

The Scottish Women's Team.



Fiona, Liz, Paula, Anne, Helen, Sam

This is the first time we have qualified for the World Championships.

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The Valentine Pairs

11-15 February 2019

A fund-raising Simultaneous Pairs organised by the Scottish Bridge Union on behalf of its Women's Team

Commentary by Team Captain Alex Adamson

Welcome to the final day of the European Championships! Yes, it has been a tough week, but with three matches to go you are on the verge of qualifying for the World Championships in China.

That's the position that the Scottish Women's team found themselves in last summer in Ostend. Tonight we will be playing through the first two of the three matches on the final day. You will, of course, be playing match points, but in this commentary you can see how your scores compare to those of the top women's teams in Europe. A guide score is provided on each hand, showing the average score in Ostend, and there is a scorecard for you to compare your scores with.

In the first match, Scotland played Norway, who were lying third and in the hunt for a medal. Scotland occupied the eighth and final World Championship qualifying spot.

Scotland v Norway

1	♠JT983 ♥4 ♦QJ62 ♣K64	None Vul Dealer N	♠AQ4 ♥KQJT7 ♦A9 ♣J82
	♠62 ♥A83 ♦8743 ♣AQ95		♠K75 ♥9652 ♦KT5 ♣T73

Some EW pairs will have to deal with a Lucas 2♠ by North, and that may be why one pair in Ostend played 3NT. Everyone else found their heart fit and played in 4♥. A diamond lead is best for the defence (no-one found that) holding declarer to 10 tricks. A spade lead is worst, likely to lead to 12 tricks. In our match Norway gained an IMP with 450 against the Scottish 420.

NS Guide score: -450.

2	♠- ♥KQJ8542 ♦AQ9 ♣K83	NS Vul Dealer E	♠JT98762 ♥A ♦8 ♣Q764
	♠53 ♥T76 ♦KT75 ♣A952		♠AKQ4 ♥93 ♦J6432 ♣JT

Will East open? If so how high? 4♥ by North was the normal contract but those EW pairs bold enough to go to 4♠ gave NS a real problem. 4♠ was doubled twice, losing 300 and 500. Most Norths competed to 5♥ and found that was too high. A spade lead gives access to the dummy but only 2 discards can be taken before West ruffs in. Scotland gained 12 IMPs, making 4♥ as NS, and beating 5♥ as EW.

NS Guide score: +420

3	♠A632 ♥Q ♦AJ ♣KT8652	EW Vul Dealer S	♠- ♥AKJT95 ♦K97532 ♣3
	♠QJT854 ♥74 ♦QT84 ♣Q		♠K97 ♥8632 ♦6 ♣AJ974

This hand was played by all four players, and in every denomination, from the 2- to the 6-level. 2♦ was the lowest contract, 6♦x the highest. 5 of a minor was the highest making contract for each side. Needless to say, there were massive swings in many matches. A guide score is meaningless, but the two EW pairs in 2♦ ended up about the middle of the scoresheet. (On both occasions West's Multi 2♦ was passed out.) Scotland gained 7 imps.

So, how did you do in these matches? Scotland's big wins were enough to put them into a strong 7th place, and all but certain qualification for the World Championship.

You can score up against the guide scores and see how you would be placed going into the final round.

Board	NS	EW	+IMPs	-IMPs
1		450		
2	420			
3		150		
4	100			
5		400		
6		170		
7		100		
8	100			
9		650		
10	0	0		
11		420		
12		170		
13	680			
14		400		
15		110		
16	130			

Board	NS	EW	+IMPs	-IMPs
17	400			
18		420		
19		170		
20	170			
21	170			
22	460			
23		200		
24		400		
25		110		
26		680		
27	420			
28	630			
29	630			
30		50		
31		140		
32		50		

How did the second match go for you? If you only played eight of the boards then you can double your IMPs if you are plus, and assume that the rest were flat if you are minus.

Based on 24 boards played:

+75 IMPs	Fantastic scoring! You have qualified for the World Championship with a match to spare!
+38 to +74	You go into the last match in 7 th place – you need to pick up a few VPs to get to the World Championship
+30 to +37	You go into the last round neck-and-neck with France for 7 th place. A small loss in the last round will assure you of qualification.
+10 to +29	You go into the last round neck-and-neck with Russia for 8 th place. A win will guarantee qualification for the World Championship
-10 to +9	You are going to have to win your last match, and outscore Russia if you are to get the final qualifying place.
-22 to -11	You are going to have to get a good win and hope that Russia lose in the last round
-37 to -23	It's not over yet, but it's close. Win big and hope that Russia collapse
-38 or more	You've had a great run. Enjoy the last match.

