

The ECatsBridge Summer Pairs
Monday 7th July 2025



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.

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.

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

<p style="text-align: center;">♠ J ♥ 6 5 4 3 2 ♦ J 6 5 2 ♣ 7 3 2</p> <p>♠ Q 10 8 7 3 ♠ A K 9 6 5 2 ♥ 8 7 ♥ A Q J 10 ♦ — ♦ A 8 ♣ K Q J 8 5 4 ♣ 10</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ 4 ♥ K 9 ♦ K Q 10 9 7 4 3 ♣ A 9 6</p>	
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When East opens 1♠, the field will be split between those who choose to go quietly with the South cards and overcall 2♦, and those who preempt – anywhere between 3♦ and 5♦ depending on taste. Today is a good one to be active, since E/W can make 6♠ standing on their heads, and most of the field will find a way to get there. In fact the real danger for N/S is that they might sacrifice in 7♦, and concede 1100

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

<p style="text-align: center;">♠ 6 4 ♥ 9 5 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ K 9 7 4 3 2</p> <p>♠ A K 8 7 2 ♠ J 5 3 ♥ J 10 ♥ K Q 8 7 6 3 ♦ Q 3 ♦ K 9 8 2 ♣ A Q 6 5 ♣ —</p> <p style="text-align: center;">♠ Q 10 9 ♥ A 4 2 ♦ A 10 7 5 ♣ J 10 8</p>	
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The East hand is a classic 2♥ preempt (or Multi 2♦ if those are your methods). Left to their own devices E/W will play 4♥, where East has no clear way forward on the ♣J lead. Most routes lead to 10 tricks, but the odd declarer will play on diamonds, then misguess the play when South wins a diamond trick cheaply and leads two rounds of hearts. Conversely, some N/S will get into trouble by being too active in clubs, and be doubled and defeated 200 or 500.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

South has the option of opening a rather feeble preempt – and if he does, North might boost to 3♠ before East has a chance to speak. If East sells out to 3♠ he will find he cannot beat it, with both diamond honours onside for South. But that same unfortunate lie of the cards means that E/W are probably well out of the auction. If they declare the hand, their limit is eight tricks in diamonds – and that might spell trouble at the vulnerability.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

West will open 3♣, to which East should respond 3♥ – forcing unless by prior agreement. West can do little but raise to 4♥, where East can make 10 (or even 11) tricks in a number of different ways. By contrast if East wants to explore for slam in clubs, he might find a way to reach 6♣ – which is worse than the club finesse on two rounds of spades, but happens to make

today. My guess is that +620 will be close to an average here for E/W.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

Most Souths are going to end up looking very silly here, as they open 2NT, and find it passed out and down three in top tricks, despite dummy's scattered values. Of course if South guesses to open a minor suit his side may end up going plus in 3♣, but is not that South hand a routine 2NT opener? I'd say so, despite the result. Incidentally, E/W can make eight tricks in spades, but will rarely be allowed to get the chance to try.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

E/W will have their defence tested, assuming South declares 3NT after East has opened 1♠. After a spade lead by West to South's king. Declarer will play the ♦A, followed by the ♦J to West's ♦Q. Will East be able to discard a low club and low spade

to persuade West to find the heart shift – and will East continue the suit? This is not an easy defence; but it will make the difference between 3NT going down one and coming home with an overtrick.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

<p>♠ A J 9 ♥ A K J 9 8 6 ♦ K J 4 ♣ 2</p> <p>♠ 6 5 3 2 ♥ Q ♦ A Q 9 8 7 ♣ A 9 5</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 4 ♥ 10 7 5 3 2 ♦ 2 ♣ K Q 8 3</p> <p>♠ K Q 10 ♥ 4 ♦ 10 6 5 3 ♣ J 10 7 6 4</p>
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When West opens 1♦ in second seat some Norths will overcall 1♥, some will double instead. The overcallers will finish up declaring a heart partscore (occasionally doubled or redoubled) making nine tricks, or perhaps penalizing E/W somewhere. If North doubles, then East will respond 1♥, and South will join in with 2♣, creating complete confusion for N/S thereafter. They will do well to go plus after that start, though 2NT is makable by North.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ J 4 2 ♥ A 8 4 ♦ 10 8 7 3 2 ♣ J 2</p>	<p>♠ K 3 ♥ J 7 2 ♦ A Q 5 ♣ K Q 10 9 3</p> <p>♠ 10 8 ♥ K 10 9 ♦ K 6 4 ♣ A 7 6 5 4</p> <p>♠ A Q 9 7 6 5 ♥ Q 6 5 3 ♦ J 9 ♣ 8</p>
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This is a good hand for a strong no-trump and transfers, since it would get you to 4♠ by North, which can only be set on a very

