

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION♥♣



*First Interclub – Heat A*

*20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021*

*Commentary by Ian Hamilton*

**1**

♠ 9753  
♥ K10  
♦ J1093  
♣ A109

♠ A108  
♥ Q62  
♦ 875  
♣ QJ87

♠ KQ2  
♥ 98743  
♦ A  
♣ K543

♠ J64  
♥ AJ5  
♦ KQ642  
♣ 62

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

When both sides find their respective red suit fits after east's 1♥ opener the Law of Total Tricks - the sum of both sides longest fits - correctly suggests that there are 17 total tricks. It also suggests that you should bid as far as the level of your fit - the 3 level for N/S and the 2 level for E/W.

This advice proves wrong today, in that E/W can make 3♥, scoring 140, whereas passing out 3♦ nets a mere 50 penalty.

Will any press on E/W and get their just desserts? I wouldn't as east, with such a poor suit and defensive hand.

**2**

♠ K1032  
♥ K109854  
♦ J8  
♣ 2

♠ Q4  
♥ AQJ73  
♦ Q764  
♣ 63

♠ AJ98765  
♥ 2  
♦ A95  
♣ A5

♠ 6  
♥ K1032  
♣ KQJ109874

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Opening 4♣ with the east hand could miss a slam, so a 1♠ opener looks wiser. The hand is not remotely close to a 2♣ or Strong Two, if played, needing a lot of fillers.

South doubtless bids clubs, and 3♣ is plenty opposite a passed hand at adverse vulnerability. West shows his hearts, but gives up when east keeps bidding spades.

E/W can make 4♠ when trumps play for one loser and the diamond king proves to be on-side, though declarer needs to be careful not to cede a ruff in the suit.

Any N/S adventure in clubs is expensive, only nine tricks available. The defense can even take five tricks so long as west doesn't rise with the diamond queen in front of the knave, or the defence allow a ruff in dummy.

**3**

♠ 42  
♥ 7  
♦ Q85  
♣ AJ97642

♠ 85  
♥ AQJ9  
♦ AK10973  
♣ Q

♠ KQ10  
♥ 8653  
♦ 62  
♣ K853

♠ AJ9763  
♥ K1042  
♦ J4  
♣ 10

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

A south Weak 2♠ or Multi could easily have the effect of pushing E/W overboard into either 4♥ or 3NT, more likely the latter after west has overcalled 3♦.

4♥ is pretty hopeless, declarer losing at least two aces and two trumps, there being insufficient entries to pick up the suit.

3NT has more hope, and will certainly succeed on a spade lead. South needs to lead his singleton club, and north switch to spades. Dummy must play the 10 to prevent multiple undertricks.

I can't see many defending thus, though the BBO robots frequently successfully lead singletons against NT rather than give away a trick - maybe we could learn from them.

**4**

♠ A954  
♥ A74  
♦ KQ62  
♣ 92

♠ J106  
♥ J105  
♦ 9854  
♣ AKQ

♠ Q832  
♥ Q62  
♦ J10  
♣ J863

♠ K7  
♥ K983  
♦ A73  
♣ 10754

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

West has an awful near-opener, few opening, so N/S will usually find themselves unopposed in 1NT by north, after either a Weak NT opener or rebid following 1♦/1♥.

Whatever east leads declarer should make eight tricks when hearts divide, but diamonds don't. Some could make nine should west fail to realise his diamond pips are a stop. Where north has opened 1♦ he will surely not fall from grace, but might otherwise.

In theory, top score goes to those playing in hearts, a club ruff available in north - I can't see many of these, but there could be a few when north raises south's suit, rather than bidding 1NT. The danger now is getting too high, with south having 10HCP.

**5**

♠ 9  
♥ KQJ8632  
♦ K93  
♣ QJ

♠ A106532      ♠ KQJ87  
♥ A5              ♥ 10  
♦ J852            ♦ Q  
♣ 6                ♣ K109852

♠ 4  
♥ 974  
♦ A10764  
♣ A743

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

This is another where the vulnerable N/S need to be wary of ceding a penalty. There is a case for 1♥, 3♥ or even a higher pre-empt with the north hand.