29	♠AK52 ♥AQ62 ♦Q94 ♣J2	All Vul Dealer N			
♠J763 ♥KJ87 ♦K75 ♣93	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠QT8 ♥T543 ♦T82 ♣KQ8
N					
W E					
S					
	♠94 ♥9 ♦AJ63 ♣AT7654				

31	♠KJ ♥KQJ5 ♦A74 ♣KQ97	NS Vul Dealer S			
♠A63 ♥9642 ♦KQ8 ♣AT2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠QT9842 ♥A83 ♦J6 ♣64
N					
W E					
S					
	♠75 ♥T7 ♦T9532 ♣J853				

3♣ by West was -1, but 3NT by South came home when West didn't lead a heart.
NS Guide Score: -150

4	♠9532 ♥A2 ♦T932 ♣AK3	All Vul, Dealer, W			
♠QT7 ♥Q85 ♦K65 ♣J982	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠K6 ♥KT976 ♦A874 ♣T7
N					
W E					
S					
	♠AJ84 ♥J43 ♦QJ ♣Q654				

Did you open? You don't get many passed out hands in international bridge and at 21 of the 22 tables we had an auction. NS pairs allowed to play in 2♠ will do well, making 8 tricks easily enough, but tonight you are playing Pairs: what do you do if EW bid 3♥? Going on to 3♣ is likely to prove fatal. 3♥-1 will score poorly for NS, though it will be 2 down if declarer misguesses trump. NS need to double to ensure a good score. This was a flat board: Scotland lost 100 in 3♥-1 and gained 110 by making 2♠.

NS Guide Score: +100

5	♠KQT874 ♥K62 ♦4 ♣843	NS Vul Dealer N			
♠A95 ♥3 ♦K875 ♣AKQ62	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠62 ♥QT85 ♦AQJT ♣T75
N					
W E					
S					
	♠J3 ♥AJ974 ♦9632 ♣J9				

A good, solid weak 2♠ from North will not keep EW out of the bidding, but may keep them out of game. A reopening 3♣ from West could well be passed out, and the alternative 2NT is not too appealing. Most

EW pairs reached game in Ostend. 3NT was the most common spot but 5♦ is also good. Scotland gained 7 IMPs for 3NT+1 as EW and defending 3♣+2 as NS.

NS Guide Score: +400

6	♠A7 ♥K8762 ♦QJ2 ♣876	EW Vul Dealer E			
♠KT8642 ♥95 ♦3 ♣AJT2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠9 ♥AQT4 ♦AK987 ♣Q33
N					
W E					
S					
	♠QJ53 ♥J3 ♦T654 ♣K94				

EW have good hands but they fit poorly. Thanks to the kind lie of heart and club kings and her good spade pips, West can make 4♠ by giving up 3 trump tricks. Not an easy game to bid or play. 3NT offers other lines, but also requires a nice lie of the cards. Just over half the pairs stopped in partscore, but in the Norway-Scotland match both tried game. Scotland made 3NT+1; the Norwegian West was -1 in 4♠.

NS Guide Score: +170

7	♠AK5 ♥KJ42 ♦Q863 ♣A3	All Vul Dealer S			
♠QT9863 ♥AT73 ♦J ♣J2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠72 ♥9 ♦AT92 ♣K98764
N					
W E					
S					
	♠J4 ♥Q865 ♦K754 ♣QT5				

NS have 25 points and an 8-card heart fit. Most pairs will play 4♥, though some pre-emptive action by West might push a few people towards 3NT. With the red suits lying horribly all declarers in game went down, often 2 down.

In Ostend, one pair played (and made) 5♣. 21 other NSs were in the more obvious 3NT and all but three made it. I can see no reason other than tiredness to find a losing line. Even if declarer gets clubs wrong and makes only four club tricks there seem to be enough tricks. Portugal gained an IMP by making 11 tricks against Scotland's 10.

NS Guide score: +630

30	♠Q952 ♥Q6 ♦J864 ♣J62	None Vul Dealer E			
♠T83 ♥AT97 ♦AQ ♣KT95	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠AKJ64 ♥85 ♦93 ♣Q873
N					
W E					
S					
	♠7 ♥KJ432 ♦KT752 ♣A4				

Do you open the East hand? Probably not – you'll come in again later, right? At some tables South opened 1♥, West passed and North responded 1♠. South's 2♦ rebid ended the auction, and the contract could not be beaten. Six EW pairs tried 4♠, all but one successful. The middle of the scoresheet belonged to EW pairs with a small plus score. Portugal had a great board, making 2♦ NS and 4♠ EW, but 11 IMPs could not salvage their score.

