ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for BBC Children in Need

Monday 9th November 2026

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. Over the past years we (well you) have helped raise an amazing **£1,474,766.47 …** we are so close to one and half million -will we make it this year ? We are keeping our fingers crossed!

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/sims/currentdonations.asp

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

Our thanks, as always, go to our commentators: Brian Senior for his words of wisdom on Tuesday and Thursday, Julian Pottage did the analysis for the Monday session, Mark Horton for the Wednesday session and Rob Miller completes the crew, writing up Friday event. It's always interesting to see if they got it right but you will have discovered that by now of course !

With very best wishes

Anna & Mark – the ECatsBridge Team

anna@ecats.co.uk

Board 1	♠ KQJ6	Dealer N
	♥ 1053	Vul: None
	♦ QJ643	
	♣ 8	

♠ 875		♠ A932
♥ Q987		♥ 42
♦ A952		♦ K108
♣ K4		♣ Q1095
	♠ 104	
	♥ AKJ6	
	♦ 7	
	♣ AJ7632	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

In the illustrated auction, everything is natural. For some pairs North would respond 1♠, in which case South rebids 2♣ and plays there. After the less space consuming 1♦ response, there is more room to explore.

As is often the case when the trump fit is delicate, there are a variety of ways that the play might go. If nobody has bid spades, West is likely to lead a spade against a heart contract. Declarer would seek to knock out the ♠A anyway if the lead was something else. If the lead is a spade, declarer does best to play an honour from dummy, giving the option to retain the ♠10 as an entry for taking a second club ruff in dummy.

In a club contract, if nobody has bid hearts, West might lead a heart, which would allow 2♣ to make. On a spade lead or low diamond lead, 2♣ fails by a trick with three tricks in trumps and one in each side suit to lose.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 2

	♠ J104 ♥ Q985 ♦ Q2 ♣ KJ75	Dealer E Vul: N-S
♠ AK975 ♥ A3 ♦ J87 ♣ 842		♠ Q83 ♥ K106 ♦ AK64 ♣ A109
	♠ 62 ♥ J742 ♦ 10953 ♣ Q63	

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

Playing a weak no-trump opening, East is too strong to open 1NT and so makes a suit opening followed a by a no-trump rebid. Whether and how West looks for a possible 5-3 fit in spades depends on style and system. Here I have assumed that West does investigate the possible fit via a 2♣ enquiry. Some pairs these days play 'two-way Stayman' also known as XYZ, in which case West would rebid 2♦ (artificial game force). Having said that, pairs using 'two-way Stayman' often play a strong no-trump, in which case East opens 1NT and West responds with a 2♥ transfer.

Whether spades are trumps or there are no-trumps, declarer can make 11 tricks by dropping the ♦Q doubleton. However cashing the ♦A-K will not be the normal way to play the suit unless the opening lead is a club. If the defenders are not in a position to cash two club tricks the moment they get the lead, the normal play in diamonds is low towards the jack. Perhaps if declarer judges that South is the sort of player who would go in with the ♦Q it then it is possible to recover by ducking the first diamond.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 3	♠ KQ97	Dealer S
	♥ Q108643	Vul: E-W
	♦ 6	
	♣ 53	

♠ 4		♠ A85
♥ K72		♥ 9
♦ AQ103		♦ K98542
♣ AJ1074		♣ K96
	♠ J10632	
	♥ AJ5	
	♦ J7	
	♣ Q82	

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

Facing a passed hand, North should have no qualms about making a weak jump overcall in 2♥ despite holding four good spades.

Over 3♥, West might do more than raise to 4♦ – but with the ♥K of doubtful value (facing a shortage and probably with the the ♥A sitting over) it is unclear that anything more aggressive would be right.

6♦ is a good contract, likely to make if South holds either the ♥A (when one of East's clubs can go away on the ♥K) or with a successful view on which opponent holds the ♣Q. While North's 2♥ overcall reduces the chance that the ♥A is onside, it increases the chance that South holds the ♣Q. As the cards lie both the ♥A and ♣Q are favourably placed, and trumps are 2-1, so just about everyone should make 12 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 4	♠ AQ93 ♥ 763 ♦ A4 ♣ K982		Dealer W Vul: Both
♠ J752 ♥ K85 ♦ Q103 ♣ 543		♠ 106 ♥ J4 ♦ 987652 ♣ AJ10	
	♠ K84 ♥ AQ1092 ♦ KJ ♣ Q76		

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

For pairs playing a weak no-trump and transfers, the auction shown will be a common one. After South suggests a 5332 type with the 3NT rebid, North judges to play in the suit game holding three-card heart support and a doubleton diamond. If South has two diamonds as well, the suit will be a weakness in 3NT. If South holds the three diamonds then a ruff may be available.

