



COMMENTARY FOR THE SBU EASTER PAIRS 2026

Monday 23rd March 2026

Thank you for supporting the SBU Easter Pairs 2026. We do hope you enjoyed the hands, found them interesting, challenging and fun whatever result you ended up with! There are generous overall masterpoint awards and red points for those who do well as the local points awarded by your own club for doing well there.

So now you can relax and enjoy the commentary and see how well you did on the website of course !

Do have a look on the [SBU web site](#) and [Facebook page](#) for all the SBU news and also for information about forthcoming tournaments.

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

The likely spot is 4♠ by North, although the ways of getting there may vary. After North opens 1♠ East may well come in with a weak 3♣ and South's next bid isn't obvious. Would 4♥ still be a splinter after intervention? Anyway, 6♠ (by North) makes but is a lucky and undesirable contract as it requires that the Spades play for no loser (about 40%). Also, North is fortunate that the Diamonds are 7-0 and not 6-1 as on this layout the defence can't get a Diamond ruff.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

All that is available on this hand is a part-score; North-South can make about 2♦ and East-West can make about 2♥. Many will get too high on this hand after East opens with either 1♠ or 1NT (which I much prefer). After 1♠ West is likely to push the bidding up to at least 3♠ and this will go down quickly after a Heart lead and a Heart ruff. After 1NT West may transfer to Hearts and bid 2NT. East does best to Pass this – if he bids 3♥ he will struggle.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Another part-score deal with South likely to be declarer in Hearts. Any Heart contract must lose a trick in each suit so making nine tricks will depend on South's reading of the Club position. When declarer plays a Club to dummy's King East must play low nonchalantly. If the ♣A is taken South has little option but to finesse the ♣10 on the next round. If East plays low in tempo South may well go wrong in the suit, giving East-West a good score.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

4♥ is the normal contract on this deal and should be reached simply enough. West may open 1♥ and that will lead to an easy auction. Some Wests will open 2NT (an unnatural practice with a bare 19 points) but East can still apply Stayman to find the Heart fit. There are always ten tricks available in Hearts but eleven can't be made after a Diamond lead. If West plays in 3NT he may get a good score after a low Club lead, won cheaply by the ♣10. Fortunate.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

Part-scores are all that are available on this deal. Assuming that North Passes (and there are some who will open that rubbish with 1♠) South will open 1♥ and North will respond 1♠. South has an awkward rebid now – 2♥ should show a six-card suit and North should Pass that. Still, on the lucky lie of the cards, 2♥ should make at least eight tricks. Those who can rebid INT to show 12-14 points will be all right – declarer should rake in about eight tricks.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

East will open 1♣, West will bid 1♦ and North should bid 4♠, Passed round to West. Double is the most flexible call now but that gives East a problem at the vulnerability. Pass will net 100 whilst 5♦ can make. Perhaps East should pull the Double to 5♦ (or even 4NT, suggesting both minors). 5♦ is a fraught affair after a Spade lead but declarer has little choice but to play three top Hearts throwing a Spade. North can ruff that but only with the ♦A. Contract made.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

South will open 1♥ and rebid 2♦ after a 1♠ response, giving North a small problem. I suppose many will Pass but that might, on other layouts, be the wrong thing to do. However, as the cards lie, the best contract is indeed in a Diamond part-score where South can make nine tricks. I wouldn't bid on those East cards but many will try 2♣ – allowing West (maybe) to compete to 3♣. Still, South is likely to press on with 3♦ and win the auction that way.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

East-West can make two Game contracts on this deal (a cold 3NT and a poor 5♣) but reaching either of them is going to be tricky. East should open 1♣ in third seat, West will respond 1♠ and East will surely repeat his Clubs. Now, even if West raises to 3♣, it is hard for East to see that he has nine top tricks in No-trumps. True, East has stoppers in the unbid suits but that is not going to be sufficient unless the Clubs are solid – and the bidding gives no guarantee of that.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

This may well prove to be an exciting affair in the auction. North-South can make 4♠ and East-West can make 5♥ so there should be lots of interesting competitive bidding. North should Pass (anyone for 3♣?) and East might try a pre-empt in Hearts. If not, South will open 1♠ and West has a marginal overcall of 2♥. If he Passes the bidding, conceivably, will die young but if he does bid East is going to get the bit between his teeth. Scores all over the place?