East is likely to get showing his spades whatever north opens, and it turns out that it is E/W with the makeable game.

Where north opens 1♥ I can see some souths doubling an E/W spade game, holding two aces opposite a vulnerable opener. However, these are the only tricks for the defence.

I expect a few large scores E/W, some penalties when N/S get too high.

**6**

♠ Q8653  
♥ KQJ74  
♦ 76  
♣ 3

♠ A974              ♠ K2  
♥ 10                ♥ 10632  
♦ KQJ94            ♦ 8532  
♣ QJ85            ♣ 1072

♠ J10  
♥ A985  
♦ A10  
♣ AK964

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

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

With two 5 card suits north should bid these down the line when west overcalls south's 1♣ with 1♦, he essaying 1♠. He is too shapely for a sputnik double. Luckily, he gets a chance to show hearts when south rebids 2♣. Some souths could even stretch to reverse into hearts themselves, or rebid their strong NT.

Thus, N/S should get playing the heart game. This is a little awkward on a diamond lead when trumps split 4:0. Declarer needs to pitch a diamond on a top club, then play spades. Repeated diamond leads make it tricky to keep control, but declarer should emerge with 450.

Will everyone manage it?

**7**

♠ Q7653  
♥ A  
♦ Q105  
♣ A1076

♠ A10              ♠ 942  
♥ 1082            ♥ QJ954  
♦ J76432        ♦  
♣ J3              ♣ KQ984

♠ KJ8  
♥ K763  
♦ AK98  
♣ 52

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

This should be N/S in 4♠, after either a south weak N/T and transfer, or after a 1♦ opener and 1NT rebid. Partnerships should have a mechanism, here 2♣, to check whether south has four hearts or three spades. Today, it is the latter north seeks, he rebidding 2♠ over south's 2♥, and getting raised.

Who declares is critical. North cannot be beaten, losing at most a trump and two clubs. He could make an overtrick if diamonds are picked up or south gets a club ruff. By contrast, a diamond opening lead by west sees east ruffing, and west has the trump ace to deliver the killing second ruff.

Will many only make nine tricks?

**8**

♠ 94  
♥ 5  
♦ AKJ10742  
♣ 1042

♠ 762              ♠ QJ5  
♥ J10843        ♥ KQ6  
♦ 5                ♦ 9863  
♣ A753            ♣ QJ8

♠ AK1083  
♥ A972  
♦ Q  
♣ K96

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	5	-	3	4
S	1	6	-	3	4
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

A perfectly reasonable 3♦ pre-empt by north today only succeeds in making it awkward for south. There is serious danger in trying 3NT, in that north's diamonds could prove hard to both establish and run for lack of entries. Today, the good suit saves the day and 3NT rolls home with an overtrick.

Some could try 3♠ with the south hand, and north likely raises to game. 4♠ will rarely succeed, so long as west leads a red suit. A diamond renders the dummy useless, a heart threatens the same as declarer must duck a trump to avoid having a load of heart losers when the defence get in.

Will there be many making N/S games here?

**9**

♠ AQ54  
 ♥ QJ8  
 ♦ A102  
 ♣ AK5  
  
 ♠ K8  
 ♥ A1072  
 ♦ 87  
 ♣ J7642  
  
 ♠ J10976  
 ♥ K64  
 ♦ J63  
 ♣ 109

 Dealer: North  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

North will be in the hot seat again, declaring 4♠ after a 2NT opener and transfer. East does best to try his doubleton diamond to the queen and ace. Now declarer must eschew the trump finesse, playing ace and another, negating any possibility of a ruff.

Of course, this could look silly were the trump king with west, an overtrick spurned. On any other lead declarer can try the finesse, and when it fails, is fortunate to find both diamond honours well placed.

Will any go light, seeking the overtrick?

