

# ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021



**Together we can ...**

... and by competing in this Simultaneous Pairs you have once again certainly shown that **together we can indeed do something to help make a difference** to children who really need our help.

Some of you will be playing Face-to-Face and others online but all the results will be included in the overall scoring so don't worry!

Thank you so so much for coming along and joining in, playing and donating – please don't forget the donating bit though, will you – just go to :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/donate/>

and you will see how you can do it – if you haven't already done so of course!

Our thanks to Brian Senior for writing this set for us – I hope you found it interesting (and accurate!).

Take care won't you and stay safe

*Anna & Mark*

## Board 1. None Vul. Dealer North

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

My expectation is that the auction will be pretty standard around the room – or should that be around the internet? East will open 1♥ and rebid 3♥ over West's 1♠ response, and West should close proceedings with a raise to 4♥.

The opening lead will be all important. If South leads a club there are 11 easy tricks – six hearts, four clubs and one diamond. Even a twelfth may be possible if both defenders throw too many diamonds away on the run of the hearts and clubs.

It is a different matter on a trump lead. Declarer should see that he will be prevented from taking a diamond ruff in dummy so should look elsewhere for his tenth trick – 11 should no longer be a possibility. Best is to win the heart in dummy and lead a club to the jack at trick two. As the cards lie,

that loses but ensures 10 tricks. And if South panics and switches to ace and another diamond? Then East will be back up to 11.

Whether North leads a spade or a diamond, any West who gambles by bidding 3NT over 3♥ should be held to his contract, short of an inspired guess in the club suit.

## Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East

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

The popular start, after a pass from East, will be 1♦ from South, 1♠ from North, and a 2♦ rebid from South, passed round to East.

Some Easts will pass this out, but that is not a long-term winning strategy and the more popular choice should be to double. Now it will be very tempting for West to choose to defend 2♦ doubled, hoping for the magic +200 on a partscore deal. Alas, it is a trivial matter to come to eight tricks on the N/S

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cards, and in practice a non-spade lead should allow South to come to an overtrick for a very handy +380.

Alternatively, West may remove the double to 3♣ – after all, a wise man once said that take-out doubles are meant to be taken out. If left to play there, West should be able to come to nine tricks for a solid +110, but might not North compete to 3♦ with his three diamonds and singleton club? Now West will be really tempted to double for penalties but, as we have seen, this will make other than on an initial spade attack, so there may even be some +670s to N/S on the scoresheet.

### Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South

<p>♠ A 9 ♥ A K Q 10 2 ♦ A K J 7 6 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ 7 6 4 ♥ 9 8 5 4 ♦ Q 10 4 ♣ J 9 7</p>	<p>♠ J ♥ J 7 6 3 ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ A Q 6 5 4</p> <p>♠ K Q 10 8 5 3 2 ♥ — ♦ 9 8 ♣ K 10 8 2</p>
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Partner will not thank me on this occasion, but I would open 4♠ on the South cards – every day of the week and twice on Sundays, as they say. Imagine that the two small clubs were actually small hearts, giving South a 7-2-2-2 hand, would he not then open 3♠? Then surely the actual hand has far too much playing potential to open at the three level and should open a level higher.

A 4♠ opening is great when an opponent holds the North cards, putting said opponent under fearsome pressure, but it forces partner to do the guessing when he is the one with a big hand. This time, North can ask for key-cards with 4NT and, on finding South with one, can bid the small slam. But imagine if North had two low clubs and a diamond fewer – he probably should still ask for key-cards, but there would be no guarantee of making 5♠, let alone 6♠, opposite some hands that would open 4♠ at favourable vulnerability.

Six Spades is cold on any lead, and the overtrick is possible on a non-club lead. Those who miss slam could find themselves scoring very poorly indeed.

### Board 4. All Vul. Dealer West

<p>♠ J 7 2 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ A K 6 ♣ 10 8 6 4</p> <p>♠ A 10 9 4 ♥ A Q 10 3 ♦ 10 7 5 2 ♣ 2</p>	<p>♠ K 8 6 5 ♥ 8 6 ♦ Q 9 8 ♣ Q 9 5 3</p> <p>♠ Q 3 ♥ J 9 7 5 ♦ J 4 3 ♣ A K J 7</p>
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West is just shy of an opening bid, and so is North, while East is not even close, which leaves the fate of the deal to South.