unlikely heart lead and diamond shift. Conversely, 4♠ by South on a diamond lead has four top losers (even if not everybody will find a way to cash them). Of course the only game that cannot be defeated is 3NT -- the defence have at best four top side-suit winners, and no realistic prospect of any other trick.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 9 7 6 4 ♥ K J 4 ♦ Q 10 5 4 3 ♣ K</p> <p>♠ Q J 10 3 ♥ Q 8 3 ♦ K 8 7 2 ♣ Q J</p>	<p>♠ A ♥ A 10 7 6 5 2 ♦ A J 9 6 ♣ 7 3</p> <p>♠ K 8 5 2 ♥ 9 ♦ — ♣ A 10 9 8 6 5 4 2</p>
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When East opens 1♥, will the majority of Souths shoot out 5♣? I'd guess so, and despite the 4-1 spade break, they can escape for down two, and -300. Of course for the sacrifice to be right, that assumes that 4♥ will make. On best defence -- ♣A and a ruff and a diamond ruff in return -- the defence have four winners. Even on an opening spade lead, East is far more likely than not to go down in four hearts.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ 9 6 2 ♥ A 10 9 6 5 2 ♦ K 10 7 3 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ A Q J ♥ 8 ♦ Q J 9 8 ♣ K Q 7 4 2</p> <p>♠ K 5 4 3 ♥ K Q 7 4 3 ♦ 6 ♣ 10 6 3</p> <p>♠ 10 8 7 ♥ J ♦ A 5 4 2 ♣ A J 9 8 5</p>
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A weak 2♥ by West will see East bounce at once to 4♥, after North's takeout double.

Now South could try 4NT to show the minors, or double to show cards – not penalty, but North generally passes if balanced. 5♣ figures to go down when both the spade and diamond finesses lose, but that might be cheaper than defending 4♥ doubled! That has ten tricks on top – despite the fact that West’s ♦K is completely wasted on offence. There will be a lot of +590’s around.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

N/S have many different routes in the auction, but all roads lead to Rome (or 4♥) today. Making 4♥ is another matter. On a top club lead and spade shift, simplest and best is to cash the ♥A and ♥K, then to lead the ♦A and pass the ♦J. With the trumps not breaking and the ♦K offside, this line produces only nine tricks. But the inferior approach of the cross-ruff produces 10 tricks; declarer can safely ruff black suits in hand, and diamonds in dummy.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Almost every N/S pair will start an unopposed sequence 1♦-1♥-2♣-3♣; now what? Some Norths will pass (“only 13 points partner”) more realistic players will jump to 5♣, appreciating the fifth trump and the aces. Very unluckily for them, the misplaced trump honours will lead to down one. The only game with chances is 3NT by South. The defence must attack the red suits to have a chance to defeat that game – far from easy to do!

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

I am confidently expecting that most travellers will feature results in every strain – and quite a few doubled contracts too. Diamonds is a playable spot for N/S (although perfect defence holds North to just seven tricks) but E/W can actually make eleven tricks in clubs, double-dummy. As to what will happen in real-life: my guess is that small penalties will be the order of the day, with +200 being the

most frequent traveller result – for one side or the other.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

When South opens 1♥ and West overcalls 2♣ North will invite in hearts, and 4♥ will be the normal contract. Ten tricks look easy, but then you notice the defence can take a diamond ruff; does that set the hand? No! On a diamond lead declarer must cash the ♣A before playing on trumps. East wins the heart, gives West a ruff – and now what? Since a spade allows the ♠Q to score; West plays a club, but declarer ruffs in dummy and pitches his spade loser.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

This sort of deal will be played almost universally in 3NT making either 11, 12 or 13 tricks, depending on the quality of declarer play and defence (with 12 the result of best play by both sides). In fact 6♣ is really a fair spot; on a heart lead declarer is not much better than the diamond

finesse, with some additional small chances. On any other lead, the contract is rather better than one of two diamond finesses – a 75% chance. How to get to 6♣? Don't ask me!

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Few Easts will preempt, vulnerable when North opens 1♣; they will cautiously pass or risk 1♠. Even without intervention the deal is tough for N/S. Best is to play the easy 5♣, but 4♥ is more challenging, toughest defence being a spade lead. To make now, South must cash the ♥QJ, then lead clubs himself, and the defence only get their two black winners. If South plays for hearts 3-3, he will overtake the ♥J, and probably go down a trick or two in the process.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Though North might open any of his four-card suits, in practice as soon as South discovers his partner has a reasonable

