a 2♥ cuebid. If East now bids 2NT, West will raise to game.

South will usually lead partner's suit and North duck to preserve defensive communications. Double dummy, there are 10 minor-suit tricks to be had now, but in practice declarer is unlikely to pick up the clubs, so will be held to nine, using a club entry to dummy to allow a second-round

diamond finesse – five diamonds, three clubs, and a heart,

If South chooses to lead his own suit, a low spade, declarer will get them wrong by putting in the jack – after all, it was North who opened the bidding. However, the defence can still only come to four tricks unless declarer misreads the position.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	1	-
S	-	-	1	1	-
E	4	4	-	-	4
W	4	4	-	-	4

=====

Board 22	♠ AKJ	Dealer E
	♥ Q83	Vul: E-W
	♦ QJ	
	♣ K10963	
♠ 6	♠ Q10843	
♥ A742	♥ J65	
♦ A965432	♦ 107	
♣ 2	♣ AQ7	
	♠ 9752	
	♥ K109	
	♦ K8	
	♣ J854	

The auction will begin with two passes to West. The hand is hardly a classic for a pre-emptive opening, with two aces, no high cards to back up the aces, and a biddable four-card major on the side. But, whatever one's opinion of opening this hand with a pre-empt in first or second seat might be, all the usual rules and limitations can be forgotten in third seat. West knows that his side is outgunned in terms of high cards, while even if there is a heart fit, the chances are that it would be outbid by the opponents in spades. So, even at adverse vulnerability, I would always open this hand with 3♦ – eight days a week, to quote The Beatles.

And suddenly, instead of being able to open either 1♣ or 1NT, according to system, North has a horrible problem – 16 HCP, but that including the queen-jack doubleton in

diamonds. North cannot overcall 3NT, and has no four-card major for a take-out double. Yet can he pass with 16 HCP? Very unpleasant.

If North chooses to double, South will usually respond 3♠ and play there. The battle in 3♠ is for the seventh trick, and at double dummy the defence comes out on top. If South makes the gross overbid of 3NT, that is worse, and if he passes the double 3♦ doubled makes.

Compare that list of unsuccessful choices for N/S when West opens 1♦, with how much easier life is if West opens 1♦ or passes, unable to bring himself to break 'the rules' for an opening pre-empt. North gets to start to describe his hand, and there is no pressure, even if East overcalls 1♠ over 1♣.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 23	♠ 105	Dealer S
	♥ 865	Vul: Both
	♦ K1087	
	♣ QJ76	
♠ QJ9732	♠ A64	
♥ 10	♥ AKQ3	
♦ J9	♦ AQ642	
♣ 9432	♣ 8	
	♠ K8	
	♥ J9742	
	♦ 53	
	♣ AK105	

All roads should lead to E/W playing the spade game and coming to 11 tricks.

Most Souths will open 1♥ and some Wests will like their six-four shape enough to make a weak jump overcall of 2♠, even when vulnerable.

If West does overcall 2♠, East will drive to game, possibly making a slam try on the way – a 4♣ splinter, for example. West would like

the splinter but the West hand is too weak to co-operate and should sign-off in 4♠, ending the auction.

If West passes over 1♥, North may raise to 2♥ – certainly if 1♥ promised five, and quite possibly even facing a potentially four-card major given that North has a weak doubleton on the side which could be a liability in NT. East will double either 1NT or 2♥ and West can jump on spades, realising that the six-card suit is worth a lot more than would be an extra high card. East can raise to 4♠.

N/S have a club fit, but not enough distribution to justify saving in 5♣ over 4♠. The sacrifice costs too much and -800 will be a near bottom.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 24	♠ A43	Dealer W
	♥ 76532	Vul: None
	♦ 98	
	♣ 754	
♠ J108652	♠ Q9	
♥ 9	♥ Q108	
♦ Q1054	♦ A632	
♣ 102	♣ KQ63	
	♠ K7	
	♥ AKJ4	
	♦ KJ7	
	♣ AJ98	

Many Wests will open a weak two bid – if you don't like doing so with only 3 HCP, remember that 2♠ shows a weak hand, and 3 HCP with 6-1-4-2 shape is quite a bit different from 3 HCP with 6-2-3-2 shape.

If there are two passes, South will double and, whether bid immediately or via a Lebensohl style 2NT to show a weak hand, North will bid 3♠ and South raise to game.

