



# Commentary for the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs 2023, and for your continued support for the CBAI.

Thankfully, the signs are that things are stabilising after a very difficult couple of years, but the Association still faces many challenges, including financial ones, following the disruption caused by the covid hiatus. So the funds raised from the Sims this year will be particularly welcome. If you know of clubs that do not participate in the Sims events, please encourage them to sign up – the feedback is that members really enjoy them and look forward to playing in them every year.

I hope that you found the hands (which are randomly dealt by computer with no human intervention whatsoever) as interesting and challenging as ever, and that you enjoyed the chance to pit your bridge wits against your fellow players across the country (and for those still playing online, perhaps a few overseas players as well). Many thanks to our expert commentators: Monday – Fearghal O’Boyle, Tuesday – Lucy & John Phelan, Wednesday – Enda Glynn, Thursday – Brian Senior, and Friday – Carol-Ann Cummins & John Noonan, for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. Don’t forget to check your standing in the national results at [www.ecatsbridge.com/sims](http://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims).

## Pat O’Mahony – President, Contract Bridge Association of Ireland

For the purposes of our discussion, let us assume that we are playing simple ACOL ‘4-card majors, weak No-Trump, Stayman, Transfers, Weak 2’s in 3 suits, RKCB and natural signals (high encouraging)’. We will mention other variations where relevant but as is often the case, the bidding system used makes little or no difference

Some of tonight’s hands are quite fascinating and as unbelievable as it may be, I can assure you that the hands are truly 100% random - there has been no human tampering with any hand whatsoever.

### Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

<p>♠ A 4 ♥ - ♦ A Q 9 7 4 3 ♣ K Q 9 5 4</p> <p>♠ Q J 9 2 ♥ A K J 5 3 ♦ K 2 ♣ 7 6</p> <p>♠ K 10 8 5 ♥ 9 8 7 2 ♦ 8 6 ♣ A 10 3</p>	<p>♠ 7 6 3 ♥ Q 10 6 4 ♦ J 10 5 ♣ J 8 2</p>
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### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
15		N	7	6	-	2 2
14	4	S	7	6	-	2 2
7		E	-	-	1	- -
		W	-	-	1	- -

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	5♣	All Pass	

Respect to any North player who rebids 6♣ on the third round of the auction.

An interesting board to begin with - although N/S can make a Grand Slam in clubs, it is hard to see many pairs getting past 5♦, so much so that 5♦+1 will probably be an above average score for N/S and for sure 5♣+2 will be a huge score for them.

Some N/S pairs might try 3NT especially if South manages to respond 1H on the first round of the auction. If North ends up playing then West might double the final contract to ask East to lead a heart.

If E/W do not cash their 5 heart tricks then declarer can win 9 tricks if he has the courage to take the diamond finesse. Sadly, even if N/S are allowed to make 3NT it will still be a poor result for them.

If South responds 1♠ on the first round then West is worth a bid - either double or 2♥ - but even if West bids it is difficult to see E/W having any further involvement in the auction. Furthermore if West bids it might give those declarers who reach 3NT that bit of extra confidence to expect the diamond finesse to be a success.

Normally we avoid contracts like 5♣ and 5♦ in matchpoint games so we have sympathy for those brave souls who end up in 3NT – but maybe being in 3NT with a 2-0-5-6 shape is a bit much? Of course there is no reason to end up in 3NT if E/W bid hearts or indeed if West doubles 3NT to ask for a heart lead (first suit bid by dummy).

6-5 shapes like North's are all about tricks and not 'points'. The good North players will not be counting 'points' when they pick up this hand. Instead they will only be interested in finding out if partner has the three magic cards i.e. ♠K, ♦K, ♣A. If South has all three then we should be in a grand slam. If South has only two of those cards then we should be in a small slam. If South has only one of those cards we should stay at the 5-level. Since we are never going to be able to find out exactly, I have a lot of admiration for a 'middle of the road' practical 6♣ rebid by North after 3NT - offering a choice of 6♣ or 6♦ to partner.

As an aside, it is worth observing why it is that N/S can make a Grand Slam despite having only 22 points between them. Three points to note are that the N/S points are all in aces and kings, their two queens are supported by either an ace or a king and also the fact that North's void is opposite zero points i.e. South has no points in hearts.

**TIP:** When your partner tells you he has a singleton or void in a suit, you should get excited if you have an ace or zero points in his short suit. Conversely, if you have a king, queen or a jack in his short suit you should curb your enthusiasm and discount these points.

## Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

♠ Q 10 8 2 ♥ A J 10 4 ♦ 2 ♣ A 8 6 3	♠ J 7 5 4 3 ♥ 9 2 ♦ A Q J ♣ K 9 5
♠ A 9 6 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ 9 7 5 3 ♣ J 10 4	♠ K ♥ K 7 6 3 ♦ K 10 8 6 4 ♣ Q 7 2

### HCP                      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	11	N	4	3	4	1 3
7	11	S	4	3	4	1 3
	11	E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♣	1♠	DbI
2♠	Pass	Pass	DbI
All Pass			

All 4 players have decisions to make here and each decision will have an impact on the final result.

In the modern game, more and more players are opening with 11 HCP but I guess even those that do might draw the line with this East hand because most of its points are outside the long spade suit?

If East passes then some Souths might be tempted to open but the singleton ♠K and the fact that he is vulnerable might persuade him to pass. If South does not open then West has an easy pass.

If the bidding is passed around to North then the text books tell him that he is worth an opening bid given that he passes the 'Rule of 15' i.e. his HCP plus the number of spades he holds totals 15.

Nonetheless, there will be a few 'pass out' results.

If E/W decide not to open the bidding then they need to be careful not to offer themselves on a plate to N/S e.g. by overcalling and getting too high in a spade contract.

If N/S play the hand, the fact that East has the bare  $\heartsuit$  AQJ, will mean declarer can make a lot of tricks – provided declarer can guess the location of the  $\heartsuit$  Q.

**TIP:** It's worthwhile spending some time focussing on your card play skills. You will often score well simply by making a lot of tricks in the play despite the fact that you may feel that you have underbid or find yourself in some strange contract.

**Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable**

<p><math>\spadesuit</math> Q J 8  <math>\heartsuit</math> A 10 4 2  <math>\diamondsuit</math> 6  <math>\clubsuit</math> A J 10 9 6</p> <p><math>\spadesuit</math> A 10 9 6  <math>\heartsuit</math> Q 8 7  <math>\diamondsuit</math> 4  <math>\clubsuit</math> Q 8 7 5 4</p>	<p><math>\spadesuit</math> 7 5 4 3 2  <math>\heartsuit</math> 9 6 3  <math>\diamondsuit</math> A 8 7  <math>\clubsuit</math> 3 2</p> <p><math>\spadesuit</math> K  <math>\heartsuit</math> K J 5  <math>\diamondsuit</math> K Q J 10 9 5 3 2  <math>\clubsuit</math> K</p>
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**HCP      Makeable contracts**

		$\clubsuit$	$\diamondsuit$	$\heartsuit$	$\spadesuit$	NT
12		N	4	5	5	2 5
8	4	S	4	5	5	2 5
16		E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

West	North	East	South
			1 $\diamondsuit$
Pass	2 $\clubsuit$	Pass	3 $\diamondsuit$
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

North and South each have nice hands and both are happy to co-operate in any slam investigations but the bottom line is that there are 2 aces missing so there is no slam on this board tonight.

There doesn't even seem to be any mis-defence that will allow declarer to make 12 tricks.

The trick will be for N/S to avoid 5  $\diamondsuit$  and instead play in No-Trump below the 6 level.

Is the South hand worth a stronger opening like 2  $\clubsuit$  or 2  $\diamondsuit$ ? With 2 singleton kings – probably not.

Players often ask: Should North respond 1  $\heartsuit$  or 2  $\clubsuit$  to the 1  $\diamondsuit$  opening bid? With 6-10 points

responder should respond 1  $\heartsuit$  rather than 2  $\clubsuit$  i.e. when responder is weak then he is worth just one bid and he should use his one and only bid to show his 4-card major.

But when responder has 11 or more points, he is worth two bids and now he can afford the luxury of bidding his longest suit first (2  $\clubsuit$ ) followed by his 4 card major on the next round if he is still inclined to show his 4-card major at that point.

Maybe North should rebid 3  $\heartsuit$  over 3  $\diamondsuit$  but he is minimum for his initial 2  $\clubsuit$  and if he bids 3  $\heartsuit$  he might endplay his partner into bidding past their most likely resting spot of 3NT.

**TIP:** In matchpoint games (normal club scoring), we try to avoid playing in contracts of 5  $\clubsuit$  or 5  $\diamondsuit$  because most other pairs will be in 3NT, most likely making it +1 or +2. We only play in 5  $\clubsuit$  or 5  $\diamondsuit$  after we have ruled out the possibility of playing in 3NT or 4NT.

**Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable**

<p><math>\spadesuit</math> J 9 4  <math>\heartsuit</math> K Q J 10 9 4  <math>\diamondsuit</math> K J 8  <math>\clubsuit</math> 4</p> <p><math>\spadesuit</math> A Q  <math>\heartsuit</math> 8 7 5  <math>\diamondsuit</math> 6 5 2  <math>\clubsuit</math> Q J 10 7 3</p>	<p><math>\spadesuit</math> 8 6 5 3 2  <math>\heartsuit</math> 6 3  <math>\diamondsuit</math> 9 7 3  <math>\clubsuit</math> K 9 8</p> <p><math>\spadesuit</math> K 10 7  <math>\heartsuit</math> A 2  <math>\diamondsuit</math> A Q 10 4  <math>\clubsuit</math> A 6 5 2</p>
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**HCP      Makeable contracts**

		$\clubsuit$	$\diamondsuit$	$\heartsuit$	$\spadesuit$	NT
11		N	1	5	5	2 5
9	3	S	1	6	5	4 5
17		E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 $\heartsuit$	Pass	2 $\clubsuit$
Pass	2 $\heartsuit$	Pass	3NT
Pass	4 $\heartsuit$	All Pass	

It looks like all roads lead to 3NT by South or 4  $\heartsuit$  by North, although some may try 6  $\heartsuit$ . Even if North escapes the deadly spade lead he still cannot avoid losing 2 spades at the end.

'Hats Off' to any N/S pair who manage to bid the only making slam i.e. 6♦ by South.

A few points of interest:

1. North is way too strong for a weak 2♥ opening bid
2. Some Souths will wonder about making a 3♣ or 3♦ 'jump-shift' response. These strong responses are fine – your intention being to rebid in NT on the next round to show a balanced hand with 16+. In fact a 3♦ response might be your only way to get to 6♦.

Those Norths who decide to leave their partners in 3NT will score extremely well – declarer will win the same 11 tricks whether he is in a heart or a No-Trump contract.

**TIP:** With 28+ HCP it is often worth playing your game contracts in 3NT.

#### Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

♠ A K Q 6 2	
♥ K 8	
♦ A 8 7 6	
♣ K 3	
♠ 4	♠ J 9 3
♥ J 10 9 4	♥ Q 6 5 3
♦ K J 4 2	♦ 10 9 5 3
♣ 10 7 6 5	♣ 8 4
♠ 10 8 7 5	
♥ A 7 2	
♦ Q	
♣ A Q J 9 2	

#### HCP      Makeable contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
19	N	7	2	2	7	7
5    3	S	7	2	2	7	7
13	E	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♥*
Pass	7♠	All Pass	

\* 2KC, no ♠Q

Most will bid to 6♠. Those who get to 6NT will score above average but those N/S pairs who bid 7♣, 7♠ or 7NT will collect most of the matchpoints.

North's first decision will be whether to open 1♠ or some stronger opening like 2♣ or 2NT? In general we open 1♠, consoling ourselves that if partner does not have 6 points then we were not making any game contract.

If North opens 1♠ then South will have to decide how to show his good spade raise. Does he show his good club suit first and then raise to 4♠ (Delayed Game Raise) or does he make a splinter bid response of 4♦ (showing 4-card spade support, 12-15 points and a singleton or void in diamonds). South might also be contemplating a Jacoby 2NT response - if playing that. However 'Jacoby 2NT' should not be used when you can make a delayed game raise or a splinter bid instead.

The sound advice here is that we show partner the best important feature of our hand and in this case the best feature of the South hand is the beautiful club suit – so we show our hand by giving a delayed game raise i.e. 2♣ then 4♠ on the next round.

Then after 1♠-2♣, North will have to decide on a rebid i.e. does he make a simple rebid of 2♦ or should he jump to 3♦? It is good to have the agreement with partner that a 2 of a new suit rebid after a 2 level response is forcing for one round so 1♠-2♣-2♦ is forcing.

When North finds out that South has ♥A and ♣A then that information coupled with the fact that South showed a good 5 card club suit and extra points with his first response means that there must a good play for all 13 tricks. In fact, some partnerships will be so confident that they will claim their Grand Slam before the opening lead is made.

