Commentary
for the
IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs

Tuesday 3 November 2026

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for participating in the Irish Bridge Union (IBU) Simultaneous Pairs. This will be the last ever IBU Sims, as the IBU will no longer exist after the formation of a new 32-county Irish bridge body next January. Who knows, perhaps these commentaries will end up for sale on eBay as collectors' items!

The funds raised from these tournaments will be handed over to the new body by the IBU, so you are continuing to contribute to the development of Irish bridge, and your support is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the opportunity to test yourself against your fellow players across Ireland (and indeed overseas as well). As always, the deals, prepared randomly with no manual intervention whatsoever, provided plenty of tricky decisions. Thanks to the experts who have provided their commentary to help us to deal with the problems: Brian Senior (Monday), Enda Glynn (Tuesday), Paul Delaney (Wednesday), Enda Muphy (Thursday), and Karel De Raeymaeker (Friday).

Don't forget you check your standings in the overall results on the ECatsBridge Website. You'll find the daily commentaries there too.

We'll be back with the first ever Bridge Ireland Simultaneous Pairs in the first week of March. If your club hasn't played before and would like to sign up, please contact Head Office on 353-1-4929666.

Gordon Lessells,

President, Irish Bridge Union

Board 1	♠ 10	Dealer N
	♥ 87	Vul: None
	♦ QJ5	
	♣ KQ109643	
♠ AQ9543		♠ J862
♥ J109532		♥ K64
♦ 4		♦ A86
♣		♣ AJ7
	♠ K7	
	♥ AQ	
	♦ K109732	
	♣ 852	

West	North	East	South
	3♣	Pass	Pass
4♣*	Pass	4♠	All Pass

North will set the ball rolling with a 3♣ bid. Many East players with a flat thirteen count may pass on the first round of bidding. West in the passout position will come alive with a 4♣ bid, showing the majors. 4♠ from East should end the auction, although some Easts may be tempted to advance to 5♠, which West will pass. If East declares a 5♥ contract an unlikely spade lead will lead to defeat for declarer. Eleven tricks in a major for EW is the most likely result.

Tip: When advancing over a bid made in the balancing position, remember your partner may not be strong.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 2	♠ 96 ♥ K53 ♦ 10973 ♣ AJ92	Dealer E Vul: N-S
♠ J8 ♥ Q76 ♦ Q862 ♣ Q753		♠ AK10752 ♥ 10 ♦ K5 ♣ K1086
	♠ Q43 ♥ AJ9842 ♦ AJ4 ♣ 4	

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
Dbl	3♥	All Pass	

With a reasonable 6-card suit South is worth a 2♥ overcall. West with seven high-card points will double. North will raise to 3♥ and that may end the auction. Some East players will be reluctant to retire from the bidding and may bid 3♠ or 4♣ (the second certainly an overbid). NS do not have the values to advance beyond the 3-level. A double will be required to earn some matchpoints as 3♠ minus1by East will be a poor score for NS. With an 8-card fit it is generally unwise to advance to the 3-level in a competitive auction. This hand is the exception that proves the rule. South as declarer can make nine tricks in hearts. East can make eight tricks in spades.

Tip: At favourable vulnerability it can be wise to bid one more.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 3	♠ A102 ♥ A107543 ♦ 943 ♣ 5	Dealer S Vul: E-W
♠ KQ75 ♥ 62 ♦ Q72 ♣ J763		♠ J8643 ♥ J ♦ K65 ♣ AK109
	♠ 9 ♥ KQ98 ♦ AJ108 ♣ Q842	

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♥	Dbl	2♥
2♠	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

4441 hands are notoriously difficult to bid. Even with EW active in the bidding, NS should still arrive in a comfortable 4♥. The singleton spade in dummy is a great asset for declarer. A double finesse in diamonds will see declarer make a comfortable eleven tricks. If EW get overactive in the bidding and stretch to 4♠ a timely double will lead to a lot of matchpoints for NS. You need some values as well as good distribution to be sacrificing at unfavourable vulnerability.