NS Guide score: -50

I imagine few will reach this partscore battle tonight. Very few IMPs swung in Ostend but there are a lot of fine judgments to be made in the play and defence at matchpoints. North's bidding will give a strong indication as to the position of the spade honours so East is likely to make 9 tricks in spades. If NS play the hand they should score well if they can escape for -1. In our match both NSs played 3♦-1.

NS Guide score: -140

32	♠AKQT832 ♥K8 ♦86 ♣94	EW Vul Dealer W			
♠96 ♥QT95 ♦A42 ♣KQT8	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠J5 ♥76 ♦KQT953 ♣AJ7
N					
W E					
S					
	♠74 ♥AJ432 ♦J7 ♣6532				

Well done if you stopped in a making partscore. A lot of NSs tried 4♠ with its four top losers, often doubled, Three EW pairs tried the equally flawed 5♦ and one pair reached 6♣! With all this overbidding going on an average score on the hand was to be had for going one down undoubled. Our match finished with a second consecutive flat board in 4♠-1.

NS Guide score: -50.

A flat board in our match. The Norwegian NS played 4♥, the Scots tried 3NT, both -2. The real outlier on the scoresheet was a magnificent +870 for England: their EW pair made 2♠x +1.

NS Guide score: -100

8	♠AQ8632 ♥KJ94 ♦QJ ♣7	None Vul Dealer W									
♠K7 ♥Q86 ♦A63 ♣QJ965	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠J4 ♥A753 ♦K52 ♣AT42
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠T95 ♥T2 ♦T9874 ♣K83										

Does 12 opposite 12 and no fit equal 3NT? Three-quarters of the EWs in Ostend thought so – they all went down. Played by West a spade lead gives declarer her fourth trick so if the club finesse worked she would have nine. The Norwegian EW opted to defend 3♠, one off. Scotland were in 3NT and North led the ♦Q. When South got in with the ♣K there were six spade tricks to take for -2 and 6 IMPs to Norway.

NS Guide Score: +100

9	♠Q7 ♥J2 ♦932 ♣J98432	EW Vul Dealer N									
♠AKT ♥K654 ♦J7 ♣KT65	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠J98632 ♥QT9 ♦A ♣AQ7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠54 ♥A873 ♦KQT8654 ♣-										

If South gets any hint of diamond support from North she will not be willing to defend 4♠, maybe not even 5♠. The score sheet

shows five pairs in 5♦x and four in 6♦x. With 650 or 680 available for NS the aim was to lose no more than 500, which most managed. Top marks to Italy who went on to 6♠ over 6♦ and played North for the ♥J. Norway pulled back 5 IMPs, playing 5♦x-3 as NS and 4♠+2 as EW.

NS Guide Score: -650

10	♠JT87 ♥A8 ♦KT93 ♣Q65	All Vul Dealer E									
♠962 ♥KJ3 ♦QJ2 ♣AJ43	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠AQ543 ♥95 ♦A754 ♣T7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠K ♥QT7642 ♦86 ♣K982										

International women's bridge is a not for the faint-hearted. This deal saw a lot of competitive bidding with most pairs pushing too high. Only six declarers managed to bring their contracts home. NS competed in hearts, going down. EW were mostly in spades, with a couple trying game. If you got a plus score, either way, then you are probably above average. The Scottish EW pair got to 3♠-2, at the other table the hand was passed out. That was the middle result on the score sheet.

NS Guide score: 0 (no bidding)

11	♠9 ♥AQJ932 ♦32 ♣J843	None Vul Dealer S									
♠AKQT7 ♥75 ♦JT ♣Q976	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠J6532 ♥K64 ♦A85 ♣AT
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠84 ♥T8 ♦KQ9764 ♣K52										

The key to this hand is East's club suit. Were these values in her other suits then EW would likely make 4♠. From the NS viewpoint, this club split dooms 5♣. Not surprisingly, a few pairs got too high. Two NS pairs went down in club contracts and six EW pairs in spades. Most of the time, people were playing, and making, a spade partscore. Scotland made eight tricks in 2♠ while Portugal were one down in 4♠. That gave them 2 IMPs.

