

*The ECatsBridge
Summer Charity Pairs
Monday 6th July 2026*



Thank you so much for joining us for our Summer Charity Pairs in aid of Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation both of which are charities that need as much funding as possible in order to continue their work.

We hope you enjoyed the hands and that they weren't too challenging – and whether or not you did well at least you can at least rest assured that you are helping to support two great charities.

We are very grateful to our commentators – Julian Pottage for the Monday set, Iain Sime for Tuesday's commentary, Mark Mortimer did the Wednesday commentary, Mark Horton had the fun of doing Thursday's and Liz McGowan undertook Friday's. The great question is – did they get it right ?? or did you do better ?

You will see that although there are actually 32 boards in the set, we have only asked for a commentary on the first 28, as very (very) few clubs play boards 29-32 and we don't want to overburden our commentators! So only the hand analysis is provided for those boards.

The results are at <https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/default.asp> and the link to make donations to the charities is :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp> - they are done through JustGiving and you will be able to see how much is raised there. If you are making a donation please check this page:

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/BeforeDonating.asp> which explains how to avoid that JustGiving "tip".

By the way, did you know we have a Facebook page ?

<https://www.facebook.com/ECatsBridge> ... do follow us so you can see what we are up to !

And keep enjoying your bridge won't you ...

All the best

Anna & Mark

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Board 1	♠ AKJ8 ♥ Q1083 ♦ 72 ♣ J102	Dealer N Vul: None
	♠ Q743 ♥ J7 ♦ A9853 ♣ KQ	♠ 1096 ♥ AK9654 ♦ 104 ♣ 73
	♠ 52 ♥ 2 ♦ KQJ6 ♣ A98654	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2♥	3♣
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Many pairs these days play a weak two opening, which will thus be East's choice. South faces a bit of a dilemma, on the one hand not wanting East to play quietly in 2♥, and on the other hand knowing that a 3♣ overcall is all too likely to attract 3NT from North.

In 3NT after a normal fourth highest ♥6 lead, the best declarer can do is allow the ♥J to win the first trick and thereafter drop one of West's club honours under the ♣A to escape for one down. East cannot possibly hold the king-queen of clubs as well as the ace-king of hearts for a weak two opening.

A club contract plays rather better for North-South. By using the same logic that East cannot hold 12 points for a weak two opening (or for an initial pass if weak two openings are not in use), declarer knows not to follow usual restricted principles and instead plays to drop one of West's club honours.

2♥ goes at least one down, the losers being three in spades and one in each other suit. A wrong view in the trump suit would allow North a second trump trick, resulting in a two-trick defeat.

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

Board 2

♠ 97
♥ KJ7
♦ 3
♣ AK108654

♠ K853
♥ A109643
♦ A107
♣

♠ QJ102
♥ Q2
♦ QJ96
♣ J32

Dealer E
Vul: N-S

♠ A64
♥ 85
♦ K8542
♣ Q97

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

In traditional Acoll, 9 points high cards with a 5-card suit suffices for a two-over-one response. After North overcalls 3♣, East is too shapely to pass. I am used to playing that a double shows significant extra values (15+ HCP), which leaves a choice between 3♦ and 3♥. Rebidding the 6-card major seems favourite.

If 3♥ had been a jump, it would be forcing (after the 2♦ response). As it is, 3♥ is merely competitive and West passes. The adverse vulnerability and seemingly poorly located heart honours should deter North from competing further.

The 4-1 diamond split means that making 3♥ is not entirely straightforward, especially if South leads the queen of spades, paving the way to remove dummy's ace of spades entry. An endplay on North may then save the day. If instead South starts with a club and North knows the finesse, it should be possible to set up the diamonds.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3

♠ 8754
♥ KQ74
♦ Q8
♣ 964

Dealer S
Vul: E-W

♠ A63
♥ 8
♦ A102
♣ AJ10753

♠ KJ109
♥ J92
♦ 543
♣ KQ2

♠ Q2
♥ A10653
♦ KJ976
♣ 8

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2♣	2♥	Double	Pass
3♣	3♥	4♣	All Pass

After South opens 1♥ and West overcalls 2♣, system and style will determine whether North raises to 2♥ or 3♥. Playing 3♥ as showing a mixed raise, North is not quite good enough for that with the doubleton queen of diamonds not pulling full weight. Having raised only as high as 2♥ first time, North happily competes to 3♥ on the next round. Despite being vulnerable East-West will do well to go on to 4♣ (or better still, if they guess the spades correctly, if they go all the way to 5♣).

