

Commentary for the 2025 Northants CBA

Monday 8th September

Commentary by Robert Miller

Board 1	♠ 1092	Dealer N
	♥ 432	Vul: None
	♦ 93	
	♣ AQ875	
♠ J6	♠ AK3	
♥ AK105	♥ 9	
♦ Q7542	♦ AKJ108	
♣ 64	♣ J1093	
	♠ Q8754	
	♥ QJ876	
	♦ 6	
	♣ K2	

North	East	South	West
Pass	1♦	2♦*	3♦
Pass	3♥**	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
	2♦*	Both majors	
	3♥**	Asking for a stop	

East should open 1♦ and South can bid 2♦, a Michaels Cue Bid, showing both majors. West should show a raise to 3♦ either by bidding it or by making a cue bid of one of South's majors if they prefer 3♦ to be weak. East will then ask for a stop in the suit they are lacking. Again some prefer here to bid the suit they have a stop in (2♠ here). The result is the same. West will bid 3NT with a good heart stop. Asking or showing which is better? There is not a lot in it, the best method as always is to play the same as your partner! 😊 Some I'm sure will bid to 5♦ with a ten-card fit but that would be a mistake at pairs.

Nine tricks should be the limit in no trumps so those bidding and making 5♦ will probably not score too badly this time. Anyone making more will score very well.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	5	1	-	4
W	2	5	1	-	3

=====

Board 2	♠ QJ98	Dealer E
	♥ Q743	Vul: N-S
	♦ 532	
	♣ A9	
♠ A10732	♠ 65	
♥ A52	♥ KJ106	
♦ KJ7	♦ Q4	
♣ Q7	♣ KJ1084	
	♠ K4	
	♥ 98	
	♦ A10986	
	♣ 6532	

North	East	South	West
-	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣*	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

* 2♣ Stayman

After two passes, West will open, but what? A five-card major in a flat 5332 12-14 shouldn't stop you opening a weak no trump if that's what you play. East has only ten points but a good four card major and a nice five card club suit make it worth an invite which West will accept. Strong no trumps may open 1♠ and pass a 1NT rebid stopping out of game. Best defence, a small spade lead, will hold declarer to eight tricks, but this is unrealistic. The more likely lead of the queen means declarer can now make nine. Wests who bid spades may deter North from a spade lead all together. Anyone bidding and making game should score very well. Even 150 in a part score maybe very good.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3 ♠ 10852 Dealer S
 ♥ QJ2 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 10742
 ♣ 84

♠ A976 ♠ KQJ3
 ♥ 10984 ♥ 75
 ♦ AQ8 ♦ 65
 ♣ K9 ♣ QJ1073

♠ 4
 ♥ AK63
 ♦ KJ93
 ♣ A652

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

The first part score battle of the set and anything could happen! South should open one of a minor. I was always taught the lowest, but some prefer the middle on a 1444 hand. West has an opening hand with both majors and is worth a double. North should pass and East has more than they could have and with 9+ is worth a positive response so 2♠ should be bid (1♠ could be nothing). South has fifteen points and can compete with a double themselves. West has bid their hand so can pass and North will bid their best suit, diamonds. Does East bid 3♠? Because of the five-card club suit on the side I would, and I suspect many will, some simply because everyone hates to be outbid when they have the spade suit at pairs! The vulnerability may put some off though. As always with these hands at pairs there will be a lot of scores in both directions. There are only three losers in spades but the 4-1 spade break means the defence can limit declarer to nine tricks, if they make ten, they will score very well. East - West playing and getting a plus in spades will score well, North - South playing in diamonds for a small minus should score well too.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4 ♠ AK2 Dealer W
 ♥ KQ1087 Vul: Both
 ♦ 964
 ♣ 75

♠ J876 ♠ Q105
 ♥ A932 ♥ 4
 ♦ KJ ♦ 108753
 ♣ K42 ♣ AJ86

♠ 943
 ♥ J65
 ♦ AQ2
 ♣ Q1093

North	East	South	West
-			INT
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

West has a third weak no trump hand in a row and if that's what you play will open it. Should North bid 2♥? Can North bid 2♥? Most these days play two suited overcalls and will be unable to bid here those who can, may decide not to given the 3532 shape and the vulnerability. INT is not a thing of beauty. If declarer plays on spades, they may limit the loss to -100. If they try clubs, it will be much worse! Spades will guarantee two tricks in the suit so is the better option. Those who can and venture 2♥ will not fare much better as this is no picnic either. On a diamond lead declarer needs to take a good view in that suit (duck and drop the king second time) to make. Strong no trumppers will open one minor and make it easier for North to stick a heart bid in and save them from playing the poor INT. I suspect a lot of minus scores in both directions. Anything making will score well and even a small minus may not be too bad.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5 ♠ J763 Dealer N
 ♥ 52 Vul: N-S
 ♦ K1093
 ♣ AJ9

