

Commentary for the 2026 Northants CBA

Monday 14th September

Commentary by Robert Miller

Board 1	♠ J74	Dealer N
	♥ AQ93	Vul: None
	♦ A94	
	♣ QJ2	
♠ AQ10652	♠ K3	
♥ 5	♥ J42	
♦ KQJ2	♦ 1086	
♣ A8	♣ K10643	
	♠ 98	
	♥ K10876	
	♦ 753	
	♣ 975	

West	North	East	South
-	INT	Pass	2♦*
Db **	3♥***	Pass	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

* transfer to hearts

** diamonds or a good hand

*** four hearts

If North opens a weak no-trump South will transfer to hearts. It is best now for a double to be either diamonds or a good hand (penalty double of INT or better). North can compete with a jump to three showing four hearts to make life harder for the opponents. Don't worry that partner maybe weak the level of the fit should be OK. When it comes back to West, they can bid their spades. Having doubled and bid spades this should be like a strong jump overcall hand, so East can raise to game.

If North South play a strong no-trump North will open a minor which after two passes again West should double and bid spades to show such a good hand or jump to two if playing strong jump overcalls. Don't make the mistake of just a simple overcall or you may end up playing there! Eleven tricks are easy just losing two aces but, with both opponents bidding, getting to game may not be so easy and those that do will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 2 ♠ 9762 Dealer E
 ♥ 753 Vul: N-S
 ♦ KQ8632
 ♣

♠ K	♠ 84
♥ Q108	♥ AJ92
♦ 107	♦ AJ9
♣ A1098753	♣ KQJ2

♠ AQJ1053
♥ K64
♦ 54
♣ 64

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♣	1♠
3♣*	4♠	Db1**	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

* weak raise

** good hand

Playing a weak no-trump system, East opens one club and after a one spade overcall West's raise is best played as weak (use a cue bid for a better raise). North should bid game with such a shapely hand and East may well double to show a good hand although the lack of a trump trick may put many off. Either way five clubs from West looks normal with so many clubs between them. If East opens a strong no trump, South will still overcall and West will compete in clubs and a similar auction should follow.

Four spades can make but requires dropping the spade king in the weak hand so will almost certainly fail. Conversely five clubs can fail but requires the defence to find diamonds early or the loser goes on the hearts so may well make! 😊 The game that fails making the one that makes failing is why we love this game! I suspect if you make either game you will get most of the match points.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3 ♠ 1064 Dealer S
 ♥ 65 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AQ1092
 ♣ 976

♠ KQJ75 ♠ A82
 ♥ 1098 ♥ AJ743
 ♦ J4 ♦ 87
 ♣ KQ10 ♣ 432

♠ 93
 ♥ KQ2
 ♦ K653
 ♣ AJ85

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	INT
2♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Another weak no-trump opener, this time for South, and West, despite the flat hand and adverse vulnerability, with good spades and an opening hand is just about worth an over call. What they overcall to show spades will depend on the defence to a no trump they are playing, East isn't worth a move really as partner was unable to double one no trump so is limited. North South can compete in diamonds but it's hard on this auction to see them getting involved as North is too weak to act. Strong no trumpers will open one club and again East West should get into the auction and play at some level in spades.

With both hearts offside and the clubs onside it's difficult to see spades making anything other than eight. If South gets on lead they should resist a heart switch as they are not going away but I've been wrong before! 😊. If North South do find their diamonds and go for a small minus or push East West to a minus this will score well for them.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4 ♠ J863 Dealer W
 ♥ 9 Vul: Both
 ♦ AK4
 ♣ 108762

♠ A4 ♠ 72
 ♥ J8763 ♥ AK1042
 ♦ 1097 ♦ Q32
 ♣ 943 ♣ AKQ

♠ KQ1095
 ♥ Q5
 ♦ J865
 ♣ J5

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	1♠
3♥	3♠	4♥	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East opens one heart and after a spade overcall West's raise is again best played as weak. North will compete and East will bid game. It's tempting (very 😊) with the spade suit to bid four over this and if they do East West do best to double and lead a diamond and a diamond again when in with the spade ace, if they leave diamonds too late declarer can set up the clubs to dispose of them.