In a club contract, if the defenders lead and continue hearts, declarer can make ten tricks even with a spade loser. A diamond switch raises the stakes since a losing spade finesse could result in the loss of two tricks in diamonds as well as one in each major. Declarer might guess correctly either by counting points or by holding up once in diamonds and judging that North is the safe hand. Playing spades for four tricks will necessitate finessing South for the queen while East still has a trump re-entry. In a heart contract, the defenders just have four top winners to take.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4

♠ A102
♥ AK98
♦ 942
♣ J109

Dealer W
Vul: Both

♠ KJ875
♥ Q10743
♦ K
♣ 52

♠ Q9
♥ J65
♦ QJ865
♣ K43

♠ 643
♥ 2
♦ A1073
♣ AQ876

West	North	East	South
Pass	INT	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Double
Pass	2NT	All Pass	

If a weak no-trump is in use, North opens INT. South is not quite strong enough to look for game. Holding five cards in each major and being limited by the initial pass, West happily competes. Playing 2♣ to show both majors is common.

After East shows preference between the majors with 2♥, South wishes to compete. If played for takeout, double is the most flexible action. Given that East-West are vulnerable, North might decide to play for 200 by leaving in the double for penalties.

In a no-trump contract, with the king of clubs as expected onside, nine tricks result (five in clubs and four top winners in the other suits).

A club contract yields one trick more with a diamond ruff (or maybe just a slow diamond winner) in the North hand being the extra trick.

For East in 2♥ (doubled), escaping for one off may require a trump endplay, this restricting the losers to two in clubs, the pointed suit aces and just two trumps.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5

♠ 642
♥ K943
♦ 932
♣ KQ3

Dealer N
Vul: N-S

♠ A1095
♥ Q6
♦ QJ54
♣ A106

♠ J73
♥ 10875
♦ AK8
♣ J42

♠ KQ8
♥ AJ2
♦ 1076
♣ 9875

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
INT	All Pass		

As on the previous board, a weak INT opening is the likely first positive action in the bidding. This time the completely balanced hands held by all the other players mean there is no further action.

North will probably lead a fourth highest ♥3 against INT. South wins with the ace and, seeing the four hearts and moderate clubs in dummy, switches to a club. Declarer ducks this, allowing North to win, who then does best to cash the king of hearts and put South in with the jack of hearts for a further club lead. This way the defenders score two tricks in clubs together with three in hearts and one in spades.

If they can somehow get there, East-West fare best declaring a spade contract. With the spades 3-3, the possession of a trump suit neutralises what would otherwise be a third-round heart winner for the defenders.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6

♠ 2
♥ KJ53
♦ J9743
♣ A93

Dealer E
Vul: E-W

♠ AK983
♥ 976
♦ 652
♣ 62

♠ 65
♥ 84
♦ AK108
♣ K8754

♠ QJ1074
♥ AQ102
♦ Q
♣ QJ10

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

As on board 2, the responding hand holds a 5-card suit with 9 HCP. After the two-level response, South change of suit rebid (2♥) is forcing, hence the raise to 3♥. Even if system means that North responds 1NT initially, the hand would surely be worth raising 2♥ to 3♥.

With West as the opening leader, an initial club lead (and return if East gets to win the first trick) defeats 3♥. Declarer faces the unenviable choice between drawing trumps, which makes ruffing two spades in the North (or two diamonds in the South hand) impossible, or not drawing them and having West ruff a club.

If West prefers an initial trump lead against 3♥, declarer can prevail by winning in hand and leading a diamond. After a second trump lead, the way home is to take it in dummy and concede a second diamond to East. It is then possible to set up a spade trick and a long diamond.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7

♠ Q92
♥ 97
♦ J1052
♣ 8753

Dealer S
Vul: Both

♠ AKJ743
♥ 4
♦ A876
♣ Q2

♠ 86
♥ KJ8632
♦ K3
♣ AJ6

♠ 105
♥ AQ105
♦ Q94
♣ K1094

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

There is plenty of scope for variation in this auction, mainly stemming from East's choice of rebid. A 2NT rebid probably makes finding 4♠ easier since West might well bid 4♠ over 2NT. For me, West cannot probe with 3♦ over 2NT; I play 3♦ as a sign off over 2NT showing a minimum opening with a 5-card diamond suit.

