

**The January Charity pairs, in association with the World Bridge Federation
 Monday 25 January 2021**

Our January Charity Pairs, raises funds for [UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/) to help children in danger through the world. They need so much help now, not just because of war, famine, the need for medicines, clean water but now there is the added threat from the coronavirus. Please help us raise as much money as we can – send your donations to us and we will gather them together and pass them on to UNICEF from bridge players all over the world.

Just go to : <https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/wbfcharity/payments.asp> and you will see how to do it ... there is no specified amount but we do suggest £3 per player if you can manage that !

Help us to help these children who are in such need. Please. And please read the bit at the end of the commentary about future events (and to see the butterfly!)

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Many Souths will bid 2♦ over 1♣ (whether weak or intermediate) to take away E/W's bidding space. Even if North ups the ante to 4♦, E/W should still reach 4♥ anyway. After the top diamond lead, East can see that a second diamond promotes a trump for North if he had four, so he might get the trumps right. East still needs to take a deep finesse in clubs to come home, though. +420 would be a great board here – 5♦ is only set -300 on an initial trump lead.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

After East opens 1NT South should overcall (most players these days have a way to show this sort of two-suiter). Now the issue is whether North will drive to game. If so will he blast 3NT (making only 600) or explore to find spades. In 4♠ on a trump lead declarer can ruff out the hearts, and lead up to the ♣K, or ruff out the ♦KQ. But I cannot see a way to combine all the necessary plays to come to 12 tricks. The 4-1 trump break looks too inconvenient.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

E/W can use a strong jump shift here easily enough to get to one of a making slam, but getting to the highest scoring slam at Pairs is a challenge. An auction 1♣-2♦-3♣-4♣-4NT-5♥-6♣ is simple enough. But if East can find diamond support and the ♠A, he might use Blackwood himself, and drive to 6NT. At Pairs it appears that reaching a minor-suit slam will score reasonably, but no better than that. You need to play no-trump to get all the marbles.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

I'd guess most will choose to bid 1♦, because they can get both suits into play efficiently. Whether or not North overcalls 1♥, E/W will surely play 4♠. After two top hearts, one or other defender might shift to clubs. Declarer will win, play ♠A-Q, (unless North's false-card of the ♠9 misleads him) and then clear the diamonds; ten tricks made. BUT....a better shot for N/S is to give two ruff and discards. Declarer can survive, but may well misread the position.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

As a dedicated member of the 'raise with three trumps' fan-club, I wonder what else the dissenters would do as East if they do not open 1♦ then raise 1♠ to 2♠? Defending 2♠, North is likely to lead a club. West wins his ♣A and might now guess to lead a heart to dummy's ♥K (and North might make the guess easier). If so, the favourable lies in both red suits, with ♣Q onside for the ruffing finesse, mean West might bring home 170 for a huge result.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

Are you a purist or pragmatist? Sometimes one has to choose one approach or the other, and after 1♣-3♣ West can guess to rebid 3NT or explore scientifically with 3♦. I favour the latter approach, but today blasting 3NT would get North to lead a diamond, to concede 11 tricks. Going the slow route would get East to declare 3NT and South would find the heart lead. You pays your money, you takes your choice. 5♣ makes 600 of course, for an average score?

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

West will overcall 2♥ over 1NT at many tables, and North will join in with 2♠. East now has enough to bid 3♥ (♥A4 is pretty decent support here) and will South bid 3♠? I think he might, and now after a heart lead and diamond shift -- yes, a heart continuation might be better -- North will do well to manage to escape for down one. -200 will surely be a disaster for N/S but E/W can make 3♥ -- and also, believe it or not, 3NT on their 17-count!