Leading diamonds will result in down two and that's the best they can do as five hearts doesn't make. A heart lead will lead to a more normal down one as declarer has time to get the clubs going for a diamond discard. Four hearts by East West will score exceptionally well, minus 200 scoring well, I suspect, for North South, and pushing their opponents and defending five hearts doing very well indeed.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5 ♠ QJ7 Dealer N
 ♥ Q842 Vul: N-S
 ♦ Q62
 ♣ 1087

♠ 94 ♠ A85
 ♥ KJ1095 ♥ 63
 ♦ A85 ♦ J974
 ♣ A43 ♣ KJ95

♠ K10632
 ♥ A7
 ♦ K103
 ♣ Q62

West	North	East	South
-	Pass	Pass	1NT
2♥	Pass	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South opens one no trump (don't worry about having a five-card major, it's still best when balanced) and after a two-heart overcall may compete with their spades which I suspect will end the auction. Strong no trump players opening one spade and getting a simple raise from partner to the same contract.

Despite being happy to win the auction low they may not be so happy when they see dummy as this is a horrid contract, with so many losers: a spade, a heart, three clubs and at least one diamond. Any who can scramble out for one down by finessing the diamond ten or by setting up the heart queen for a trick may score well. East West can make two hearts but this requires playing on diamonds to set the fourth up for a club discard. Playing on clubs, though more natural, with the queen wrong will fail. Any East Wests that do make a contract should score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6 ♠ A10 Dealer E
 ♥ K952 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 1087
 ♣ KJ92

♠ KJ9643 ♠ 875
 ♥ 3 ♥ 874
 ♦ K3 ♦ AQJ54
 ♣ Q1075 ♣ 43

 ♠ Q2
 ♥ AQJ106
 ♦ 962
 ♣ A86

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	INT
2♠	Dbl*	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South opens a weak no trump. As with the previous hand, even with five hearts, it's better to do so with a flat hand. West bids two spades as they have six (or whatever they play to show such a hand) and North's double is best played as take out. With thirteen and five hearts South is worth a jump to game. It's the wrong vulnerability for East West to sacrifice so this contract should play. Strong no trumpers will open one heart and get there more easily 😊.

A double dummy diamond lead and a spade switch from East will hold this to ten maybe even nine unless declarer brings in clubs for four tricks. However, with clubs four two, this requires a very good view by finessing the nine and later the jack to make all four tricks. A simpler finesse of the jack on the first round will mean nine is the limit in hearts anyway. A more normal club lead means South now has time to play clubs for four tricks but again may well go wrong in the suit unless they read the lead as fourth highest from four. A spade lead gives the contract very quickly but should be avoided at all costs from such a dangerous holding. I suspect a lot will fail in this game, any making scoring very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7 ♠ AK953 Dealer S
 ♥ Q103 Vul: Both
 ♦ J82
 ♣ J7

♠ 107 ♠ QJ2
 ♥ 652 ♥ J87
 ♦ 963 ♦ Q754
 ♣ 98653 ♣ AQ10

♠ 864
 ♥ AK94
 ♦ AK10
 ♣ K42

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	INT
Pass	2♣*	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

* checkback

If South opens one heart, after a spade from North, South will rebid INT. Two clubs now is checkback to see what partner's majors are. Three spades shows a maximum hand with three card support and North bids game. With the diamond finesse onside and hearts being three-three (playing to the ten is wrong on this holding, jack dropping in three is better odds) this should make eleven. Some may feel inclined to not show the spade support and play in no trumps with a flat hand but with all aces and kings a suit contract looks better. Whether they get away with this will depend on East finding a club lead.

If you do make eleven in no trumps buy a lottery ticket tonight. 😊 Any who open a strong no trump will have the same choice once partner shows their five spades. Spades making eleven should be normal, eleven in no trumps very good.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8 ♠ 943 Dealer W
 ♥ 7532 Vul: None
 ♦ K9
 ♣ AKQ10

♠ A8 ♠ J105
 ♥ AQJ6 ♥ K1084
 ♦ Q764 ♦ A1052
 ♣ 982 ♣ 75

♠ KQ762
 ♥ 9
 ♦ J83
 ♣ J643

West	North	East	South
INT	Pass	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

A competitive part score at love all means anything may happen 😊. If West opens a weak no trump it should come round to South who despite a rubbish hand just has to bid two spades at this vulnerability at pairs. Luckily today partner comes up with a suitable hand for it to make. Sadly, they have such a nice hand they may will almost certainly raise and turn a plus score into a minus.