In a spade contract, the play is awkward if declarer decides to win an initial diamond lead in hand and then play a heart. A stronger line after winning the initial diamond is to run the queen of clubs. Although the finesse loses and South can switch to a trump, declarer is in control. It is not too difficult to go up with a high trump, cash East's three winners in the minors discarding a heart on the third club and then ruff a heart to hand. After this declarer can ruff a diamond in dummy and a second heart to hand. The contract would then be makeable even if North started with four trumps, though at matchpoints declarer is likely to cash a second top spade hoping the queen will fall.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8

♠ 87
♥ AJ42
♦ Q654
♣ 984

Dealer W
Vul: None

♠ AQ103
♥ Q9863
♦ K107
♣ 3

♠ J6
♥ 7
♦ AJ93
♣ QJ10762

♠ K9542
♥ K105
♦ 82
♣ AK5

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

Once more the responding hand has 9 points, though this time with a 6-card suit. If a 3♣ rebid would not be invitational, East might choose that. Indeed, while changing a major to a minor while raising the level carries some risk even if 3♣ does not invite further bidding, it is a chance some will take.

2♥ might make without a diamond lead because the spade finesse succeeds, as does a ruffing club finesse. The desire to create entries to dummy will make it a easy decision to play North rather than South for the queen of diamonds. An initial diamond lead defeats 2♥ because it attacks dummy's entries – and paves the way for South to score a diamond ruff.

East could make an overtrick in 3♣ even on a diamond lead by playing a heart early to cut defensive communications. However, attempting to discard a heart by playing three rounds of spades may result in going down in 3♣.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9

♠ 965
♥ A92
♦ 54
♣ J7532

Dealer N
Vul: E-W

♠ AQ1032
♥ 108
♦ AJ873
♣ 9

♠ KJ4
♥ K6
♦ KQ1096
♣ K86

♠ 87
♥ QJ7543
♦ 2
♣ AQ104

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

With a combined 26 HCP and a solid 8-card spade fit, East-West should have no difficulty in reaching 4♠.

In the example shown, West's fit-showing jump (2♠ showing spades and diamonds) has the effect of keeping North out of the auction. At some tables, North will get an easier chance to raise hearts. Given the vulnerability, North-South might sacrifice in 5♥. With hearts bid first by South, both East and West are likely to take a dim view of their heart holdings and be reluctant to go on to 5♠.

In a spade contract, with the ♥A unexpectedly onside, it would take an imaginative defence (or line of play) for the result to be anything other than 11 tricks for the declaring side.

A heart contract offers greater scope for variation since if the defenders do not take their three tricks in the pointed suits either quickly or after getting in with the ♥K, then declarer might get a loser away on the fifth club. At the other end of the spectrum, if the initial lead is a club and declarer takes the heart finesse then West gets a club ruff.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10

♠ AJ87
♥ 54
♦ Q
♣ AK10543

Dealer E
Vul: Both

♠ Q95
♥ KQJ96
♦ J10
♣ Q98

♠ K64
♥ A872
♦ AK93
♣ 72

♠ 1032
♥ 103
♦ 876542
♣ J6

West	North	East	South
		INT	Pass
2♦	3♣	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

At many tables East opens a weak INT and West responds with a transfer. North's overcall does not silence East, who was probably planning some sort of super acceptance (bidding 3♣ to show the losing the doubleton is quite a popular method).

After the ♣J lead against 4♥, North does best to conceal the ♣10, potentially lulling declarer into thinking that it is safe to ruff the the third round of clubs low. Since ruffing with the ace would only result in a trump loser if North held all four missing trumps, ruffing the third round high is definitely right.

Having safely negotiated the threat of an overruff, declarer can draw trumps and needs to avoid a second spade loser. Finding North with the doubleton ace would be one way.

The diamond suit also offers possibilities. One option is to plan to play three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third. Then if the ♦Q has not fallen, there remains the option to play North for a short ♠A. Because, with trumps 2-2, the ♥8 is an entry, it is possible to play the pointed suits in reverse order, a spade to the king first before touching diamonds. As the cards lie, an overtrick then materialises if North ducks.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11

♠ J93
♥ J53
♦ AQ7
♣ QJ63

Dealer S
Vul: None

♠ 86
♥ AKQ1097642
♦ 52
♣

♠ A754
♥
♦ J1096
♣ K10972

♠ KQ102
♥ 8
♦ K843
♣ A854

West	North	East	South
4♥	Double	All Pass	1♦

South opens the traditional 'suit below the singleton' 1♦, though some will prefer 1♣. Either way West bids some number of hearts. Some people will take things slowly, hoping to attract a double later. The risk in doing that is that the opponents may find a fit that a direct 4♥ overcall would leave them no room to find. Holding a balanced 11 count, there is little else North can do but double 4♥. If viewing the double as more takeout than penalties, South could remove to 4♠.