**TIP:** When you have more than one thing to tell your partner, show your best feature first.

**Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable**

♠ A 10 5  
 ♥ 9 7 4  
 ♦ 4 3  
 ♣ Q J 10 7 5  
 ♠ Q 6 4  
 ♥ 8 6  
 ♦ K J 8 7 6  
 ♣ 8 3 2  
 ♠ K J 8  
 ♥ A K Q J  
 ♦ 9 5 2  
 ♣ A K 9  
 ♠ 9 7 3 2  
 ♥ 10 5 3 2  
 ♦ A Q 10  
 ♣ 6 4

**HCP                      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
7		N	-	-	-	-
6	21	S	-	-	-	-
6		E	3	5	4	4
		W	3	5	4	4

West	North	East	South
		2NT	Pass

3NT                      All Pass

This will be the auction at most tables. Hopefully, we won't see any E/W pairs landing in 5♦? 3NT is nearly always easier to make than 5♣ or 5♦.

In 3NT, declarer can only make 10 tricks here and yet holding declarer to 10 tricks will be a good score for N/S because other N/S pairs will allow declarer make 11 tricks.

To stop declarer from making 11 tricks, South needs to keep his ♦A until the third round of the suit and North needs to keep his ♠A to beat dummy's ♠Q to prevent dummy's ♠Q becoming an entry to the winning diamonds.

If either North or South slip up then declarer will be able access dummy's diamond winner and make his all important 11<sup>th</sup> trick.

**TIP:** When dummy comes down with a long suit the defenders should think about how they might prevent declarer from gaining access to that long suit.

**Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable**

♠ A 9 6 4  
 ♥ Q J 10 9 6  
 ♦ 8  
 ♣ K 6 5  
 ♠ K J 5  
 ♥ 8 2  
 ♦ A 9 7  
 ♣ J 10 8 3 2  
 ♠ 3 2  
 ♥ K 7 5 3  
 ♦ K J 5 4 3 2  
 ♣ Q  
 ♠ Q 10 8 7  
 ♥ A 4  
 ♦ Q 10 6  
 ♣ A 9 7 4

**HCP                      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
10		N	2	-	3	4
9	9	S	2	-	3	4
12		E	-	2	-	-
		W	-	2	-	-

West	North	East	South
			1NT

Pass                      2♦                      Pass                      2♥  
 Pass                      2♠                      Pass                      4♠  
 All Pass

An interesting board to bid and to play....so much so that those who simply play in 2♠ might score most of the matchpoints.

Whether South opens 1♣ or 1NT, the North players are eventually going to have to decide to either downgrade their 10 HCP to 9 HCP or upgrade them to 11 HCP.

In my opinion North's 7-loser hand is worth closer to 13 HCP than 10 HCP: the beautiful texture of the heart suit, the ♠9, the 5-4-3-1 shape and the absence of any 2's or 3's are all good features.

If North values his hand as a weak hand he will use Stayman and pass South's 2♠ response.

If North thinks he has a good hand he will use Stayman and rebid 3♠ or 4♠ or maybe he will transfer to hearts as in the auction above and then show his 4-card spade suit on the next round.

South will also have a decision to make if he is invited to 4♠. As is often the case, simply making 10 tricks in a 3♠ contract might be nearly as good as bidding and making 4♠ as

quite a few declarers will not make 10 tricks in 4♠.

It seems that the success (or not) of this contract boils down to how you play this particular trump combination. Those who play a spade to the ace will go down while those who run the 7 on the first round (running the queen also works tonight) will succeed. Then after 2 rounds of trumps, one winning line is simply to play ace and another heart to set up 4 heart tricks.

**TIP:** Any time spent learning how to handle various 'suit combinations' is time well spent. For instance, on this hand, there is a difference between how we play Q432 opposite A765 and how we play Q1098 opposite A765.

**Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all**

♠ 10 3 ♥ A 9 7 5 4 ♦ K Q J 2 ♣ J 7	♠ J 7 6 5 4 ♥ K 8 ♦ 10 5 4 ♣ A 9 8
♠ A 2 ♥ J 3 ♦ A 9 8 3 ♣ K Q 6 5 3	♠ K Q 9 8 ♥ Q 10 6 2 ♦ 7 6 ♣ 10 4 2

**HCP                      Makeable contracts**

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

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	3♥
All Pass			

There will be many different auctions on this board all depending upon whether or not North decides to overcall 1♥ or not.

If North remains silent then the E/W auction should be a simple 1♣-1♠-2♣-P as West is not strong enough to rebid 2♦ (a reverse bid showing 17-18). If West does rebid 2♦ then E/W will probably land in 3NT.

3NT by E/W goes down one on a heart lead but if North talks himself out of a heart lead

and instead leads one of his top diamonds and then persists with diamonds, declarer will make his all-important 9<sup>th</sup> trick in diamonds.

North's 11 HCP and nice second suit should persuade him that his hand is worth a 1♥ overcall – even though he lacks a second heart honour. Remember we do not want to be 'passing' on boards 1, 8, 11 or 14. 3♥-1 even if doubled should be an ok score for N/S.

**TIP:** To quote Andrew Robson, we try to have our 'bidding boots' on when we are playing boards 1, 8, 11 and 14 - the 'Nil-All' boards.

**Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable**

♠ K 7 ♥ A 10 8 4 3 ♦ A J 9 5 ♣ 6 5	♠ Q J 5 3 ♥ J ♦ 10 7 6 4 2 ♣ 10 7 3
♠ 9 8 4 ♥ Q 5 ♦ K Q 8 ♣ K Q J 8 4	♠ A 10 6 2 ♥ K 9 7 6 2 ♦ 3 ♣ A 9 2

**HCP                      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
12	N	2	1	6	4	3
13	S	2	1	6	4	3
11	E	-	-	-	-	-
	W	-	-	-	-	-

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT*	Pass	5♦**
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

\* (RKCB)  
 \*\* 0 or 3

Of course, I don't expect to see many (if any) tables bidding this slam. At most tables the auction will go 1♥-1♠-2♦-4♥-Pass or even 1♥-4♦-4♥-Pass.

South's 4♦ response here is a 'splinter bid' showing 12-15 points, 4+ card heart support and a singleton or void in diamonds.

Those of you who receive the ♠Q opening lead (normal enough) will be able to make all 13

tricks by winning the lead in hand with ♠K and then finessing the ♠10 on the second round of the suit allowing you to discard your club loser.

Again it's worth noting why this 23 point slam is making:

All of N/S's points are in aces and kings, we have a 10 card trump fit, South's singleton diamond is opposite an ace – the only wasted point in North's hand is the ♦J. The fact that West's ♦KQ come down in 3 rounds is a help too.

A nice agreement to have, when hearts are trumps, is to play that North's 5♥ bid is to be taken as a 'sign-off' if South has zero keycards but it is to be taken as the 'queen ask' if South has 3 keycards. South's 6♥ then shows 3 keycards without the ♥Q.