In a heart contract, the presence of a trump suit means that the defenders are never going to get to run the diamond suit. Taking (or at least planning to take) two finesses is the normal way to play the heart suit. With the ♥J doubleton onside, it is hard to go wrong. In the spade suit the textbook play in the suit produces four tricks, if four are sought. This is so because East is almost twice as likely to hold 10-x or J-x than J-10-x, making it correct to finesse the ♠9 on the third round. Ten tricks are the limit in either denomination if West is on lead and leads a club or if there are no-trumps and either defender starts off with a diamond.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 5	♠ 9854 ♥ Q1094 ♦ K7 ♣ J42	Dealer N Vul: N-S
♠ J73 ♥ KJ876 ♦ 95 ♣ A75		♠ AKQ2 ♥ 2 ♦ AQJ64 ♣ Q63
	♠ 106 ♥ A53 ♦ 10832 ♣ K1098	

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

Holding 18 point in high cards, East is very much maximum for the 1♠ rebid. Some will prefer 2♠ or 2NT. West, holding 9 HCP should not pass 1♠, so all routes should lead to the no-trump game. The only likely variation on the final contract is that East might get to declare.

With West as declarer in 3NT, the most testing lead is a club. One way to make ten tricks is to start by playing low from dummy and capture the eight with the ace. Next finesse the ♦J, return to the ♠J and repeat the diamond finesse. Then, before clearing the diamonds, cash a second round of spades. Finally, after South wins the fourth round of diamonds and switches to a heart, go up with the ace.

If East is declarer in 3NT, an initial low heart lead would stop the overtrick no matter how well declarer guesses.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 6	♠ 53	Dealer E
	♥ 10986	Vul: E-W
	♦ Q1053	
	♣ K94	

♠ 8762		♠ 94
♥ A542		♥ KJ7
♦ J		♦ AK98764
♣ QJ73		♣ 2
	♠ AKQJ10	
	♥ Q3	
	♦ 2	
	♣ A10865	

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♠
Double	Pass	2♦	3♣
Pass	Pass	3♦	All Pass

South has a strong hand for a simple overcall. Some will start with a double. Few pairs have a two-suited bid to show the black suits – and even those that do may be reluctant to use it because the spade suit is so strong. West's double strongly suggests four hearts, after which East surely rebids the 7-card card suit rather than settling for the likely Moysian fit in hearts. South is strong enough to take further action. Either 3♣ or double brings the club suit into consideration.

In 3♦ declarer has just one entry to dummy (the ♥A). It seems natural to use this entry to finesse the ♥J rather than to run the ♦J. Such a line results a in two-trick defeat with two losers in each pointed suit and one in each rounded suit.

South can make 3♣, probably by ruffing the second round of diamonds with the ♣8 or ♣10 and subsequently finessing the ♣9.

3♠ should fail because the defenders can force declarer to ruff twice; this sets up a trump trick for West.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 7	♠ 3		Dealer S
	♥ A1042		Vul: Both
	♦ Q86542		
	♣ A6		
♠ 10		♠ J98742	
♥ K98753		♥ QJ6	
♦ A9		♦ 10	
♣ J872		♣ KQ4	
	♠ AKQ65		
	♥		
	♦ KJ73		
	♣ 10953		

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

Being vulnerable, West probably does not fancy either a simple 2♥ overcall or weak jump overcall of 3♥. South's jump to 3♥, when it would be usual to play that 2♥ would be natural and forcing, is a splinter agreeing diamonds and showing a shortage in hearts. This is music to North's ears, who can envisage a parking spot for three losing diamonds by ruffing in the South hand. An immediate check on key cards is a reasonable continuation.

Some partnerships will have a way to show a void in reply to 4NT. If such a facility exists, it it would be right to use it here because the splinter bid makes it clear that the void is in hearts. What South should not do is treat the void as if it were an ace because if North holds the ♥A then doing so could mean bidding a hopeless grand slam. In the example auction I have had South simply show two key cards (the ♠A and the ♦K).