If West does not open, South will start with a

double of whatever East chooses to open and will strongly invite game on seeing North bid hearts, once again reaching the heart game.

Four Hearts is a good contract but there are decisions to be taken in hearts, clubs and diamonds. Get everything right and there are 11 tricks, get everything wrong and the contract will fail.

Say that the lead is a spade. Entries to the North hand are at a premium, so I would suggest winning the ace and playing a diamond up. The point of this is that ruffing the third round of diamonds provides an extra entry to hand – even getting hearts right by taking the finesse then leaves declarer leading away from one of dummy's minor-suit holdings.

So, play a diamond at trick two and guess to put up the king because West has shown a weak hand – yes, he could have the ace, but the odds are against it. When the king scores, cash a top heart and the ♠K then concede a diamond. Another diamond may come back, so ruff and then take the heart finesse. Again, no guarantees, but West has six spades and East only two, so a three-one heart break is probably with the odds.

There will be two club losers now as the suit will have to be broached from dummy, but 10 tricks should be sufficient for a decent score. To make 11 declarer would have to play clubs before the second heart, and play for the king-queen to be onside. Well done to anyone who does that after getting both red suits right. They will deserve all the matchpoints that come their way.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

Board 25	♠	Q95	Dealer N
	♥	KJ9	Vul: E-W
	♦	Q865	
	♣	1075	
♠	AK2		♠ 843
♥	AQ104		♥ 873
♦	A94		♦ 1072
♣	843		♣ Q962
	♠	J1076	
	♥	652	
	♦	KJ3	
	♣	AKJ	

If South opens a weak NT, West will double and E/W will be in deep trouble. One No Trump doubled is just a matter of overtricks, with eight tricks the likely outcome. East might run to 2♣, but it is N/S who can make that contract, not E/W, so even if nobody doubles –300 is the likely outcome.

If everyone was conceding INT doubled plus one for –380, that –300 might not be so bad, but at tables where South opens one of a suit E/W will not get into quite as much trouble. If West overcalls INT, North is just shy of what I would expect the majority to think worth a penalty double, especially facing a favourable vulnerability third in hand opening, which might be shaded. One No Trump undoubled is down two, but that beats all the –300s and –380s. And, if South opens 1♣ and West feels unable to overcall INT with three low clubs, he will double instead, North may bid 1♦ or INT, and E/W will be off the hook.

There isn't much to the play. If N/S declare a NT contract declarer can play on diamonds then spades, and probably won't even need the club finesse, while if West is declarer he just plays on hearts to establish a fifth winner.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26	♠	K102	Dealer E
	♥	A32	Vul: Both
	♦	Q	
	♣	AJ9864	
♠	QJ7654	♠	A983
♥	K96	♥	75
♦	K98	♦	AJ7632
♣	7	♣	2
	♠		
	♥	QJ1084	
	♦	1054	
	♣	KQ1053	

N/S can make 6♣, courtesy of the winning heart finesse. It is unlikely that they will get there unless E/W compete to the five level and someone guesses to go on to slam.

The double fit means that there are a lot of tricks to be had. As a practical matter, if West declares a spade contract he will come to 10 tricks because South will never get in to lead through the king of hearts. North will have to cash the ♥A when in with the ♠K to even beat 5♠.

Though there are 12 tricks in a club contract, N/S can be held to 11 should they play a heart contract, as two rounds of spades force a ruff in the North hand and now West gets a heart trick.

There are so many ways the auction could go. A few will open the East hand with 1♦. Now, will South overcall a simple 1♥ or prefer 2NT, lowest two unbid suits? West will show spades either way, and the bidding could get very high.

If East does not open, South doesn't have a one-level opening either, but some will be playing weak two-suited bids, here 2♥ showing hearts and a minor. North will take some convincing which minor that is.

If there are two passes to West, he can open 2♠, North overcalls 3♣, and East bids 4♠. South has an east 5♣, and that will sometimes end the auction, though West may bid a fifth spade.

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

=====

Board 27	♠	96	Dealer S
	♥	J9	Vul: None
	♦	A852	
	♣	Q9754	
♠	AK854	♠	732
♥	K6	♥	Q42
♦	J1064	♦	93
♣	K10	♣	AJ862
	♠	QJ10	
	♥	A108753	
	♦	KQ7	
	♣	3	

South opens 1♥, West overcalls 1♠, and North can make a negative double. East can raise to 2♠ without risk that partner will expect more than this because, with a nice 9- or 10-count, East could cuebid 2♥ to show a more constructive raise.