**TIP:** Splinter responses to partner's 1♥ or 1♠ opening are worth researching.

#### Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

♠ K J 10 2 ♥ Q 8 4 ♦ Q 7 ♣ J 9 7 3	♠ 7 5 4 ♥ A J 3 ♦ K 6 3 ♣ A K 10 4
♠ A Q ♥ K 10 2 ♦ A J 9 8 2 ♣ Q 8 6	♠ 9 8 6 3 ♥ 9 7 6 5 ♦ 10 5 4 ♣ 5 2

#### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
9		N	-	-	-	-	
16	15	S	-	-	-	-	
0		E	7	7	5	3	7
		W	7	7	6	3	7

West	North	East	South
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	INT	Pass
4NT	All Pass		

This board could decide the winner of the event.

The strong No-Trump pairs might bid it: INT-4NT-P. Of course there will be a few in 6NT with varying degrees of success.

Declarer has 8 top tricks and can set up 2 more in diamonds after finessing the ♦J and losing to North's queen.

To make 13 tricks, declarer has a lot of things to get right. First of all, he needs to play for the drop of the ♦Q, then guess where the ♥Q is, then avoid the spade finesse and then finesse the ♣10. What a player!

Needless to say, those declarers who make 11, 12 or 13 tricks will be well rewarded with buckets of matchpoints.

South has a near 'yarborough' - only the ♦10 spoils it - and yet this near yarborough could be the defence's strongest asset because declarer won't expect the missing 9 HCP to be divided 9-0. Those E/W pairs who bid slam will feel very hard done by when they find out that North has everything. However there's many 'a slip between cup and lip'.

If South starts off with a spade lead declarer will be under a lot of pressure. On the other hand, if South chooses a heart lead that will solve declarer's heart problem but still leave him with the diamond and club problems to solve.

On the face of it, there is no reason for declarer to do anything other than take the losing diamond finesse. Even when this loses declarer can still make 12 tricks if he can divine the 4-2 club break. Perhaps after 5 rounds of diamonds, declarer will have deduced that spades are 4-4 and that as a consequence South can only have a doubleton club?

**TIP:** A raise of INT to 4NT is a 'quantitative' raise, asking opener to pass with a minimum opener and to bid 6NT with a maximum.

#### Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all

♠ K 10 9 3 ♥ 8 ♦ A 9 4 2 ♣ A K 8 5	♠ 7 5 ♥ Q 7 5 4 2 ♦ 8 6 5 3 ♣ 7 3
♠ A 6 ♥ K J 10 9 6 ♦ K 7 ♣ J 9 4 2	♠ Q J 8 4 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ Q 10 6



HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
14	N 5	5	-	6	3
12 2	S 5	5	-	6	3
12	E -	-	1	-	-
	W -	-	1	-	-

  

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	4♥	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Another slam hand but I can't see any reason to bid it especially if West shows a good hand either by making an initial take-out-double or by overcalling 2♥.

Nevertheless there will be a good few Norths who will simply wheel out Blackwood and then bid 6♠. For sure the North hand is magnificent but if you involve South in the discussion it will be hard to convince him that he has the perfect hand for North.

As in other slam boards, it is worth noting the beauty of the singleton heart in the North hand facing the ace in the South hand i.e. no heart wastage - yet another advertisement for 'Splinters'. North's 4♥ bid is a splinter bid showing 12-15 points, 4+card spade support and a singleton or void in hearts.

With the diamond finesse working, there is nothing to the play in a spade contract - 12 tricks roll in.

**TIP:** As in all walks of life, good bridge partners involve and respect each other's judgement when making big decisions. Going 'rogue' and making unilateral decisions all the time is not good for partnership harmony.

#### Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

♠ Q 8 5	
♥ A Q 8 6 4	
♦ A K 8	
♣ 8 6	
♠ K 6 4 2	♠ J 10 9 3
♥ 9 5 3	♥ 2
♦ 5 3	♦ Q 10 7 6 2
♣ A K 5 4	♣ Q J 7
	♠ A 7
	♥ K J 10 7
	♦ J 9 4
	♣ 10 9 3 2

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
15	N 1	-	4	-	2
10 6	S -	-	4	-	2
9	E -	-	-	1	-
	W -	-	-	1	-

  

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

Most tables should get to 4♥ and declarer should make 10 tricks - losing 1 spade and 2 clubs.

Declarer makes his contract by drawing trumps and playing a spade towards the queen, discarding a diamond on the established ♠Q and then ruffing a diamond in dummy.

Some North's might open 1NT but even so the 5-4 heart fit should still come to light via a Stayman auction.

There will be some who don't get to game - most likely because South counts his losers and finds he has 9 of them. In fact he has 8 - if he remembers the adjustment i.e. we deduct a loser when all of our points are in aces and kings.

But even counting points, South has 9 HCP plus one more distributional point for his doubleton spade so responding 2♥ is an underbid.

**TIP:** If you are using the Losing Trick Count (LTC) method of hand evaluation, it is a good idea to deduct a loser from your hand when all or nearly all of your points are made up of aces and kings.

#### Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

♠ J 8 3	
♥ 6	
♦ K 8 6 4 3 2	
♣ Q J 2	
♠ 6 5 4 2	♠ A 7
♥ K 10 9 8 4 2	♥ Q 5
♦ -	♦ A 10 9 7
♣ 7 6 4	♣ A K 10 9 8
	♠ K Q 10 9
	♥ A J 7 3
	♦ Q J 5
	♣ 5 3



### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
7		N -	2 -	- -	- -	
3	17	S -	2 -	- -	- -	
13		E 3	- 3	1 1	1 1	
		W 3	- 3	1 1	1 1	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♣	Dbl
Pass	1♦	INT	Pass
2♥	All Pass		

There might be fireworks on this board – both sides have 20 HCP and yet both sides might feel like it's their board.

Some brave Norths might try a weak 2♦ opening bid. E/W might still land in 2♥ or 3♥ but if E/W get a chance to double 3♦ they should take it because +200 from 3♦x-1 will be a great result.

The most likely result will be 2♥+2 by West. Those E/Ws who find themselves in 4♥ will probably land on their feet because it takes the unlikely defence of a trump lead from North and ducked by South to hold West to 9 tricks.