After a club lead, declarer in 6♦ needs to play two rounds of spades to dispose of the ♣6 before touching trumps (ideally starting the latter with the ♦K or ♦J in case one defender has 10-9 of trumps and a doubleton spade).

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	6	-	1	4
S	-	6	-	1	4
E	-	-	2	-	-
W	-	-	2	-	-

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Board 8	♠ J5	Dealer W
	♥ KJ1063	Vul: None
	♦ 1075	
	♣ QJ9	

♠ Q10874	♠ K6
♥ AQ	♥ 874
♦ 8	♦ QJ42
♣ A10876	♣ 5432

♠ A932
♥ 952
♦ AK963
♣ K

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

These days almost everyone opens 1♠ on hands with 5-5 in the black suits. East scrapes up a 1NT response. Being non-vulnerable, South does not mind overcalling 2♦ with the decent 5-card diamond suit. Whether West should double or bid 3♣ depends on which is the weaker action in partnership methods. The big advantage with the double is that it leaves open the possibility of 2♠ and the slight chance of defending 2♦ doubled.

The cards lie favourably for declarer in a heart contract with the ♥Q, ♦Q and ♦J all onside. With careful play it is possible to restrict the defenders to one trick in each suit apart from diamonds.

In addition to scoring less for a minor suit, the 5-3 diamond fit does not play as well as the 5-3 heart fit does. An initial spade lead paves the way for East to score both the ♦Q and ♦J by overruffing North in spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 9 ♠ KQ98 Dealer N
♥ A53 Vul: E-W
♦ Q542
♣ 97

♠ A3 ♠ J74
♥ 9 ♥ Q64
♦ K10987 ♦ A
♣ KQ654 ♣ AJ10832

♠ 10652
♥ KJ10872
♦ J63
♣

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♣	2♥
4♥	Pass	5♣	All Pass

Even if North were not a passed hand, South should have no compunction about making a weak jump overcall of 2♥ with such good hearts and poor spades. Over 2♥ West might make fit-showing jump of 4♦, a splinter of 4♥ (as shown) or perhaps just check for key cards with 4NT. One risk with 4NT is that there might be a third round diamond loser even if East the minor-suit aces and a definite risk of two diamond losers if East has the rounded suit aces. East, although regarding news of the heart shortage in a positive light, cannot really go slamming. With the pointed suits reversed East could cue bid 4♠ but it would not be sensible to cue bid 4♠ with J-x-x.

6♣ is a good spot, making if diamonds are 4-3 or if South has something like J-x- or Q-x (when a marked ruffing finesse position will develop). Whenever diamonds play for three tricks it should be possible to discard two of East's spades on the diamonds and ruff two hearts in the West hand, thus just losing a heart.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 10	♠ 108		Dealer E
	♥ KQ97		Vul: Both
	♦ J103		
	♣ J876		
♠ J7532			♠ 94
♥ A65			♥ 82
♦ A84			♦ KQ97652
♣ K9			♣ A3
	♠ AKQ6		
	♥ J1043		
	♦		
	♣ Q10542		

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

It is a close call whether East opens 1♦ or 3♦. The fact that the hand has offers some defensive potential, the vulnerability and the sterile 7222 shape are all factors in favour of preferring 1♦. South has enough to make a takeout double of either 1♦ or 3♦.

Assuming East has opened 1♦, West responds 1♠ and North competes with 2♥. Being very much minimum East does not bid 3♦ despite the 7-card suit. After South raise to 3♥, West follows Hamman's rule – if one possible bid is 3NT, bid 3NT.

In 3NT declarer has ten tricks on top – seven diamonds, two clubs and a heart. There is little scope for making any overtricks. In a diamond contract declarer clearly has the same ten tricks. There is a some chance of making an eleventh trick – if South cashes two spades then the entries are available to ruff the spades good and get back to the long spade.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 11	♠ 3		Dealer S
	♥ J532		Vul: None
	♦ 10763		
	♣ 10954		
♠ KJ875			♠ 962
♥ A4			♥ 10987
♦ AK			♦ J
♣ K762			♣ AQJ83
	♠ AQ104		
	♥ KQ6		
	♦ Q98542		
	♣		

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Double	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Over South's 1♦ opening, West (holding 18 high card points) is a bit strong for a simple 1♠ overcall and so starts with a double. North holds 4-card diamond support but whether raising diamonds is possible with only 1 HCP is a matter of system and style. Assuming North passes, East has a choice. While normally one strains to bid a major, the singleton diamond suggests that 2♣ will not end the auction, thereby providing the chance to show both suits and that the clubs are longer. In practice when West shows the spades, East simply raises without ever mentioning hearts.

