

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION♥♣



First Interclub – Heat A

28th - 29th September 2026

Commentary by Ian Hamilton

1

♠ KJ86
 ♥ 1053
 ♦ J104
 ♣ Q82
 ♠ A10542
 ♥ Q42
 ♦ 83
 ♣ AJ7
 ♠ 73
 ♥ 976
 ♦ KQ7
 ♣ K10643
 ♠ Q9
 ♥ AKJ8
 ♦ A9652
 ♣ 95

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

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

Love all is usually for declaring, a 50 or even 100 point loss against an opposing part-score often showing a profit.

Today, nobody can make much. West will overcall a south 1♦ with 1♠, and north surely will try 1NT, when 2♦ works better, N/S able to get over the line, just losing a spade, heart, diamond and two clubs.

1NT fares worse, north entry-less after a spade is ducked, and losing five clubs a spade and a diamond. In practice the defence might plug away with spades, letting declarer home.

Hard to predict this one, any plus likely good.

2

♠ KJ
 ♥ 1084
 ♦ J9852
 ♣ J109
 ♠ 10762
 ♥ J75
 ♦ Q1043
 ♣ 72
 ♠ A984
 ♥ K96
 ♦ A76
 ♣ 543
 ♠ Q53
 ♥ AQ32
 ♦ K
 ♣ AKQ86

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

N/S should reach 3NT whether south opens an off-shape 2NT or 1♣, north scraping up a response.

Declarer has nine tricks on a spade lead, when the heart finesse succeeds, but has few options for a tenth unless the defence go badly off-piste, though discarding on five clubs after the heart finesse might see some go astray.

Looks like a pretty flat board in 600 N/S.

3

♠ K1074
 ♥ KQ4
 ♦ K6
 ♣ AJ82
 ♠ Q98
 ♥ A73
 ♦ A1098
 ♣ Q75
 ♠ 52
 ♥ 1095
 ♦ J532
 ♣ 10943
 ♠ AJ63
 ♥ J862
 ♦ Q74
 ♣ K6

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

South has a decidedly thin opener, but might open a 5 card major minor suit, presumably getting to the spade game.

Where south passes a west weak NT gets doubled, and could easily lose 1100. A west 1♦ should survive, south cueing 2♦, looking for north's better major.

Thus, 4♠ should eventuate, though if declarer does everything right the same tricks are there in hearts or even no trumps.

How many large penalties after the weak NT is the question? Although E/W can escape to 2♦ that still costs 800 on best defence. Rarely will any penalty be less than N/S's 4♠ plus overtricks, and is a poor advert for the weak NT.

4

♠ 76
 ♥ J108
 ♦ A10972
 ♣ K53
 ♠ J4
 ♥ 9764
 ♦ 85
 ♣ Q10964
 ♠ KQ1095
 ♥ K2
 ♦ QJ63
 ♣ 87
 ♠ A832
 ♥ AQ53
 ♦ K4
 ♣ AJ2

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

Some easts will open a thin 1♠, maybe steering N/S from their theoretical best spot of 3NT, where even nine tricks are difficult, and making Deep Finesse's ten might prove beyond most.

It can be done, south winning the second spade, entering dummy with clubs and picking up hearts via a top card, covered, then a finesse of the 8. East later has to split his honours in diamonds and gets endplayed to cede another trick in the suit.

Play is similar in 4♥. However, I reckon few will manage to make an inspired N/S game, and will either go minus or manage a part-score.

5

♠ AJ
 ♥ 10986
 ♦ KJ862
 ♣ 75
 ♠ K10864
 ♥ AKQ2
 ♦ 1097
 ♣ K
 ♠ Q952
 ♥ 4
 ♦ A
 ♣ AJ98632

Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

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

Whether south overcalls east's 1♠ with 2♣ or a weak 3♣ is a close decision. If the former east might well protect with a double and west declare 2♥. This spot might make, as south is a bit stuck after winning the club ace, taking the diamond ace and exiting a trump best.

N/S do better to advance in clubs. Nine tricks are there so long as declarer plays on spades, west having to use a trump trick to ruff in front of dummy.