Tip: Usually at unfavourable vulnerability it is best to take a vow of silence.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 4	♠ A106 ♥ KQ1053 ♦ 873 ♣ 64	Dealer W Vul: Both
♠ QJ ♥ 962 ♦ AKQJ96 ♣ K7		♠ 94 ♥ 84 ♦ 10542 ♣ AJ532
	♠ K87532 ♥ AJ7 ♦ ♣ Q1098	

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	3♦*	4♦*
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

A spirited auction will generally see North declare a 4♥ contract. With a decent suit North is worth a 1♥ overcall. 3♦ by East is a weak bid showing at least four diamonds. On his way to 4♥ South shows a diamond control. With soft values in spades, West may pass and North will bid 4♥. 5♦ is a great sacrifice against 4♥ but NS may bid on to 5♥ which on this occasion works exceptionally well. As NS have no intermediate spade spots there is only one way to play the spade suit. If EW concede 500 they will score well.

Tip: It is a matter of fine judgement whether it is best to sacrifice or subside. With extra distribution it is often best to bid on.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 5	♠ J643 ♥ AQJ74 ♦ KQ86 ♣	Dealer N Vul: N-S
♠ AKQ ♥ 86 ♦ J92 ♣ 87642		♠ 1085 ♥ 92 ♦ A10753 ♣ A95
	♠ 972 ♥ K1053 ♦ 4 ♣ KQJ103	

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	3♦*
Pass	3♥*	All Pass	

South is worth a splinter on the first round of bidding. 3♦ will show a singleton diamond and 4♦ will show a void. Both bids will show four hearts. With values in diamonds North realises that the hand does not fit well and simply rebids 3♥. A disciplined South, knowing he has already stretched, will pass 3♥ and win the day. The defence have four tricks – three spades and the ♦A. NS pairs who stay below the level of game will score well. The bid of 3♦ will always show four hearts and usually sufficient artillery to go at least to game. Here South is borderline, and partner's caution should influence him to take the low road.

Tip: After a 1♥ or 1♠ opening a response of 3♣/♦ will show a singleton in the suit bid and four cards in partner's major. A bid of 4♣/♦ will show a void and four trumps. Both bids are usually at least game going in the major suit opened.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 6	♠ A97 ♥ K ♦ KQJ943 ♣ KQ9	Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ QJ652 ♥ J ♦ 1076 ♣ 10642		♠ K3 ♥ 10863 ♦ A852 ♣ A83
	♠ 1084 ♥ AQ97542 ♦ ♣ J75	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

North has an excellent hand opposite partner's 2♥ (or 3♥) opening. He is missing Aces but a bid of 4♥ appears normal.

It is true with the favourable lie of the cards on this occasion declarer can make twelve tricks in a heart contract Any NS pairs that bid a slam on this collection are certainly of the optimistic disposition.

Tip: When partner opens a weak two in a major, partner with a good hand even holding only a singleton in the major opened should advance to game in the major.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	3	6	2	4
S	3	3	6	2	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 7	♠ A		Dealer S
	♥ 10		Vul: Both
	♦ QJ98643		
	♣ KQ83		
♠ 106532			♠ QJ9
♥ J865			♥ Q92
♦ K10			♦ 2
♣ 65			♣ AJ9742
	♠ K874		
	♥ AK743		
	♦ A75		
	♣ 10		

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦*	Pass	4♠*
Pass	5♦*	All Pass	

Playing 2-over-1 game-forcing South has an interesting rebid over his partner's 2♦ response. Holding a singleton club a simple raise to 3♦ looks best. 4♦ now is Roman Keycard Blackwood in diamonds ("Minorwood") and missing two keycards North signs off in 5♦. It is true if the ♦K is onside twelve tricks can be made. One club can be ruffed and there are two discards on the two kings. But bidding dodgy slams is not winning bridge.