Despite their eight-card fit, East-West fare better in a no-trump contract because East's clubs provide plenty of entries for repeated finesses against South's spades – two hearts and one spade are all that the defenders make if declarer plays South for the queen and ten of spades. In a spade contract South's ability to ruff clubs thwarts declarer's attempts to get to dummy – one entry is possible by ruffing a master diamond – but that is not enough to stop South from scoring three trump tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 12	♠ K96 ♥ AQ ♦ Q953 ♣ QJ75	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ Q1083 ♥ J1062 ♦ A1064 ♣ 10		♠ J2 ♥ K9853 ♦ K ♣ AK643
	♠ A754 ♥ 74 ♦ J872 ♣ 982	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	2♥	All Pass

If a weak no-trump opening is available, North opens 1NT. If 2♥ from East is either natural or shows hearts and a minor then that is the choice of overcall. West is not far away from raising to 3♥ while neither North nor South can justify positive action, and might not do so even if the vulnerability were reversed.

The cards lie very well for East-West in a heart contract. Declarer can ruff two clubs in dummy and finesse against the queen of hearts, thus holding the losers in the rounded suits to one. If the defenders cash their two top spade winners before they lose the lead then they make two spade tricks as well as the trump ace. If they fail to do so, declarer can discard a losing spade on the ace of diamonds to make 11 tricks.

If North gets to declare 1NT (doubled), the simplest way to defeat it is via an initial heart lead, scoring three hearts and two ace-kings. If East leads a low club at trick one and gets in with the king of diamonds at trick two then a heart switch is not good enough – declarer could make two tricks in each suit apart from clubs as well as the club made at trick one for seven in all.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 13	♠ KJ98		Dealer N
	♥ AQ64		Vul: Both
	♦ 954		
	♣ 72		
♠ A76			♠ 42
♥ 10753			♥ KJ9
♦ KJ763			♦ AQ10
♣ 9			♣ AQJ86
	♠ Q1053		
	♥ 82		
	♦ 82		
	♣ K10543		

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

If you play that you frequently open 4-card majors, you do not need to respond in a major, hence the 1♦ response by West. Those playing 5-card majors would respond 1♥ instead – and they should get the chance because with 17 HCP and a decent 5-card suit East should judge the hand as worth 18 rather than 17, so not open 1NT even if that were 15-17. As it happens West would raise if East did show only 15-17 and clearly raises facing what sounds like 18-19.

With clubs having been bid, South should lead a spade against 3NT. Declarer will probably hold up the ♠A until the third round, though as the cards lie (with spades 4-4) the timing of playing the ♠A does not matter. Declarer can count seven tricks (five diamonds and the black aces). Taking the club finesse or playing a heart to the king would usually generate only one extra trick – two favourable things would need to happen rather than just one. The best bet is to play North for the queen of hearts because doing so will generate two extra tricks in the heart suit.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Board 14	♠ J965		Dealer E
	♥ AJ9		Vul: None
	♦ A98		
	♣ A64		
♠ KQ732		♠ 84	
♥ 108		♥ KQ7642	
♦ J		♦ K10	
♣ 98732		♣ KQJ	
	♠ A10		
	♥ 53		
	♦ Q765432		
	♣ 105		

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

Being non-vulnerable, South is happy to make a weak jump overcall of 3♦ if that option is available, which it will be these days for many pairs. The jump silences West. Depending upon partnership style of weak jump overcalls, North might pot 3NT on the first round. If, as shown, North passes then East probably reopens with 3♥, the seemingly devalued ♦K notwithstanding. North takes the second chance to bid 3NT. Nobody has a good reason to disturb 3NT.

East might lead a high heart, a low heart or the king of clubs against 3NT. The first or third of these options prevents any overtricks. Declarer just scores six tricks in diamonds together with the three aces on the side. A low heart lead works less well, letting declarer score a cheap second heart trick.