NS Guide score: -110

26	♠T8754 ♥6 ♦76 ♣A6542	All Vul Dealer E									
♠AK96 ♥AQ84 ♦K ♣QJT8	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠QJ32 ♥JT7532 ♦AJ3 ♣-
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠- ♥K9 ♦QT98542 ♣K976										

In the high majority of cases, I would expect EW to declare this board in hearts – but at what level? 13 tricks can be made by taking the trump finesse, but that would run the slight risk of running into a ruff. At teams, making 6♥ would be very satisfactory – something managed at five tables. The Portuguese EW pair competed in diamonds, and got to the five level. Scotland took the money, which came to 1400. This might have been a small gain for Portugal, but their EW pair stopped in 4♥ so it was a loss of 12 IMPs. The biggest swing came in Belgium – Hungary where Belgian bid and made 6♥ while the Hungarian EW pair had a catastrophe: they played in 2♦ in the 3-1 fit, losing 300 and 18 IMPs.

NS Guide score: -680

27	♠AQ7642 ♥K ♦KQ9 ♣AJ5	None Vul Dealer S									
♠K985 ♥Q ♦J87532 ♣43	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠J3 ♥AJ72 ♦AT64 ♣K72
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠T ♥T986543 ♦- ♣QT986										

A couple of EW pairs bought this in 3♦, and one pair played 5♦x-2, but mostly this was a NS hand. The eight-card heart fit plays much better than the seven-card spade fit. Partly down to the extra trump but mostly because the South hand is of little use in spades but the North hand is still valuable in hearts. Thanks to the kind lie in trump, two hearts and a club are the only obvious losers. 10 tricks proved to be the norm. Scotland gained 10 IMPs by playing in 4♥; Portugal were in 3♠-1.

NS Guide score: +420

28	♠A7 ♥T874 ♦AQ82 ♣KQ5	NS Vul Dealer W									
♠KT8 ♥K93 ♦J765 ♣T87	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠9632 ♥Q65 ♦T43 ♣A42
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠QJ54 ♥AJ2 ♦K9 ♣J963										

The whole field played in 3NT by North, mostly making 10 tricks. Two pairs held themselves to 8 tricks – one (Portugal) on a lead of the ♠6, one on a small club. Declarer persuaded herself to finesse the ♣9 on the third round of the suit. Scotland made 9 tricks to gain 12 IMPs.

NS Guide score: +630

22	♠AT ♥K6 ♦653 ♣QT9853	EW Vul Dealer E			
♠K9874 ♥987432 ♦Q9 ♣-	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠Q62 ♥J5 ♦J82 ♣A7642
N					
W E					
S					
	♠J53 ♥AQT ♦AKT74 ♣KJ				

3NT by North is a fine contract, and was a popular choice in Ostend. 3NT by South may look good too, but try it on a low spade lead. Whether the Ace is played on the first or second round of the suit declarer will go down: she does not have enough tricks to take before East gets in and plays a spade back to West. If South is declarer you need to avoid the spade lead in 3NT or to try 5♦, not that there will be many matchpoints for +400. Scotland right-sided 3NT and made 12 tricks. Portugal wrong-sided it and went one down. 11 IMPs to Scotland.

NS Guide score: +460

23	♠8 ♥953 ♦763 ♣AQJ876	All Vul Dealer S			
♠KJ974 ♥AQ876 ♦KT ♣K	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠QT6 ♥KJT ♦QJ9852 ♣9
N					
W E					
S					
	♠A532 ♥42 ♦A4 ♣T5432				

This deal hinges on how much pressure NS can put their opponents under. EW have an easy looking 4♣, with just three Aces to lose. But NS have a good sacrifice in 5♣. That only goes one down, losing a diamond and two hearts. If EW go on to 5♠ that will be one down, and NS probably get a good score

even if they take the phantom sacrifice in 6♣. Nine EW pairs were pushed too high in Ostend, including the Portuguese pair. The Scots were allowed to play in 4♣. That meant a third consecutive double figure swing to Scotland.

NS Guide score: -200

24	♠J9 ♥T742 ♦Q54 ♣KJ62	None Vul Dealer W			
♠AT3 ♥AK83 ♦T876 ♣A3	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠Q76 ♥Q9 ♦KJ93 ♣Q954
N					
W E					
S					
	♠K8542 ♥J65 ♦A2 ♣T87				

EW have 27 points between them and will no doubt play in 3NT, as did the entire field in Ostend. Despite all the high cards, this is not a straightforward make. There are many winning lines, and a few losing ones – especially if the defence gives nothing away. A heart lead from North presented the most difficulty. It doesn't set up anything for declarer, and eventually the defence can establish a trick in the suit. Portugal made 10 tricks and Scotland 9.