Tip: Use Roman Keycard Blackwood in the minors by bidding 4 of the minor once the suit is agreed – a useful tool.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 8	♠ Q865 ♥ Q7 ♦ K43 ♣ J763	Dealer W Vul: None
♠ KJ2 ♥ AJ9632 ♦ 105 ♣ A5		♠ A1074 ♥ K105 ♦ J976 ♣ Q9
	♠ 93 ♥ 84 ♦ AQ82 ♣ K10842	

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♥*	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

Any intrepid South players who bid 3♣ in sandwich position might get lucky. Raising partner's 1♥/1♠ opening to 2♥/2♠ is best used to show 8-10 high-card points and 3- or 4-card trump support. That will silence most NS players on this hand, but there are many in Ireland who will enter the fray at the 3-level even if the suit is not of the highest quality, and I would expect to see some 3♣ bids here. West will almost certainly bid 3♥ anyway. Either way, this is not a constructive bid. It simply shows a sixth heart and makes it more difficult for NS to steal the contract. Balancing the bidding is a phenomenon that requires good judgement. Frequently silence is the better part of valour. The above hand shows the exception proves the rule.

Tip: Be careful balancing the bidding.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 9	♠ 8765 ♥ AJ5 ♦ K9764 ♣ 3	Dealer N Vul: E-W
♠ KQJ3 ♥ 10 ♦ 85 ♣ AKJ1097		♠ A42 ♥ K82 ♦ A102 ♣ Q865
	♠ 109 ♥ Q97643 ♦ QJ3 ♣ 42	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Dbl	3NT	All Pass

2♣ by West is normal Stayman. 3♣ indicates a club suit and a 4-card major. It also expresses doubt about a no-trump contract, with poor holdings in two suits. East has good support in clubs and is well stocked in all suits so a 3NT bid is the normal course of action. There are two losers in a club contract so the no-trump game scores best.

Tip: Bid out your hand so that you can arrive in the right spot, rather than guessing blindly.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 10	♠ AQ84 ♥ 92 ♦ 543 ♣ AJ96	Dealer E Vul: Both
♠ 10632 ♥ A7 ♦ 10 ♣ KQ8542		♠ J95 ♥ KJ108 ♦ QJ762 ♣ 3
	♠ K7 ♥ Q6543 ♦ AK98 ♣ 107	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♥
2♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

Even vulnerable many West players will venture into the bidding with their 6-card club suit. South in the passout position does not have the ideal hand for a takeout double. But needs must. A double by South (takeout) will win the watch, as North has an easy pass to convert it to penalties. Some NS pairs may land in a no-trump contract but eight tricks are the maximum. There are only five tricks for EW in a club contract. Plus 800 for NS will score a lot of match points.

Tip: Have your values when you bid (especially vulnerable at the 2-level or higher) and do not wander into the bidding aimlessly.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 11	♠ Q4 ♥ A9632 ♦ 9843 ♣ 87	Dealer S Vul: None
♠ A1085 ♥ J854 ♦ 6 ♣ KQJ5		♠ 9763 ♥ KQ107 ♦ AQ10 ♣ 92
	♠ KJ2 ♥ ♦ KJ752 ♣ A10643	

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Dbl	1♥	Dbl	2♣
Pass	2♦	2♠	All Pass

Over a 1♦ opening by South, West has a classic takeout double with 4414 distribution including a singleton diamond. North will usually respond 1♥. A double from East here should always show hearts. West has already shown tolerance for hearts with his takeout double. As the late Paddy Walsh (David's father) wrote the double by East shows hearts exposing any psyche, a frequent ploy in Paddy's days. West passes with a minimum hand, North gives preference to diamonds and 2♠ by East will usually close the auction. South has a difficult hand to lead from. The defence should score four tricks – 1 club, 1 heart and two trumps.

Tip: Make sure you have an agreement with partner after he doubles for takeout and your right-hand opponent bids a new suit that you hold.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 12	♠ J6432		Dealer W
	♥ QJ93		Vul: N-S
	♦ Q96		
	♣ K		
♠ Q105			♠ K987
♥ 752			♥ A106
♦ J5			♦ K107
♣ A6542			♣ J98
	♠ A		
	♥ K84		
	♦ A8432		
	♣ Q1073		

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	All Pass	

Many modern partnerships open all flat eleven-point hands. That policy may not always lead to best results. Shape is frequently more potent than high-card points. If East chooses to open 1♣ on this hand only Almighty God knows what the final contract might be. In the context of the above hand North is not strong enough to bid 2♥ (fourth suit forcing to game). If South plays in 3♦ he will have an easy nine tricks. If EW buy the contract in any denomination NS should apply the axe which will not be a pleasant result for the light opener.