In a diamond contract the defenders are very likely to make four tricks unless West lead a spade.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 15	♠ 83	Dealer S
	♥ AKQJ1054	Vul: N-S
	♦ K65	
	♣ 8	

♠ K94	♠ J1052
♥ 98	♥ 6
♦ A1093	♦ Q842
♣ A974	♣ Q652

	♠ AQ76
	♥ 732
	♦ J7
	♣ KJ103

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Both South and West hold 11 HCP: not quite enough to open the bidding for most people. North therefore gets the chance to open in third seat. With a solid suit and judging a slam very unlikely facing a passed partner, North opens 4♥. Anyone who prefers to open 1♥ will also surely end up in 4♥ too.

With the jack-ten combination in spades, East's normal lead against a heart contract is the ♠J. Declarer has little choice but to finesse dummy's queen. If West, after capturing the queen of spades with the king, switches to a low diamond, declarer will need to go up with the king.

A heart contract plays better from the South hand, with the tenace in spades protected. There will be time to lead North's singleton club. A winning guess in the suit, finessing rather than going up with the king, makes a club winner available for a spade discard. Most East players would struggle to duck smoothly when holding the ace of clubs if the singleton club is visible in dummy, so declarer generally would guess right.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 16	♠ K762 ♥ 10743 ♦ 1082 ♣ QJ	Dealer W Vul: E-W
♠ Q93 ♥ KQ86 ♦ AQ9 ♣ 973		♠ 4 ♥ 952 ♦ 753 ♣ AK10854
	♠ AJ1085 ♥ AJ ♦ KJ64 ♣ 62	

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

If playing a weak no-trump, West opens 1NT. At matchpoints, even if a get out to 3♣ is available, East probably passes 1NT. South can overcall 2♠ whether this action just shows spades or whether it promises a minor on the side. Looking at six clubs and a singleton spade, East then competes to 3♣, after which North goes on to 3♠.

The cards lie very well for declarer in a club contract with the ace of hearts and king of diamonds both onside and the club layout such that it is impossible to guess wrong. The losers are just in one of each of the three side suits.

In a spade contract, West opening bid should help declarer to find the winning play in the trump suit, all the more so if East turns up with the ace-king of clubs when a count of points would make it a certainty that West holds the queen of spades. The losers are thus just two in each minor and one in hearts.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 17	♠ 43		Dealer N
	♥ Q1075		Vul: None
	♦ AKQ9		
	♣ J32		
♠ J9865			♠ AQ2
♥ 632			♥ AK9
♦ 75			♦ 6432
♣ KQ7			♣ 1094
	♠ K107		
	♥ J84		
	♦ J108		
	♣ A865		

West	North	East	South
	1NT	All Pass	

The final contract is likely to be 1NT whether North-South play a weak no-trump or a strong no-trump. The only difference is that South will become declarer if North starts with a suit opening and responds 1NT.

Who becomes declarer will impact the choice of opening lead because East is most unlikely to lead from A-Q-x whereas a lead from a 5-card spade suit will be completely normal for West.

An initial diamond lead allows 1NT to make, indeed quite possibly with an overtrick because East might need to switch to the queen of spades when in with a heart to be sure of stopping the overtrick. The situation is very similar after a top heart lead.

An initial spade defeats 1NT because the defenders have time to score four tricks in spades together with two in hearts and one in clubs.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Board 18

	♠ 109 ♥ 543 ♦ A1053 ♣ Q875	Dealer E Vul: N-S
♠ AQJ764 ♥ 10 ♦ KJ86 ♣ 106		♠ 2 ♥ AKJ862 ♦ Q7 ♣ KJ43
	♠ K853 ♥ Q97 ♦ 942 ♣ A92	

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

East-West should enjoy, if that is the operative word when there is a misfit, an uncontested auction. They each hold a six-card with a four-card minor on the side. Each will be looking for a 6-2 (or better) fit in their major and face disappointment on an equal level in that regard. Some pairs will reach 3NT, some 4♥ and some 4♠.

In 3NT, the defenders could ensure four tricks via an intra finesse in clubs – but the difficulty in crossing between the East-West hands means they do not need to do that.

If hearts are trumps, the likely losers are one in each suit apart from spades, though there is some scope for losing a fourth trick either with a wrong view in clubs or taking a ruffing finesse in spades.