There is an old tip called the Rule of 15, which is recommended for use in fourth seat after three passes. The idea is to add together the number of high-card points held and the number of spades. If the total comes to 15 or more, open the bidding, if not, pass the deal out. The point is that if the high cards are split between the two sides, spade length could be critical in winning the bidding battle and going plus on the deal.

Here, for example, if South opens 1♣, West has a classic passed hand double, and E/W will find their spade fit. It isn't clear what the outcome will be in either side's likely contract, but I would rather declare 2♠ E/W than defend against it, while I would rather defend against N/S's 3♣ than try to make it. Passing the board out may therefore result in an above average score for N/S.

Things are a little better if South can open a weak NT, as that will sometimes end the auction even though E/W have a four-four spade fit. Not on the actual deal, however, as West, holding both majors and a maximum for a passed hand, should come in with whatever bid is indicated by his agreed methods to show this hand-type. Even with both sides vulnerable, the worst time to become declarer on a competitive partscore deal, it pays in the long run to get into the auction if we have the right distribution to make it possible to do so.

### Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North

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

Say that South opens a 15-17 NT. West should not be sacred off competing because an opponent shows a strong hand. Far from it, as the expert theory is that it is more important to compete against a strong NT than against a weak one. The reasoning comes from the fact that we don't have to make our contract to improve things, conceding a penalty which is less than the value of the opponents' contract also improves our score, and the stronger the opposing INT, the more likely it is that the opposing contract will be making.

Anyway, let's say that West can overcall 2♠ to show five spades and a four-card or longer minor – a popular defence to a NT. North has enough to want to bid but no good choice. Tournament players will be using Lebensohl here, such that a natural 2NT will not be available to them – though that would be the best call on this North hand, if only it was an option. A take-out double is not great with this shape, and the spades are not really up to a penalty double, should that be N/S's preferred method. So North may make a slightly grumpy pass, and West has bought it in 2♠.

Two Spades should be beaten easily enough – probably by two tricks if South manages to win the first round of hearts. But South can make +120 in INT, which would make –100 quite a good outcome for West, while if North gets involved, making a take-out double, E/W may even end up with a plus score.

If, playing Acoll, South opens 1♥, West has a 1♠ overcall and North can bid INT. That should end the auction. On a different auction East might lead the ♥K, but with hearts bid by dummy leading partner's suit – the jack of spades – looks the better shot. From here, North has to show some care but can come to the same eight tricks as are available with South as declarer.

### Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East

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

We all have slightly different ideas when it comes to pre-emption, but for me the West hand is a 2♠ opening, not 1♠. In other words, while I will open some real filth at the two- and three-level, particularly when non-vulnerable, I am also completely comfortable opening a 10-count with a weak two bid, particularly at this vulnerability.

Assuming a 2♠ opening (or multi 2♦), West is strong enough to respond 2NT to ask for further information, and East will bid whatever the system demands to show his hand-type. Now West has a big decision to make.

If West chooses to bid 4♠, there is a real risk that South will kick off with three rounds of diamonds, North getting a ruff. When South then turns up with a trump trick, the contract will be down one.

But West may prefer to play in 3NT. If North leads a club, declarer can win and duck a spade, and has nine top tricks, while if North chooses a heart lead, there will be 10.

I think that, with two honours in every side-suit, I would opt to play the NT game.

### Board 7. All Vul. Dealer South

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

Give West seven diamonds, and the opening bid would be 3♦. Add the eighth diamond, and I would open 4♦ – for every time that this takes us past a making 3NT, there will be a few times when the extra level of pre-emption will cause problems for the opposition. And for those who play a 4♦ opening as showing a big spade suit, I really think the natural pre-empt is more useful.

If 4♦ ends the auction, the fact that North cannot get at his spade ruff should mean that the contract makes exactly for +130. And if North overcalls 4♥, an unattractive call on such a moderate suit, but it's either that or nothing, that game is at least one down and probably two, losing two tricks in each minor plus a trump.

Actually, a 3♦ opening should see the same heart game reached by N/S – but isn't so much more comfortable for North if he can overcall 3♥ than if he is forced to make a decision a level higher. If North does overcall 3♥, South has a borderline raise to game. The best N/S scores may come from those where North can overcall 3♥ and South takes the low road, passing it out for -100 or possibly +140.