opening bid and spades, he will simply drive to slam. All roads lead to 12 tricks in spades, so the issue will be how many pairs miss the slam. Not that many, I'd expect but maybe a few will attempt 6NT by South, where any lead but a spade makes things easy. Even then, a club finesse and a good view in hearts might bring home +990 and a top.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ 9 7 3 ♥ A K J 2 ♦ K 9 8 5 4 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ A K Q 8 5 ♥ Q 6 ♦ J ♣ A 8 5 4 2</p> <p>♠ 6 4 ♥ 10 9 7 3 ♦ Q 10 2 ♣ K Q 9 7</p>	<p>♠ J 10 2 ♥ 8 5 4 ♦ A 7 6 3 ♣ J 10 6</p>
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When West opens 1♠ in third seat some will overcall with the North hand, some cross their fingers and double. Either way, East will raise to 2♠, and now West might drive to 4♠ or simply try for game with 3♣, which ought to lead to the relative safety of playing 3♠. In 4♠ you have to lose two hearts and two clubs. I'd expect to see the odd N/S pair go overboard in a red suit, but all the other traveller results will be +140 for E/W or -50 for N/S.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

<p>♠ A 6 5 ♥ A 8 3 ♦ Q 9 6 4 ♣ Q J 8</p> <p>♠ K 10 9 8 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ 7 ♣ A K 9 3 2</p> <p>♠ J 4 3 2 ♥ 10 4 ♦ A K J 2 ♣ 10 7 5</p>	<p>♠ Q 7 ♥ Q J 9 6 5 ♦ 10 8 5 3 ♣ 6 4</p>
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When West opens 1♣ many Norths will act -- doubling being the obvious course. East will respond 1♥, and now South compete directly, or if pushed, to 2♠. In fact par on the deal is 3♥ by East – N/S cannot stop declarer ruffing diamonds or setting up clubs. But INT by South can be set on repeated heart leads (the defence get their spade trick in before declarer gets a club trick) and 1♠ by South goes down on the club ruff, while 2♦ is equally hopeless.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ A 8 6 ♥ K J 4 2 ♦ 10 ♣ 8 6 4 3 2</p> <p>♠ Q 9 5 ♥ 8 5 3 ♦ 6 5 2 ♣ K J 9 5</p>	<p>♠ J 10 4 2 ♥ 7 ♦ Q J 9 7 3 ♣ A 10 7</p> <p>♠ K 7 3 ♥ A Q 10 9 6 ♦ A K 8 4 ♣ Q</p>
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However North evaluates his hand in support of hearts (my preference would be for a simple limit raise) South will declare 4♥ at almost every table. The matchpoint battle is for the eleventh trick; best defence is repeated trump leads. But declarer can prevail by leading clubs at every turn and using dummy's trump entries to set up that suit. The fifth club can be cashed after taking the diamond ruffs and drawing trumps.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

N/S have a huge spade fit and virtually no losers in that strain, despite the 4-0 trump fit. But it is far from easy for them to find the fit and play game. For example after a 1NT opening bid will South look beyond the two-level? I think not – and why should he? In fact E/W might well buy the hand cheaply; they can take nine tricks in clubs and eight in no-trumps. Meanwhile even a spade partscore for +170 (or 200) might not score N/S so badly today.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

When East opens 1♥ will West dredge up a response? Vulnerable, with a motley collection of queens and jacks, I'd vote for a pass. If so N/S might well buy the hand in a spade partscore, where the fall of the ♠QJ gives North nine tricks. Note that if West does respond initially, it may be hard to stop East below 3♥. The bad trump break means that East will have to play the hand very carefully to avoid losing 200.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

The E/W hands may look easy to bid to slam – with a combined 32 points – but East might well find it difficult to locate the good hearts that are essential for the slam to have play. Maybe after 1♥-1♠-2♣-2♦-3♥, East can take control and drive to 6NT – a distinctly better spot in abstract than 6♥. The latter relies on hearts behaving, whereas 6NT can fall back on clubs, or squeeze chances. The difference between +1430 and +1440 might well be significant at Pairs.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

3NT by West is the normal spot, but much will depend on whether West has bid spades, or implied good stops in that suit after North has overcalled. On a spade lead by North West can test both red suits and emerge with a painless +630. However, if North starts out passively on defence, the play is far harder for West. He may not wish to test diamonds early – in fact nine tricks seem to be the limit, and