If spades are trumps, it looks like the defenders should score two trumps and two aces. Declarer will need an inspired line with an endplay to avoid the second trump loser.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 19

	♠ A53 ♥ J1042 ♦ A7 ♣ 7652	Dealer S Vul: E-W
♠ K7 ♥ 63 ♦ QJ10985 ♣ K109		♠ J10862 ♥ 987 ♦ K64 ♣ Q8
	♠ Q94 ♥ AKQ5 ♦ 32 ♣ AJ43	

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

Playing a weak no-trump and four-card majors, South opens 1♥. At any other vulnerability West might well overcall 2♦. North has a raise to 2.75 hearts, which many will round up to a jump raise. The aces are good, as is the trump support. If North raises to 2♥ then partnership can stop out of game because South does not have quite enough to make a game try.

The mirror image distribution of the North-South hands mean that despite the combined 25 high card points and eight-card fit that game requires a lot of luck. The clubs would need to be 3-2, with both the king and queen in the East hand.

As the cards lie clubs are 3-3 but the king and queen are in opposite hands. This means declarer will lose two clubs, a diamond and usually one spade. The reason why, even with the king of spades offside, there will generally be only one spade loser is that playing ace and another spade in the endgame could endplay West – and if East switches to the jack of spades when in with the king of diamonds then the nine of spades scores by force.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 20

Dealer W
Vul: Both

	♠ 983 ♥ KJ5 ♦ AKJ2 ♣ 843	
♠ A4 ♥ 1096 ♦ Q10954 ♣ 976		♠ KJ2 ♥ AQ7 ♦ 873 ♣ QJ102
	♠ Q10765 ♥ 8432 ♦ 6 ♣ AK5	

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

With the North cards, few players pass with 12 HCP, even when vulnerable and with a completely flat shape. In my usual methods a 2♣ Stayman response to a weak no-trump followed by a rebid of 2♥ over a 2♦ denial shows a weak (or weakish) hand with both majors and invites opener to correct to 2♠ with 3-3 in the majors. Those not playing such a method or who decide the four baby hearts are not worth considering as a trump suit will just show the spades. If a strong no-trump is in use then South would generally declare any spade contract.

In a spade contract, with the ♠J onside but the ♥A-Q offside, the obvious losers are two spades and three hearts – there is no need to lose a club because South's low club can go on North's diamonds. On a club lead 2♠ is makeable – but only if declarer wins the first three tricks with the ace-king of clubs and a finesse of the jack of diamonds. Hoping that West has one of the missing heart honours seems a more natural line.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 21	♠ Q6	Dealer N
	♥ K8	Vul: N-S
	♦ Q98543	
	♣ Q92	

♠ 10753		♠ AKJ94
♥ Q965		♥ A2
♦ 1072		♦ AK6
♣ 75		♣ A43
	♠ 82	
	♥ J10743	
	♦ J	
	♣ KJ1086	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

East starts with the system strong bid and after West's negative/waiting response of 2♦ rebids 2NT. Many pairs these days play some sort of five-card Stayman enquiry. The sequence would be the same if ordinary Stayman is in use.

With trumps sitting kindly, in 4♠ declarer should emerge with an overtrick. If South leads the ♥J, it will be easy enough to make a second heart trick. If South leads the ♦J, neither defender will able to continue diamonds safely (and in South's case not at all). Even on a club lead, which (as the cards lie) gives nothing away, declarer is likely to fall into endplaying North to lead away from the ♥K or ♦Q..

If there are no trumps, the inability to ruff a club in the West hand reduces the trick-taking potential and makes an endplay riskier.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 22

	♠ KJ9843 ♥ K2 ♦ Q10 ♣ J103	Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ A ♥ J1087 ♦ J87653 ♣ 92		♠ 10762 ♥ 953 ♦ 42 ♣ A754
	♠ Q5 ♥ AQ64 ♦ AK9 ♣ KQ86	

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

South has slightly fewer high cards than East did on the previous deal and so starts with 2NT rather than rebidding it. Holding a six-card spade suit, North is likely to insist on playing in spades, though the soft values in the other three suits mean the decision is not clear cut. Some pairs play both 4♥ and 3♥ as transfer in response to 2NT. In that method raising 3♠ to 4♠ constitutes a mild slam try, one South declines through being minimum and holding a doubleton spade.

If spades are trumps, declarer needs to guess how to play the spades. If East has the bare ace, low towards the queen works best. If West has the bare ace, low away from the queen works best. Since playing towards the queen may be better if East is void, it will be quite common for declarer to lose two trump tricks. There is a slight possibility of making 12 tricks if declarer successfully flushes out West's trump ace and East ducks the club ace.