### Board 8. None Vul. Dealer West

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

Some will open the empty 11 HCP West hand, though the only thing to recommend the hand is the fact that this gets in the first blow when neither side is vulnerable – the best time to become declarer if the deal is a competitive partscore.

Say that West opens 1♣ and East responds 1♥. South can overcall 2♦, and North can perhaps try 2NT, or make an unassuming cuebid of 2♥ to show a good diamond raise. Either way, South is likely to sign off in 3♦, knowing that the partnership is light in values to play 3NT. To make 3♦, South will have to pick up the diamonds without loss, but perhaps this is possible as West's opening bid followed by pass implies a (semi-)balanced hand, so playing him for the ♦Q makes sense.

What happens if West passes as dealer, something which could hardly be criticised? East will open 2♥ in third seat. Should South overcall 3♦? A good question, and one to which there is no really good answer.

If South does not overcall, East will be left to play in 2♥, and that contract is an easy make for +110.

And if South overcalls 3♦? The problem is that, while that contract can be made, North will very often bid 3NT when that contract is hopeless because N/S simply have too many high cards

missing. South is aware of this and could well be dissuaded from bidding.

If South does overcall 3♦ and North does bid 3NT, a club lead sinks the contract, but a winning diamond play means the contract is only down one – actually better than defending against 2♥. And what if East leads his own suit – the queen of hearts. West can still beat the hand by grabbing the ace and switching to a club, but it won't be easy for him to guess to play East for both the missing club honours, particularly after east has failed to lead the suit. If West wins the ♥A and returns a heart, 3NT can be made – ♥K, diamond to the ace, diamond to the jack, diamond king, spade to the king – and that's an overtrick!

So the answer to the question – should South overcall 3♦ – would appear to be a yes. Even when a N/S contract is defeated, N/S can still score well. The key is the vulnerability or, rather, lack of it. With both sides going down in 50s, South can afford to be aggressive and overcall; were both sides vulnerable, and therefore going down in 100s, the odds on bidding would be a lot less promising.

### Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North

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

North opens 1♣ and many Souths will dredge up a 1♠ response. Were West to pass, that would leave North with an awkward rebid problem – a bit good for 2♣, not good enough for 2♦, and altogether the wrong texture for a 15-17 INT rebid, which has the disadvantage of wrong-siding an eventual NT contract. Which would I choose? An unhappy INT if that would be strong, 2♣ rather than 2♦ if INT would be weak.

However, with a bit of luck, West will come riding to North's rescue. He does, after all, have 16 HCP and some semblance of a stopper in every suit, so will often overcall INT. No, this really shouldn't be played as showing the other two suits – there are plenty of other ways to do that.

How will it go from here? North, expecting his side to have the balance of strength and with an easy opening lead, may double, and East run to 2♥. If East can do so via a transfer, 2♥ is a making contract when played by West, but it should be defeated if

East has to run with a natural 2♥, as will the majority of pairs.

Meanwhile, N/S can make nine tricks with either minor as trumps. It's quite unclear what will be the popular spot on this one – 1NT by either North or West, 2♥ by East or West, 3♣ by North – and there is enough in the play and defence that the outcome is by no means clear-cut either.

### Board 10. All Vul. Dealer East

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

Where would you like to play this one on the N/S cards? It isn't clear but, on what is a borderline slam hand, if we are to play a slam then 6NT is better than 6♠. The reason is simple enough – if spades come in without loss there will be 12 tricks so that 6NT will be making, while if there is a spade loser 6♠ should be going down. However, just as on the actual layout, it will sometimes be possible to make 6NT despite spades not coming in for seven tricks.

The most challenging lead to 6NT is a diamond. Declarer wins the ace, cashes the king and queen of hearts, and plays a club. West should win that and play a second diamond, and declarer wins the king. When he cashes the ace of hearts, he discards the blocking club honour, leaving himself with two club winners. Two more hearts, then the jack and ten of clubs, brings the total up to nine, and the ace, king and jack of spades brings the total up to 12.

The contract could even be made when West has queen to three spades – as long as he also holds four clubs. The fifth heart will squeeze him in this scenario and he will have to give up one of his black stoppers.