**10**

♠ J762  
 ♥ Q42  
 ♦ J943  
 ♣ 104  
  
 ♠ K953  
 ♥ A  
 ♦ AK62  
 ♣ AKJ8  
  
 ♠ 84  
 ♥ KJ9753  
 ♦ 7  
 ♣ 7632

 Dealer: East  
 Both Vulnerable

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

It will be interesting to see how the field handles this one. There is a case for opening 1♦, 2♣ or 2NT with the east hand. Over 2NT west could well just raise to game, knowing of a maximum of 32HCP, a bit shy of the 33-34 required for a slam in the absence of a 5 carder somewhere.

Defending NT south is unlikely to lead his long suit, liable to give up a trick to the strong hand, though best today. A passive club lead is the only other suit not to give something away.

Those opening 2♣ (not recommended) or 1♦ just might find the diamond slam, easily made with just the loss of a trump. Indeed, on the book lead of a trump, the suit can actually be picked up without loss, an overtrick possible should the spade lie also be divined.

**11**

♠ AJ98  
 ♥ K542  
 ♦ AK62  
 ♣ 9  
  
 ♠ 52  
 ♥ AQJ976  
 ♦ J4  
 ♣ J103  
  
 ♠ KQ43  
 ♥ 103  
 ♦ 1085  
 ♣ KQ72

 Dealer: South  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

Where north opens 1♦ in third seat east may well make a weak jump in hearts. When south doubles for takeout north is actually best to pass, but is far more likely to bid 3♠, and the pretty hopeless game might ensue.

Over a north Acol 1♥ east passes, but south's 1♠ is likely double raised, though Terence Reece's maxim that 4441 plays badly is true today, and might dampen north's enthusiasm, his simple raise maybe passed out.

Those who miss the game should get a great board. However, switch the defensive aces and 4♠ is cold, east either losing his club ace, or allowing two diamond pitches on the KQ and maybe even eleven tricks. Such is the luck of the game.

**12**

♠ AK532  
 ♥ J82  
 ♦ J632  
 ♣ 3  
  
 ♠ 984  
 ♥ Q65  
 ♦ 1098  
 ♣ J762  
  
 ♠ 1076  
 ♥ AK107  
 ♦ KQ4  
 ♣ 1095

 Dealer: West  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

A west strong NT could easily be passed out, and will make on a low spade lead from north. It looks as if there are nine possible defensive tricks, but the spade blockage means the best N/S can do is record 50.

Where west opens 1♣ north is too weak for a vulnerable overcall, but gets to bid spades when south doubles in the protective seat. However, reaching game looks unlikely.

There are as many as eleven tricks N/S declaring spades when trumps and the two side suits provide the maximum possible tricks. 200 is a lot better than 50.

**13**

♠ 10  
♥ A975  
♦ K8632  
♣ AK7

♠ A943  
♥ Q104  
♦ Q7  
♣ 10965

♠ QJ62  
♥ 63  
♦ J94  
♣ Q842

Dealer: North  
Both Vulnerable

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

West hasn't enough to get involved when south replies 1♠ to north's 1♦. Assuming he is silent north is likely to declare 2♦. Alternatively he might rebid and play 1NT, a slight stretch in Acol.

Neither spot is a thing of beauty, and are both beatable, 1NT probably more easily, so long as the defence find an early heart switch.

2♦ has more of a chance, and could well survive. East has to, rather improbably, find the trump queen opening lead or switch after starting with the spade ace. Trumps then need to be continued to prevent dummy heart ruffs.

So there could well be some positive N/S scores.

**14**

♠ 85  
♥ QJ108542  
♦ Q754

♠ KQ10954  
♥ AKJ2

♠ J3  
♥ 109643  
♦ AK9  
♣ AK3

♠ A8762  
♥ Q7  
♦ 763  
♣ 1062

Dealer: East  
Neither Vulnerable

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

West will be rather nervous of his trump suit when it is jump raised by east after being introduced in response to east's 1♠. East could even splinter in diamonds, this unlikely to excite west, holding wasted values in the suit.