East West can make three hearts too with an excellent view in diamonds - cash ace and duck small to the king. Diamond to the ten or to the queen is the normal line though and will mean three hearts will fail but this is still better than defending two spades. However, it's difficult to see on this auction how they get there. If they open a minor playing a strong no trump though East will respond a heart and they should now be able to compete. Contracts getting too high and going off will be normal on this type of competitive hand. Any making contract will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9 ♠ 1063 Dealer N
 ♥ Q9 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 7652
 ♣ J1075

♠ AK98542 ♠ 7
 ♥ K10 ♥ A742
 ♦ 9 ♦ AQJ104
 ♣ 986 ♣ KQ3

 ♠ QJ
 ♥ J8653
 ♦ K83
 ♣ A42

West	North	East	South
-	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

East opens one diamond and South shouldn't bid this heart suit at this vulnerability, so West will bid one spade and after a two-heart rebid (this is a reverse and shows extra values), can bid to four. For once playing a strong no-trump should make little difference and they should bid the same! 😊. There are three losers (a trump and two clubs) but if declarer takes the ruffing diamond finesse this reduces to two and eleven tricks.

The normal finesse failing should lead to ten tricks. If declarer has the time however the best line is to draw a couple of trumps, ace and ruff a diamond, heart to the ace and then the ruffing finesse, allowing for the chance for the queen to come down doubleton, club to the king queen is then the entry to the diamonds later if needed. If the defence attack clubs early though declarer won't have time to do this and an immediate ruffing finesse is best. There will be some, many probably as its pairs, who will play this in no trumps, but the ruffing finesse is not available in this contract so should lose a diamond a club and a spade. This will beat the tens in spades but lose to the elevens so the no trump game will score well or badly depending on how many make eleven in spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10 ♠ KQJ72 Dealer E
 ♥ Q8 Vul: Both
 ♦ 10
 ♣ A10752

♠ A10984 ♠ 3
 ♥ J1052 ♥ K976
 ♦ A94 ♦ KQJ82
 ♣ 3 ♣ Q98

♠ 65
 ♥ A43
 ♦ 7653
 ♣ KJ64

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	Pass
1♠	2♣	Pass	3♣
Dbl	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Another part score battle with the points 20/20. East is worth a one diamond opener with such a nice suit and the shortage. West will respond one spade and North will be ready to overcall this suit but will be stopped in their tracks and have to replace the one spade in their hand with two clubs 😊. East, with a minimum opener and shortage in partners suit, will pass and South's raise to three clubs is best played as weak and use some sort of cue bid for a good raise. This makes life harder for the opponents to compete. Here West is just about worth another bid and they have the perfect shape for a double here, East's three hearts should end a lively auction.

Four hearts can actually make today with the singletons in each hand and the heart queen onside, but this really shouldn't be bid and any making 170 being content with a decent score. I suspect, any North Souths who steal the hand in clubs, even if they go down, will score well too.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11 ♠ AJ7 Dealer S
 ♥ Q109632 Vul: None
 ♦
 ♣ KJ62

♠ 9532 ♠ 86
 ♥ K87 ♥ A4
 ♦ K43 ♦ J109652
 ♣ 1083 ♣ A75

♠ KQ104
 ♥ J5
 ♦ AQ87
 ♣ Q94

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	INT
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

South opens a weak no trump and what does North do? They can just bid four hearts or transfer and let partner play it. Who wants to let partner play it? Seriously, with such shapely hands I prefer to just bid the game in case the opposition can get in the auction at a lower level and find a save or even a making contract themselves. On this hand East West have nothing to say and it should make no difference. Strong no trumpers will open a minor and after a one no trump rebid should end in the same spot.