How is it likely to go in the auction? Many Souths will open with an Acol-style 2♣ and North perhaps make a natural positive response of 2♥. Two spades from South, 2NT from North, and 3♠ from South. If North now admits to reluctant spade tolerance, South may bid 4NT to ask for key cards then play in 6♠. If, on the other hand, North bids 3NT over 3♠, South may make a natural and invitational raise to 4NT. If so, North, looking at an ill-fitting minimum for the initial positive response, should pass. However, if we have got this far, I suspect that a lot of pairs will, in one fashion or another, drive to slam.

6NT ought to score very well, 6♠ very badly. 4NT may score above average, while 4♠ is harder to judge.

### Board 11. None Vul. Dealer South

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

There will be three passes to East. If East opens 1NT, West may just raise to game. If East opens 1♣ and rebids 1NT over the 1♦ response, he again may be raised to game.

Where E/W have bid both minors, there is a strong argument for leading a major, and for me spades is clearly the better option – set up spades and the ♥A is an entry to cash them, while there are also fewer spade layouts where leading the suit costs than there are heart lay-outs. I am assuming, of course, that on this auction neither East nor West is likely to hold a four-card major. And the spade 1 would lead would be the queen, not a low one. There is a distinct possibility on the auction that an opponent will have the short jack of spades, as indeed proves to be the case. This is more likely than that a low spade lead will see declarer with a jack-nine guess to get wrong.

Say that South does lead the ♠Q. To succeed, declarer must duck both the queen and the king continuation. He wins the third round, crosses to the ♣K, and leads the ♦Q to king and ace. Next come four more rounds of clubs, and South is squeezed. He has thrown two hearts, but next must be his last spade to keep the third diamond. But now two rounds of diamonds endplays him to give a trick to the ♥K at the end; just made.

Note the importance of ducking two rounds of spades. Say that declarer wins the second spade. Now South can pitch a spade on the fifth club and still have one left to lead to North's nine to defeat the contract.

Some will lead a low spade, and declarer's only worry will be whether to play for overtricks or play safe. Others will lead a low heart, and that too will give the ninth trick immediately. And those who go passive and lead a diamond? Well, declarer can definitely make overtricks now and score a lot of matchpoints.

The diamond lead is a little more attractive after the auction 1NT – 3NT, when it may look to be safe and South has a blind lead where either major could cost a trick that never comes back. It is, in the sense that it doesn't give a trick in itself, but the tempo given up by the fact that the defence has not established any of its own tricks, is what costs on this layout. Still, a diamond lead is not a ridiculous choice, just perhaps mildly inferior.

### Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West

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

North opens 1♥ and rebids 2♥ over the 2♣ reply. Now I would bid 2♠ with the South cards (unless of course playing two-over-one GF, when 2NT would be forcing), as that saves space compared to 3♦ and leaves more options open to North. Either 2♥ or 3♦ will get 3♥ from North, and now South will have had enough of messing about and will jump to 4NT, Key-card for hearts. When North shows three key-cards, South can bid 5NT to invite Seven but, when North signs off in 6♥, denying either the desire to play a grand slam or to hold a side king, South's only decision is to play 6♥ or 6NT.

Let's say that South picks 6NT, as that scores better and he knows that every suit is well covered. West may lead a spade to the queen and king. Three rounds of hearts will clear the suit and back comes another spade. South can run put in the nine and, after cashing the hearts, take the club finesse for his twelfth trick, or he can rise with the ace and cash the hearts. This squeezes East so that if he reads the ending correctly declarer again has 12 tricks despite being able to take the club finesse only once.

Double dummy, even 7♥ can be made. Declarer has to play for the four-one heart break, as of course West will not split the jack-ten, and he has absolutely no reason to do so. Supposing that West did split, declarer would be able to shorten his trumps and end up in dummy at trick 12 to lead through West's remaining holding for a trump coup but, as I say, that is strictly double dummy, as no sane West is going to split on the second round of hearts.

### Board 13. All Vul. Dealer North

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

Vulnerable, I see little benefit in South opening the bidding, so at most tables it will be West who does so. If he opens 1♥, North can overcall 1♠ and East cuebid 2♠ or jump to 2NT, according to his methods, to show a constructive raise to 3♥. Should West go on to game facing a passed hand, probably not, but it's close.

There is also the possibility of opening 2♥. In fourth seat this should be stronger than otherwise, maybe around 10-14 with, of course, a six-card suit. If West intends to rebid 2♥ after opening 1♥, why not get the hand off his chest in one go and make it much less likely that the opposition will be able to compete? This time East may go on in search of game, perhaps via a 2NT inquiry. Once again, West has a close decision.