Unless the defenders are really helpful – like starting with three rounds of diamonds, declarer in 4♥ (doubled) should lose two tricks in diamonds and one in spades. In fact even playing three rounds of diamonds might not result in an overtrick if West either ruffs the third round high or discards a spade on it.

North-South have a profitable sacrifice in either black suit or, so long as North declares, in no-trumps! In 4♠, if East keeps ruffing hearts to get in to give West two clubs ruffs, those first four tricks are all that the defenders make.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12

♠ Q8
♥ 10543
♦ 75
♣ Q9653

Dealer W
Vul: N-S

♠ 965
♥ K9876
♦ J4
♣ A84

♠ 1042
♥ AQJ2
♦ KQ1092
♣ 7

♠ AKJ73
♥
♦ A863
♣ KJ102

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
Double	Pass	2♥	Double
3♥	All Pass		

Whether South is too strong for a simple overcall is debatable. The void in one unbid major makes doubling a bit risky, though not as risky as having a void in the higher ranking spade suit would be.

After the 1♠ overcall, West might (being a passed hand) stretch to 2♥. One factor in favour of doubling is that the three low spades suggests East might (who could hold a tenace in spades) do better declaring any heart contract.

In a heart contract the defenders have various ways to collect five tricks, the simplest being for North to discard a diamond on the third round of spades and then score a diamond ruff.

A spade contract by North-South plays well. Indeed after a diamond lead, ducked by declarer, the defenders need to take the ♣A and a club ruff at tricks two and three just to score three tricks. East should overtake the ♦J with the ♦Q rather than expect West to find the club switch.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13				♠ A84	Dealer N
				♥ 5	Vul: Both
				♦ 10864	
				♣ J10952	
	♠ J10653			♠ K	
	♥ AK3			♥ 98764	
	♦ A953			♦ Q7	
	♣ Q			♣ K8743	
				♠ Q972	
				♥ QJ102	
				♦ KJ2	
				♣ A6	
West	North	East	South		
	Pass	Pass	INT		
2♠	All Pass				

Yet again, we have a deal on which the opening bid is likely to be a weak INT. West will want to take some action. If 2♠ shows spades and a minor, that fits the bill. In the olden days, 2♦ would have been the way to show spades and another (or spades and a minor) – not sure if anyone plays Astro variants any more.

News of spades plus a second suit, which East can see is likely to be diamonds, is not exactly good news. Passing before any doubling starts seems a reasonable shot.

As is often the case when the contract breaches Burn's law (that the declaring side should have the majority of trumps), 2♠ does not play all that well. In fact the contract could go as much as four down if all declarer makes is a couple of trumps and the red aces (North ruffing one of the top hearts).

A heart contract fares massively better. Indeed it takes a trump lead (admittedly not hard to find from Q-J-10-x) to defeat 2♥ by even one trick.

INT by South would stand a good chance of making. The bare ♣Q and the short ♦Q onside give declarer a variety of different ways to succeed.

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

Board 14		♠ AQ52	Dealer E
		♥ 10753	Vul: None
		♦ Q62	
		♣ 65	
♠ KJ87		♠ 109	
♥ A64		♥ QJ2	
♦ J954		♦ A1073	
♣ 108		♣ AK93	
	♠ 643		
	♥ K98		
	♦ K8		
	♣ QJ742		
West	North	East	South
		INT	All Pass

The weak no-trump opening is likely to be in action yet again. As on board 5, the more or less equal distribution of the remaining high cards between the other three hands coupled with the fact that everyone holds a balanced hand mean that nobody is likely to disturb INT.

Although the ♠Q is offside, the rest of the layout is pretty favourable for East as the declarer in a no-trump contract. Indeed, given time, it would be possible to develop three tricks in diamonds together with two in each of the other suits. How can the defenders manage to score five tricks in time to thwart this? The easiest way is for North to switch to a heart when in with the ♠Q, paving the way for the defenders to score two tricks in each major together with a diamond. Moreover, given the assault on dummy's ♥A entry, declarer may need to guess well merely to make eight tricks.