♠ 542 ♠ AK8
 ♥ A1096 ♥ J83
 ♦ Q64 ♦ A8
 ♣ Q74 ♣ K10652

♠ Q109
 ♥ KQ74
 ♦ J752
 ♣ 83

North	East	South	West
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

After a 1♣ opener from East and a 1♥ response from West, East can show a strong no trump. The 3433 shape make pass a sensible choice by West with this poor eight count. It doesn't matter here however, as partner will pass an invite anyway. What to lead? South would like to lead hearts, but they may have been bid by left hand opponent, so a diamond is the obvious alternative. I hate Jxxx leads, and the hearts are so good I may choose a heart anyway. Partner only needs the jack and even the ten maybe good enough. But what do I know? 😊 A diamond lead works much better. Declarer will make eight tricks on a diamond lead (there is only one sensible way to play clubs, small to queen then finesse the ten). Those playing a strong no trump will benefit hugely here, opening and playing in 1NT. Without the heart bid South will lead its best suit and promptly give a trick away! Anyone who does better than 120 will score very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6 ♠ AQ85 Dealer E
 ♥ KJ9763 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AK
 ♣ 9

♠ 64 ♠ J73
 ♥ 1085 ♥ Q4
 ♦ QJ72 ♦ 83
 ♣ 8754 ♣ AKQJ63

♠ K1092
 ♥ A2
 ♦ 109654
 ♣ 102

North	East	South	West
-	1♣	Pass	Pass
X	2♣	2♠	Pass
4♣*	Pass	4♥**	Pass
4NT***	Pass	5♥****	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

- * Splinter (short club spade support)
- ** Heart control
- *** Roman Keycard Blackwood
- **** Two keycards, no trump queen

North - South have the first slam of the evening but bidding it may be hard, especially as the opponents will open the bidding first! East will open 1♣ which should be passed to North. What do they bid? On these type of hands they do best to double. It's too strong to just bid one heart and if two hearts is a strong jump it shows the strength but may miss a better spot in spades. East can compete with 2♣ with such a good suit and with an ace and a king South is worth a free bid. What now North? They should be bidding game so it can't cost to bid 4♣ on the way if you have that system available. A 4♥ bid by South shows the ace or king which is golden to North who can now see the potential to only lose a club. With hearts 3-2 and spades 3-2, twelve tricks are straight forward in spades. Even those who play in hearts instead of spades can score the same if they play East for the heart queen and drop it, not absurd given the opening bid. Game making twelve will be normal any that bid this slam can pat themselves on the back and take most, if not all, the matchpoints.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7 ♠ AKQJ103 Dealer S
 ♥ 5 Vul: Both
 ♦ 1094
 ♣ A95

♠ 98	♠ 742
♥ K108432	♥ A6
♦ 85	♦ Q7632
♣ KJ8	♣ Q32
	♠ 65
	♥ QJ97
	♦ AKJ
	♣ 10764

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

* Weak two

If East - West are playing weak twos that's what West should open. How many spades does North bid now? I expect it to vary between two, three and four! 😊 Two looks a bit tame with such a good suit but four at this vulnerability is a little dangerous so three seems about right. South has an easy raise. Whatever North chooses game should be reached (2NT over two spades then game from North). Some Souths may even open the eleven-count making it even easier to bid. Ten tricks are the limit and will be normal as there is simply nowhere to go for anymore. This surely will be pretty flat! Any who decide their spades are running and trust partners heart stop to be good enough will score very well in no trumps.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8 ♠ AQ75 Dealer W
 ♥ K63 Vul: None
 ♦ 10532
 ♣ J10

♠ 8	♠ 96432
♥ Q542	♥ A
♦ Q964	♦ KJ8
♣ K865	♣ AQ32
	♠ KJ10
	♥ J10987
	♦ A7
	♣ 974

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

* Take out

** Good heart raise

East should open their longest suit even though it happens to be their worst! 😊 I know a lot of Souths will pass and understandably so with such a flat hand and poor suit! However it's love all - the life blood of part score battles at pairs (with each side only going down in 50's and not wanting to give up easily) so 2♥ wins it for me. West has both minors and can double for takeout. North is worth a good raise in hearts however the partnership plays it and East can compete easily in clubs. North - South may compete further which will lead to four clubs or the dreaded axe falling. 130 to East - West should be normal, any making more will score well. Any North - Souths that steal the hand for less should do well too.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9 ♠ J9 Dealer N
 ♥ KQ93 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 952
 ♣ K832