And what about 4♥? Will it be successful? It shouldn't be, as there are four top losers, but that will require North to lead or switch to diamonds at trick one or two. I think that is the recommended lead, but some will surely go for the safe club lead, and for the second time in three deals we see a safe lead costing tricks. With some of the field playing in 3♥, the difference between +100 and -620 will be quite substantial.

### Board 14. None Vul. Dealer East

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

E/W can make 2♣, while a couple of good guesses in the red suits and N/S can even make four in either major.

There will usually be two passes to West, who will often open 1♣. North can double that and East

raise pre-emptively to 3♣. However, nothing East can do will silence South, who can either bid 3/4♥ or make a responsive double, over which North will bid 3♠. Will South be able to resist the temptation to force to game? I can see a fair number bidding to game, with a smaller number guessing well enough to make it – the diamond guess is with the odds given that West opened the bidding, but the heart is a good deal tougher to find. Personally, I would be content to play partscore and, if I managed to make 10 tricks, be happy enough with my +170.

Some Wests may open a weak NT, which should see two passes round to South, whose system should include a way to launch a hand with nine cards in the majors. Knowing that South could be weaker than the actual hand and be merely wishing to disturb INT, North ought to be content with a quiet 2♠ now, though he will be willing to take the push to 3♠ if West competes in the minors.

**Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South**

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

If playing Acol, South will open 1♥, the middle of three touching suits, and that may go round to East, who overcalls 2♠ – intermediate in pass-out seat, so sound opening values and a six-card suit. There is no sensible action other than passing with the South cards and, while West is very close to inviting game, he too is likely to pass.

While it is not a desperately attractive option facing a partner who has not bid, South leads a low diamond because everything else looks worse. From here, he will try to negotiate three trump tricks to go with one in each side-suit, however, if declarer judges to play him for spade length including the king, he can be held to only two trump tricks and the contract is made.

So can 2♠ be defeated? Yes, it can. South has to cash the ace of clubs then lead a diamond. If he plays North for both queen and ten of diamonds, he can force an entry to his partner's hand and get a ruff with the six of spades, his third trump trick.

Five-card majors create a whole different ballgame, with South opening 1♦ – OK, so you could open INT if playing that as strong, but it's not something I do very often. After a pass from West, North has a classic inverted diamond raise and can jump pre-

emptively to 3♦. If left to play there, South should come to an overtrick.

Over 3♦, East will surely overcall 3♠ and South may double for penalty. The winning defence of ♣A followed by a diamond switch is much more attractive now, and 3♠ doubled should be defeated by two tricks – a great score for N/S, but horrible for E/W.

**Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West**

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

Somewhat to South's surprise, East opens 1♥ in third seat. That silences South and West, in the hope of improving the contract, scrapes up a INT response.

If playing Acol, I would be inclined to pass as East facing a INT response. Yes, we could have 25 HCP between us, but most of the time we will not, and 3NT will be very hard work. Meanwhile, when partner is close to minimum, he will find 2NT an uphill struggle, so best not to put him to the test.

It would be more difficult playing stronger two-over-ones, as now partner could have as much as 10 or 11 HCP. That makes a raise to 2NT, or perhaps a descriptive 2♠, a little more attractive. Were I West, I would pass whichever of 2NT and 2♠ East rebid.

With diamonds unbid, North will presumably lead the suit, West winning cheaply in hand. If he now plays on spades, the position is exactly as he would wish it – H-10 doubleton onside – which means that he can have three tricks in the suit. If West follows with the ten, the jack will lose to the queen and when West gets back on lead the king will fall under the ace. It is much better, therefore, for North to put in the king, which from West's perspective could be from a variety of holdings. He may eventually be forced by a lack of options into playing for the actual spade layout, but for now he will win the king with the ace and play the jack of diamonds. How things will progress from here is hard to predict, but West can make INT, but should be beaten if he is any higher.

I said that I would pass if East rebid 2♠ over my INT response. What happens to 2♠? Well, while it looks quite a promising contract on just the E/W hands,

the fact that North is over-ruffing dummy, combined with South's diamond shortage, means that 2♠ should be defeated. Still, should and will are not the same thing, and I would certainly prefer to play 2♠ than 2NT.