As the cards lie, the worst opening lead defensively is the traditional 'fourth highest of your longest and strongest' ♣4. This lead allows declarer not only to score a cheap trick in dummy at trick one but also to take a diamond finesse at trick two.

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

Board 15

♠ KQ9
♥ Q4
♦ AQ7
♣ AK652

Dealer S
Vul: N-S

♠ 10653
♥ 10963
♦ 1095
♣ 103

♠ 874
♥ K852
♦ 84
♣ Q874

♠ AJ2
♥ AJ7
♦ KJ632
♣ J9

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	6NT	All Pass	2NT

With a combined 35 HCP, North-South should have no difficulty reaching a slam. Even if a 13-15 INT opening is in use (traditional range for Precision players) North would have enough to raise to 6NT.

6NT is close to being a 100% contract. Unless diamonds are 5-0, there are 12 certain tricks. If diamonds were 5-0, it would be possible to make four club tricks any time clubs are 3-3 and much of the time they are 4-2.

As the cards lie, East needs to cover the ♥Q with the ♥K to stop the overtrick in 6NT. There is no squeeze because West guards hearts (with the ten) and East clubs.

The play in 7♦ is quite interesting. Declarer would probably draw couple of rounds of trumps and then play three rounds of clubs, ruffing high. When clubs are not 3-3, it will be necessary to find East with the ♥K.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	6	7	3	6	6
S	6	7	3	6	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 16

♠ AJ
♥ Q1065
♦ AK1097
♣ 85

Dealer W
Vul: E-W

♠ K754
♥ J73
♦ J432
♣ Q2

♠ Q10832
♥ A82
♦ 85
♣ A96

♠ 96
♥ K94
♦ Q6
♣ KJ10743

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

Whether it is weak or strong, North might elect to open 1NT. The majority will prefer 1♦, which allows East to overcall 1♠. South, with 9 HCP and a good 6-card suit, is happy to bid 2♣, the same as if East had passed. The soft values and unfavourable vulnerability probably mean that West bids no higher than 2♠ either directly over 3♣ or on the next round.

In 3♣ many declarers will settle for losing a spade trick and hope to play the trumps for one loser. This way, when the ♣Q is offside, the defenders score one trick in each major and two in trumps. The way to make an overtrick in 3♣ is to take the first spade and immediately play three rounds of diamonds. After East ruffs the third diamond, it is possible to play the trumps for one loser by finessing the ♥10 to set up an entry to dummy and thereafter leading up to the ♣K.

3♠ goes two down, with one trick in each black suit and one in each red suit to lose.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 17

♠ 64
♥ QJ7
♦ A97532
♣ J8

Dealer N
Vul: None

♠ 87
♥ K98654
♦ Q
♣ A654

♠ A52
♥ 102
♦ J6
♣ K109732

♠ KQJ1093
♥ A3
♦ K1084
♣ Q

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

Whether West makes a simple overcall of 2♥ or a weak jump overcall of 3♥ is partly a matter of style. At matchpoints and being non-vulnerable, I do think the jump is the winner, all the more so facing a passed partner.

If West overcalls 2♥ then North would make a negative double. The 3♥ jump overcall probably silences North. After South, holding some extra values and a good 6-card spade suit, competes with 3♠, North should find a raise to 4♠.

If West leads the singleton ♦Q against 4♠, East needs to grab the ♠A on the first round of trumps and return the ♦J (possibly after cashing the ♣K first, though that is a bit far fetched). This way a diamond ruff gives the defenders a third defensive trick. Another possible way to stop the overtrick is for West to lead a low club at trick one, which would potentially allow East to put up the ♣K and switch to a heart.

5♣ doubled is a very cheap sacrifice, the only losers being in one in each of the three side suits.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18

♠ 8
♥ AKQ987
♦ A876
♣ K10

Dealer E
Vul: N-S

♠ AKJ943
♥ 62
♦ KQ
♣ 752

♠ Q75
♥ J1043
♦ 43
♣ AJ84

♠ 1062
♥ 5
♦ J10952
♣ Q963

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

After West's third seat opening of 1♠, North has a bit of a heavy 2♥ overcall. The downside with doubling is that East could quite easily be in a position to raise to 3♠, in which case North's only further chance to introduce hearts would be at the four level.

As it turns out, East holds just 3-card spade support so is content with giving a single raise. West, anticipating further bidding from North, pre-empt to 3♠. North is happy enough to double this for takeout knowing that East-West have a fit and that South is already aware of the option to play in hearts.