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ Q J 3 ♥ A Q 3 ♦ A 3 ♣ A Q 10 6 5</p> <p>♠ 10 9 7 2 ♥ J 10 9 ♦ J 8 4 ♣ K 8 3</p>	<p>♠ K 6 4 ♥ K ♦ K 10 9 6 5 2 ♣ J 4 2</p> <p>♠ A 8 5 ♥ 8 7 6 5 4 2 ♦ Q 7 ♣ 9 7</p>
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Facing a 2NT opening (if North upgrades because of his five-card suit) South should transfer into 4♥ and deny slam interest, or transfer and offer 3NT. Either way, North will declare 4♥, and on any lead but a spade can get clubs going at once. In fact by guessing trumps he might make +480. Compare how awkward 4♥ by South is on a diamond lead. If the defenders win ♦K and shift to spades, even ten tricks become something of a struggle. Some may go down in 4♥.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ A 10 7 ♥ A 10 9 7 2 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ A 9</p> <p>♠ 9 3 2 ♥ K 5 ♦ A K 10 7 ♣ Q 8 6 4</p>	<p>♠ J 8 6 5 4 ♥ Q 4 3 ♦ 9 6 5 4 ♣ 7</p> <p>♠ K Q ♥ J 8 6 ♦ J 8 ♣ K J 10 5 3 2</p>
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North is unsuitable for a 12-14 no-trump; most will open 1♥ and rebid 2NT over 2♣. When South shows 3-card heart support North will raise to 4♥. East might understandably lead either a spade or diamond, but a club gives declarer the worst problems. At double-dummy he can win in hand, pitch a diamond on the spade, and then exit with ♥A and a heart. The chances of this line succeeding are slim – but it works in practice. There are, however, better, less successful lines at single-dummy.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ 10 ♥ A Q 9 3 ♦ 10 9 8 7 4 3 ♣ 8 2</p> <p>♠ A J 9 6 2 ♥ K 10 8 6 2 ♦ A 2 ♣ 3</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 ♥ 7 5 4 ♦ J 5 ♣ A Q 9 7 5 4</p> <p>♠ K Q 5 4 3 ♥ J ♦ K Q 6 ♣ K J 10 6</p>
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South will open 1♠ and West must pass now. When North responds INT East might wander in with 2♣. If South can double that for penalties, West might run to 2♥. North would think he had a fair double now, but he would be wrong! On the lead of ♠10, the defenders can only prevail if South avoids splitting his spade honours. Any defender who finds that play would deserve his partner's applause. Students of the bizarre will note that 3NT is cold from South.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

<p>♠ A K J 9 4 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ 6 ♣ 9 7 5 3</p> <p>♠ Q 7 6 5 ♥ J 5 ♦ K Q J 10 ♣ A K 4</p>	<p>♠ 8 ♥ A 10 7 3 2 ♦ A 7 5 4 ♣ 10 8 6</p> <p>♠ 10 3 2 ♥ 9 8 4 ♦ 9 8 3 2 ♣ Q J 2</p>
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Do you believe you should open the West cards 1♦ or 1♠? The former works considerably better today. If you open the West cards 1♠, East will play 3NT – and North will be able to double for a spade lead, and +300. If West opens 1♦, then North will overcall 1♠, and the final contract is likely to be a partscore in diamonds, hearts, or no-trump, from West. The favourable heart-break means you can make game in either red-suit, not that you'd want to be there.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

A weak 2♦ opening by West would surely buy the contract here. But many will have to pass, letting South open INT. Now a Stayman auction will probably get North to 2♥ one way or another, and if West overcalls in diamonds, North may just simply bid 2♥ now. Against 2♥ the defenders have four top winners, so the key for N/S is to try to establish the 13th spade before the defenders get a ruff or a force going. Quite a few matchpoints will hinge on this.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

South will open 1♠ and North can choose between raising spades or bidding no-trump. Either way, N/S will have to pick between 3NT and 4♠ with two balanced hands and an eight-card fit. 3NT by South on a top diamond lead can be made by guessing ♠Q, and then leading a heart towards the ♥Q9. 4♠ needs you to handle both majors correctly and also to endplay East in hearts; anyone bringing home +420 on a top diamond lead will have earned their top!

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

This looks like a good hand for strong no-trumps. South will open INT and be raised to 3NT, making, perhaps with overtricks, on a diamond lead. But most Souths will open 1♣ and after North's 1♦ response East can double. Now even if N/S get to 3NT from the South seat, game is in severe jeopardy on either major-suit lead. The spade blockage means declarer can still make nine tricks on that lead, but a heart lead should set the game by force.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

Most Souths will respect the vulnerability and pass, leaving North to open 1♦ in third chair. East will probably overcall INT (yes, the hand is maybe sub- minimum, but passing does not win Pairs contests)

Now E/W will probably bid to 4♥, down a trick. Since 3NT is down two on the likely club lead, E/W can only go plus by playing partscore or defending minor-suits contracts. +140 from 3♥ will score very well here.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

West will open 1♣ and hear a double on his left and 1♠ on his right. Even at unfavourable vulnerability, it seems reasonable to act, by either doubling or rebidding 2♣. But South will generally declare 2♠ on the lead of ♣K. Declarer may not feel able to duck this, and his best move next is to advance the ♠J, although a low spade to the eight also makes sense. While eight tricks are easy, collecting +140 should earn N/S the lion's share of the matchpoints.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