Two Spades will sometimes end the auction and, when it does, the contract should be made. However, the vulnerability will tempt South to compete with 3♥. True, South has nothing to spare in high-card terms, but partner has shown some modest values, and he does have a six-card suit. If South does declare 3♥, the most likely outcome is down one, a good save against 2♠, and it is not impossible to let 3♥ through.

The problem with bidding 3♥ on a minimum hand is that South might also make the same bid on a noticeably stronger hand, so how is partner to know when to go on to game? Particularly at matchpoints, I would tend to concentrate on competing the partscore in an effective fashion, rather than straining to bid all the possible games. In other words, North should give South some leeway to compete – not that there is a problem on the actual hand, of course.

There is also a convention called the



Good/Bad 2NT, which some tournament pairs use to help differentiate between the two strengths of hand that want to make the same bid, but that would take too long to describe here.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 28	♠ J103	Dealer W
	♥ AQ10	Vul: N-S
	♦ Q932	
	♣ J76	
♠ AK874	♠ Q9	
♥ K32	♥ J984	
♦ K7	♦ AJ105	
♣ Q53	♣ K82	
	♠ 652	
	♥ 765	
	♦ 864	
	♣ A1094	

If West opens a strong NT, East will use Stayman then raise to the NT game.

Weak no-trumpers will open 1♠ and show their strong NT with their rebid over the 2♦ response, game being again reached easily enough.

If diamonds have not been bid, a low diamond is North's most likely opening lead. Declarer wins the ten and, if he plays on hearts, if North finds a club return now the best declarer can do is take his nine tricks. Win the ♣Q and play a second heart, and the contract is defeated.

Of course, declarer can cash spades immediately upon winning the first trick, and that puts everyone under pressure, including the dummy. It's all very well when spades divide evenly, but discards from dummy will limit declarer's options later in the play. On the actual layout, 10 tricks are possible.

Ten tricks are possible at double dummy,

except where West is declarer on a club lead, which holds the contract to nine, and may even beat it if declarer misguesses the play – club to the queen, spade to the queen, heart to the king, for example, and the defence has three clubs and a second heart to cash.

Plus 430 will score very well, and –50 pretty poorly. I would guess that the latter will be the more common result, but with +400 being the popular result.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 29	♠ AKQ763	Dealer N
	♥ KJ1092	Vul: Both
	♦ 96	
	♣ 96	
♠ J1052	♠ 9	
♥ A75	♥ Q84	
♦ AJ4	♦ K10987	
♣ 842	♣ QJ105	
	♠ 84	
	♥ 63	
	♦ Q6532	
	♣ AK73	

North has a hand of great potential and will be mildly disappointed that slam is not an option, though he would be considerably more disappointed were South's minor-suits switched around, when even game would be in grave danger.

N/S should have the auction to themselves. North will open 1♠ and most Souths respond 1NT – some Acoll players will prefer 2♣, and that is a close decision, but with no intermediates and no spade honour I prefer the more conservative choice.

North rebids, 3♥, generally played as GF, but not guaranteeing the fifth heart unless a special agreement is in place. Invite to choose between his two small doubletons, South is likely to choose neither, opting for 3NT. North shows the fifth heart and a very

shapely hand, and this time South gives preference to 4♠, ending the auction.

East is likely to lead the queen of clubs, which means that declarer is under no real pressure. He wins and plays a heart, probably getting them wrong, ruffs a diamond return and cashes three top spades then knocks out the ace of hearts. There is a trump to be lost but declarer has a safe 10 tricks. If he guesses hearts right at trick two, he can then take a heart ruff in dummy and make 11.

An initial diamond lead would be more challenging as declarer gets forced and, if he gets the heart wrong, can be forced twice more, losing control of the hand and going down. The contract is still OK if declarer gets the heart right by crossing to dummy with a club and leading to the king. With only one heart loser, declarer gets forced once less often so retains control.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 30	♠ J62	Dealer E
	♥ Q9	Vul: None
	♦ 97542	
	♣ K72	
♠ Q853	♠ 10974	
♥ J5	♥ 87632	
♦ KQ108	♦ 63	
♣ Q96	♣ A8	
	♠ AK	
	♥ AK104	
	♦ AJ	
	♣ J10543	

South has 20 HCP and, despite the mildly off-centre shape, I would expect almost everyone to open 2NT. If playing Puppet Stayman, North may check for a five-three spade fit. Personally, I would not bother when the doubleton includes some strength so that there may be no ruffing value. A five-three fit

plays better than 3NT far less often than some players imagine, while if the final contract is 3NT anyway, less information is given away to the defenders if we simply raise directly to 3NT.