Declarer will lose the two top hearts and the ace of clubs for the flattest board ever seen in bridge! Can anyone seriously do any different? I'm sure they will and prove my flat board prediction hopelessly wrong! 😊

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12 ♠ A74 Dealer W
 ♥ 53 Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ94
 ♣ AK93

♠ Q1092 ♠ KJ865
 ♥ K104 ♥ 982
 ♦ 76 ♦ 1053
 ♣ QJ54 ♣ 76

♠ 3
 ♥ AQJ76
 ♦ AK82
 ♣ 1082

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦*
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

* transfer to hearts

Another weak no trump this time for North, after which South will show their hearts, and I bet, being pairs, North will choose the no trump game despite the shaky spade stop, as they have no heart fit and who plays in five of a minor at pairs? 😊 Well today is a good day to raise the minor as six can make and three no trumps may well fail but it doesn't feel right at pairs. I suspect very few will bid that so three no trumps on a spade lead is most likely.

Declarer can make by double finessing clubs but if they take this line hold your cards up! 😊 The more likely approach will be the single heart finesse which fails! Silly game. 😊 Strong no trumppers open one club and after a one no trump rebid are in a similar position but it looks even harder to find the diamond contract now. Anyone who does manage to make a game or even a slam will score very well indeed.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13 ♠ J97 Dealer N
 ♥ A108 Vul: Both
 ♦ A432
 ♣ K104

♠ K53 ♠ Q10842
 ♥ Q942 ♥ J653
 ♦ Q1085 ♦ 6
 ♣ Q5 ♣ 972

 ♠ A6
 ♥ K7
 ♦ KJ97
 ♣ AJ863

West	North	East	South
-	INT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Here we go again... 😊 another weak no trump for North which I guess most Souths will just raise to the most popular contract at pairs. If some have a complicated system to show 4/5 minors slam try they can but most won't, I am sure. Strong no trump players who open a minor (maybe one diamond) have a much better chance of finding the minor fits but there are still too many holes and not enough points and trumps to consider a slam so the same contract should be reached. For the second hand running spades is declarer's weak spot.

On a spade lead they will need to take a very good view in clubs to make, either dropping the queen or finessing through the ten. Neither is the best line which is finessing through the long suit but which of course fails here. So, I suspect many will go down. Any bidding and making game will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14 ♠ KQ74 Dealer E
 ♥ J3 Vul: None
 ♦ AQJ4
 ♣ Q93

♠ J3 ♠ A1082
 ♥ AK10 ♥ 75
 ♦ 963 ♦ 1082
 ♣ AKJ52 ♣ 10764

♠ 965
 ♥ Q98642
 ♦ K75
 ♣ 8

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	2♥
2NT	DbI	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Whether South opens two hearts or not will depend on their partnership style but non vulnerable I see nothing wrong in it. West, on the face of it, has a perfectly good two no trump overcall, but with East having so little it doesn't work well. North does best with a balanced good hand to double rather than bidding three hearts. This should lose four diamonds a club and a spade for down one. If South passes West will open one club or one no trump depending on system and North South should compete over this to two hearts either by overcalling one no trump and being transferred or doubling a strong no trump and South pulling to two hearts.

Actually, not much makes on the hand at all with two clubs by East West being the highest makeable contract, quite rare. Although some may scrape two hearts if they lead towards the jack of hearts twice and pick the suit for two losers. The defence now need to play a spade and eventually a third spade from East for a trump promotion – wow, tough. On such hands, love all at pairs, I expect a lot of contracts to get too high and go off, those going off the least scoring well and any making a contract scoring very well indeed.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15 ♠ A8763 Dealer S
 ♥ J5 Vul: N-S
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ QJ43

♠ Q92 ♠ 1054
 ♥ A107432 ♥ 98
 ♦ K2 ♦ A43
 ♣ A7 ♣ K10652

♠ KJ
 ♥ KQ6
 ♦ J109875
 ♣ 98

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	Pass
1♥	1♠	Pass	2♦
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

West will open one heart and North can overcall one spade. Some may choose one no trump by South with a heart stop, but I prefer to bid a six-card suit 😊. Either way West will compete with two hearts at favourable vulnerability. This should end the auction as North South are vulnerable, and any higher contracts could and should get doubled.