♠ A3 ♠ K108765
 ♥ A74 ♥ J
 ♦ AKQJ7 ♦ 10864
 ♣ Q94 ♣ A7

♠ Q42
 ♥ 108652
 ♦ 3
 ♣ J1065

North	East	South	West
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

East will open two spades if they play it as weak and what does West do? 2NT is how a lot will start to see how good partner's weak bid is, but I like new suits to be natural and forcing allowing you to bid good suits like here. Today it is rewarded as partner can raise. 4♥ is a cue as is 4♠ and now with no club control West needs to stop. East? Well, they have opened weak and shown the spade king, they can't have much more. The club ace is huge and sounds like what West is missing so can raise to slam. Six diamonds is easy as declarer can ruff the spades good and should indeed make all thirteen. Spades isn't quite so good but will make six played by West or by East on a non-club lead. Those that don't play weak twos and get West to play spades after a 2NT opener and a transfer from East will right side spades and score well. Anyone who bids any slam and makes it will get most of the match points. Even game making twelve may score well. Any that bid slam and go off on a club lead...it's just not your night!

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	1	7	-	5	4
W	1	7	-	6	4

=====

Board 10 ♠ Q73 Dealer E
 ♥ 8732 Vul: Both
 ♦ K2
 ♣ A854

♠ J9 ♠ AK865
 ♥ KJ10 ♥ Q964
 ♦ 109864 ♦ 73
 ♣ 1032 ♣ 76

♠ 1042
 ♥ A5
 ♦ AQJ5
 ♣ KQJ9

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

South should open 1♣ and North bid 1♥ (don't worry how bad they are, don't bypass a major). After East overcalls 1♠ what should South do? It's too good to pass so X for takeout seems the most flexible bid. North can bid 1NT (6-9) and South should invite, and game will be reached. North won't be happy with their spade stop but its good enough here.

North has nine tricks and that is all but West may lead a small spade (I would 😞) which gives declarer the tenth. Any playing a strong no trump will open it and after a Stayman sequence reach game. They will probably get a diamond lead which does East - West no good but no harm either! South will have no way of making a tenth from there. Nine should be normal, any making the tenth will score very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11 ♠ K3 Dealer S
 ♥ QJ8 Vul: None
 ♦ KJ
 ♣ KQJ643

♠ 74 ♠ 96
 ♥ 765 ♥ AK943
 ♦ AQ108765 ♦ 92
 ♣ 2 ♣ A985

♠ AQJ10852
 ♥ 102
 ♦ 43
 ♣ 107

North	East	South	West
-	-	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

A classic 3♠ opener from South. Don't bid weak over weak so West should pass. What about North? My grandmother taught me not to pre-empt with an outside ace. If you follow this advice North knows they are missing three aces and needs good spades plus a second-round heart control to make game and may make a very wise pass. I have ignored my grandmother's advice on many occasions of course and open 3♠ on anything. Therefore I couldn't resist raising with North and I expect a lot to do so also. If North does pass, they will put dummy down afraid they have missed something only to find all they have missed is 2♠! 😊 I envisage lots of minus scores for North - South here, even minus 50 may score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12 ♠ 76 Dealer W
 ♥ A532 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 96543
 ♣ J10

♠ 842 ♠ AK5
 ♥ K4 ♥ Q986
 ♦ AK8 ♦ QJ72
 ♣ AQ876 ♣ 94

♠ QJ1093
 ♥ J107
 ♦ 10
 ♣ K532

North	East	South	West
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♠*
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

* Forcing good hand

Not dissimilar to hand nine, with opener having a good hand and the opposition overcalling spades. This time however it's dangerous to double as partner will think you have hearts so 2♠ is better. East will bid 3NT. The play? South will lead the spade queen and East will win. Now should declarer go for hearts or clubs? It is very tempting to play hearts first to knock out the ace as South may have it, then you can finesse the clubs in safety. The trouble with this theory is South could have a slow entry in clubs instead, so declarer should start on their long suit and play clubs first. What about a spade duck? Technically safer but it is pairs and if everything goes well you could make eleven losing just the ace of hearts and a club. Ducking looks sensible but with the beautiful jack ten doubleton of clubs, greed works here as eleven can be made. Finally, if declarer plays clubs first will they risk a heart now with the spades wide open? Maybe not. It will take nerves of steel to make eleven. There should be an awful lot of 3NT contracts making ten.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13 ♠ J765 Dealer N
 ♥ AKQ1053 Vul: Both
 ♦ AK
 ♣ K