If West leads the king or queen of diamonds against 3NT, dummy's nine will come into its own as a second stopper. Declarer will win the ace and play on clubs, losing two tricks in each minor.

A spade lead is more challenging because when declarer wins and plays a club East can win the ace. If East returns a spade, the defence has two of those established for when West wins the ♣Q, but declarer has nine winners. If an inspired East finds a diamond switch, the defence can set up three winners in the suit. If declarer's first club play was to run the jack or ten, he can still survive if he reads the ending correctly, as West can be squeezed and endplayed to lead away from the ♣Q in the endgame, this also assuming that declarer wins the first diamond. But if the first club play was low to the king and ace, declarer cannot survive a diamond switch from East.

The opening diamond lead looks more attractive than a spade, and after a spade lead the diamond switch is far from being obvious, so I expect a sizeable majority to make nine tricks.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 31	♠ Q84	Dealer S
	♥ J64	Vul: N-S
	♦ Q954	
	♣ AK10	
♠ J95	♠ A6	
♥ KQ10732	♥ A	
♦ 106	♦ KJ8732	
♣ 87	♣ QJ62	
	♠ K10732	
	♥ 985	
	♦ A	
	♣ 9543	

West holds a classic weak two opener and North is too balanced to double, particularly facing a passed hand, with only 12 HCP so passes. Should East, holding 15 HCP, make a try for game? Some may do so but the odds against finding a good game are quite high and I would be happy to pass and see what happens – if anything.

The answer to what will happen will often be nothing, as South has only 7 HCP and knows that partner probably has some heart length, given that the opposition have stopped in 2♥ and North could not find a take-out double.

Two Hearts can be beaten, either by a defensive diamond ruff or declarer's diamond misguess. However, after the likely top club lead, the chances are that eight tricks will be made far more often than not, for a solid +110.

Some Souths will balance with 2♠, arguing that their passed hand status should protect them from partner getting over-optimistic. And, indeed, North should remember South's initial pass and not go on over 2♠. If left to play there, South can make 2♠, but will not always manage to do so, as the natural way to play the trumps will lose a second trump trick and six tricks in all.

But if South balances with 2♠, so might East now compete with 3♦. That is hopeless, usually down two, while we have already seen that eight is the absolute limit should west convert back to 3♥.

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

Board 32	♠ Q743	Dealer W
	♥ KQ82	Vul: E-W
	♦ 842	
	♣ 54	
♠ A8	♠ K10962	
♥ A76	♥ J10	
♦ K973	♦ J10	
♣ Q1032	♣ AK87	
	♠ J5	
	♥ 9543	
	♦ AQ65	
	♣ J96	

West has a weak NT and, if that is the opening bid, East will transfer to spades then either just jump to 3NT to offer a choice of games, or show the clubs. A good question for east to ask himself is, how often will we actually want to play in 5♣? And East has to bear in mind that West is perfectly entitled to raise clubs if he likes the suit. In the longer term I think that it pays to keep bids of 3♣/♦ in these auctions restricted to hands with which 5/6♣ is a place we would be willing to play a fair proportion of the time, as opposed to bidding it just to help partner to choose between 3NT and 4♠. Remember, that the quicker the auction to 3NT the less the defenders know about the two hands, and the harder that may make the defence.

So, I would rebid 3NT with the East hand and West has no reason not to play there.

Four Spades can be made while 3NT can be held to nine tricks so, double dummy, 4♠ is the place to play. Declarer has to get both spades and diamonds right, and the correct theoretical line in spades is to cash the ace and king, as opposed to taking a second-round finesse – there are eight honour doubletons and only six small doubleton combinations.

In 3NT, there is a chance of getting a low

heart lead on this layout, giving a cheap trick. Either three rounds of spades or the diamond finesse now provides two extra tricks and 10 in all.

If North leads a heart honour, the defence will establish three heart winners. Declarer can no longer afford to play on spades as this would create a fifth winner for the defence. His hope to establish the two extra tricks he requires is to play South for the queen of diamonds. The successful defence brings in nine tricks.

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