### Board 17. None Vul. Dealer North

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

Wow! What a deal. There are so many different ways the auction could go on this deal, leading to so many different outcomes.

Many Norths will open with a weak 2♥ or multi 2♦. A popular defence to a weak two bid is Leaping Michaels, where a jump overcall in a minor shows at least five-five in that minor plus the other major. If E/W play that as game-forcing, East might overcall 4♦, intending to raise whichever suit West showed preference for to slam – maybe even to Seven.

It isn't clear what West would do if left to do as requested – probably refuse to do so and instead bid clubs Five or Six according to how optimistic a mood West is in. While that may show a long strong suit, you wouldn't imagine that many Easts would allow their partner to play the hand in his own suit, not when East is looking at such a huge hand of his own.

But, of course, South is not going to go quietly over 4♦. What might he do? He could try some kind of bluff bid to try to confuse the opposing auction, or perhaps just jump to 6♥, an advance sacrifice against what looks like a cold slam for E/W.

What happens from here is anybody's guess. East can make 7♠ but not 7♦, while West cannot make either grand slam, and even 6♣ is beaten if North finds a diamond lead. As for N/S, even 7♥ is down only three.

I think the best thing I can say about this deal is just – enjoy it!

### Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East

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

East will often open a weak NT and West transfer to spades. North should pass for now but, when East's 2♠ completion of the transfer comes around, can double for take-out. That gets N/S to 3♦, but West will surely compete to 3♠ over that.

Three Spades makes exactly if declarer sets up the hearts to provide extra tricks, and if the defence leads trumps, thereby taking away the option of ruffing two clubs in hand, hearts will be declarer's best option.

As for diamonds, the friendly lie of the red suits makes it possible to make even 5♦. North might compete with 4♦ over 3♠. True, he is vulnerable, which would suggest that caution would be wise, but partner has picked North's five-card suit, while the fact that E/W are only competing the partscore means that South will have some high-card values as well as a fit for diamonds. If North fails to take the push to 4♦, he will be disappointed when 3♠ makes and he discovers that so would have 4♦. South, of course, is far too balanced to be able to bid again.

### Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South

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

If playing them, South may open a weak 2♦ though, I have to confess, that whether or not I had the option of opening 2♦, I would prefer to open 3♦. Holding 10 cards in the majors suggests that the opposition will have a fit in a major, so let's make life as tough as we can for them to find it and decide how high to bid.

West will pass over either 2♦ or 3♦, and so will North. What about East? Well, I guess he might

double 2♦ for take-out – I don't fancy a 2NT overcall on such a tenuous diamond stopper and bare minimum for the bid – but how will that pan out? Three No Trump can be made as the cards lie. If West is declarer he must duck the opening diamond lead then get the clubs right, while things are a little easier if East plays the contract. Perhaps, not knowing which major to bid, West will respond to a double with a 3♦ cuebid. With no four-card major, East might now bid 3NT.

Now suppose that South opens 3♦ and there are two passes. East does not have enough to bid 3NT, while a take-out double, facing a hand that could not double itself, and holding no four-card major is fraught with danger. Here it is likely to get the partnership to four of a major. There are nine tricks possible in spades, but only seven in hearts.

If South does not open at all, it may be North who opens with a weak two bid. Though borderline, East's well-positioned heart holding may be just enough to convince him to overcall 2NT, and West will raise to game – going via Stayman in search of a spade fit is dangerous because of West's heart length, meaning there is a big risk of a defensive heart ruff. The likely diamond lead now offers the prospect of overtricks in 3NT.

**Board 20. All Vul. Dealer West**

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

East is likely to open 1♠ in third seat, with South doubling and West perhaps bidding INT. North might bid freely on the strength of his long suit, but that risks getting partner over-excited, given North's low point-count. Perhaps it is wiser to pass. East will often rebid 2♥ and South now bid 3♣, showing a hand too good for an initial overcall.

South cannot be prevented from making 3♣, but it is easy to see how he might go wrong in the play and fall a trick short. This may prove to be of academic interest only, however, as West has good four-card support for partner's second suit, and is very likely to compete to 3♥. Even if Declarer manages to drop the bare king of diamonds offside, which is by no means impossible given that South has shown a strong hand in the auction, the four-one trump split should still be too much for East to

overcome, and 3♥ will normally be down at least one.

**Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North**

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

After a pass from North, East has just enough to open the bidding with 1♠.