♠ K842 ♠ AQ3
 ♥ 82 ♥ 976
 ♦ 109873 ♦ Q54
 ♣ J8 ♣ 9432

♠ 109
 ♥ J4
 ♦ J62
 ♣ AQ10765

North	East	South	West
2♣	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

North has a strong two and should open 2♣. South has a good six card suit with two of the top three honours and, in my view, is worth a positive 3♣. North can bid their hearts and South raises to game. Should North go on? No. If South had a diamond or spade control, they could show it or do more so North can safely pass knowing they are missing the ace and king of spades. East needs to lead the spade ace to take two tricks, otherwise declarer can unblock his club, cash two hearts ending in dummy and play clubs throwing spades and make twelve. Unfortunately, the spade lead is almost impossible to find from this holding. Any North - Souths who have a more sophisticated auction and highlight the missing spades might allow East to find the lead and score very badly as a result. Any that blast slam may well make due to the difficulty in leading a spade and score undeservedly well. 680 should be very common.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14 ♠ 4 Dealer E
 ♥ AQ65 Vul: None
 ♦ Q652
 ♣ AJ74

♠ AJ10752 ♠ Q6
 ♥ 73 ♥ K1092
 ♦ AK4 ♦ J1093
 ♣ K6 ♣ 983

♠ K983
 ♥ J84
 ♦ 87
 ♣ Q1052

North	East	South	West
-	Pass	Pass	1♠
X	Pass	2♣	2♠
3♣	3♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

After two passes West can open 1♠, North has a perfect take-out double, South should bid 2♣ and West will compete with two spades. North has bid their hand, but it seems timid to let the opposition get away with playing 2♠. It's usually losing tactics to let opposition play at such low levels when love all at pairs. So North can compete to 3♣ and East will, no doubt, push on to the failing 3♠. North South have done well in the bidding to push the opposition too high but I suspect they will do less well in the play. Either leading the partnership's suit or a more passive diamond (my choice) gives declarer the ninth trick. In fact the best lead, for the second hand running, is an ace from ace queen! Thanks dealing machine! Not many will find this and I suspect spades playing making nine to be very common. If North - South lead a minor and, when in with heart ace, panic and lead the other they will give away ten and get a really poor score. Any North - Souths that can go for a small minus in clubs will score very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15 ♠ 10 Dealer S
 ♥ A2 Vul: N-S
 ♦ KQ8532
 ♣ 9762

♠ J7653 ♠ Q984
 ♥ K107 ♥ QJ8654
 ♦ 96 ♦ 10
 ♣ AQ10 ♣ K5

 ♠ AK2
 ♥ 93
 ♦ AJ74
 ♣ J843

North	East	South	West
-	-	INT	Pass
2NT*	X	3♣**	3♠
4♦	4♠	X	Pass
Pass	Pass		

* Diamonds
 3♣** Good diamonds

South will open INT if they play it as weak and North can transfer to diamonds should their system include this handy tool. It's best here for East's double to be takeout of diamonds, even 3♦ for the majors would be ok too. South's transfer break shows good diamonds and West is worth competing in spades. North knowing partner has good diamonds will push on to 4♦ and with the nice 6-4 shape and favourable vulnerability East may push on to 4♠, not with any great expectation of making but happy if it isn't as 4♦ probably is. If North - South don't play transfers over INT, North will be forced to pass but East should still compete with 2♥ or a major showing bid. North will compete in diamonds much the same. Although strong no trumps will open 1♣, East - West will get together in a major and North will compete in diamonds. 4♠ doubled only goes one down, with diamonds making ten this should score well. A good part score battle with the vulnerable side making but the non-vulnerable side going down cheaply. Any 130 or better for North - South should score well and any small minuses for East - West should score well for them.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16 ♠ Q108753 Dealer W
 ♥ K75 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 76
 ♣ Q3