NS guide score: -400

25	♠A53 ♥J32 ♦74 ♣J8432	EW Vul Dealer N			
♠KQJT74 ♥Q76 ♦QJ62 ♣-	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠982 ♥K984 ♦T3 ♣AQT5
N					
W E					
S					
	♠6 ♥AT5 ♦AK985 ♣K976				

For once, the score sheet was dominated by one result: 20 of the 22 pairs played in 4♣ making 10 tricks, including both pairs in Norway-Scotland. The two exceptions were both good for NS. Somehow, a 3♦ opening by the Swedish South was passed out and only one down. If that was too cautious by EW, Belgium were too optimistic, reaching 5♠ - one too high.

NS Guide score: -420

12	♠T8 ♥KQT7 ♦Q852 ♣A98	NS Vul Dealer W			
♠AJ42 ♥AJ43 ♦T ♣KJ54	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠9753 ♥9 ♦AJ764 ♣Q72
N					
W E					
S					
	♠KQ6 ♥8652 ♦K93 ♣T63				

Doesn't this hand fit well, and lie well, for EW? No adverse club ruff, no nasty surprise in trumps and a great red suit cross-ruff available with no unfortunate overruff. Declarers made a lot of tricks in spades, up to 11, but only seven were in game. NS played the hand only once, a 3♥ contract that was lucky to make 6 tricks: -300 was an ugly score. Norway-Scotland both made 11 tricks in partscore.

NS Guide score -170

13	♠A93 ♥KT5 ♦KQJ ♣K973	All Vul Dealer N			
♠KQ65 ♥Q4 ♦4 ♣J86542	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠JT742 ♥63 ♦9652 ♣AQ
N					
W E					
S					
	♠8 ♥AJ9872 ♦AT873 ♣T				

NS have only 25 points between them but some will get to slam. How good is 6♥? You are fine if trumps are 2-2; or if they are 3-1 with a singleton Queen; and with such good pips you can pick up all 4 trumps with East provided you cash the ♥K first. That makes it about 57%. Five pairs in our event bid 6♥. One declarer went down, presumably by taking a losing finesse in trump. Norway played in game but Scotland made the slam. The 13 IMP swing pushed the lead up to 34 IMPs.

NS Guide score: +680

14	♠K7 ♥9742 ♦9 ♣AQJ982	None Vul Dealer E			
♠9832 ♥Q63 ♦A864 ♣T6	<table border="1"> <tr><td>N</td></tr> <tr><td>W E</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠AT6 ♥AKT ♦KQJT732 ♣-
N					
W E					
S					
	♠QJ54 ♥J85 ♦5 ♣K7543				

You may well have played, or defended 5♦, as happened at 16 tables in our tournament. Six pairs thought that this combined 23 count was worth a shot at slam, half making and half going down. A club was a common lead. How should East play? She cannot discard a spade from her hand so an endplay is the only hope. Trumps are drawn and clubs and hearts eliminated. Then on the ♠A North has to play the King – if not, she is going to be on lead, forced to give a ruff and discard. She should manage that. However, if a skilful declarer leads a spade towards the Ace early in the play it is far harder for North to put the King up. Scotland bid slam, Norway played game: both made 12 tricks so Scotland gained another 11 IMPs.

NS Guide score: -400

15	♠983 ♥K65 ♦AQ9 ♣KJ65	NS Vul Dealer S									
♠AK7 ♥A742 ♦82 ♣T832	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠Q6542 ♥J8 ♦KT76 ♣97
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠JT ♥QT93 ♦J543 ♣AQ4										

EW can make 2♠ on this board, and that was what happened at most tables. You may wonder how they get into the bidding. A number of pairs were systematically opening most balanced 11 counts, so West started the auction with 1♣. Where West passed, North opened 1♠ and South responded 1♦, there was a chance for West to make an off-centre double. A couple of Norths got to play, and make, 1NT. While few IMPs changed hands I can see this being hard-fought at match points. Norway declared in both rooms, one down in 3♣ NS, making 2♠ EW for no swing.