Tip: Opening flat eleven-point hands (particularly vulnerable) is not a recommended policy by this old-fashioned bridge player from outside the Pale.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 13	♠ 6543		Dealer N
	♥ 108		Vul: Both
	♦ Q54		
	♣ A1087		
♠ AQ1098		♠ 2	
♥ QJ6		♥ AK952	
♦ K7		♦ A832	
♣ J54		♣ 962	
	♠ KJ7		
	♥ 743		
	♦ J1096		
	♣ KQ3		

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
4♥*	All Pass		

With three quick tricks, East is worth a 1♥ opening. (Some 11 points are worth a lot more than others – reference the last board.) West's 4♥ bid on the second round of bidding shows the values for a game, but no more. With more points and heart support he can make a fourth suit forcing bid instead to keep the slam on the table. All roads lead to ten tricks in a heart contract. I prefer the lead of the ♣K to the ♦J – the stronger suit. After three rounds of clubs and a probable trump switch declarer can ruff two diamonds in dummy and make his contract. On the diamond lead declarer has the chance to finesse a spade but if that loses, he will have floored a stone-cold contract. The famous Sylvia of bridge lore likes to take a finesse and she will get lucky here with an overtrick.

Tip: Take your ten tricks – do not put your stone-cold contract at risk.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 14 ♠ J2 Dealer E
♥ 942 Vul: None
♦ Q7543
♣ 742

♠ AQ754 ♠
♥ Q7 ♥ AKJ86
♦ J ♦ AK1098
♣ K10653 ♣ AQ8

♠ K109863
♥ 1053
♦ 62
♣ J9

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♣	Pass	6♣	Pass
7♣	All pass		

It is difficult to arrive at the optimum contract of 7NT. But if ANY grand slam is bid against you, it will usually be a below average result. With two 5-card suits, even with 21 points, I prefer a 1-level opening, here 1♥. It gives more bidding space. West's bid of 4♣ over 3♦ will surely show a 5-card suit with no primary support for either of partner's suits. The bid of 6♣ by East indicates an excellent hand, and West puts another one to it which shows good judgement. The play is straightforward. Any pair who manage to bid 7NT will earn top marks.

Tip: With 21- 22 high-card points and two 5-card suits and a side suit singleton an opening bid at the 1-level gives more space for a descriptive auction.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	6	7	3	7
W	7	6	7	3	7

Board 15	♠ J532		Dealer S
	♥ 2		Vul: N-S
	♦ 7654		
	♣ 9643		
♠ 108			♠ KQ6
♥ AQ3			♥ KJ109764
♦ QJ8			♦ K2
♣ AKJ52			♣ Q
	♠ A974		
	♥ 85		
	♦ A1093		
	♣ 1087		

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	4♥	All Pass

This is a dangerous hand and many will bid a hopeless slam. The problem with the East hand is that it is short of Aces. If East moves slowly in the auction and gets support for hearts showing a maximum hand for 1NT rebid there is difficulty going forward. A bid of 4NT (Roman Keycard Blackwood) from East will illicit the response of 5♠ (showing two keycards and the trump queen) and now you are overboard. Gay Keaveney advises that a golden rule of bridge is that with no Ace yourself, you should not go looking for Aces. Defending 6♥ South will have little difficulty cashing his two Aces. A pair that will avoid a slam will score above average.

Tip: With no Aces yourself, do not use Roman Keycard Blackwood.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 16	♠ A9852		Dealer W
	♥ QJ105		Vul: E-W
	♦		
	♣ AK76		
♠ 63			♠ KQ107
♥ A86			♥ 974
♦ 8532			♦ A1094
♣ Q843			♣ 95
	♠ J4		
	♥ K32		
	♦ KQJ76		
	♣ J102		

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Playing 2-over-1 game-forcing, South has a difficult response to partner's opening bid of 1♠. 1NT showing a maximum of eleven points may be a little conservative, but in these situations one can usually make up ground subsequently. After a 2♥ rebid by partner South may try 2NT and partner with fourteen points will advance to the 3NT game. It requires double dummy defence to beat 3NT. West can lead the ♠6. East will win and switch to the ♥9 (denying an honour in the suit). West can beat South's King when it is played, and continue spades, and now South cannot get to any diamond tricks in time. The defence will score five tricks. On a diamond lead South will likely prevail – scoring two diamonds, three clubs, three hearts and one spade.