**TIP:** Ideally 'vulnerable' weak two opening bids should have good suits i.e. 2 of the top three honours.

### Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all

♠ A Q 10 9 8	
♥ K 8 4 3	
♦ K 6 2	
♣ 4	
♠ 7 5 3	♠ K J 2
♥ A 10 2	♥ J 9 7 6
♦ 7	♦ J 10 8 4 3
♣ A J 8 6 3 2	♣ Q
♠ 6 4	
♥ Q 5	
♦ A Q 9 5	
♣ K 10 9 7 5	

### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
12		N -	1 -	1 1	1 1	
9	8	S -	1 -	1 1	1 1	
11		E 1	- -	- -	- -	
		W 1	- -	- -	- -	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	All Pass	

This looks like another 'banana skin' board for N/S. If South and West like their hands it is going to be hard to stop below game. Those N/S's who manage to get off the bus in time will score well

If South decides not to open, some West's will venture a 3♣ opening bid and this might goad N/S into a game contract that they were trying to avoid. Other West players will open 1♣ (third in hand).

Those E/W pairs who 'pull the trigger' and double these N/S game contracts will score very well indeed.

If there are 3 passes around to North then N/S might be able to get off the bus in time e.g. 1♠-2♣-2♥-2NT-Pass. Unless West leads his singleton diamond (the unbid suit) or a spade, South will make 8 tricks and a great score. Most likely minus 1 will be a good board for N/S also.

Those N/S pairs who were able to conceal their club suit (e.g. using a forcing INT response instead) will most likely receive a club lead from West and a huge score.

**TIP:** In matchpoint games (ordinary club scoring), there is no need to stretch ourselves to bid thin games. Most of the time these thin games will be difficult to make and quite a few declarers will go down in their contracts. So simply making your partscore might be a good result.

### Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

♠ A 10 7 3	
♥ A Q J 8 6 5 3	
♦ 6 3	
♣ -	
♠ J 9 8	♠ Q 4 2
♥ 10 7 4	♥ -
♦ 10 9 5	♦ A K Q 8 2
♣ 8 7 6 2	♣ A K Q 10 5
♠ K 6 5	
♥ K 9 2	
♦ J 7 4	
♣ J 9 4 3	

HCP                      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
	11	N	-	-	4	1	-
I	20	S	-	-	4	1	-
	8	E	4	3	-	-	-
		W	4	3	-	-	-

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	3♥	Dbl	All Pass

The shapely 7-4-2-0 North hand is often referred to as a 'Marilyn Munroe' and just like the original this hand is going to break a few hearts tonight.

3<sup>rd</sup> in hand, some North's will consider opening 4♥ but the vulnerability might persuade them to settle for a 3♥ opening. South might raise to 4♥ at some point and with the spades breaking 3-3 there are 10 easy tricks to be made.

Whether North opens 3♥ or 4♥, East has a tough bidding problem and he might just start proceedings with a double or even 4♥ or 4NT.

Double will be a popular choice and some West's might just let it go – so we will see a few 3♥x+1 and a few 4♥x=.

It looks like any E/W pair who get to play in 5♣ even if doubled will score very well. Any N/S pair who take the push to 5♥ should score badly – unless E/W take the plunge to 6♣. Sadly the 4-1 club break means that 6♣ has no chance even if declarer does not get a spade lead.

**TIP:** 5-level decisions are tricky but it is amazing how often the adage 'The 5-level belongs to the opponents' proves to be the winning advice.

**Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable**

	♠ -	
	♥ A J 9 8 6 4	
	♦ J	
	♣ A J 8 7 4 3	
♠ A K 7 3		♠ Q 10 9 5
♥ 7 5 3		♥ K Q 10
♦ Q 10 8 6 5		♦ 9 7 4
♣ Q		♣ 9 6 5
	♠ J 8 6 4 2	
	♥ 2	
	♦ A K 3 2	
	♣ K 10 2	

HCP                      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
	11	N	7	-	4	-	3
I	7	S	7	-	4	-	3
	11	E	-	-	-	1	-
		W	-	-	-	1	-

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Any game contract will score well for N/S - even 5♣+2.

While North doesn't have a 'Marilyn', his 6-6 shape requires very little from partner e.g. give South king-small-small in either of North's suits and there are plenty of tricks to be made.

Some Wests will open 1♦ but others will choose to pass - after all, you are vulnerable and the ♣Q is not really worth 2 HCP. If West decides to open 1♦ then North can either bid each of his two suits in turn or use some two-suited convention like Michaels or Ghestem to show 5-5 in hearts and clubs.

Either way, when South shows 11+ points, North is worth a stab at game. 6-6 shapes don't come up all that often and so they are not covered in the text books so when you get one you just 'shoot first and beg forgiveness later' if things go 'belly up'.

North will make 4♥+1 unless East finds a club lead (to set up a later club ruff for West). Maybe East can visualise from the auction that N/S have a club fit and that therefore West is short in clubs?

**TIP:** With 6-5 'Come Alive' and with 6-6 'there are plenty of tricks'.

### Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

<p>♠ A ♥ A 9 4 3 ♦ A K Q 9 2 ♣ 8 7 4</p> <p>♠ 10 9 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ J 7 6 3 ♣ A K 9 3</p>	<p>♠ Q 7 6 5 3 ♥ K Q 10 7 ♦ - ♣ Q 10 6 5</p> <p>♠ K J 8 4 ♥ J 6 5 ♦ 10 8 5 4 ♣ J 2</p>
--	--

#### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
17		N	-	2	2	-	1
8	9	S	-	2	1	-	1
	6	E	2	-	-	2	-
		W	2	-	-	2	-
<b>West</b>		<b>North</b>		<b>East</b>		<b>South</b>	
		1♦		Pass		1♠	
Pass		2♥		Pass		3♦	
All Pass							

If you can put the brakes on early here you will do well. Quite a few pairs will have their bidding set to automatic and find themselves in 3NT after 3 rounds of bidding.

On the plus side, this is 'Nil All' board which means that 3NT-1 will score very well.

At quite a few tables, East will overcall 1♠ and if West raises to 2♠ this will either push N/S to 3NT or lead to 2♠x. While 2♠x is makeable (if declarer does not draw trumps) it will probably go down in practice.

If E/W stay quiet, then some partnerships will have cute agreements here e.g. Lebensohl or Blackout to help them decipher the strength of South's 3♦ bid. If 3♦ might be weak then North might decide to bail out in 3♦ whereas if 3♦ might not be weak there will be a few who will have a punt at 3NT hoping to find the golden club stopper in dummy.

Given that North's reverse is only a one round force there might be a few inspired South's who decide to pass North's 2♥ rebid (perhaps sorry that they responded on the first round).

In NT, the defence seem to have 6 tricks if they can wait patiently to collect them (4 clubs and

2 hearts) - which means that the attractive ♥K lead will certainly help declarer win an extra trick.

Then there is the impossible 4-0 diamond break to contend with so overall you should be a very happy N/S pair if you only went down one on this board.

**TIP:** If you can keep your concentration until trick 13 you will be surprised how often one more trick falls into your lap and that one trick could be the one that turns a rotten score into a good score. 'It's never over 'til the fat lady sings' – this is especially apt in bridge.

### Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

<p>♠ A Q 10 9 2 ♥ A ♦ A 10 9 6 ♣ A Q 9</p> <p>♠ J 8 4 ♥ Q 10 3 ♦ Q J 8 ♣ 10 8 5 4</p>	<p>♠ K ♥ K J 7 5 2 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ K J 7 6</p> <p>♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ 9 8 6 4 ♦ 5 4 2 ♣ 3 2</p>
---	---

#### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
20		N	-	2	-	4	1
6	14	S	-	2	-	4	1
	0	E	2	-	2	-	-
		W	2	-	2	-	-
<b>West</b>		<b>North</b>		<b>East</b>		<b>South</b>	
				1♥		Pass	
INT		Dbl		2♣		Pass	
2♥		Dbl		Pass		2♠	
Pass		3♠		All Pass			

There will be a few North players who will drive on to 4♠ and while it is makeable, not too many will make 10 tricks – indeed you will have to bring your 'A' game to the table to bring home 9 tricks.

East has a routine 1♥ opening bid and West, even if playing 5-card majors, might prefer to respond INT with his 'pancake 4-3-3-3' shape. If West does indeed respond INT then this might be a subtle clue for declarer later in the hand (implying a 3-1 spade break rather than a 2-2 break)?

North with his 20 points does best to start off with a double (which most likely shows a take-out-double of a 1♥ opening bid). With both opponents bidding, there is a good chance that South has very little, so North should not make a unilateral decision to bid 4♠ - his 3♠ should be asking South to bid game with 4-7 points.

To make 10 tricks, declarer needs to cash the spade ace to drop the king and if he does that then he will have no difficulty in finessing the ♠9 on the second round of the suit.

Those declarer's who take the normal spade finesse of the queen on the first round, can salvage quite a few matchpoints by recalling West's earlier INT response and this might lead these declarers to finesse the ♠9 on the second round of trumps.

As an aside, the South players should try their luck with the LOTTO tomorrow night – they have just been dealt a perfect yarrowborough with odds of 1827 to 1.

**TIP:** There are often subtle clues available from your opponent's bidding (or lack of) to help you as declarer (or defender) in the play of the hand.

**Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable**

<p>♠ K 10 8 7 2 ♥ 8 7 6 ♦ 10 8 7 ♣ 10 5</p> <p>♠ A ♥ K 9 5 4 2 ♦ A K J 2 ♣ J 4 3</p>	<p>♠ J 4 3 ♥ A J ♦ Q 9 6 5 3 ♣ A Q 7</p> <p>♠ Q 9 6 5 ♥ Q 10 3 ♦ 4 ♣ K 9 8 6 2</p>
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**HCP                      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
3		N	-	-	-	-
16	14	S	-	-	-	-
7		E	3	6	5	1 3
		W	2	6	5	- 3

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♠*	Pass	4♣**	Pass
4♦	Pass	4♥***♥A	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠****	Pass
6♦	All Pass		

\*short  
\*\* ♣A  
\*\*\* ♥A  
\*\*\*\* 2KC+DQ

A tough hand for E/W to bid and most will probably play in 3NT with a few earning a big result for themselves by landing in the 5-2 heart fit and making 4♥+1.

Since there won't be too many North players overcalling 1♠, those tables where the auction starts 1♥-3NT, will earn a huge matchpoint result for making 3NT+3 on the likely club lead.

Since 1♥-2♦-2♠ would be game forcing, there is no need for a 3♠ rebid here so it can be used as a 'splinter bid' showing 4-card support for partner's diamond suit and a spade shortage (ok the ace is not an ideal card for splintering) but that beautiful West hand is hard to describe below 3NT otherwise?

The splinter bid is great news for East because he now knows that he is only going to lose 1 spade trick at most and he also knows that his partner's points will be in hearts, diamonds and clubs. Once East decides that West's spade shortness is good news he can cue bid (bid the suits where has aces). West checks for keycards and might even roll out 5NT to see if partner has the ♣K just in case they have a Grand Slam.

Of course, if E/W give too much information away and decide to stop in 3NT or 4NT, then they might pinpoint the spade lead for the defenders.

**TIP:** An opener's reverse (rebidding a new suit above 2 of the suit opened) after a 2 level response from responder is forcing to game showing 15+HCP, 5+ cards in the first suit and 4+ cards in the second suit. Therefore a jump in the 'reverse suit' e.g. 1♥-2♦-3♠ is our new best friend the 'Splinter Bid'.

### Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

<p>♠ 9 4 3 ♥ J 10 8 7 5 3 ♦ 10 ♣ K 9 7</p> <p>♠ 5 2 ♥ 9 ♦ A Q 9 8 6 3 2 ♣ Q 5 4</p>	<p>♠ J 10 8 7 6 ♥ A K 6 ♦ 7 5 4 ♣ 8 3</p> <p>♠ A K Q ♥ Q 4 2 ♦ K J ♣ A J 10 6 2</p>
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#### HCP                      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	4	N 3	-	4	-	-
8	8	S 3	-	4	-	-
	20	E -	3	-	1	-
		W -	3	-	1	-

West	North	East	South
3♦	Pass	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

They say that good bridge is a simply a matter of consistently getting the simple things right - for instance 4♥ is a normal enough contract and yet bidding and making it will probably yield an above average score for N/S.

In theory, E/W have 9 easy tricks in a diamond contract with the aid of the diamond finesse. In practice E/W will make 4♦ unless North can find an initial spade lead. The ♥J looks like a stand-out lead so 10 tricks for E/W in a diamond contract seems normal. On paper an E/W sacrifice in 5♦ going only 1 or 2 down should show a profit.

However, 4♥ is not a 'gimme'. Declarer in 4♥ has to find the ♣Q. He has a two-way finesse in clubs and if the opponents don't give him any help he will probably guess wrong. With nothing else to go on, it is logical for declarer to place the ♣Q in the East hand because there is more room for it to be there given that West has advertised a long diamond suit (the theory of vacant spaces).

On the other hand when East turns up with the ♥AK, declarer might wonder if West really was brave enough to open a vulnerable pre-empt with only 6 HCP?

It is knife-edge decisions like this that make Bridge such a great game. Hands like this help us understand why our top players like Tom Hanlon love the face-to-face game - they have in-built radar that can sniff out these missing queens with amazing accuracy.

Some Souths might decide to double instead of bidding 3NT and now N/S might not get to 4♥ especially if East raises the anti to 4♦. It looks like 3NT might be a better initial choice for South rather than double.