It looks too aggressive for South to overcall a weak no-trump, but he might back in over a transfer to hearts. That delayed sequence would probably prevent North from driving to game; indeed, as the cards lie, North should pass 2♠, since that is technically the limit of the hand. Mind you South will make 140 if West leads anything but a heart. Some E/W pairs will compete to 3♥ and buy the contract, going down just one trick there, for a fine score.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

The North cards do not look worth an invitation facing a INT opening bid, so North will transfer and pass the 2♥ response. As it happens, game is excellent for N/S here, but they may get a second chance. East might stretch to re-open with a take-out double (probably unnecessarily aggressive at Pairs) If East re-opens, N/S might stop off to double their opponents and collect 300 against either spades or diamonds.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

In third seat any North worth his salt will exploit the vulnerability to open with a diamond pre-empt. It will probably not prevent E/W getting their act together, though; East will double, and West will bid on to 4♥, for 680. Perhaps some N/S pairs might find their sacrifice in 5♦. If you look at the N/S cards, you might hope to get out for 300. Alas, the defenders have THREE spade ruffs coming for 800 if they are accurate – but they will need to be very precise.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Both the North and South hands present difficult problems in valuation. Should North double 1♣ or plan to bid spades, then hearts? And if North bids 1♠ as I think he should, will South raise to 3♠ when East makes a preemptive jump to 3♥? The bottom line is that E/W can make eight tricks in hearts (nine if West was declarer!) while N/S can only take seven tricks in spades. So there will be virtually no contracts making here today.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

Another difficult hand for N/S, who are the ♠9 away from a decent slam. South will force to game and show hearts, North will make a constructive raise, South will start cue-bidding, and it will be very hard to apply the breaks in time. On a top club lead declarer cannot both strip off the clubs and lead spades from dummy. He could only make if the defenders donated him an extra entry to dummy, or (far more likely) if East forgets to cover the ♠10!

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

In third seat vulnerable will West open 1♣ or an insouciant INT? If he opens 1♣ then N/S bid smoothly to 3NT, and should make on a heart lead. However, a club lead sets up the clubs for the defence before declarer can knock out both the spade and diamond honours. If West opens INT then the red cards will start to fly, with E/W likely to end up in 2♥ doubled. East should manage to emerge with six tricks – but a very poor matchpoint result.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

Would you overcall 4♥ as West over 1♠? To my mind, it acts as a transfer to 4♠ for the opponents, and I'm not sure you want that to happen. If you just bid 2♥, then 3♥, N/S will probably buy the hand in a spade partscore and make nine or ten tricks. If you bid 4♥ you may play it there, and even if undoubled will go down 200. Or you might push N/S into 4♠, and now South might make his game by guessing spades or by a trump reduction if he does not.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

If East does not open 2NT (not a particularly attractive hand for this action) he can choose to bid 1♣ or 1♠ -- I prefer the latter. If South rashly pre-empts to 3♥ he will get to play there doubled at many tables – and be lucky to escape for only three down. Of course 3NT makes ten tricks fairly comfortably for E/W, so this would not be a tragedy at teams; but at Pairs +500 will surely collect the bulk of the matchpoints.

Remember that we are planning to run other Charity events during the year – the **Charity Challenge** for 2021 will be raising money for two Cancer Charities, which have been so badly affected by COVID ... Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie with the funds split between them. That will be held from 15th – 19th March with different hands each day and we expect it will all be played online but we are getting used to that aren't we ☺

In July there will be the **Kidney Research Pairs** – again we are looking at running this for a full week, with different hands each night, starting on Monday 5th and with the last day on Friday 9th July. And we may include a second charity as we are doing for the Charity Challenge and split the funds raised between them. Maybe, just maybe, some clubs will be playing face to face by then, it would be lovely to think so, but in any case we can mix and match with the scoring to accommodate both online and face-to-face clubs. All part of the challenges we are facing at the moment!

Then comes November and our **Children in Need event** – maybe there is an even better chance of being back at the bridge table by then, I know we must all be looking forward to that. As ever, different hands each night and I am looking at the dates being Friday 5 November, then Monday 8th – Thursday 11th. We don't yet know when the BBC will be doing their CiN “night” but I am guessing it will either be 12th or 19th so our dates should be just fine.

Do keep an eye on the website – obviously we will publish the amounts raised for the various events, and of course it's quite different with individuals donating but hopefully we can raise some goodly amounts for charity – the charities are all having such a tough time of it at the moment, so hopefully by doing these events we can all help a bit.

Thank you for joining us, thank you for your support – really truly we appreciate it so much – and here's a lovely butterfly to say thank you !

Best wishes

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