This time the example auction does lead to the par contract. In 4♦ declarer has one trick in each suit apart from hearts to lose.

While 4♠ (doubled) should go two down, the defence could go awry. If for example the play starts with two top hearts followed by two rounds of diamonds, declarer can draw three rounds of trumps ending in dummy and then set up a heart trick.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19

♠ J1083
♥ A52
♦ 65
♣ AQJ2

Dealer S
Vul: E-W

♠ 2
♥ K9743
♦ AKJ94
♣ 105

♠ A
♥ 6
♦ Q10732
♣ K98643

♠ KQ97654
♥ QJ108
♦ 8
♣ 7

West North East South
4♠

All Pass

Purists would balk at the idea of a pre-emptive opening on the South hand because of the good support for hearts. Pragmatists will pay scant regard to such concern and go with the action most likely to make life difficult for the opponents if the deal belongs to them and most likely to reach the best contract for one's own side otherwise. Either West or East might come in with 4NT to show two suits – the vulnerability means they might well not. If East-West do enter the auction, North goes on to 5♠.

In a spade contract the defenders surely score a diamond at trick one and the trump ace later. Even if the initial lead is not a diamond, a ruffing finesse in clubs does not help declarer much because West could ruff the third round of clubs – and entries to dummy are a problem anyway.

By East-West 5♦ makes unless the defenders start with the ♣A and a club ruff (or cashing a heart first would be OK).

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20

♠ K7
♥ Q654
♦ A52
♣ 9853

Dealer W
Vul: Both

♠ Q984
♥ A983
♦ 106
♣ Q104

♠ A62
♥ KJ10
♦ J943
♣ K72

♠ J1053
♥ 72
♦ KQ87
♣ AJ6

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	INT	All Pass

With both sides vulnerable, there is a slightly higher chance of a pass out than there was on boards 5 and 14, both of which were also likely to feature the contract bought by a weak INT opening. Here a weak INT in third seat carries the highest risk of being doubled. Sometimes the solution is to open a chunky 4-card suit with the intention of passing any response. Alas, J-9-4-3 fails to qualify as chunky!

Since (with equal length suits) it is customary to lead a major rather than a minor, South might well lead the ♠3 against INT, whereupon the ♠8 drives out the ♠K. The defenders should score three tricks in diamonds and one in each black suit. Whether they get to score a heart trick depends on whether declarer needs to develop the hearts and whether a winning guess in the suit is or is not forthcoming. It may be possible to make three tricks in spades, one in diamonds and two clubs, thus avoiding the need to decide who holds the ♥Q.

At the opposite end of the scale, if the ♠Q goes up in dummy at trick one and declarer runs the ♥J at trick two, INT could even go down.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 21

♠ J876
♥ 10843
♦ 82
♣ 763

Dealer N
Vul: N-S

♠ A32
♥ KJ97
♦ AQ93
♣ J9

♠ KQ954
♥ Q5
♦ J1076
♣ 104

♠ 10
♥ A62
♦ K54
♣ AKQ852

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

Following South's opening and West's takeout double, it is a close decision whether East is worth a jump to 2♠. The decent 5-card suit and the fact that there is nothing wasted in South's suit are bullish features. Once East does jump, West would very much like to bid game – but is conscious that East has not 100% promised a 5-card spade suit.

Given the bidding, with the opening bidder clearly the favourite to hold the ♦K, the spade game is a good one. There would also be some chance of a trump loser if spades break 4-1 but the singleton is a low one or if South holds the spade length. On the actual layout, declarer can cash the king of spades followed by the ace, thereafter taking a marked finesse on the third round of trumps.

If North-South somehow declare a club contract, they lose two tricks in each red suit and one in spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22 ♠ J97632 Dealer E

♥ Vul: E-W

♦ K83

♣ J742

♠ KQ4

♥ J10976

♦ Q6

♣ K108

♠ 5

♥ K54

♦ J109542

♣ 963

♠ A108

♥ AQ832

♦ A7

♣ AQ5

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

These days many pairs have the mechanism to discover a 5-3 fit in a major after a 2NT and routinely open 2NT on hands containing a 5-card major. Here North transfers into spades and insists on the spade game. If you play that 2♥ and 3♥ are both transfers in response to 2NT then North responds 4♥ because the lower transfer followed by raising would be a mild slam try.