Due to the spade position declarer should finesse the nine to pick up the jack and only lose two tricks in the suit. Yes, the defence can get three spade tricks via a ruff, but this is at the expense of one of their trump tricks. So nine tricks should be made for a decent score. Any North Souths who do bid on and escape for only minus one hundred will score well but I would not advise this action.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16 ♠ 9 Dealer W
 ♥ KQJ63 Vul: E-W
 ♦ K83
 ♣ AQ52

♠ 8632 ♠ KQ54
 ♥ 1097 ♥ 852
 ♦ J754 ♦ AQ962
 ♣ K8 ♣ 4

♠ AJ107
 ♥ A4
 ♦ 10
 ♣ J109763

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	2♦	Dbl
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦*
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

* Asking for stop

North South can make a slam here but it's only fifty/fifty on the club finesse and it is not advisable to be bidding these at pairs. The trouble is, on this hand, three no trumps is on the club finesse too so you may as well bid the slam. Five clubs, normally the worst contract at pairs, is the safest on this deal, but knowing all this from the bidding is impossible so three no trumps is likely to be the contract bid but this could depend on whether South asks for a diamond stop or just supports clubs. I prefer the former and if partner can't bid 3NT then with no wasted values in diamonds slam looks good. Any Wests who support diamonds, not advised at this vulnerability, will surely just push North South into clubs rather than no trumps and maybe even the slam.

There is very little to the play other than to call for the jack of clubs and close your eyes 😊. Although East has bid there are enough missing points to stick with the percentage play in clubs. When declarer finally opens them, they will be relieved to see the clubs behave this time and a lot of tricks are made. Leading a small diamond which looks normal only giving the thirteenth away! Any defending five clubs will score very well East West way. Those who bid the fifty/fifty slam scoring well for North South.

Makeable Contracts

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



Board 17 ♠ 109 Dealer N
 ♥ 104 Vul: None
 ♦ J87
 ♣ J108643

♠		♠ A8653
♥ KJ987653		♥ 2
♦ 4		♦ AK9653
♣ AKQ2		♣ 7
	♠ KQJ742	
	♥ AQ	
	♦ Q102	
	♣ 95	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	1♠
2♥	Pass	3♦	Pass
5♥*	Pass	Pass	Pass

* invitational

Another pushy slam this time for East West. True the West hand is enormous and some may just get carried away and bid slam due to the shape but it needs help in the trump suit from partner to make it a sensible slam and as partner can't support over two hearts they appear to be short. It's useful to play a jump to five as an invite here. Some sort of keycard Blackwood would work too but will probably agree diamonds on this auction so five hearts looks best. Partner with only one has an easy pass.

The play - declarer will lead the heart towards their suit intending to play jack as the qx is the only holding to pick the suit for one loser. Here, with ace queen onside twelve tricks are easy. Twelve in game is normal, any that bid the slam getting a very lucky good board 😊

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18 ♠ K654 Dealer E
 ♥ AQ97 Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ K42

♠ A107 ♠ QJ3
 ♥ J84 ♥ K105
 ♦ 963 ♦ A82
 ♣ 7653 ♣ Q1098

♠ 982
 ♥ 632
 ♦ K10754
 ♣ Aj

West	North	East	South
-	-	INT	Pass
Pass	Dbl*	Pass	Pass
Pass			

* showing 15+

Another weak no-trump opener this time for East. This should then get three passes to North who with fifteen plus points can make the traditional double. This really should end the auction as South will be happy with eight points and West will be unhappy but has nowhere to go 😊. South will undoubtedly lead a diamond and this results in carnage for East West. They should be restricted to just the diamond ace two spades and a heart for minus five hundred.