**TIP:** Remember 'Hamman's Rule': When 3NT is one of your options - choose 3NT.

### Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

<p>♠ 10 3 ♥ A 9 6 4 ♦ J 10 6 2 ♣ 8 6 2</p> <p>♠ Q J 9 7 ♥ K Q J 7 ♦ 4 3 ♣ K J 4</p>	<p>♠ A K 8 6 ♥ 8 3 2 ♦ A 9 7 ♣ Q 7 5</p> <p>♠ 5 4 2 ♥ 10 5 ♦ K Q 8 5 ♣ A 10 9 3</p>
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#### HCP                      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	5	N -	1	-	-	-
13	13	S -	1	-	-	-
	9	E 1	-	3	4	2
		W 1	-	3	4	2

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

At last an easy hand - and yet it is unlikely to be a unanimous board.

E/W have 26 HCP and an 8-card spade fit so 4♠ looks like where we should be (losing one heart, one diamond and one club).

The 'weak NT' pairs will have a simple Stayman auction to 4♠.

However, the '5-card major, strong NT' pairs who start off with 1♣ will need to have some sort of 'Checkback' agreement should East (quite reasonably) decide to rebid 1NT rather

than 1♠ - otherwise E/W will land in 3NT or 4♥ both of which can be defeated.

**TIP:** It is a good idea when we have a balanced hand to either open with a No-Trump bid or else rebid in No-Trumps. However, before we adopt this sound policy we need some method of checking to ask opener if he has bypassed a 4-card major. One simple 'Checkback' method after 1♣-1♥-INT, would have responder use 2♣ as 'Checkback'.

Opener would then rebid as follows: 2♦ (I do not have 3 hearts or 4 spades), 2♥ (I have 3 hearts and may have 4 spades) and 2♠ (I have 4 spades and do not have 3 hearts).

### Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

♠ K 10 9 ♥ A K Q 6 ♦ Q J 8 3 ♣ Q 3	♠ A 6 ♥ 8 2 ♦ A K 7 4 2 ♣ K 6 4 2
♠ Q J ♥ 10 7 4 3 ♦ 9 6 ♣ J 10 9 8 5	♠ 8 7 5 4 3 2 ♥ J 9 5 ♦ 10 5 ♣ A 7

#### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	17	N	-	-	1	3
4	14	S	-	-	1	2
	5	E	4	-	-	-
		W	4	-	-	-

  

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
Pass	Dbf	Pass	1♠
Pass	INT	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Most tables will have South declarer in a spade partscore. South should only make 8 tricks, losing 2 spade tricks, 2 diamond tricks and a club trick. However the defence will only get their club trick if West leads a club (and with ♣J10985 this will indeed be an attractive lead). However some Wests might be tempted to lead their doubleton diamond.

Those who can arrange (seems impossible to arrange) for North to play in 2♠ will do well as

they will escape the ♣J lead from West. If North is declarer the defence will not win their club trick.

If the defence play 3 rounds of diamonds, declarer should see the futility of ruffing the third diamond with a small trump. Instead he should discard his losing club from the South hand to make his 9 tricks.

Despite being non-vul, the South hand is a tad too weak to be making any noises (like 1♠ or 2♠) on the first round. If South does bid he might find himself too high very quickly.

**TIP:** If you know you are going to be over-ruffed it is often a winning tactic to discard a known loser instead of ruffing.

### Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

♠ 10 7 6 4 3 ♥ K J 8 7 5 ♦ 8 7 ♣ 7	♠ 9 8 ♥ 3 2 ♦ A 9 4 3 ♣ A K 6 4 3
♠ A 5 ♥ A Q 9 6 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ J 9 5 2	♠ K Q J 2 ♥ 10 4 ♦ J 10 6 5 ♣ Q 10 8

#### HCP      Makeable contracts

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	4	N	-	-	1	-
16	11	S	-	-	1	-
	9	E	4	3	1	2
		W	4	3	2	2

  

West	North	East	South
		1♦	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
INT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

This hand is all about distracting North from finding the killing spade lead against 3NT. On a spade lead declarer should lose 4 spade tricks and the ♣Q (assuming South gets his ♠KQJ out of the way on the first 3 rounds of the suit). If East plays 3NT then he is going to get a spade lead and be defeated automatically - 'Sorry about that Chief'.

The 'strong NT' pairs will probably have a simple uninformative INT-3NT auction and

now North is likely to lead a heart rather than a spade - given that his hearts are better than his spades.

The auctions that will help North find the spade lead are those auctions where West has to reveal that he has 4-card heart suit e.g. 1♥-2♣-2NT-3NT or those that start 1♣-1♦-1♥.

Those 'weak NT' pairs who play some form of 'checkback' (see tip on board 21) will be able to conceal West's heart suit from N/S by using the auction given above. If the 'weak NT' pairs are not playing 'Checkback' then West will probably have to rebid 1♥ on the second round of the auction and now North will know not to lead a heart.

This is another hand where North should not be making a vulnerable overall. If North decides to bid, he might find himself in 3♠x-2 pretty quickly.

**TIP:** The 'Suit Quality Test' is a useful guide when we are considering whether or not to overcall. The number of honours in our suit added to the number of cards in our suit should come to at least the number of tricks we are bidding for e.g. for a 1-level overcall (7 tricks) we should have a 5-card suit with 2 honours or a 6-card suit with 1 honour.

**Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all**

♠ 10 7 4	
♥ A Q 4	
♦ A K 8 4 3 2	
♣ 10	
♠ A 6	♠ Q 8 5 2
♥ K 8 6 2	♥ J 9 5 3
♦ J 9 6	♦ 5
♣ A K 6 3	♣ Q J 5 4
	♠ K J 9 3
	♥ 10 7
	♦ Q 10 7
	♣ 9 8 7 2

**HCP      Makeable contracts**

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
1♣	1♦	Dbf	2♦
3♥	All Pass		

N/S can make a lucky 5♦ game (losing 1 spade and 1 club) – but it is impossible to bid - indeed it might be hard to get past 3♦.

If N/S find their way to 3NT, then West needs to find the club switch when he gets in with ♠A to beat the contract.

Maybe N/S's best chance of playing in a diamond partscore is if West opens a 'strong NT' - now a simple 2♦ overcall might win the auction - but how many of us have a natural 2♦ overcall available these days?

There will be quite a few E/W pairs playing in a heart partscore. East's negative double of the 1♦ overcall shows 4 cards in each of the major suits.

**TIP:** A negative double after 1♣ opening bid and a 1♦ overcall shows 4 hearts and 4 spades.

**Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable**

♠ J 5	
♥ K J 7 6 3	
♦ A 9 4 3 2	
♣ 6	
♠ K Q 9 7 4 3	♠ 10 8
♥ 4	♥ A Q 8 5 2
♦ 7 6	♦ Q J 10 5
♣ A K 9 7	♣ Q 10
	♠ A 6 2
	♥ 10 9
	♦ K 8
	♣ J 8 5 4 3 2

**HCP      Makeable contracts**

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

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♠	All Pass		

Each of the four players has a decision to make in the auction and each decision impacts on how the auction will progress.