West's opening heart lead allows declarer to score two heart tricks on which dummy discards clubs but two discards are of limited value. Most likely declarer takes only one discard quickly before ruffing a heart to take a trump finesse. With West's picture cards in the black suits sitting over the respective aces the defenders are likely to score three tricks. Looking at all four hands, it is possible to make an overtrick by rejecting the trump finesse, stripping the red suits and putting West in with a trump late on to lead from the king of clubs – but I do not know how you would find such a line at the table.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 23

♠ AJ5
♥ Q87652
♦ J8
♣ 63

Dealer S
Vul: Both

♠ K104
♥ K3
♦ AK97
♣ AK108

♠ Q93
♥ J9
♦ Q32
♣ QJ942

♠ 8762
♥ A104
♦ 10654
♣ 75

West	North	East	South
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass All Pass

Just like buses, which people say have a habit of coming in pairs after you have waited for just one, we have a second 2NT opening in as many boards. Holding three spades and a doubleton heart, East might look for a possible 5-3 fit in spades. The soft values (queens and jacks) provide a counter argument to looking for a suit contract.

North has an obvious heart lead against 3NT. South wins with the ace and returns the suit. Declarer can count 9 tricks but at matchpoints desires an overtrick. There is no rush to test the diamonds. Better is to cash five rounds of clubs first. North does best to discard two spades and one heart while South can spare three spades. If either of the defenders parts with a diamond, it would be easy to make four tricks in that suit. As it is, anyone familiar with restricted choice should make four tricks in the suit anyway. Start by cashing the ace and queen. Then, if either the ten or jack has fallen from North, finesse on the next round. It is almost twice as likely that North started with a doubleton honour than with J-10-x. A possible further clue is that if holding three low diamonds South might have discarded one.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 24

♠ Q106
♥ KQ83
♦ 954
♣ 1095

Dealer W
Vul: None

♠ J985
♥ 6
♦ 63
♣ AKJ864

♠ 432
♥
♦ AKQJ1082
♣ Q72

♠ AK7
♥ AJ1097542
♦ 7
♣ 3

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♦	4♥
Pass	Pass	5♦	Pass
Pass	5♥	All Pass	

Non-vulnerable, with a good suit, pure values and good shape, a 1♣ opening is fine with the West cards. Whether East makes a simple 1♦ response or has a strong jump shift of 2♦ available and uses it, South will surely overcall 4♥. Taking the auction slowly merely helps the opponents. With the long diamond suit and a void in hearts, East has an easy decision to go on to 5♦. With 4-card heart support North presses on to 5♥. If East started with a strong jump shift then a pass over 5♥ would be forcing but on the illustrated auction 5♥ could end the auction. Perhaps East should bid 6♣.

In a heart contract the defenders just have the two minor-suit aces to make. In a diamond contract with South on lead, it will be natural to start with a top spade. What might not be so easy is for South to work out that finding North with the queen of spades and only two other spades with it represents a better chance than finding East with a heart.

If clubs are trumps, North is on lead and had better not lead South's heart suit. Doing so would allow declarer to make all 13 tricks!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 25

♠ 9842
♥ QJ984
♦ AJ8
♣ A

Dealer N
Vul: E-W

♠ AK53
♥ K103
♦ 763
♣ K72

♠ J6
♥ 62
♦ K54
♣ J108653

♠ Q107
♥ A75
♦ Q1092
♣ Q94

West	North	East	South
	1♥		Pass 2♦
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

With 10 HCP South is definitely too strong (in Acol) to respond INT to 1♥ or make a simple raise to 2♥. When North makes a minimum rebid, it seems reasonable to give up. If South did raise 2♥ to 3♥, North should pass, the partial fit for diamonds withstanding. West is too flat and has an unsuitable heart holding to come in with a takeout double 2♦. It would be possible to reopen with a double when 2♥ comes back, though the vulnerability is a deterrent. As the cards lie, a reopening double would work well because East has a long club suit.

To be sure of defeating 3♥ (or stopping the overtrick in 2♥), East would need to find the ♠J lead. Then a spade ruff materialises in addition to tricks with the two top spades and the red kings. In real life, a club lead probably suffices because declarer will normally take the trump finesse rather than playing ace and another. This gives West, when in with the ♥K, the chance to switch to spades.