On these types of hands declarer should try to set up as many tricks as possible as quickly as possible so although he has only six spades but eight clubs he should just take the spade finesse and set up a couple of tricks. Although North South make game it's unlikely any will bid it so five hundred should score incredibly well. Any playing a strong no trump here benefit enormously as they will avoid the penalty. They will open a club and North will overcall one no trump after an invite by South they will play two no trumps. If they bid to three this will score well for North South.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19 ♠ QJ432 Dealer S
 ♥ 1098 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 3
 ♣ J854

♠ 865
 ♥ Q42
 ♦ 986
 ♣ KQ92

♠ AKJ7
 ♥ AKQ10754
 ♦ 73
 ♣ 73

♠ AK1097
 ♥ 653
 ♦ J2
 ♣ A106

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	INT
DbI	2♠	Pass	4♠
5♦	Pass	Pass	Pass

I have a twisted sense of humour and therefore I do hope South opens a weak no trump just to see West's face when this happens. 😊😊 West would have been poised with a two-club opener but must change plan now! 😊 All they can do is start with a double and see what happens. North will run to spades. I believe it's better with five to just have a method of bidding a suit naturally straight away and use redouble for other types of hands. When South picks themselves off the floor they must decide what to do. Normally when partner runs from one no trump you should pass whatever, but you have five headed by the ace and king and you are non-vulnerable, surely a raise is the order of the day. On such hands I like to bid to the level of the fit (how many trumps you have between you) so here, four spades. West will now have to pick themselves off the floor and can do little else than just bid five diamonds. Game will be made but slam will be missed.

Any that open one spade may make it just as hard for the opposition as North, for the same reason, should raise to four after West doubles and West will bid five diamonds when it comes back. Yes, well done to those that spot five spades is a good sacrifice against five diamonds but only if you get to play it. You may just push the opposition into an unbeatable slam. 😊 When the dust settles on a volatile hand, five diamonds should be normal. Any bidding the slam scoring very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20 ♠ 8642 Dealer W
 ♥ Q63 Vul: Both
 ♦ Q10952
 ♣ 5

♠ 107 ♠ AKQJ95
 ♥ 84 ♥ K975
 ♦ J74 ♦ 3
 ♣ A109742 ♣ K6

♠ 3
 ♥ AJ102
 ♦ AK86
 ♣ QJ83

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♠	Dbl
Pass	2♦	2♠	3♦
3♠	4♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

East will open one spade and South has a perfect take out double, West should pass and North can do no more than just bid her longest suit. East has a good hand, but partner is passed so there is not much point in doing more than two spades, South will compete also (be careful not to bid too many too as partner has shown nothing here). Now with two card support and an ace West may push North South a bit higher. At this vulnerability East also needs to be careful not to bid more, partner has passed first time and is now only competing so don't punish her.

A heart lead will hold declarer playing diamonds to ten as they need to ruff some spades so will unfortunately walk into a heart ruff. Diamonds making should be normal - any making eleven scoring well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 21 ♠ AK73 Dealer N
 ♥ Q10732 Vul: N-S
 ♦ Q
 ♣ K74

♠ J105 ♠ 942
 ♥ K84 ♥ A965
 ♦ A962 ♦ J853
 ♣ J95 ♣ 106

♠ Q86
 ♥ J
 ♦ K1074
 ♣ AQ832

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	

North and South should have a free auction this time to the most popular pairs game. Some may bid game on the second round but at pairs an invite is better especially if North can open the type of hands that I would. 😊 😊

It matters not here as North has an obvious raise. I like a passive spade here, but many will pick a fourth highest diamond. It doesn't matter this time as declarer should make five clubs four spades and a diamond and the defence making ace king ace. Flat? Should be but we will see! 😊 😊

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22 ♠ 6532 Dealer E
 ♥ A52 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A32
 ♣ J98

♠ AK987 ♠ Q
 ♥ KQJ6 ♥ 93
 ♦ Q10 ♦ J9854
 ♣ Q3 ♣ K10654

♠ J104
 ♥ 10874
 ♦ K76
 ♣ A72

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	INT	Pass
2NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

This time East West have the auction to themselves but don't have quite enough for game and should stop a level short. Don't worry about responding one no trump on such an unbalanced hand you simply don't have the points to bid at the two level. Strong no trump players will open one and play there at a more relaxed level.