there are plausible lines that lead to one down in 3NT.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 10 8 7 2 ♥ 10 8 5 ♦ J 10 6 4 ♣ 8 3</p> <p>♠ A K 9 6 4 ♥ A 3 ♦ Q 8 2 ♣ J 10 4</p>	<p>♠ — ♥ J 9 7 4 ♦ A 9 7 5 ♣ A K Q 9 7</p> <p>♠ Q J 5 3 ♥ K Q 6 2 ♦ K 3 ♣ 6 5 2</p>
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When East opens 1♣ most sensible Souths will pass (E/W can set 800 in 1♠ doubled) leaving E/W to bid to their best game, 3NT. With West declarer, the defence need to be careful to hold declarer to ten tricks – technically only a spade lead does that at double-dummy. Some E/W pairs might bid to 6♣ by East, an awful spot, though a heart lead actually allows declarer to make by getting rid of dummy's diamonds on the hearts, and ruffing a diamond in dummy.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ A J 7 6 5 4 3 ♥ 4 ♦ 2 ♣ K Q 7 4</p> <p>♠ 10 ♥ K Q 9 ♦ A K J 10 9 8 5 ♣ 5 3</p>	<p>♠ K 9 ♥ A 7 6 3 2 ♦ Q 7 ♣ J 9 6 2</p> <p>♠ Q 8 2 ♥ J 10 8 5 ♦ 6 4 3 ♣ A 10 8</p>
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In third seat West might open 1♦, or preempt to any number of diamonds he sees fit. Today bigger is better – since 4♠ by North has ten tricks, and the 5♦ sacrifice only goes down one trick. It looks easy for N/S to cash out against 5♦ – even if the defence start by leading hearts, declarer

cannot quite bring home eleven tricks, whatever he does. Will defeating 5♦ be good for N/S? Since N/S have only 17HCP, not everyone will get to game, or double the sacrifice.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

<p>♠ J 4 3 ♥ K Q 10 6 2 ♦ 10 2 ♣ A J 8</p> <p>♠ 7 5 ♥ A 8 3 ♦ Q 9 7 6 4 ♣ K 7 4</p>	<p>♠ A K 10 9 6 2 ♥ J 7 5 ♦ A K 8 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ Q 8 ♥ 9 4 ♦ J 5 3 ♣ Q 10 9 6 3 2</p>
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Few will open the South hand 3♣, so E/W will probably bid unopposed to a spade game or part-score. Even if North opens 1♥, it should not affect the outcome too much. 4♠ on the ♥9 lead makes, whether East ducks in dummy (best) or goes up with the ♥A to take two top trumps then run diamonds. In 3NT by on a top heart lead West has to win and play spades to keep South off lead. Today the simple line of playing the suit from the top works fine.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

<p>♠ K 9 8 7 5 ♥ A K Q 4 ♦ A J 2 ♣ A</p> <p>♠ A J 6 4 2 ♥ J 2 ♦ 3 ♣ K 10 9 5 2</p>	<p>♠ Q ♥ 10 9 8 7 6 5 ♦ 10 6 5 ♣ 8 7 4</p> <p>♠ 10 3 ♥ 3 ♦ K Q 9 8 7 4 ♣ Q J 6 3</p>
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Playing standard Acoll, South has maybe just enough to respond 2♦ to 1♠. If so, North may simply drive the hand to slam – 6♦ is a pretty fair spot, though it can be defeated

on ♠A and a spade ruff. If South takes a more cautious approach to his hand one would expect N/S to end up in 5♦, or their best matchpoint contract, of 3NT. One way or another, eleven tricks seem to be par for the course there.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

West has the option of responding 1NT to 1♠, or bidding 2♦ – I strongly prefer the latter. The problem here is not just to get to the right game (3NT is better than 4♠) but how to make either game. 4♠ is of course hopeless – South will cash his hearts and collect two trump tricks -- but 3NT on a club lead (a top heart is fatal here) will fare no better. Declarer can test both spades and diamonds, but he can only make by playing on hearts, and why would he do that?

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

Much will depend here on whether South passes, or opens 1♠ or 1NT. If he passes,

then E/W should bid unopposed to 2♥. Whether North leads trumps or a top club, declarer should come to +140, though this may require finessing the ♦9 on repeated trump leads. If South opens, then N/S may finish up in spades, making either seven or eight tricks in that strain. No-trumps may do better, though technically South can be held to six tricks there.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

At many tables a quiet auction will consist of East opening 1NT in fourth seat and buying the contract there, for five or six tricks. More exciting things will happen if North opens in third seat, or balances over 1NT, to show the majors. Although E/W have a prime 23HCP between them, it looks impossible to set 2♠ by N/S, although 2♥ can be held to seven tricks. My guess is that any plus score for E/W would score well today.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

E/W will often have the auction to themselves via 1♥-2♥, similarly if West opens 1♣. Best defence will maybe see N/S set 2♥ by taking their club ruff early, then shifting to trumps to prevent declarer playing a cross-ruff. Meanwhile, if N/S get into the act; they can quite sensibly play either 2♠ or 3♦. The fall of the club spots and the ♦Q mean that both 2♠ and 3♦ are easy to make with the sight of all 52 cards – at the table things may be more challenging!