Few will find the heart slam, whether or not north makes a nuisance of himself, bidding diamonds. 6♥ is a comfortable make, despite the A/K of diamonds being redundant, so long as trumps are picked up. In the unlikely event of east declaring a spade ruff defeats it.

6♠ is perhaps a better spot, even with the 5:0 break, and some might find it.

**15**

♠ KQJ63  
♥ AJ109  
♦ A732  
♣

♠ 2  
♥ Q732  
♦ Q4  
♣ KQ7543

♠ A10954  
♥ 86  
♦ J10  
♣ 9862

Dealer: South  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Whether or not west opens a thin 1♦ north should get bidding spades. A double is unsuitable, as south might well bid clubs. East could make a weak jump in clubs. Either way south has a pre-emptive bounce to 4♠.

It is important that partnerships have methods to distinguish between sound and pre-emptive raises. Otherwise, the original bidder has no idea whether to look for a possible slam. Slowly, maybe via a cue of the opponents' suit, with a decent raise, a pre-emptive jump with a limited hand, is the normal agreement.

Today, it looks a pretty flat board, most in game, eleven tricks there in spades, with little chance of more or fewer - unless someone gets carried away, light in the hopeless slam, there being two unavoidable red suit losers.

**16**

♠ Q92  
♥ K  
♦ Q107542  
♣ Q98

♠ J5  
♥ 109743  
♦ AJ  
♣ J1032

♠ AK873  
♥ J  
♦ K986  
♣ K64

♠ 1064  
♥ AQ8652  
♦ 3  
♣ A75

Dealer: West  
E-W Vulnerable

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

With defensive values and a poor suit north is best not to jump in diamonds over west's 1♠, east bidding 1NT. Should south bid 2♥ west has an easy "extra values" double, and east be happy to pass.

In the event 2♥x is not seriously damaged, likely only one light. However, this could be better for E/W than declaring. Although they can theoretically make 2♠ or 2NT for a bigger score the play is not easy, and some could easily go minus.

Where north does bid diamonds he is liable to go for a decent penalty.

**17**

♠ 10976  
♥ 97543  
♦ Q7  
♣ K10

♠ AKJ  
♥ 1086  
♦ K42  
♣ AQ52

♠ Q852  
♥ AKQJ  
♦ 10986  
♣ 3

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

An east strong NT is presumably passed out, unless south decides to show his majors at love all. This will only have the effect of pushing E/W into their club fit, also found where east opens the suit or west transfers to the suit.

Declaring NT, declarer is fortunate that the defence can only take four heart tricks. When clubs are picked up nine tricks result.

The same score should eventuate where E/W declare clubs, unless declarer is inspired enough to drop the diamond queen, in which case 170 will actually beat the no trumpers' 150.

**18**

♠ AQ972  
♥ K8654  
♦ AK  
♣ 9

♠ 85  
♥ Q1097  
♦ 98542  
♣ 102

♠ J106  
♥ J  
♦ 10  
♣ AKQ76543

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

South may well try either a 5♣ or 3NT (long solid minor) pre-empt. This rather puts it to north, who has no way of being certain that twelve tricks are there. Few will risk it, as it looks as if two major suit finesses might be needed. The eighth club means only one is required, and both work as it happens.

Defending the gambling 3NT the classic lead by west is his ace, wise, as otherwise it is lost when the spade finesse succeeds, 520 on the card.

The play is similar when declarer declares clubs, a heart going on diamonds and the spade finesse resulting in all thirteen unless west starts with his ace.

I cannot see any sensible route to the reasonable slam. Will any just punt it?

**19**

♠ 1098  
♥ K983  
♦ Q865  
♣ 94

♠ 742  
♥ 1072  
♦ A1072  
♣ 1052

♠ K63  
♥ AQJ5  
♦ J3  
♣ K873

♠ AQJ5  
♥ 64  
♦ K94  
♣ AQJ6

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

This time it is south's strong NT passed out, and it is a touch and go affair. West is best to start with hearts and play east for the 10. However, declarer should still manage to record three spades two clubs, a diamond and heart, scraping home. Some could record an overtrick when a low club from west forces east's 10, and results in a third trick in the suit.