Tip: Sometimes imagination and good technique are required to find best defence.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 17	♠ 10	Dealer N
	♥ KQJ1086	Vul: None
	♦ KQJ10	
	♣ KQ	
♠ K42		♠ A98653
♥ 943		♥
♦ 9542		♦ 86
♣ 1085		♣ 96432
	♠ QJ7	
	♥ A752	
	♦ A73	
	♣ AJ7	

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	2NT*
Pass	3♠*	Pass	4NT*
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦*	Pass	6♥
All Pass.			

South's bid of 2NT shows sixteen points plus and agrees hearts (showing at least 3-card support) North's bid of 3♠ shows a singleton spade and more than a minimum opening. South's spade holding is not ideal but with three Aces and four trumps he makes a forward move with a bid of 4NT (Roman Keycard Blackwood). After the 5♣ response showing obviously one keycard, South bids 5♦ to check for the trump queen. North's bid of 6♦ shows the trump queen and the ♦K. 6♥ becomes the final contract. If North did not have the trump queen he would bid 5♥ and which might have become the final contract, as South would not have known they had a 10-card trump fit.

There are twelve top tricks in a heart contract. The key to the slam is North's splinter bid so South is aware that there are not two spade losers.

Tip: A splinter bid is an essential tool in slam bidding.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 18	♠ 86		Dealer E
	♥ AJ108		Vul: N-S
	♦ A87		
	♣ AK85		
♠ J97			♠ 53
♥ 54			♥ 97632
♦ KJ1092			♦ Q643
♣ 974			♣ Q10
	♠ AKQ1042		
	♥ KQ		
	♦ 5		
	♣ J632		

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♠
Pass	7♠	All Pass	

The 2♣ bid by North is game forcing with clubs. South judges that his hand is best described by a jump bid in spades. He has a good suit and club support. 4NT Roman Keycard Blackwood is wheeled out once again. With excellent controls, North advances to 7♠. The key to bidding the slam is South's jump rebid of 3♠, showing a good suit and better than minimum opening bid. The play is straightforward as the heart winners can be used for club discards.

Tip: With a good suit and better than minimum opening it is often best to jump in the second round of bidding even after a 2-over-1 response forcing to game.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	7	2	5	7	7
S	7	2	5	7	7
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 19	♠ AKQ952		Dealer S
	♥ J10		Vul: E-W
	♦ J9		
	♣ 987		
♠ 764			♠ J
♥ 8652			♥ A743
♦ AQ10			♦ 8643
♣ AQ6			♣ 10532
	♠ 1083		
	♥ KQ9		
	♦ K752		
	♣ KJ4		

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

Many North players will bid again after first transferring with a good 6-card suit. The two warning signs are the unsupported jacks and partner's failure to break the transfer. With a good 13 or 14 points and 3- or 4-card support it is good policy to break the transfer. If South becomes declarer he can make nine tricks, as East will be unable to attack both diamonds and clubs simultaneously. If North is declarer East is in pole position. He can lead either minor suit and his partner can return a high heart showing no honour in the suit. East will realise that he must switch to the other minor to score the fifth defensive trick.

Tip: In suit contracts discount unsupported jacks when adding your points.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 20

	♠ 976 ♥ 65 ♦ 109542 ♣ 954	Dealer W Vul: Both
♠ 32 ♥ KJ43 ♦ AK8 ♣ K1063		♠ AJ1054 ♥ Q10982 ♦ 63 ♣ A
	♠ KQ8 ♥ A7 ♦ QJ7 ♣ QJ872	

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

East has a game-going hand over partner's 1NT opening. However, it remains to be determined which is the best game. After the heart fit is discovered East will normally become declarer in 4♥. It would be wrong for East to transfer to hearts first as he may never be able to show five spades. Heaven forbid, this is not a hand for Stayman. Sam Stayman (1909–1983) reportedly died of a broken heart after his wonderful convention was so frequently abused. With a 5-card major (here TWO 5-card majors) after partner's 1NT opening you should use a transfer bid not Stayman. The play in 4♥ is straightforward and there are eleven tricks for EW.