♠ AJ2 ♠ 6
 ♥ AQ93 ♥ J1042
 ♦ 2 ♦ KQ1084
 ♣ A10754 ♣ 962

 ♠ K94
 ♥ 86
 ♦ AJ953
 ♣ KJ8

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

2♠* weak

After a 1♣ opener from West, North can make a weak jump overcall. East isn't strong enough to double at this level and vulnerability. South should now raise to 3♠ (knowing the nine-card fit). This is best played as weaker with 3♣ (cue) as a good raise. It's now hard for West to come back in. West would like to bid again but doesn't really have a suitable call so 3♠ will probably win the auction. If South passes, West can come back in with a double over 2♠, and will get to 3♥. South may bid 3♠ over this now. The vulnerability is wrong for East - West to bid on to 4♥. 3♠ will make or go one off dependent on North finding the spade jack. They may well get this wrong and go one down. Any making contract will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 17	♠ A	Dealer N
	♥ K86	Vul: None
	♦ K10962	
	♣ 9753	
♠ J7		♠ Q9643
♥ A72		♥ Q543
♦ AJ43		♦ 5
♣ Q864		♣ AJ10
	♠ K10852	
	♥ J109	
	♦ Q87	
	♣ K2	

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣*	Pass	2♦**
Pass	2♠***	Pass	Pass
Pass			

2♣* Stayman

2♦** no four card major

2♠*** non forcing

After three passes West can open yet another weak no trump. I suspect most Norths will play some sort of defence to one no trump and be unable to bid. East can use Stayman to look for a major fit and after 2♦, 2♠ by East is a weak version of Stayman and should be passed. This will not end well on this hand though. The bad spade break leading to one off. If any Norths can bid 2♦ and do so East should double, best played as take out. West may well pass this although it can make. Finally, any Easts that play a strong no trump will open 1♣, North will bid 1♦ and East should double as they are only going to bid once so better to show both majors. South can bid 2♦ and East will compete to 2♠. A love all part score battle and although eight tricks in diamonds is the highest contract either side can make, neither side may want to sell out too cheaply and therefore, get too

high. I expect a lot of minus scores in both directions. The key here is to get a plus score!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18	♠ K	Dealer E
	♥ A963	Vul: N-S
	♦ KQJ7	
	♣ A843	
♠ AJ53		♠ Q1092
♥ Q2		♥ 84
♦ 65		♦ A932
♣ Q10652		♣ KJ7
	♠ 8764	
	♥ KJ1075	
	♦ 1084	
	♣ 9	

North	East	South	West
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

After 3 passes, North, as in board three, has a 1444 shape that I would open 1♣. Some will open 1♦, even 1♥. Over a one minor opener South is just about worth a 1♥ response. Yes, its light but with both majors it can hardly be worse than 1♣. Today the bravery is rewarded as partner should raise to the unbeatable game. Hearts will make ten or eleven dependent on finding the heart queen. Any bidding the game will score well. Any that pass 1♣ will play there and regret it!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19 ♠ J3 Dealer S
 ♠ 1053 Vul: E-W
 ♠ 642
 ♠ J10864
 ♠ 102 ♠ K9654
 ♥ AQ982 ♥ J4
 ♦ J5 ♦ AKQ98
 ♣ K975 ♣ 2
 ♠ AQ87
 ♥ K76
 ♦ 1073
 ♣ AQ3

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

* hearts and a minor

After so many weak no trumps this set, South could be forgiven for opening it automatically. However this fifteen count 4333 really is only worth fourteen and should be downgraded to yet another IN. West is worth a bid but what they bid will depend on their methods over one no trump. Here I have the common hearts and a minor bid. Whatever they bid East will respond showing its spades and 3NT should be reached. The diamonds are so good game is worth bidding. If South plays a strong no trump they should open one of a minor, West should bid one heart, and game should still be reached (1♦-1♥-P-1♠-P-2♣-P-3NT). South has a horrid lead. Again ace from ace queen (clubs) is best but who will find that? A passive diamond would be my choice. If East plays heart jack covered, they do best to duck, keeping north off lead this should result in ten tricks. If North is allowed to get in and play a spade this should hold it to nine.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20 ♠ AKQ6 Dealer W
 ♠ 94 Vul: Both
 ♠ A962
 ♠ 743
 ♠ 973 ♠ 10852
 ♥ Q65 ♥ K3
 ♦ KJ3 ♦ 54
 ♣ K1062 ♣ AQJ85
 ♠ J4
 ♥ AJ10872
 ♦ Q1087
 ♣ 9

North	East	South	West
-	-	-	Pass
INT	Pass	2♦*	Pass
2♥	3♣	3♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