Holding hearts, west might double the alternative Acol 1♠ opener, otherwise it too is passed out, probably recording the same tricks.

Where west does intervene he is likely to record a bigger minus than defending, so discretion when vulnerable looks wise.

**20**

♠ K4  
♥ AK7  
♦ 1094  
♣ KJ963

♠ Q1083  
♥ J986  
♦ Q7  
♣ A72

♠ A9752  
♥ 103  
♦ 632  
♣ Q105

♠ J6  
♥ Q542  
♦ AKJ85  
♣ 84

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

A north weak NT will lead to the NT game after a failing Stayman enquiry. This is decidedly uncomfortable after a low spade lead. Declarer may well try the diamond 10 now, hoping for a cover by east. When this is not forthcoming some will drop the queen, and survive. Those that finesse go at least two light.

N/S are much better declaring a red suit, but it is hard to see this happening unless north opens 1♣ and east thinks it is smart to overcall spades vulnerable with his rubbish.

Looks like a lot of minuses N/S.



**21**

♠ K1072  
♥ K9752  
♦ 93  
♣ 84

♠ A6  
♥ J104  
♦ A1074  
♣ Q973

♠ 854  
♥ 863  
♦ K85  
♣ AJ52

♠ QJ93  
♥ AQ  
♦ QJ62  
♣ K106

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Acol easily finds the spade fit when south opens 1♠. There is some danger of getting too high, but south would be wise to simply pass the 2♠ raise, knowing of limited values opposite.

By contrast, a south strong NT will see south in the inferior 2♥ spot after a transfer - unless NS are playing "Garbage" Stayman - nowadays most play the convention as promising at least a 2NT raise.

In practice, both major suit contracts will often make nine tricks. Defending 2♥ it takes west to improbably find ace and another spade lead or diamond lead and spade switch. This prematurely kills north's entry to pull trumps, and ensures a defensive spade ruff.

**22**

♠ A109872  
♥ K10  
♦ 973  
♣ 109

♠ KQJ653  
♥ 7  
♦ QJ2  
♣ J43

♠ 4  
♥ AQJ64  
♦ 64  
♣ AKQ65

♠ 98532  
♥ AK1085  
♦ 872

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

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

North will be licking his lips when west rebids 2♠ after east's 1♥ and 2♣ rebid. Left in 2♠ west can actually make, pitching a winning club on east's heart ace after a successful finesse, and north later end-played in trumps. However, few will do so. Some could be doubled and defeated.

East is far more likely to continue with 3♣ and west may well give up. 3♣ can make as many as ten tricks. West could just about stretch to 3NT. This is an extremely lucky make when hearts play for three tricks, and the defence must allow declarer a spade or diamond trick.

Will any have 600 on the card, bidding a contract I wouldn't recommend?

**23**

♠ A2  
♥ K872  
♦ QJ10  
♣ Q832

♠ J107  
♥ Q105  
♦ A652  
♣ K95

♠ Q643  
♥ A643  
♦ K9  
♣ 1064

♠ K985  
♥ J9  
♦ 8743  
♣ AJ7

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

This one might be passed out, north not fancying a vulnerable weak NT in third seat. 5 card majors will open 1♣, and north likely finish in the same 1NT.

The defence to this contract is complex. East needs to start with a spade to the 8,10 and ace. He wins a top diamond and continues spades, west's pips just good enough. Should declarer play clubs instead west needs to find a low heart switch to the ace and east continue spades.

In practice, few will be defeated except where declarer goes wrong, or south improbably declares.

**24**

♠ KQ9875  
♥ A  
♦ K10742  
♣ 8

♠ 4  
♥ J1083  
♦ AQJ98  
♣ K75

♠ A  
♥ KQ97654  
♦ 3  
♣ Q962

♠ J10632  
♥ 2  
♦ 65  
♣ AJ1043

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

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

N/S have a big spade fit here and south surely blasts game when north overcalls west's 1♦ with 1♠. Holding decent support and a singleton west could advance to 5♥, supporting east's suit, bid over 1♠.