A nice battle for the biggest plus, possibly both ways.

6

♠ 84
 ♥ A10743
 ♦ A9
 ♣ KJ43
 ♠ J109765
 ♥ K
 ♦ Q8752
 ♣ 6
 ♠ KQ32
 ♥ 52
 ♦ J1064
 ♣ Q98
 ♠ A
 ♥ QJ986
 ♦ K3
 ♣ A10752

Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

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

Even at adverse vulnerability many wests will use Michaels or simply bid spades over south's 1♥. Whether this is technically sound is debatable, despite the extreme shape. Personally, I avoid Michaels when the higher ranking suit is longer anyway, or a 5:2 fit rather than a 6:2 one may result.

N/S will surely outbid the vulnerable E/Ws, but at what level? There are actually all 13 tricks available to N/S in hearts with a winning view in clubs, which may well be found where west's shape has been spelt out.

Although they may disrupt the opponents' bidding two suited overcalls can backfire, helping declarer read the lie of the cards. Will many have 1010 on the card, making an overtrick in slam, or even get to slam?

7

♠ AQ102
 ♥ AKJ10
 ♦ 52
 ♣ J83
 ♠ KJ987
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A83
 ♣ 10962
 ♠ 63
 ♥ 987
 ♦ QJ964
 ♣ AQ5

Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

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

North could open a strong NT or an Acoll 1♥. N/S could stay in 1NT by either party, or might get dangerously high.

In 1NT north might be blessed with a spade lead, likely to make at least nine tricks. The winning club lead takes out south's late entry to the diamonds prematurely and can hold declarer to seven tricks. However, should declarer duck to the knave west needs to play low too.

Where west is on lead declarer should be held to at most eight tricks. In practice, more may eventuate. However, some might find the spade lead and east a club switch to beat 1NT.

I bet someone bids and makes game.

8

♠ 753
 ♥ AJ74
 ♦ K6
 ♣ QJ53
 ♠ 1062
 ♥ K98
 ♦ A98
 ♣ K1094
 ♠ A98
 ♥ Q5
 ♦ QJ32
 ♣ A872
 ♠ KQJ4
 ♥ 10632
 ♦ 10754
 ♣ 6

Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

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

A light 1♣ opener from north may steal it for N/S in 2♥. Where east opens a weak NT or a minor E/W may get declaring 1NT or 2♣, though in practice they could easily get to 3♣.

N/S should make 2♥ when spades divide, even if declarer misguesses the trump lie. However, it isn't straightforward on a club lead and continuation, so some may be light.

E/W's 1NT just gets over the line on a spade lead, and likewise even on the best lead of a heart from north.

Defending and declaring low level contracts isn't easy, and either side could easily drop a trick or two. No predictions on this one.

9

♠ 976
 ♥ 104
 ♦ AQ9832
 ♣ 98
 ♠ J1052
 ♥ AKJ
 ♦ J6
 ♣ J1062
 ♠ AK4
 ♥ Q87632
 ♦ 105
 ♣ 73
 ♠ Q83
 ♥ 95
 ♦ K74
 ♣ AKQ54

Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

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

North has a classic Weak 2♦, south likely raising the ante, and probably buying it. Where east gets to open a Weak 2♥ or Multi, south may try 3♣, missing the diamond part-score. However, west surely raises to 3♥ and that likely buys it.

Defending 3♥, south can cash two clubs, but might err with a spade switch, whereas a diamond should beat it. In practice, it may not, south winning the second diamond and either giving a ruff and discard, or playing a spade when a trump is safe.

Playing in diamonds north can't really go wrong, and could make overtricks should the defence fail to cash out accurately.

10

♠ Q104
 ♥ Q7
 ♦ AJ652
 ♣ 765
 ♠ AJ962
 ♥ J4
 ♦ Q874
 ♣ 104
 ♠ 753
 ♥ A985
 ♦ 1093
 ♣ KQ9
 ♠ K8
 ♥ K10632
 ♦ K
 ♣ AJ832

Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

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

South doubtless opens 1♥ and rebids 2♣ over 1NT, getting preference back to hearts - in theory.