Tip: With one or two 5-card majors after 1NT opening by partner make a transfer bid to the higher-ranking suit first and in the next round of bidding mention the second suit. Do not use Stayman!

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 21	♠ 8	Dealer N
	♥ AQ1092	Vul: N-S
	♦ Q9875	
	♣ 85	
♠ AJ743		♠ Q952
♥ K6543		♥ 87
♦		♦ AJ1062
♣ K42		♣ Q10
	♠ K106	
	♥ J	
	♦ K43	
	♣ AJ9763	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
2♦*	Dbl	2♠	All Pass

The 2♦ bid by West is the Ghestem convention showing both majors. If West had bid 2♣ it would show the two remaining suits furthest from each other (here, diamonds and spades). If West bid 2NT it would show the lowest two remaining suits – here, diamonds and hearts. When you use the Ghestem convention, your two suits should always be at least 5 cards in length. In the subsequent bidding a double by West would show a strong Ghestem hand if the opponents are competing in the bidding, while pass will say I have nothing further to add to the bidding.

A double by North suggests some values and an ability to double one of opponents suits. East is worth a competitive bid of 2♠ – the ♣Q might not be a good working card even though it is here. No 3-level contract on either side should make but on some occasions with three declarers at work nine tricks may accrue.

Tip: Put the Ghestem convention into your armoury. Remember the three principles.

A. A cue bid shows the two remaining suits furthest from each other.
B. A bid of 2NT shows the lowest-ranking two remaining suits
C. A jump in the minors shows the exclusive remaining suits.

The advantage of Ghestem over Michaels is that the two suits are identified immediately.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 22	♠ 9763 ♥ 6 ♦ J72 ♣ J8532	Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ 108 ♥ K1054 ♦ Q1083 ♣ K106		♠ AKJ42 ♥ AQJ82 ♦ K5 ♣ 4
	♠ Q5 ♥ 973 ♦ A964 ♣ AQ97	

West	North	East	South
		1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	3♥*	Pass
4♥	All pass.		

The rebid of 3♥ is game-forcing by East. It may only show four hearts – all the better if you have five. West has limited his hand by his original 1NT bid. But he can confidently bid 4♥ with good trump support. The favourable lie of the cards means there are eleven tricks available in either major, losing only two minor suit Aces. There is a discard on the ♣K and a spade can be ruffed in dummy. Playing in a heart game contract will beat all the no-trumpers, who can only score a maximum of nine tricks, and even then need to drop the doubleton spade queen offside.

Tip: Always play in the right denomination. Avoid no-trumpitis.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 23	♠ K5		Dealer S
	♥ KJ2		Vul: Both
	♦ K98632		
	♣ 87		
♠ AQ9764			♠ 1032
♥ 5			♥ A9876
♦ A7			♦ Q
♣ AJ93			♣ K1052
	♠ J8		
	♥ Q1043		
	♦ J1054		
	♣ Q64		

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♦*	Pass
4NT*	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

This is a borderline slam but aggressive bidding from West will get the job done. 3♣ is a game try. 4♦ shows a singleton, with spades the agreed suit. East's hand has improved after his partner's bid of 3♣. He has a singleton diamond, the ♥A and good club support. The slam depends on one of two finesses and reasonable breaks in the black suits. The trial bid from West carries the day. Maurice Hession, a fine Galway Bridge player, always advised to show a second suit which will frequently help arrive at the correct destination.