West should pass and, guess what, North has another weak no trump. I suspect most Easts will have to pass as 2♣ will be artificial. South should transfer to hearts and after North completes East may well bid now as they couldn't the first time. South will bid again. It is better here for 3♥ to be just to play at pairs and double or bid a new suit to make a genuine game try. West with a flat hand and vulnerable needs to resist bidding 4♣. Hearts making nine is the limit, but this needs the defence to play diamonds very early from East setting up a diamond trick and a ruff. I suspect 170 should be normal. Any East - Wests that bid too many in clubs may go for the dreaded -200.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 21

♠ Q42 Dealer N
 ♥ K865 Vul: N-S
 ♦ K10987
 ♣ 2

♠ 96
 ♥ A103
 ♦ Q532
 ♣ AQ75

♠ J103
 ♥ J2
 ♦ AJ4
 ♣ KJ943

♠ AK875
 ♥ Q974
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 1086

North	East	South	West
Pass	INT	2♣*	2s**
3♥	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	4♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

* both majors

** asking for a spade stop

A part score battle where one side has the points and the other the majors. These are always competitive and difficult to predict! Added to the confusion anyone of three people may open the bidding here. With favourable vulnerability and such good clubs, I would upgrade and open East INT. If East passes it's very tempting to open 1♠ in third seat with both majors, and if both East and South pass, West has, lo and behold, another weak no trump! North – South, whatever is opened, should find a major fit and non-vulnerable East - West can compete in clubs. How high this auction gets though is anyone's guess! Any North - South who make a major contract should score well, any East - Wests making or going for a small minus likewise. Even the auction INT-3NT by East - West with North - South silent may score OK even though it will fail.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22

♠ AK64 Dealer E
 ♥ 8 Vul: E-W
 ♦ J9532
 ♣ A92

♠ Q97
 ♥ J7432
 ♦ Q10
 ♣ 873

♠ J53
 ♥ Q106
 ♦ A8
 ♣ Q10654

♠ 1082
 ♥ AK95
 ♦ K764
 ♣ KJ

North	East	South	West
-	Pass	INT	Pass
2♣*	Pass	2♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

* Stayman

What a nice change! South can open a weak no trump. Those playing this system will be enjoying the session. It does show the frequency of these hands and why, at pairs, it is so popular.

North - South should have the auction to themselves for a change and after a Stayman sequence settle in 3NT. Strong no trumps will no doubt open one minor but should reach the same contract. West may be put off the best lead of a heart on this auction and choose a passive club instead. This gives declarer a third trick in the suit which they can do for themselves but may not have the time on a heart lead. Diamonds missing AQ108 can only really be played small to the king which works like a charm on this hand for four tricks in the suit. Declarer should make ten or eleven depending if they are given or risk the club finesse. At pairs they probably should in such a normal contract. There may even be the odd twelve on a mis-defence. Finally, six diamonds can make thanks to the lucky diamond layout and the club finesse. If you bid this - wow!

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 23

♠ A7	Dealer S
♥ AJ62	Vul: Both
♦ K1084	
♣ J53	
=====	
♠ KQ542	♠ 986
♥ Q3	♥ 10974
♦ J762	♦ AQ
♣ 76	♣ K842
=====	
♠ J103	
♥ K85	
♦ 953	
♣ AQ109	

North	East	South	West
-	-	Pass	Pass
1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

I'm running out of words to describe yet another weak no-trump opener 😊. South has the big decision. Is their hand worth eleven points and a raise? The club holding is surely worth an extra point but the flatness of the hand probably one fewer. It pays to be cautious in these situations at pairs, so pass is best. West should resist bidding with such poor heart holding and vulnerable, but I suspect some will. If North - South can double this it will go for a big penalty, even not doubled maybe enough for a good score. Meanwhile the sensible ones left in one no trump have eight tricks with the club and heart finesses working. They can then prove you don't need to bid this thin game for nine to be a good score. The way to nine is not obvious but if East starts with the eight of spades, jack, queen, ace, declarer will eventually tackle diamonds for nine but the defence are stuck in spades. If they continue the nine (MUD), ten, king or if they play the six, ten, king the suit is blocked the suit. Eight will be normal, any making nine whether they bid the game or not should score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 24

♠ 8	Dealer W
♥ 42	Vul: None
♦ A97642	
♣ A854	
=====	
♠ K102	♠ AQJ6
♥ 1063	♥ Q875
♦ 53	♦ KQJ
♣ KQJ76	♣ 103
=====	
♠ 97543	
♥ AKJ9	
♦ 108	
♣ 92	