Although 3♣ is makeable with all four hands in view (by ducking the first round of trumps to flush out the bare ace), in real life one down looks to be more normal.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 26

♠ AK83
♥ A32
♦ A7652
♣ 8

Dealer E
Vul: Both

♠ J1052
♥ J985
♦ 10
♣ KJ64

♠ 96
♥ Q1074
♦ KJ43
♣ 953

♠ Q74
♥ K6
♦ Q98
♣ AQ1072

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	INT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	2♦

If South opens a weak INT (a lot of INT openings today) then North is likely to use Stayman. I say likely because with my most regular partner we play that a jump to the three level shows a shortage in the suit (so we would respond 3♣). On the Stayman sequence, North is not worried about the clubs once South denies a major, especially as East did not double 2♣.

West has a choice of which major to lead against 3NT – remember North has only promised one major while South has denied both, so a club lead would be poor. As the cards lie, a heart is safer than a spade. A (low) spade lead would enable declarer to capture the nine with queen and subsequently take a deep finesse of the eight. In contrast, after an initial heart lead, with the ♦K onside and little helpful happening otherwise there are only eight obvious tricks (three in spades, one in clubs and two in each red suit). The extra trick could come from a squeeze on West in the black suits or from a forced losing lead from one of the defenders at some point.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 27

♠ A10973
♥ 75
♦ 9543
♣ 73

Dealer S
Vul: None

♠ KJ6
♥ KJ982
♦ KQ6
♣ 64

♠ Q84
♥ A104
♦ A87
♣ AK108

♠ 52
♥ Q63
♦ J102
♣ QJ952

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

Those following the Robson style of opening 1NT willy nilly whenever a 5-card major is held (and playing a weak 1NT) could open 1NT on the West hand despite the small doubleton in clubs. In that case East would simply raise to 3NT.

Facing a 1♥ opening and rebid in hearts, it is difficult for East to judge to play in the no-trump game. If for example West held a singleton in one of the pointed suits, 4♥ could be a rather safer spot.

Whether the contract is 3NT or 4♥, the natural way to play the hearts is to cash the ace and then finesse South for the queen. This produces five heart tricks any time South holds the queen or North holds the bare queen. If instead you finesse North for the queen you cannot cater either for a singleton queen with South (or at least without giving up on a far more likely Q-x-x-x facing a small singleton) or for a 5-0 break.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 28

♠ KQ9
♥ KJ753
♦ 105
♣ J64

Dealer W
Vul: N-S

♠ A10742
♥ 102
♦ J986
♣ A8

♠ 3
♥ A9
♦ KQ7432
♣ K532

♠ J865
♥ Q864
♦ A
♣ Q1097

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	All Pass

Traditionally a jump shift by a passed hand is a fit-showing jump: four-card (or longer) support for partner's suit and at least five cards in your own suit. This describes the West hand quite well. Perhaps East should make a vague try towards game with 3♣, the helpful doubleton club in the West hand being quite likely, albeit normally a losing doubleton rather than one that includes the ace.

With trumps 2-1, declarer in a diamond contract can afford to play draw trumps and later take two club ruffs in the West hand in completely safety.

If North-South buy the contract (unlikely given the vulnerability), they could go two down in 3♥ if East scores a spade ruff and West scores a club ruff. Since East holds the ♥A, they can achieve these ruffs even after the ♦K opening lead. In practice East probably leads the ♠3, in which case West wins with the ♠A and returns the ♠2 as a suit-preference signal asking for a club next.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 29

♠ 653
♥ 965
♦ AKQ3
♣ J63

Dealer N
Vul: Both

♠ K10842
♥ J2
♦ J2
♣ A1097

♠ Q7
♥ KQ74
♦ 1065
♣ Q854

♠ AJ9
♥ A1083
♦ 9874
♣ K2

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 30

♠ 82
♥ Q742
♦ QJ10765
♣ 7

Dealer E
Vul: None

♠ AQJ43
♥ K108
♦ K4
♣ J42

♠ 765
♥ 93
♦ A932
♣ Q653

♠ K109
♥ AJ65
♦ 8
♣ AK1098

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 31

♠ J4
♥ AJ
♦ 108763
♣ 7632

Dealer S
Vul: N-S

♠ K1083
♥ 1074
♦ Q92
♣ K94

♠ Q2
♥ KQ632
♦ K4
♣ A1085

♠ A9765
♥ 985
♦ AJ5
♣ QJ

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 32

♠ AQ
♥ 7632
♦ J10542
♣ A8

Dealer W
Vul: E-W

♠ J
♥ KQ10
♦ KQ6
♣ K106532

♠ K8532
♥ A85
♦ 9873
♣ 7

♠ 109764
♥ J94
♦ A
♣ QJ94

Makeable Contracts

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

=====