Of course, west might overcall 1♠ on his tram tickets, and get raised by east, who has support and a decent 9HCP. Now E/W should lose 200, for a poor board, unless the defence let declarer off the hook, either mis-defending, or advancing, perhaps in clubs.

Losing 200 isn't a disaster at Teams, but at Pairs it could be a pretty poor board, with 140 the best N/S can obtain declaring.

11

♠ Q109872
 ♥
 ♦ K873
 ♣ Q54
 ♠ J543
 ♥ AQ653
 ♦ AJ9
 ♣ K
 ♠ K
 ♥ KJ74
 ♦ Q10542
 ♣ A63
 ♠ A6
 ♥ 10982
 ♦ 6
 ♣ J109872

Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

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

By contrast to #10 north overcalling 1♥ with 2♠ (weak) is eminently reasonable, though in practice is unlikely to stop N/S reaching 4♥.

It looks as if declarer has only two losers in 4♥, but in practice cannot avoid a diamond ruff or a trump promotion, where declarer ruffs spades in dummy, and either gets over-ruffed or south's trumps grow up.

Indeed, I can see the occasional declarer only managing nine tricks.

12

♠ 9
 ♥ 108763
 ♦ K864
 ♣ KQJ
 ♠ A10754
 ♥ Q2
 ♦ 72
 ♣ 8432
 ♠ Q832
 ♥ AKJ9
 ♦ AQJ3
 ♣ 6
 ♠ KJ6
 ♥ 54
 ♦ 1095
 ♣ A10975

Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

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

E/W should establish a spade fit whether east opens a red suit or an off-shape strong NT. East is liable to push to game.

Care is needed on a club lead, the second ruffed in dummy. The percentage play in trumps is ace and another, but this allows south to pull trumps and make at least one more club.

Today, it is better to leave trumps alone, enter west with a heart, and finesse a diamond. In practice, this wins. Ace and another trump again fails, but declarer can instead either play a spade to the 10 or play hearts, attempting to ditch west's clubs. South can ruff, but west over-ruffs and is back in control.

A nice hand for the technicians.

13

♠ J862
 ♥ K75
 ♦ 7
 ♣ K9762
 ♠ AQ10753
 ♥ Q42
 ♦ K98
 ♣ 3
 ♠ 4
 ♥ A9
 ♦ AJ1054
 ♣ J10854
 ♠ K9
 ♥ J10863
 ♦ Q632
 ♣ AQ

 Dealer: North
 Both Vulnerable

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

At both vulnerable caution may be the order of the day, and wisely so, as N/S can make nothing, and E/W may have difficulty finding their best fit in diamonds.

N/S may win the auction when south opens 1♥, west overcalls 1♠ and north supports hearts. Sadly, this proves to be a poisoned chalice.

2♥ can be held to six tricks, for an ugly 200 in the minus column. West may try 2♠ in the pass-out seat, a contract that can make, maybe with overtricks on a low heart lead.

Today, west is better passing 2♥ and collecting a 200 penalty.

14

♠ K
 ♥ A10652
 ♦ 107654
 ♣ J10
 ♠ 109
 ♥ 987
 ♦ Q3
 ♣ KQ9543
 ♠ AJ543
 ♥ 3
 ♦ AKJ8
 ♣ A76
 ♠ Q8762
 ♥ KQJ4
 ♦ 92
 ♣ 82

 Dealer: East
 Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	6	1	-	3	2
W	6	1	-	3	2

E/W will probably miss their slam in clubs, the suit never bid, west responding 1NT to 1♠ and giving preference back to spades over 2♦ (though some might stretch to 3♦). At love all north just might bid hearts, but this is unsound, and may help E/W get to the best spot.

Despite the 5:1 trump break declarer has enough ammunition to survive in 2♣, indeed make overtricks, but some care is needed after a heart force, only one round of trumps taken, then outside winners played. If declarer plays a second round of trumps he loses control.

I bet nobody bids and makes 6♣, straightforward when trumps divide, a spade and heart going on diamonds, the last heart ruffed.