South will lead a heart. The useful spade queen helping declarer make 5 tricks in the suit and the lovely club position (play to the queen losing to the ace and finesse the ten back) and with the suit three-three declarer can make an unlikely nine. Indeed if the defence don't cash their winners declarer can make even more. Any East West scoring more than 150 will do very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 23 ♠ 9 Dealer S
 ♥ AQ965 Vul: Both
 ♦ KQ83
 ♣ Q75

♠ 743 ♠ AJ10652
 ♥ KJ ♥ 7432
 ♦ AJ965 ♦ 10
 ♣ KJ10 ♣ 92

♠ KQ8
 ♥ 108
 ♦ 742
 ♣ A8643

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	Pass
INT	2♥	2♠	2NT
Pass	3NT		

West has a weak no-trump opener and North will bid two hearts whatever it means. East can compete with two spades which gives South a headache. They have too many points to go quietly. They could just raise hearts but only have two, double but this may lead to an awful diamond contract or bid two no trumps but this is a little light. I think two hearts is probably the best of the choices although no trumps is the winner today as North will raise and the magic heart position make it unbeatable. Strong no trumpers will open one diamond and after one heart one spade it's a bit easier for South who can now just bid two clubs. North South now have the tricky position they have stops in the oppositions suits but one each making it difficult for either to bid no trumps and I suspect a simple three clubs is all North can now do.

Plus scores for North South should be normal. Any that bid the thin game scoring most of the match points.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 24 ♠ Q75 Dealer W
 ♥ QJ86 Vul: None
 ♦ 985
 ♣ 1076

♠ AJ4 ♠ K62
 ♥ KI0754 ♥ 9
 ♦ KI02 ♦ QJ643
 ♣ Q5 ♣ AKJ3

♠ 10983
 ♥ A32
 ♦ A7
 ♣ 9842

West	North	East	South
INT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

West has yet another weak no trump (don't be put off by the five-card major) which may just be raised straight to game by East. If they do play some form of five card Stayman they may look for a spade fit but then rest in the same spot. Strong no trumpers will open one heart and after a two-diamond response play the same contract I suspect from the same side.

If West has opened a no-trump North will probably lead a heart and the defence should take two hearts and the ace of spades. Those playing a five-card major system and strong no trump may benefit here as the opening bid should put North off the lead, leading a passive club instead or worse a spade. 🙄 With a good guess (heart to the king) later on declarer can now scramble eleven. Ten should be normal, any making eleven scoring well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 25 ♠ AQ1075 Dealer N
 ♥ 106 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A109862
 ♣

♠ J	♠ K6432
♥ AQ972	♥ K854
♦	♦ 543
♣ Q975432	♣ 6

♠ 98
♥ J3
♦ KQJ7
♣ AKJ108

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	Pass	2♣
2♥	2♠	3♥	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

What is going on here? What a hand! 😊 When one hand is six-five lots can happen when another is seven-five on the same board anything will. North isn't good enough to reverse and the spades may get lost but it's still a one diamond opener for me. East may feel left out of the party at the moment and will pass and South should bid two clubs, West will relook at their cards several times to this bid and some will probably ask "is that natural?" (Surely not – Ed). Despite the shock they are still worth two hearts. North can now bid two spades without it being a full reverse as this is below three clubs which they would have had to bid anyway, and East is worth a competing three hearts.

South has a good opener opposite their partner opening but it's tricky to look for three no trumps now, so five diamonds looks a pragmatic choice. Now, can West bring themselves to pass? With so many losers in diamonds and no source of tricks outside trumps they should but how many will resist bidding again with this shape? 😊 With two hearts and the spade offside five diamonds will fail and hearts the other way can be held to a miserly eight tricks on a trump lead. Any who escape with plus scores in either direction here should score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 26 ♠ J874 Dealer E
 ♥ 108542 Vul: Both
 ♦ 94
 ♣ 53

♠ KQ965 ♠ 3
 ♥ J ♥ K763
 ♦ AJ10 ♦ Q7632
 ♣ Q876 ♣ A42

♠ A102
 ♥ AQ9
 ♦ K85
 ♣ KJ109

West	North	East	South
-	-	Pass	1♣
1♠	Pass	INT	Dbl
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	3♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

South opens one club and West has a good overcall. After North passes East is worth a one no trump bid and South should double this to say 'I have a good hand'. North will pull to two hearts to say 'I don't'. Although vulnerable, West has an opening hand and the perfect shape to compete with a double and East will bid their diamonds. It feels everyone has done more than enough at this point, and this should end the auction. Strong no trumppers, of course, will open INT and West will overcall spades which may well end the auction.