Orthodox wisdom is that the 5 level belongs to the opponents, but this is wrong here, both sides having an eleven card fit. The Law of Total tricks (see #1) correctly predicts 22, so N/S need to advance to 5♠ and E/W sacrifice in 6♥.

Will most get this one right, N/S scoring a paltry 100? I reckon a lot will be allowed to play 5♠. "The 5 level belongs the the opponents" isn't always right.

**25**

♠ J10  
♥ 32  
♦ A985  
♣ K9653

♠ K4  
♥ AQJ109  
♦ 10642  
♣ A2

♠ Q7632  
♥ K8  
♦ QJ  
♣ QJ107

♠ A985  
♥ 7654  
♦ K73  
♣ 84

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

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

When east opens 1♠ west will respond 2♥ and surely drive to game, presumably 3NT, though either could declare, depending on how the auction proceeds.

It looks like it needs a diamond lead to set up five defensive tricks, but there are entry problems on any lead, so declarer should be defeated however he plays.

Will any let this one through, or some stay low, getting a small plus?

**26**

♠ 5  
♥ J109873  
♦ Q73  
♣ K92

♠ 1084  
♥ 6  
♦ J10984  
♣ 7643

♠ AKJ76  
♥ AQ542  
♦  
♣ AQ8

♠ Q932  
♥ K  
♦ AK652  
♣ J105

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

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

Hands like east's are best started by opening a suit, else pre-emptive action by the opponents could cause problems getting both suits into the auction. In any case 2♣ is an over-statement.

East will get showing his hearts on the second round, after diamond intervention, and might or might not drive to game after being given preference. Some norths may bid hearts, which will not enthuse east.

In the event 4♠ cannot be defeated, declarer felling the heart king and ruffing his other hearts in dummy. He might easily manage eleven tricks if the top clubs are cashed early after a finesse. Only a trump lead holds it, and few will find that.

**27**

♠ 10  
♥ 764  
♦ AQ104  
♣ AJ963

♠ 7643  
♥ J98  
♦ KJ5  
♣ Q105

♠ KJ85  
♥ Q102  
♦ 872  
♣ K84

♠ AQ92  
♥ AK53  
♦ 963  
♣ 72

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

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

Deep Finesse finds and make a diamond slam here, picking up trumps, ruffing clubs good and finessing the spade queen. I cannot see any in that strain, never mind bidding slam.

It looks like a universal 3NT, and with every card right, and all the suits breaking, declarer will have no problem making, in theory, eleven tricks, in practice quite possibly twelve tricks at many tables. It needs a major suit lead to stop them. Anything else takes one of south's four finesses for him.

Will there be many 490s on the card?

**28**

♠ A54  
♥ 94  
♦ A1064  
♣ A854

♠ QJ98632  
♥ A52  
♦ 8  
♣ 97

♠ 7  
♥ J  
♦ KQJ9752  
♣ KQJ10

♠ K10  
♥ KQ108763  
♦ 3  
♣ 632

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

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

N/S can make 3NT or 4♥ on our last offering, but have no sound intervention over west's 3♠ pre-empt. 3♠ should be defeated at least one trick and most of the field's score will revolve around the second undertrick.

It needs a trump lead, or top diamond followed by trump switch, to take six tricks in defense. This could be found at some tables. The alternative club ace or heart lead leave the defence a tempo behind.

E/W can do better in diamonds, but the pre-empt means the suit will rarely see the light of day.

So completes an interesting set, with defensive and judgement issues aplenty. It is hoped they proved enjoyable.

Ave HCP	N 10.00	S 10.00	E 9.93	W 10.07	Balanced	N 8	S 13	E 12	W 14
Voids/singletons	N 2/15	S 2/12	E 3/11	W 1/10	7+ suit	N 4	S 3	E 3	W 1