15

♠ AQ
 ♥ A7
 ♦ AQJ7543
 ♣ J6
 ♠ J106
 ♥ KQ98
 ♦ K96
 ♣ A54
 ♠ 982
 ♥ 1062
 ♦ 10
 ♣ Q109873
 ♠ K7543
 ♥ J543
 ♦ 82
 ♣ K2

 Dealer: South
 N-S Vulnerable

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

West's weak NT presumably gets doubled. This is 500 light on best defence, if left in, but east surely escapes to clubs where there may be no penalty, 2♣ making (the spades being blocked for the defence), or one light at worst. N/S may now play in diamonds or south try 3NT.

Where west opens 1♣ north overcalls in diamonds and may even jump to 2♦, if strong/intermediate. Again, south may or may not venture 3NT.

3NT by north should be beaten, so long as the defence prevent south getting an entry with the club king, declarer finessing diamonds (the spade queen then overtaken for a second diamond finesse).

There is no other credible game for N/S. Will many manage 3NT, or get a decent penalty?

16

♠ 43
 ♥ A832
 ♦ AJ7654
 ♣ 4
 ♠ Q62
 ♥ QJ109
 ♦ Q10
 ♣ A985
 ♠ KJ985
 ♥ 6
 ♦ 932
 ♣ J1063
 ♠ A107
 ♥ K754
 ♦ K8
 ♣ KQ72

 Dealer: West
 E-W Vulnerable

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

West might open a thin 1♣, overcalled 1♦ by north. More likely, south opens 1♥ or a strong NT. Either way, 3NT is likely to eventuate.

3NT has nine solid tricks with diamonds behaving, and that may be it for some who get spades led. However, on any lead declarer can set up a club trick, if necessary ducking two spades to keep east out of the game.

Will many have 430 on the board?

17

♠ AK953
 ♥ 109
 ♦ K9
 ♣ J542
 ♠ Q104
 ♥ AKQ75
 ♦ Q1053
 ♣ 10
 ♠ 7
 ♥ J642
 ♦ A642
 ♣ K876
 ♠ J862
 ♥ 83
 ♦ J87
 ♣ AQ93

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

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

Different methods might work for or against N/S here, north's 1♠ only raised to 2♠. West may well come in with 3♥ now, and probably gets raised to game. 4♥ should make as declarer likely plays north to hold the diamond king, finessing the 10.

Where south raises weakly to 3♠ (not that weak!) 3♠ may get passed out. East has a tricky lead, Anything but a heart cedes the ninth trick, though even on a heart west might switch to a later diamond, ceding a trick.

Double dummy declarer can pick up spades, but few will, and south hasn't the entries without help, west ruffing the second club.

Will many record 4♥, or have to make do with 50 or 100?

18

♠ 5
 ♥ KQ95
 ♦ K1087
 ♣ J743
 ♠ QJ632
 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q654
 ♣ A105
 ♠ AK107
 ♥ AJ72
 ♦ AJ9
 ♣ 96
 ♠ 984
 ♥ 10643
 ♦ 32
 ♣ KQ82

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

Whether east opens a strong NT or an Acol 1♥ E/W surely arrive in 4♠, either polarity declaring.

Twelve tricks are possible via the double diamond finesse, declarer also getting three heart ruffs in dummy. However, the 3:1 spade break complicates matters, and I can see many only making ten or eleven tricks.

19

♠ 1052
 ♥ 432
 ♦ AJ976
 ♣ 76
 ♠ K43
 ♥ QJ6
 ♦ K1043
 ♣ A93
 ♠ J98
 ♥ AK95
 ♦ Q852
 ♣ J2
 ♠ AQ76
 ♥ 1087
 ♦
 ♣ KQ10854

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

Assuming south opens 1♣ and north stretches to 1♦ N/S might buy it in a black suit.

If north passes east protects and E/W will declare something. E/W are actually well out of it, their best fit, diamonds, splitting poorly.

It seems 2♦ can just stagger over the line, but it will be hard work, albeit helped by the even heart break.