A lot of players will overcall 2♣ with the South hand. But, really, vulnerable against not and with that weak suit? I would pass, 13 HCP or not and, when I heard West respond 2♣, I would be very pleased that I had done so. East would now rebid 2♥ and West raise to the heart game.

Four Hearts should fail. There are three top losers, a likely third spade loser, and declarer has no reason to play for hearts to be four-one so is likely to lose another trick there.

Is there any hope in 4♥? Well, if South led a low club and declarer ran it to the ten then led a low club to the jack and continued with a third round, North might have to ruff and that would at least help to pick up the trumps without loss, but there would still be three spade losers, so the contract should always fail.

But what if South makes the 2♣ overcall which I so dislike? West could jump to 3NT, or make a negative double, leading to East declaring 4♥ once more, but a smart West will take one look at the vulnerability and pass. When East reopened with a double – which is a normal action when holding short clubs, however minimal the opening bid – West passes again and N/South will think they are in big trouble.

As it turns out, North's limited values are far more useful than he might have imagined, and 2♣ doubled is close to making and, at worst, only down one. But –200 will be a dreadful score for N/S, given that most E/Ws will be going down in game their way. And, if the N/S cards lay differently, so that E/W could make a game, the likelihood is that 2♣ doubled would be down more than one, and –500 would be too much even against a non-vulnerable making game.

### Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East

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

There should be three passes to North, who opens 1♦. Yes, some will be tempted to open 2NT, but I am not a fan of that approach – if a hand is unbalanced, then treat it as unbalanced.

Assuming that North opens 1♦, South will respond 1♥, North rebid 3♣, and South probably try 3NT. West will lead the king of hearts and South has 11 tricks on top, and will come to a twelfth if West isn't careful to hang on to all four spades on the run of the diamonds.

Actually, 6♦ is a very good contract, and well done to anyone who can get there. There is a possibility of doing so after a 1♦ opening – South might like the two minor-suit kings and outside ace when North rebids 3♣ and, if he gives preference to 3♦ rather than bid 3NT, North might well be interested.

If North opens 2NT, there is no real chance to get to slam. South will check for a major-suit fit, but, on finding that there no such fit, is likely to just settle for 3NT. Actually, there is a way in which that could work out well for N/S. If dummy is interested in the majors, perhaps East will lead a low club, and that gives the twelfth trick.

### Board 23. All Vul. Dealer South

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

South opens 1♥, North responds 1♠ and, with 14 HCP and four cards in both unbid suits, East can make a take-out double. South will just ignore that. With four-card support but a minimum opening, he will raise to 2♠, and North goes on to game.

There is not a lot to the play, and North should come to 11 tricks for a pretty universal +650.

I suppose that West, with a double fit for partner's minors, might get involved over South's 2♠, but he is vulnerable so may be a little wary. Even if West does bid, East is too balanced to save in 5♣/♦, and just as well, as either can be down four for –1100 should the defenders take their ruffs.

### Board 24. None Vul. Dealer West

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

West and North are both just short of having the strength to open the bidding, though I expect one or two to do so on the North cards. That leaves East to open 3♥ on pretty much a book example of the bid. Can anybody bid over that? Certainly not South or West and, though North has a maximum for his initial pass, he has too many hearts to guarantee that a fit can be found if he doubles. North too, therefore, will pass, and East will have to declare 3♥.

Three Hearts can be made, but declarer will have to be on good form to do so. Say that South leads a diamond, which looks normal enough. Declarer puts in the jack, losing to the queen. Three rounds of hearts would let the contract through now, because South would ruff with the king and declarer would know to finesse against the jack. But suppose that North quietly returns his remaining diamond to dummy's ace.

There is a blockage in clubs so that the winning finesse is of no value to declarer, who will have to fall back on ruffing his diamond loser in the dummy. Alas, that gets over-ruffed, and now three rounds of spades sees the ♥K become the setting trick. To succeed, declarer would need to cash the ace of hearts before attempting the diamond ruff. Now he loses only two spades, a diamond and a diamond over-ruff.

### Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North

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

East has a weak NT, so many will open INT. West transfers to spades and, if East simply completes the transfer, next jumps to 3NT to offer a choice of games. Despite having no ruffing value, East will choose to play in 4♠.