NS Guide score: -110

16	♠AT8 ♥K954 ♦KJ75 ♣65	EW Vul Dealer W									
♠QJ964 ♥T73 ♦T ♣Q743	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠K53 ♥J62 ♦Q98 ♣AKJT
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠72 ♥AQ8 ♦A6432 ♣982										

Another tight partscore deal. EW have 8 tricks in spades, NS have 10 tricks in diamonds, discarding the losing spade on the fourth heart. NS generally won out this time with 3♦ being the most common contract even though, like board 15, it is not obvious how they got into the auction. I would not be

surprised if a lot of EW pairs play 2♠ in the Valentines Pairs. In our match Norway gained an IMP by scoring +130 in 3♦, to Scotland's +90.

NS Guide score: +130

The final score: **Scotland 62 Norway 18.**

In the penultimate round Scotland played twelfth-placed Portugal.

17	♠A954 ♥AQ2 ♦AJ3 ♣853	None Vul Dealer N									
♠J87 ♥53 ♦K865 ♣AT76	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠T32 ♥JT64 ♦Q97 ♣K94
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠KQ6 ♥K987 ♦T42 ♣QJ2										

26 points and two flat hands. 3NT all round the room? Yes, for once 22 tables of internationalists produced an almost flat board. The only variation was whether declarer made 9 tricks or 10. Mostly North was declarer. What would a good player lead from the East hand? All four suits were tried, but the most common choice was the heart that didn't put declarer under any pressure. Scotland gained an IMP.

NS Guide score: +400

18	♠T7 ♥AJT95 ♦752 ♣742	NS Vul Dealer E									
♠QJ863 ♥Q832 ♦AQ4 ♣K	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠K954 ♥7 ♦KT3 ♣QJT86
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠A2 ♥K64 ♦J986 ♣A953										

EW will do well to reach 4♠. That should make, losing one trick in each of spades, hearts and clubs. A weak NT from South may make life too hard for some EW pairs. In Ostend, 16 pairs bid game, 6 languished in partscore. A few sneaked 11 tricks when the ♣K was allowed to score. The Scottish EW were amongst those with their bidding boots on, recording +420. The Portuguese EW stopped in 2♠. 6 IMPs to Scotland.

NS Guide score: -420

19	♠AQJ2 ♥T843 ♦Q ♣K643	EW Vul Dealer S									
♠965 ♥KJ ♦K4 ♣QJT852	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠T7 ♥AQ765 ♦AJ732 ♣A
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠K843 ♥92 ♦T9865 ♣97										

After a clear-cut NS board, followed by a clear-cut EW board, this one was all over the place. Many EW pairs played in hearts, making a wide variety of tricks. At one extreme, Iceland played 2♥ making 8 tricks. At the other Finland played 4♥ making all 13! While many made 4♥, four went down, as did the West in 5♣, and the North in 4♠. Scotland picked up 2 overtrick IMPs in 4♥.

NS Guide score: -170

20	♠A953 ♥AKJ53 ♦KQ6 ♣K	All Vul Dealer W									
♠KJ4 ♥Q982 ♦AJ97 ♣43	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠QT72 ♥4 ♦T8 ♣QJ9865
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠86 ♥T76 ♦5432 ♣AT72										

This deal was about North pushing into game, then seeing if she could make it. Two pairs tried 3NT without success. 4♥ proved a better contest. East was dealt an obvious ♣Q lead. Declarer could organise one spade ruff in the dummy, but was still short of tricks, with a number of options as to how to play on. Eight declarers made game, seven went off. In our match both NS pairs were one down. The middle of the scoresheet belonged to those who stopped in partscore and had an easy make.

NS Guide score: -170

21	♠A53 ♥83 ♦AKQ4 ♣A983	NS Vul Dealer N									
♠Q62 ♥AKJ54 ♦T9 ♣KQ5	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠K ♥Q62 ♦J753 ♣J7642
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠JT9874 ♥T97 ♦862 ♣T										

EW have the majority of the points but only managed to declare at six of the 22 tables, and five of these went down. So this deal belongs to NS – thanks to the spades. It should be easy to win the auction if North opens a strong notrump; over one of a minor South may never bid. The scoresheet was dominated by +140s and +170s. Three pairs got to game and two of them, including the Scottish pair, made 4♠. There are three obvious losers – a trump and two hearts. The problem is South's third heart. Diamonds don't break so it has to be ruffed in dummy. Once you have done that you are left with little option but to lay down the ♠A and hope for a 2-2 split or a singleton honour. Happy days! Portugal tried an ambitious 3NT with five top losers, so Scotland gained 12 IMPs.

NS Guide score: +170