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

East can open one heart as thankfully they are too strong for a weak no trump this time. 😊 South really shouldn't bid with that spade suit and such good cards in the opponent's suit. East will eventually rebid 2NT (15/16) raised, no doubt, to game by West. The low road is the winning action again though. 3N should fail with three hearts and two aces to take. Ace of hearts lead then switch should make this easy. Any East - West that does stop out of game and get a plus will score well, any North - Souths that steal the contract in diamonds (maybe after an aggressive 3♦ opener) and make (it takes a diamond lead to beat 3♦) will score very well too.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 25 ♠ 10974 Dealer N
 ♥ K108 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 10985
 ♣ 64

♠ A8	♠ Q5
♥ A943	♥ 65
♦ 62	♦ J743
♣ AQ932	♣ KJ875
♠ KJ632	
♥ QJ72	
♦ AKQ	
♣ 10	

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♠	2♣
2♠	4♣	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Another competitive part score hand that will no doubt get too high at a lot of tables. After two passes South should open 1♠ and West has a decent 2♣ overcall. What now North? I think non vulnerable at pairs with four card support this is worth a cheeky raise. East will no doubt compete to at least 4♣ with four card support. South would like to make a game try but with no room will no doubt opt for bidding game. Both 4♣ and 4♠ can fail of course. A spade lead sets up four easy winners against a club contract. East - West need to set up a heart ruff to beat 4♠. This is not so obvious but as declarer needs to get dummy to play spades and the only way there is hearts they should be able to spot the ruff and beat it. Again, plus scores will do well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 26	♠ AQ4	Dealer E
	♥ A97	Vul: Both
	♦ KJ42	
	♣ K85	
♠ 73		♠ 862
♥ 10642		♥ KJ3
♦ 876		♦ AQ105
♣ J1064		♣ 932
	♠ KJ1095	
	♥ Q85	
	♦ 93	
	♣ AQ7	

North	East	South	West
-	Pass	1NT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

East will pass and, here we go again, another weak no trump. Don't worry about having a five-card major. If you are 5332 shape and in the range a no trump opening is best. North has a good hand but flat and a maximum of 31 points so should resist any more than game. Declarer has nine tricks and will they try a diamond to dummy or a heart to the queen for ten. Those that try diamonds twice may end up with only nine and a poor score. A heart to queen gets the tenth. Of course many Easts (me included 😬) may give the tenth straight away by leading a heart at trick one. If 3NT is played by North, East should resist an aggressive diamond lead at pairs and pick a safe club instead. The diamond here will yield the tenth as well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 27 ♠ Dealer S
 ♥ K96 Vul: None
 ♦ J98532
 ♣ 9742

♠ K87632 ♠ 9
 ♥ J853 ♥ Q42
 ♦ K ♦ A107
 ♣ A3 ♣ KQJ1065

♠ AQJ1054
 ♥ A107
 ♦ Q64
 ♣ 8

North	South	East	West
-	-	1♠	Pass
Pass	2♣	2♠	X*
Pass	Pass	Pass	

* Penalty

West will be getting ready to open 1♠ and won't believe their eyes when South gets there first! They can do nothing but pass, North should too. East will no doubt bid the obvious 2♣ and you can't blame South for rebidding such a good spade suit. West should double, having passed the first time this is best played as penalty rather than take out - you would take out the first time if you had such a hand. With six spades they will double with the voice of thunder but will be disappointed that it can drift only one off. Plus hundred may not be that good. Should North run? It's such a poor diamond suit that I think it's wrong to, but it works here. 2♠ will lose four tricks outside trumps plus maybe only two spades and is only one off. Three diamonds can make. Some East - Wests may bid no trumps, A diamond leads hold this to a limit of eight but a spade lead lets through the ninth.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 28 ♠ KQ3 Dealer W
 ♥ QJ72 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 93
 ♣ AJ87

♠ AJ542 ♠ 1097
 ♥ 853 ♥ K6
 ♦ A ♦ 1086542
 ♣ Q532 ♣ 94

♠ 86
 ♥ A1094
 ♦ KQJ7
 ♣ K106

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

* good hand, forcing

West should open 1♠ for no other reason than to stop another weak no-trump opener! 😊. Here it should be routine anyway. North with an opening hand and four cards in the other major should double. I think to jump straight to 4♥ South should have five plus hearts so 2♠ is a good forcing option. North will confirm they have hearts raised to game by South. This makes a routine eleven tricks losing two aces. Any North - Souths who can visualise that 3nt is just as good (South will be worried about spades, North about diamonds) will lose just two tricks also and score very well. Unless one of North or South takes a gamble, 4♥ looks to be normal.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 29 ♠ 93 Dealer N
 ♥ AQ52 Vul: Both
 ♦ K
 ♣ J106532