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

After the excitement of Hand 9 we are back to the prosaic on this deal with only part-scores available. It is entirely possible that North opens the bidding in last seat with either 1♣ or 1♠ and plays there. As the cards lie East-West will do well to compete in Hearts as they can actually make 3♥. Meanwhile, North-South will struggle to make anything at all; even INT would fail if East were to lead a Heart rather than the more attractive and obvious low Diamond.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Game is cold for North-South here with 3NT being nearly laydown. The bidding is obvious – either North will open a strong No-trump and be raised to Game or North will open 1♦ and rebid 1NT with the same result. Only if West were to try the unorthodox by opening a weak 2♦ would anything strange occur and, even here, North can overcall 2NT. Most declarers will emerge with ten tricks as East has nothing better to do than start by leading Spades.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

This hand belongs to North-South in No-trumps although many Wests may thwart that by opening a weak 1NT and stealing the hand. After a Heart lead (better in theory than a Spade) from North, West may struggle to make more than five tricks. Even so, a score of -100 won't be bad. Where West starts with 1♣ (all the rage these days) or 1♠ the outcome of the auction is unclear. Still, North-South may well compete in No-trumps and make 120 or so.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

North-South can make 4♥ and East-West can make very little. The auction is likely to start with 1♣ from North, 1♥ from South and an overcall of 1♠ from West. Now it all gets a little murky. If North Passes (as he certainly should) and East Passes (as he might not) South has choice between a pessimistic 2♥ and a more aggressive 3♥. If he chooses the latter option North should raise confidently to Game. If East raises to 2♠ and South bids 3♥ North might Pass.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

The outcome of this hand may well be decided by East's opening bid. Realistically, you can only either Pass or try 1♥ and which to do is a matter of style. If East Passes then South will open 2NT, raised to 3NT by North. That shuts East up but now West is likely to find the killing Spade lead. Provided West also remembers to unblock the Spades at trick two 3NT will fail. If, however, East opens 1♥ West should lead the ♥9 to 3NT and now South has an easy time.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

East-West may well have an uncontested auction here. Many will open INT (15-17) in fourth position and play there. That will make an indeterminable number of tricks depending on South's choice of opening lead. Other players may play in 2♠ by East after opening 1♠ and Passing a raise to 2♠. That may make but might just go down depending on the view taken in Diamonds. Those who open 1♣ and raise a 1♠ response to 3♠ are unlikely to do well.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Another part-score with the top makeable contract being 3♦ by North. Most will Pass that West rubbish but some starry-eyed optimists will open something or other. Whether that will get them very far is not likely as even 2♥ should fail. If North is allowed to open 1♦ he may get to play in Diamonds, recording eight or nine tricks. If North can rebid INT after 1♦ – 1♠ he may play there making seven or eight tricks. Lots of different scores probable on this deal.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

North-South should reach 4♠ here with a minimum of effort, regardless of whether South Passes, opens 1♣ or opens INT. There are always ten top tricks with the 3-3 Heart break but declarer doesn't know the position and has to decide how to avoid losing three Diamonds and a Heart. He may either play to ruff a Diamond in the dummy or he may try the Club finesse and, as the cards lie, is unlikely to go wrong. That means most will end up with an overtrick.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

It is hardly possible for East-West to avoid 4♥ here but that has no chance if the opponents find a Club lead and third round ruff. The winning defence is easy if South is on lead and that is almost certain whether East opens 1♥ or INT and rebids 2♥ after a Stayman enquiry. However, if East drops the ♣Q at trick one it may well confuse the issue for South who may funk leading another Club. If East has opened INT, though, there is little scope for deception.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

North-South are sure to play this one in 3NT, probably bid after a 2NT opening bid from North. This has no chance on a Club lead but most Easts will choose a normal low Spade. If declarer wins in dummy with the ♠10, crosses to a top Diamond and leads another Spade East can still beat the hand by rising with the ♠K and switching to a Club. If, however, dummy wins the Spade lead and plays a Heart at trick two, 3NT can always make.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

East-West have a slam available in Diamonds here, although it is a marginal contract, dependent on the Spade finesse. As declarer needs five Spade tricks it is natural to draw trumps, cash the ♠A and run the ♠10 – the best percentage line and successful on this layout. Few will reach 6♦, though and many will play in Spades. Here, there appears at first sight to be the same twelve tricks but the unlikely defence of two rounds of Clubs will hold declarer to eleven.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

South has an interesting hand and the bidding on this deal is likely to be lively. Although the vulnerability is against North-South they can actually make a profitable sacrifice of 5♣ Doubled (one off only) against East-West's cold 4♠. Few will risk doing that, though, and most tables will play in 4♠ by East. Here, accurate defence can always hold declarer to ten tricks although many defenders may well concede a very expensive overtrick.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