If N/S are playing some sort of 'Tartan Two' then the North hand qualifies for a 2♥ opening bid (showing 5-9 points, 5 hearts and a 5-card



minor). There might even be a few North players who decide to open 1♥ (if the ♠J were the ♦J then for sure it would be more attractive).

However if N/S become too annoying they might find themselves at the 2 or 3 level going down in a doubled contract. If North passes then East too has a decision to make - does he open with his good 11 points or not? If he opens then E/W are going to end up in game (most likely 4♠) - and even if East does not open the bidding it will be hard for E/W to stop short of 4♠.

4♠ is not a bad contract and it is only the horrible 6-1 club break that beats it. North leads his singleton club and South needs to rise with the ♠A on the first round of trumps to give North his club ruff. However even if South plays low on the first round of trumps, declarer may still guess wrong in trumps (especially if North has opened the bidding).

If neither North nor East open the bidding then South might be tempted to try an off-centre 3♣ opening - it should be doubled and go 4 off but E/W might reasonably try 4♠ instead. Any E/W pair who wake up at the end of the auction and find themselves in a 3NT contract will be pleasantly surprised to find that it cannot be defeated. The 3 tens in the East hand proving to be very important cards – maybe this is further evidence that the East hand is indeed worth an opening bid?

**TIP:** Good temperament is just as important as technical skills. The really good players can quickly put bad results behind them and refocus on the next board. If you're going to let bad luck (like the abominable 6-1 club break on this board) bother you then you are going to struggle at this game.

**Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable**

♠ A 7 4 ♥ 8 6 ♦ Q 9 7 4 ♣ K 8 7 4	♠ 6 2 ♥ A K J 10 2 ♦ K J ♣ J 9 6 2
♠ Q 10 9 8 ♥ 5 4 3 ♦ A 10 6 2 ♣ 10 3	♠ K J 5 3 ♥ Q 9 7 ♦ 8 5 3 ♣ A Q 5

**HCP                      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		N	-	-	-	-
6	13	S		-	-	-
12		E	-	-		
		W	-	-		

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	All Pass		

Although N/S have the balance of points, their best chance of a plus score is to keep passing.

The E/W bidding is automatic - they will eventually land in 2♥ and N/S will have to decide whether to pass this out or 'protect'.

There will be some South players who will make a take-out double on the first round of the auction. While there is some support in Italy for this idea that we should double with any hand containing an opening bid, most of us are in the other camp which says that if we make a take-out double with a 'weak no-trump' hand, we should have at most two cards in the suit opened. Following this sound advice we would pass with the South hand on the first round.

However South still has another big decision to make when E/W subside in 2♥. It is rarely right to allow the opponents play undoubled in their fit at the 2 level. This hand has some factors that might suggest to South that he should not re-open the auction.

Firstly, South is vulnerable so he won't want to get too high and find himself doubled. Secondly, South has the dreaded 'pancake' 4-3-3-3 shape. Thirdly, there is no guarantee that

E/W have a heart fit i.e. it could be the case that West is merely showing preference to 2♥ with a small doubleton.

This will be a 'cat and mouse' board. It looks like the winning line in 2♥ is to refrain from drawing trumps. On the other hand, declarer has no chance at all if South leads a spade and North switches to a trump.

**TIP:** 4-3-3-3 shapes are not attractive and are certainly not attractive when you are considering whether to re-open the bidding or not.

**Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all**

<p>♠ K Q 8 6 5 ♥ J 8 5 2 ♦ 5 2 ♣ Q 7</p>	<p>♠ A 10 9 7 2 ♥ A Q 6 ♦ 10 9 7 ♣ 10 8</p>
<p>♠ 4 3 ♥ K ♦ K Q J 8 ♣ A K J 6 5 4</p>	<p>♠ J ♥ 10 9 7 4 3 ♦ A 6 4 3 ♣ 9 3 2</p>

**HCP      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		
8		N	-	-	-	-		
17	10	S	-	-	-	-		
5		E	6	6	1	3	6	
		W	6	6	1	3	6	

  

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		Pass

E/W can indeed make 12 tricks in clubs, diamonds or No-Trumps but only if he takes the anti-percentage line of rejecting the club finesse. The 'fortunate' 5-1 spade break means that South doesn't have a second spade to return to his partner when he gets in with ♦A.

This might be one of those curious situations where we might have more admiration for the players who go down in slam than for those who make it.

Maybe West does better to rebid 3♦ rather than 3NT – but the bare ♥K will probably

encourage West to take the low road and settle for 3NT.

Respect for any East player who passes the 1♠ overcall and then passes West's take-out-double to score 1♠x-3.

**TIP:** If you want to make a 'Penalty' double but you have agreed to play 'Negative' doubles, then you have to 'pass' - in tempo - and then pass again when partner re-opens with a 'Takeout' double.

**Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable**

<p>♠ 10 9 7 ♥ J 7 6 5 3 ♦ A 8 2 ♣ Q J</p>	<p>♠ 6 5 ♥ A K Q ♦ J 9 5 ♣ A K 7 6 5</p>
<p>♠ J 8 4 3 ♥ 8 2 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ 9 8 4 3</p>	<p>♠ A K Q 2 ♥ 10 9 4 ♦ K 10 6 3 ♣ 10 2</p>

**HCP      Makeable contracts**

		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		
8		N	-	1	2	1	-	
17	3	S	-	1	2	1	-	
12		E	3	-	-	-	1	
		W	3	-	-	-	1	

  

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

\* T

The 'strong NT' pairs might have the edge here - simply because a 1NT opening bid is very pre-emptive - so it won't be so easy for N/S to enter the auction.

If West opens a 'strong NT' it will probably end the auction. The most likely result is 8 tricks (5 club tricks and 3 heart tricks) unless North finds a spade lead (allowing careful defence to win 4 spade tricks and 2 diamond tricks). However, a heart opening lead looks like being the majority choice.

Maybe East should be braver over 2♥ - maybe 2♠ by him shows 4 cards in spades 'on the way'

to 3♣? For sure any E/W pair landing in 3♣ will score well (making 9 easy tricks, losing 2 spades and 2 diamonds).

**TIP:** South's 'Protective' INT overcall is a INT overcall made in the 'pass-out' seat - normally showing 11-14 with or without a stopper in the suit opened. You then have to discuss and agree with your partner, whether or not you are going to play Stayman and Transfers in response to this INT overcall. Enjoy!