Three diamonds should make. In fact there are only three losers but it's difficult to see more than nine tricks for declarer (five diamonds two spades and two clubs). Spades however is nasty and shouldn't make anything at all!. Those going plus in diamonds will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 27 ♠ AK853 Dealer S
 ♥ KQ107 Vul: None
 ♦ 85
 ♣ K10

♠ Q ♠ J9742
 ♥ A4 ♥ 853
 ♦ KQ76432 ♦ A
 ♣ AJ2 ♣ 7653

♠ 106
 ♥ J962
 ♦ J109
 ♣ Q984

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	Pass
1♦	1♠	Pass	Pass
3♦	Db1	Pass	3♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

A good competitive love all part score. 😊 West will open one diamond and North has a sound one spade overcall. I think it's better, if strong enough, when five four majors to overcall the five as you may be able to show the four later with a take out double but it's nearly impossible to show five if you double first. This will come back to West, What now? Given the vulnerability, I would bid three diamonds to make it harder for North. North however has just about a good enough hand to double and show their hearts which South will bid. This may well end the auction although some Wests may be tempted to bid even more with four diamonds. As South has passed and shown the weakest bid North shouldn't bid on to four hearts.

As the hearts are four-four East West make an incredible three no trumps but no one is bidding that. Plus scores in diamonds for East West scoring OK, small minus in hearts North South way scoring well for them.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 28 ♠ A94 Dealer W
 ♥ K5 Vul: N-S
 ♦ AK9743
 ♣ K3

♠ 53 ♠ KQ8762
 ♥ AQ943 ♥ 8
 ♦ J2 ♦ Q1085
 ♣ A762 ♣ QJ

♠ J10
 ♥ J10762
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 109854

West	North	East	South
1♥	Db1	1♠	Pass
2♣	2♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

West can open one heart with two aces and a good suit even though they only have eleven points. North has too good a hand to simply bid two diamonds so is better to start with a double, East will bid their spades and South will pass, West will now bid clubs, South will be happy at West bidding both their suits, but won't be so happy when North now bids two diamonds showing their strong hand. East is good enough for two spades which West will pass. What now North? Really they have done enough and the vulnerability should incline them to concede the auction but I suspect many won't and should hear the double from East in the next village if they do bid. 😊

Three diamonds won't end well. In spades East should lead small towards their king twice to avoid a second loser in the suit. Spades making East West way being normal.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Commentary for the 2026 Northants CBA

Monday 14th September

Commentary by Robert Miller

Board 29 ♠ K2 Dealer N
 ♥ A94 Vul: Both
 ♦ QJ1082
 ♣ KJ8

♠ A76	♠ 98543
♥ K1086	♥ 53
♦ A653	♦ K7
♣ 72	♣ A543

♠ QJ10
♥ QJ72
♦ 94
♣ Q1096

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 30 ♠ J8 Dealer E
 ♥ Q7542 Vul: None
 ♦ J752
 ♣ 109

♠ K953	♠ 10764
♥ AJ6	♥ K9
♦ Q10	♦ A3
♣ J764	♣ AQ832

♠ AQ2
♥ 1083
♦ K9864
♣ K5

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 31 ♠ AJ873 Dealer S
 ♥ K983 Vul: N-S
 ♦ A875
 ♣

♠ 52	♠ KQ4
♥ AJ52	♥ 74
♦ QJ3	♦ 942
♣ Q873	♣ KJ1065

♠ 1096
♥ Q106
♦ K106
♣ A942

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 32 ♠ J7 Dealer W
 ♥ K8 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A982
 ♣ Q9863

♠ Q1065	♠ K43
♥ QJ10	♥ 74
♦ K7654	♦ J3
♣ A	♣ KJ7542

♠ A982
♥ A96532
♦ Q10
♣ 10

Makeable Contracts

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

=====