♠ AQ8 ♠ 1064
 ♥ KJ ♥ 109876
 ♦ QJ42 ♦ 9863
 ♣ AKQ7 ♣ 9

♠ KJ752
 ♥ 43
 ♦ A1075
 ♣ 84

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

After three passes West will be delighted to have picked up such a good hand and will open the normal 2NT. After a transfer sequence to hearts their delight will turn to anguish when they see the dummy! Two hearts losers at most and two diamonds (the spades can go on the clubs) means 3♥ has a chance but the 4-2 break complicates matters. It would be a mistake to play clubs early as declarer has control of spades therefore there is no rush. Trying to get to dummy to play hearts for a miracle holding is far too optimistic - just play a heart from hand at trick two. North can do no better than play another club and West can play another trump. North will probably still play another club and South's inability to ruff will expose the 4-2 break. Now if declarer ruffs a club and plays a diamond North will win but be in trouble. A heart to dummy allows West to play another diamond and a spade is into West's tenace. This is a lot for declarer to get right, and I suspect many will play hearts going negative. To always beat 3♥ North does best to duck a heart honour killing declarer's entries.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 30 ♠ J7 Dealer E
 ♥ 63 Vul: None
 ♦ K106
 ♣ J109872

♠ AK93 ♠ Q8542
 ♥ Q754 ♥ 92
 ♦ Q95 ♦ J
 ♣ Q4 ♣ AK653

♠ 106
 ♥ AKJ108
 ♦ A87432
 ♣

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♦	X
Pass	4♠		

A lot will disagree with this auction! 😊 I have always believed you should open your longest suit so, for me, South is a 1♦ opener. Many will say 1♥ which is hardly a sin. Over either, West has an opening hand with the other or both majors so can double. East? Again, this looks aggressive, but game can make here opposite as little as Akxx in spades losing just three tricks outside the black suits, and, if it's failing the opposition are likely to make something. Here this bidding will probably go undoubled and even though it fails by one. With diamonds making ten tricks East – West's way it shouldn't score too badly. Indeed, South needs to underlead the diamond for a ruff, very difficult, or it will get close to making.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 31 ♠ AQ8 Dealer S
 ♥ 1032 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 9543
 ♣ AQ5

♠ J10962 ♠ 73
 ♥ 8654 ♥ QJ
 ♦ J ♦ AK82
 ♣ 643 ♣ J9872

♠ K54
 ♥ AK97
 ♦ Q1076
 ♣ K10

North	East	South	West
-	-	1♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

With a flat twelve North is only worth an invite which South will except anyway. Strong no trumpers will get their quicker, 1N-3N. Declarer should start on hearts, and the favourable position means they have four tricks in that suit and three in each black suit. They will then turn their attention to diamonds for eleven. East needs to duck a diamond and declarer will surely go wrong and play the ten (the percentage play), but this may be harder to do in practice. Flying in with an honour may give the game away and concede the eleventh trick. Ten tricks look normal any finding the eleventh will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 32 ♠ AJ6 Dealer W
 ♥ KQ632 Vul: E-W
 ♦ Q109
 ♣ AJ

♠ Q875 ♠ 1032
 ♥ 54 ♥ A1098
 ♦ AJ4 ♦ 753
 ♣ 9654 ♣ 1087

♠ K94
 ♥ J7
 ♦ K862
 ♣ KQ32

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

North should open 1♥ and rebid 2NT (15-17) leading to 3NT. Strong no trumpers will open 1NT and get a direct raise. If North hasn't bid hearts they may get a heart lead from East but thankfully for the defence the pips are good enough that today it doesn't cost a trick. Declarer should test hearts and when they don't behave, they need to find the diamond jack for eleven. It would be a mistake to play spades as even guessing right only gets them to ten, whereas getting three diamond tricks gets them to eleven. Which way to play diamonds? This looks entirely 50/50, running through the long hand is normal but wrong this time. Having found the heart break though declarer may play for the diamond length with West and get it right. Ten tricks will be normal and like the last hand any finding the eleventh will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====