This looks a hand best defended, especially for E/W, who have 24 HCP, but liable to lose 200 somewhere, maybe even in a game.

It is odd that N/S make more tricks in a 4:3 fit than an eight card one, it splitting normally.

20

♠ KJ752
 ♥ J
 ♦ J32
 ♣ 9872
 ♠ A10
 ♥ 43
 ♦ Q10974
 ♣ AJ106
 ♠ 9843
 ♥ AQ107652
 ♦ K
 ♣ K
 ♠ Q6
 ♥ K98
 ♦ A865
 ♣ Q543

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

4♥ looks the spot, east responding in the suit, then jump rebidding it. With two aces and two trumps west should advance.

The most awkward lead is the spade queen, the defence threatening to take a spade, diamond and a spade ruff in front of dummy, then the trump king.

If declarer reads the position he can duck, Another spade wins, a club played to the king, and the diamond king leaves south with no recourse.

I bet many go light in this one, as south's lead could be from QJ, and the duck is far from obvious.

21

♠ A975
 ♥ KQ9653
 ♦ 42
 ♣ 9

♠ Q10864
 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q6
 ♣ AJ1054

♠ KJ
 ♥ A10
 ♦ K10753
 ♣ Q832

Dealer: North
N-S Vulnerable

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

North might open 2♥, a Multi or stretch to 1♥. East may well compete with 2♠. With only an eight card fit south may allow east to play this, and north certainly will.

2♠ is no thing of beauty, declarer losing at least three trumps and a heart, and subject to a heart force. It can be held to six tricks.

Meanwhile, N/S could declare 3♥. Deep Finesse has no problem, picking up trumps and finessing the spade knave, losing just four tricks. Alternatively, spades can be ruffed in dummy.

In practice, some might let 2♠ home, or fail to make 3♥, so a wide range of scores expected.

22

♠ AQJ4
 ♥ J
 ♦ A54
 ♣ 98542

♠ K9873
 ♥ KQ7
 ♦ Q32
 ♣ AJ

♠ 10652
 ♥ A653
 ♦ K107
 ♣ 106

Dealer: East
E-W Vulnerable

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

Where east opens 1♠ he probably passes west's 1NT response, unless 1NT is forcing, where 2♦ or 2♥ might eventuate. East's strong NT likely ends in 2♥ after a transfer.

Although 1NT is held to seven tricks by Deep Finesse this needs a spade lead or diamond and spade switch. On a heart lead it could easily make nine tricks.

2♥ can make an overtrick, as declarer can avoid losing more than two diamonds, the heart ace and the spade ace. In practice, east may get forced in spades, losing five tricks.

A fun battle for the biggest E/W plus.

23

♠ 874
 ♥ Q98
 ♦ AQ543
 ♣ K10

♠ 6532
 ♥ AK42
 ♦
 ♣ AJ862

♠ K10
 ♥ 10763
 ♦ KJ862
 ♣ 93

♠ AQJ9
 ♥ J5
 ♦ 1097
 ♣ Q754

Dealer: South
Both Vulnerable

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

East will surely double a north 1♦, but may pass an improbable shaded weak NT. Passed hand south might re-double 1♦, though this is shaky opposite a 3rd hand opener. E/W should then find a heart contract, and N/S are best to keep schtum thereafter.

Defending E/W's heart contract the clubs lie well for declarer, trumps split, and south may only be in once with the spade ace to lead diamonds.

Difficult predicting this one, where N/S can actually make 1NT, but will rarely be in the auction.

24

♠ Q8
 ♥ AJ63
 ♦ Q3
 ♣ KQ974

♠ AK643
 ♥ 75
 ♦ 9
 ♣ AJ1032

♠ J102
 ♥ KQ
 ♦ A107642
 ♣ 85

♠ 975
 ♥ 109842
 ♦ KJ85
 ♣ 6

Dealer: West
Neither Vulnerable

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

At love all everyone will be bidding, north's 1♣ overcalled 1♠. E/W are unlikely to find game, but 4♠ can be made by west, only a trump lead from south beating it. This looks an improbable lead with a singleton in partner's suit, a more credible lead.