Tip: A trial bid in a new suit is ongoing and looks for help from partner in that suit. Responder jumps to game with appropriate help in the trial suit.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	6	-	2	6	1
W	6	-	2	6	1

Board 24	♠ K10764		Dealer W
	♥ A6		Vul: None
	♦ K98		
	♣ AJ9		
♠ QJ3			♠ A9
♥ 10942			♥ K85
♦ 763			♦ 1042
♣ 654			♣ Q10832
	♠ 852		
	♥ QJ73		
	♦ AQJ5		
	♣ K7		

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT*	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

The 2NT rebid shows 15-17 points and a balanced hand. South has good values, but with a maximum 30 points between the two hands, should not advance beyond game. The poor quality of trump support is another negative in the hand. North will make eleven tricks with careful play – losing just two trumps.

Tip: Evaluate your hand when judging whether to make a forward move. As Mary Trench, a leading Irish lady bridge player was prone to say: "Too much bidding can often spoil the party"

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 25	♠ KQ953 ♥ J7 ♦ J3 ♣ AJ52	Dealer N Vul: E-W
♠ A82 ♥ K63 ♦ K1064 ♣ Q97		♠ 10 ♥ A982 ♦ AQ952 ♣ K64
	♠ J764 ♥ Q1054 ♦ 87 ♣ 1083	

West	North	East	South
	1♠	2♦*	2♠
3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♦	All Pass		

East has barely the values for a 2♦ vulnerable overcall, but West will not get off the bus until he arrives in the 5♦ game. This is a good example of the theorem "If you bid them up you must be able to play them." Declarer must ruff two spades in hand, draw trumps and cash two top hearts and play a club to the king, followed by another club. The defence can cash a second club but North is left without recourse. The advantage of this play is the possibility of dropping a doubleton ♣A in the North hand also comes into play.

Tip: "If you bid them up you must be able to play them".

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26	♠ 87643 ♥ AK5 ♦ 9 ♣ 9842		Dealer E Vul: Both
♠ J2 ♥ Q10742 ♦ AQ3 ♣ A76			♠ K5 ♥ J83 ♦ KJ7642 ♣ Q3
	♠ AQ109 ♥ 96 ♦ 1085 ♣ KJ105		

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♥	All Pass

Some East players may have a weak 2♦ opening in their armoury, or may even bid 2♦ in response to partner's opening bid of 1♥. Strangely enough even with a combined 23 points 2♦ is the only 2-level making contract for EW. An intrepid North player who balances the bidding (despite holding only 7 high-card points and a poor spade suit) will strike gold as there are eleven tricks for NS in a spade contract. EW may double 4♠ but silence is the winning option – take your punishment.

Tip: Balancing the bidding with good shape can sometimes be the winning option.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 27	♠ A3		Dealer S
	♥ J104		Vul: None
	♦ 76543		
	♣ J96		
♠ 1096			♠ K42
♥ 763			♥ A52
♦ Q102			♦ AJ8
♣ AQ85			♣ K742
	♠ QJ875		
	♥ KQ98		
	♦ K9		
	♣ 103		

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	All Pass	

With fifteen high-card points East has nowhere to go and North will give preference to spades at the second time of asking. Note a 5/2 fit is better than a 4/3 fit – if forced you have more control. A spade to the Ace and back towards the queen/jack is the best way to handle this particular trump holding. With the ♦A lying favourably and good heart spot cards there are eight tricks for NS in a spade contract. EW can make eight tricks in clubs but it is not easy to see how they can enter the auction.

Tip: Note a 5/2 fit is generally superior to a 4/3 fit.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 28	♠ Q3 ♥ AQ ♦ AJ976 ♣ 9864	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ AJ102 ♥ J32 ♦ K2 ♣ AK103		♠ 865 ♥ K105 ♦ 103 ♣ QJ752
	♠ K974 ♥ 98764 ♦ Q854 ♣	

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♦	3♣	3♦
4♣	Pass	Pass	4♦
All Pass			

Even with sixteen high-card points, West must subside in the bidding. His ♦K is probably badly placed. South's good distribution, even with a shortage of high cards, entitles him to go to the 4-level. A forcing defence is best. Continuing club leads will put pressure on declarer. The hearts can be established but South has insufficient entries to enjoy them.

Tip: To double a contract you must be able to count enough sure tricks in defence to beat the contract.

Makeable Contracts

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