If South leads a club, that picks up North's queen and provides declarer with a diamond discard from hand. He can then draw two rounds of trumps, ruff the third diamond, and play ace and another heart. When someone has a doubleton honour, as here, there is no way to avoid the endplay and that gives declarer an eleventh trick. Of course, there are other less successful ways to play in the endgame. Instead of playing ace and another heart, declarer could run the jack. That loses to the queen and declarer has no winning guess on the heart return. But switch to nine or king of hearts, and there would be a winning guess available to declarer, and that might make the extra trick when hearts were four-three.

If South leads a trump at the start, declarer can take a club finesse for free, in the sense that if it loses a diamond loser will go away on the third round, just as happens if the finesse succeeds. A club finesse could be taken either way around, but it is more convenient to play North for the queen and, as it happens, that succeeds.

A diamond lead is more challenging, because now a losing club finesse still leaves two diamond losers. Declarer does best to duck the diamond, win the diamond continuation, and draw trumps. Now exit with the third diamond, and the endplay will more often than not create a tenth trick.

### Board 26. All Vul. Dealer East

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

If East opens 1♥ and rebids INT, West may pass. On a diamond lead, declarer needs to play on the majors, as clubs will be set up rather slowly and there will be three diamonds, a heart and two clubs to be lost. OK, that is still +90, but playing on hearts rather than clubs produces +120 when the spade finesse is successful.

If East opens INT and is left to play there, South will lead the ten of hearts, and now there is some scope for even nine tricks if North carelessly puts the ace on dummy's five.

Some Wests will transfer to clubs facing a INT opening, and 3♣ should be made exactly. Not many pairs can check for a four-four spade fit then sign off in 3♣ when none materialises, but methods that offer that option would be ideal on this particular hand.

### Board 27. None Vul. Dealer South

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

My style, and that of many experts, would be to open 3♣ with the South hand, as the opposition rate to have a major-suit fit a large proportion of the time, so it is a good idea to make life awkward for them.

On this occasion, West should overcall 3♠ if South does pre-empt and, after a pass from North, East will bid 3NT. Will West be prepared to put dummy down in 3NT? Perhaps, but many will try to get to a major-suit instead. The best way to achieve that would be to cuebid 4♣. If West had five hearts, he would just bid them, so this implies a two-trick disparity between his two suits.

It isn't at all clear which game will be more successful. The short answer is that neither should be a success, but this is matchpoints, and the difference between down one, down two, and down three, will be very important. That will depend on who out of declarer and the defenders is more inspired in the play. Double dummy, even INT can be defeated, while eight tricks is the limit in a spade or heart contract. In practice, things may not be quite so bad as that, particularly in 3NT.

The matchpoints will go to any E/W who can stop short of game, thereby going fewer down. That should be possible if there is no South pre-empt with which to contend – 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♠ – 2NT – 3♥ – Pass or 3♠. Someone would have to be truly inspired facing the pre-empt.

It won't happen, but South could come to eight tricks if left to play a club contract.

**Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West**

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

If West opens with a game-forcing 2♣, he will regret it, as the most that can be made on the E/W cards is 3♦.

I know that West has a powerful six-card suit along with 22 HCP, but I would open at the one level. Why? Consider the auction after opening 2♣, partner usually has a 2♦ response and we must bid 3♣. Unless he shows diamonds now, we are left to either commit to going past 3NT to show the diamonds over partner's 3♠ bid, or to bidding 3NT with a bare king. Well, as it happens, we do have a heart stopper, but the four-two club split should doom 3NT.

That is a very uncomfortable auction, so I'd open 1♣. If partner responds 1♥/♠, I can reverse into 2♦, which is a one-round force, and then keep bidding until I have all the information I need to select the final contract. And if partner passes 1♣? Well, that doesn't mean that right-hand-opponent will also pass, and even if he does 1♣ may be a better spot than we would reach by opening 2♣.

On the actual deal, South will balance with 1♥ and West can rebid 2♦ – better than double as it promises the same sort of strength – admittedly not quite as much as this – without implying that West

would be happy to see partner bid spades. North will raise to 2/3♥, and when that comes back to West he can decide what to do. If it is 2♥, then 3♣ is an easy call to show the sixth card, and East will convert to 3♦, which West should pass. If it is 3♥, it's a little tougher. Double would be take-out and would lead to 4♦ down one. Pass is the winning option as 3♥ is doomed to fail by a trick, while that is also the fate of 4♦.