Another part-score deal. The highest making contract for North-South is 2♦ and the best East-West can do is to make 2♥. After a Pass from East and 1♦ by South it is, in fact, extremely difficult for East-West to enter the auction although I have little doubt that some Wests will make an unspeakable 2♣ overcall. If that gets Passed out (or Doubled) it will cost a fortune. Still, it is possible that North-South will get too high; they certainly will if North bids 2♠.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

This could be interesting. East-West can make 5♦ standing on their heads but the defenders will surely make their two Aces. The top match-point contract, however, is 4♠, which cannot be beaten whether North leads a Diamond or forces declarer in Hearts. How might you reach this? Don't ask me! I suspect that 5♦ making will be the most common outcome with one or two bashers playing 3NT from the East hand going comfortably and deservedly down.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

The normal bidding on this deal is 1♥ from West, 1♠ from East and a raise to 2♠ by West. 2♥ is a horrible effort (most pairs insist on a six-card suit for this) although some will bid it. 2♥ can be defeated but might scrape home on a passive Diamond lead. 2♠ is always there on any lead. Some Wests may open INT (12-14) and they will do well as that will make at least eight tricks for a good score. These 5.3.3.2 hands are often best handled by opening INT.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

North-South will surely reach Game on this deal and 4♥ is the obvious spot. You can't really avoid making ten tricks with the position of the ♥Q and ♠A and many declarers will be content with that. There are ways to make an overtrick, involving some fancy squeeze plays on East, but space precludes full analysis. Some bashers will play in their favourite 3NT. That's all right if East leads a black card but fatal if he chooses a Diamond lead.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

Years ago they would have Passed this deal out – these days that may be a rarity. As you might expect with points split 19-21 no one can make anything much on this hand although many Norths may bid and make INT after a low Spade lead. East-West, meanwhile, can make 2♠ and that may well be the spot if North decides to open 1♣ in fourth seat. I would certainly throw the hand in as North if the alternative were 1♣ but many won't agree.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

The likely spot here is 3NT by North-South with overtricks the major issue. Sure, 6♠ makes on the lie of the cards but who on Earth will bid that? The number of tricks made in 3NT will depend on the opening lead and few will lead a Heart from West after South has bid the suit. On any other lead declarer can take the percentage line in Clubs (run the ♣Q and then run the ♣10) to emerge with at least eleven tricks and twelve if West misdiscards.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

The points are split 20-20 here and, predictably, neither side can make much. East-West may compete in Spades but will find even 2♠ hard work. Others will play the North-South cards in Clubs where eight tricks are the limit on best defence. After 1♣ from North, 1♠ from East some optimists will try 2♥ on the South cards. That does not work well. Others will Double, yet others will show a refreshing tendency to support partner. Where it will all end, who knows?

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

East-West can make 4♥ on this deal if they can get there. Game isn't cast iron and made in Birmingham but we have all been in worse contracts. After North opens 1♣, aggressive Easts will Double and now West has an easy 4♥ bid. If East Passes South does best to bid (2♣ anyone? Or doesn't 1♣ show Clubs in your methods?) or West has an easy 1♥ call. Still, it isn't certain that East-West will reach game after a protective 1♥ so many East-Wests will record 170.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

Computer analysis shows that the best anyone can do on this horrible deal is to make 1♥ as West (!) or 2♠ as North-South. Are these outcomes likely? Well... East will open 1♠ and now it gets murky. If South Passes then 1♠ must be Passed out. However, many will bid a Michaels-style 2♠ to show Hearts and a minor. Now what? Well, North probably ought to give up on the chance that partner has Diamonds and just Pass. That's one way of reaching the best spot...

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

East-West can make a slam on this deal but 6NT is a horrible contract. Besides, you have to play the cards with x-ray vision to make it. Normal bidding: (West first) 1♦ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♣ – 2NT – 3NT. East should do no more than bid Game with West likely to hold a single Heart after his third bid. Anyway, you don't have to overbid to score well at pairs – making twelve tricks is sure to be good. A low Club from North will help and now West has some views to take

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

The most likely contract here is 3NT but system differences will mean that either East or West could be declarer. South might lead a Club to 3NT and now East has an easy time making ten tricks. A passive Diamond is best but hard to find. If West is declarer he may well get a Diamond lead and now the timing of the hand is awkward. Unless he plays a Club to the ♣10 at some stage he will be happy to end up with nine tricks and his contract.