If there are no trumps, declarer needs only two spade tricks to make eleven, though again a winning guess followed by club duck by East results in 12 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 23	♠ 542 ♥ K94 ♦ A5 ♣ K10964		Dealer S Vul: Both
♠ A8 ♥ 8752 ♦ J973 ♣ Q72		♠ 1093 ♥ J3 ♦ KQ842 ♣ A85	
	♠ KQJ76 ♥ AQ106 ♦ 106 ♣ J3		

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

After South shows two suits, North is just about worth a jump preference, the risk that the two hands will each hold a doubleton diamond notwithstanding. It is also a bit borderline whether South goes on to game after North invites it.

With the other three suits all bid, West should find a diamond lead against a spade contract, game contract or not. Most likely declarer wins the first diamond and plays to the king at trick two. West probably wins this and continues with a low diamond. After winning the diamond, East can exit safely with a trump. The natural play in clubs is to run the jack because if West holds the queen this not only avoids a second club loser but also creates a parking space for the possible fourth round heart loser.

A no-trump contract does not play anywhere nearly as well, with four tricks in diamonds and two aces to lose.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 24	♠ KJ8 ♥ 74 ♦ KJ943 ♣ AJ4		Dealer W Vul: None
♠ AQ5 ♥ 10952 ♦ A ♣ 109752		♠ 92 ♥ AQJ63 ♦ Q752 ♣ K6	
	♠ 107643 ♥ K8 ♦ 1086 ♣ Q83		

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

If North opens a weak 1NT, East is likely to overcall 2♥ whether it just shows hearts or it shows hearts and a minor. West, holding four-card heart support, two aces and a singleton, happily raises to game.

From declarer's viewpoint in a heart contract, both major-suit kings are offside while the ace of clubs is onside. If declarer takes the spade finesse at trick one and, on the trump switch, a heart finesse at trick two, South can return a second trump. With only three trumps left in dummy, it will not be possible to ruff three diamonds there. What remains possible is to unblock the king of clubs and then set up the clubs by ruffing. This way the defenders make just three tricks – one in each suit apart from diamonds.

In a North-South spade contract, a diamond lead followed by a trump switch enables the defenders to get a cross-ruff going, scoring three ruffs as well as four winners in high cards.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 25	♠ QJ5		Dealer N
	♥ KQ32		Vul: E-W
	♦ AKJ72		
	♣ 3		
♠ AK986			♠ 74
♥ A76			♥ J1095
♦ 108			♦ 963
♣ J85			♣ 10642
	♠ 1032		
	♥ 84		
	♦ Q54		
	♣ AKQ97		

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

At any other vulnerability West would probably overcall 2♠ – and some may do so anyway. If West passes over 2♣, North has both the shape and strength for a 2♥ reverse. Having already responded at the two level, South's preference to 3♦ is forcing. Then with a spade stopper and little interest in a slam North bids 3NT.

If East leads a spade, either because West has bid the suit or because North-South have bid the other three suits, declarer has time to make only nine tricks: five diamonds, three clubs and a spade. If East looks too fondly at J-10-9-x of hearts and leads that suit, an overtrick results – indeed two overtricks if West takes the first heart and switches to a low spade hoping that East has J-x and that (understandably) declarer would guess wrongly.

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 26	♠ 5		Dealer E
	♥ J109		Vul: Both
	♦ AKQ1074		
	♣ K76		
♠ KQ9632		♠ A104	
♥ A654		♥ 832	
♦ 5		♦ 986	
♣ Q8		♣ J1042	
	♠ J87		
	♥ KQ7		
	♦ J32		
	♣ A953		

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	2♠	3♦
3♠	All Pass		

Both sides have a nine-card fit and, between them, they can make eighteen tricks with their chosen suit as trumps. Larry Cohen would be pleased!

East just about scrapes up a raise to 2♠ after North overcalls 2♦, following which West (with a six-card spade suit) competes to 3♠. Unless they somehow find a double of 3♠, North-South would do better to go on to 4♦. It is unclear who should do so – South is rather flat while North does not know whether South is full value for 3♦ or had stretched to avoid being shut out.