Declaring spades on a club lead east wins and can set up club tricks and ruffs in dummy. North is best to play the club 9 on a dummy club lead, and declarer duck!

Meanwhile, there may be some buying it in hearts N/S. Sadly, this lacks aces, and the even trump split isn't really helpful. However, if seven tricks are made in 3♥, minus 100 may be okay.

25

♠ 5
 ♥ J965
 ♦ AJ1085
 ♣ A75
 ♠ J8643
 ♥ K4
 ♦ KQ3
 ♣ QJ10
 ♠ AQ72
 ♥ 7
 ♦ 7642
 ♣ K632
 ♠ K109
 ♥ AQ10832
 ♦ 9
 ♣ 984

 Dealer: North
 E-W Vulnerable

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

North will be happy to support south's Multi or Weak Two in hearts to the Three level. Meanwhile, E/W might or might not have bid spades with their borderline values.

In practice, N/S could well make ten tricks in hearts, it requiring a club lead to get four tricks in defence, unlikely where north declares, quite likely where south does. A spade lead makes it easy, the king set up for a club pitch.

E/W need to careful not to over-reach, losing 200 in 3S a possibility. The Law of Total Tricks (the sum of both sides longest fits) suggests 20, when there are only 16, so some may mis-judge. In theory, N/S are safe at the four level according to the Law - which they aren't.

I suppose the hand could even be thrown in should south not have a Multi or Weak Two in the armoury.

26

♠ 9
 ♥ K
 ♦ AK6432
 ♣ J10984
 ♠ J532
 ♥ J76532
 ♦ 98
 ♣ Q
 ♠ AK4
 ♥ AQ8
 ♦ 75
 ♣ AK653
 ♠ Q10876
 ♥ 1094
 ♦ QJ10
 ♣ 72

 Dealer: East
 Both Vulnerable

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

This looks like a near-universal 4♥, probably by east after a transfer over a 2NT opener.

The lead is critical. Safety first, leading up to a strong hand, suggests the winning diamond, at least the defence getting the two tricks available. Worst is where south selects an aggressive low spade, subsequently watching declarer wrap up twelve tricks - thirteen if north pitches a club.

Ouch!

27

♠ QJ
 ♥ AJ1086
 ♦ 642
 ♣ 1093
 ♠ AK7
 ♥ KQ42
 ♦ 985
 ♣ KQJ
 ♠ 10965
 ♥ 975
 ♦ AJ3
 ♣ 872
 ♠ 8432
 ♥ 3
 ♦ KQ107
 ♣ A654

 Dealer: South
 Neither Vulnerable

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

Acol could lose out here, west opening 1♥, and being passed out. More likely, east responds 1♠, and rapidly passes east's 2NT rebid.

In NT luck is with declarer when the QJ of spades drop, the defence unable to get more than three diamonds and two aces.

It should be an E/W plus, but who knows.

28

♠ 83
 ♥ AJ86543
 ♦
 ♣ 9865
 ♠ J1062
 ♥ 9
 ♦ AJ32
 ♣ KQ32
 ♠ A754
 ♥
 ♦ Q1097654
 ♣ A7
 ♠ KQ9
 ♥ KQ1072
 ♦ K8
 ♣ J104

 Dealer: West
 N-S Vulnerable

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

Few will play this exhibit, but it is an interesting hand, E/W able to make 6♦ if south is on lead. Declarer can guess trumps, eliminate hearts and clubs, then end-play south with a spade.

In real life few will be that high, N/S maybe never advertising their twelve card fit, but those that play it should get to the diamond game E/W, their result depending on a winning view in trumps.

This proved an interesting set, with some challenges in bidding, play and defence. It is hoped they were enjoyed.

Ave HCP	N 9.57	S 10.43	E 10.61	W 9.39	Balanced	N 10	S 13	E 11	W 13
Voids/ Singletons	N 2/11	S 1/10	E 2/14	W 1/8	7+ Suit	N 1	S 1	E 2	W 0