In a spade contract the defenders have several chances to get their two heart tricks before declarer can get two discards on dummy's clubs – indeed the shortage of entries to the East hand mean that declarer cannot set two club winners anyway unless the defenders broach the suit or North plays the king of clubs on the eight.

In a North-South diamond contract there is one loser in each of the side suits.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Board 27	♠ 4	Dealer S
	♥ Q109	Vul: None
	♦ AJ1098	
	♣ Q765	

♠ AK102	♠ QJ3
♥ K8743	♥ 652
♦ K4	♦ Q652
♣ J8	♣ 1093

	♠ 98765
	♥ AJ
	♦ 73
	♣ AK42

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♥	Double	Pass	3♣
All Pass			

Will anyone open 1NT with a 5-card major and two doubletons? With such terrible spades I believe that someone (playing a weak no-trump) will. Most will open 1♠ despite the risk of having to rebid the suit after a 2♦ or 2♥ response. As it happens West probably overcalls 2♥ – I say probably because West does not have a great suit either. After North makes a negative double, South will be wary of rebidding 2♠ and, hoping it does not show a strong hand, rebids 3♣. East is vaguely tempted to compete to 3♥ but has a large number of losers.

In a club contract, with the diamond suit coming in nicely, 10 tricks are quite easy to make. So long as West does not lead or switch to hearts, the defenders should make one trick in each of the side suits.

In a heart contract the defenders can score six tricks either if North scores two spade ruffs or if South uppercuts with the jack of hearts on the third round of diamonds (two top clubs having been cashed first).

Makeable Contracts

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

=====	=====	=====	=====	=====

Board 28

	♠ Q432 ♥ KQ4 ♦ Q74 ♣ KJ10	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ K98 ♥ A1072 ♦ A92 ♣ 974		♠ A1065 ♥ 8 ♦ K10863 ♣ A82
	♠ J7 ♥ J9653 ♦ J5 ♣ Q653	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Double	Pass
2NT	All Pass		

If North opens a weak 1NT, South gets to transfer into hearts. Having passed over 1NT, East has more less the ideal shape for coming in with a takeout double on the second round. Holding no four-card suit apart from hearts, West then has a difficult choice. Some will bid 2♠ on the basis that East is very likely to hold four spades. Some will bid 2NT not minding whether East takes it as natural or as a scramble.

2NT if it becomes the final contract, should make in comfort via four tricks in diamonds and four top winners on the side. Indeed if the play starts with two top hearts, both ducked by West, North will need to find a club switch to prevent any overtricks.

In a diamond contract declarer can make 10 tricks by eliminating the rounded suits and putting North in with the third round of trumps.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 29 ♠ J983 Dealer N
♥ 109 Vul: Both
♦ KQ
♣ 106542

♠ 2 ♠ KQ10654
♥ 72 ♥ K43
♦ J109842 ♦ 765
♣ AKQJ ♣ 7

♠ A7
♥ AQJ865
♦ A3
♣ 983

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♠	3♥
All Pass			

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 30 ♠ AK73 Dealer E
♥ 109 Vul: None
♦ 82
♣ K10984

♠ 95 ♠ QJ6
♥ AQ875 ♥ J3
♦ Q54 ♦ J109763
♣ J63 ♣ 72

♠ 10842
♥ K642
♦ AK
♣ AQ5

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

Makeable Contracts

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

Very few clubs play boards 29 – 32, so we didn't ask our commentors to spend extra time on those boards – Julian kindly put a bidding sequence in nevertheless. So if you did use the boards to make up your movement, at least you have his suggestions and the grid of makeable contracts to see.

Board 31 ♠ A7 Dealer S
♥ AQ93 Vul: N-S
♦ 95
♣ KQJ95

♠ KJ8 ♠ Q1063
♥ 865 ♥ KJ42
♦ K7643 ♦ A82
♣ 76 ♣ A10

♠ 9542
♥ 107
♦ QJ10
♣ 8432

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♣	Double	Pass
1♦	1♥	Pass	2♣
2♦	All Pass		

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====

Board 32 ♠ 43 Dealer W
♥ AQ107 Vul: E-W
♦ AJ962
♣ 43

♠ K965 ♠ AQJ
♥ J ♥ K9654
♦ KQ108 ♦ 73
♣ A1062 ♣ QJ5

♠ 10872
♥ 832
♦ 54
♣ K987

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

Makeable Contracts

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

===== ===== ===== ===== =====