

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION♥♣



*Third Interclub – Heat A*

*12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026*

*Commentary by Ian Hamilton*

1

♠ AK5  
 ♥ KJ62  
 ♦ KJ10  
 ♣ Q105  
 ♠ J10643  
 ♥ 85  
 ♦ 865  
 ♣ K87  
 ♠ Q9872  
 ♥ A7  
 ♦ A97  
 ♣ J43

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

We could have fun and games here if south opens 1NT and west doubles. East may remove to spades, which south would be wise to pass. Where west overcalls a south 1♠ with 1NT east will certainly not transfer.

West's 1NT is no thing of beauty, but may well succeed, even if north finds the best lead of a diamond, rather than the more obvious heart.

With south so balanced a few good guesses can see an east 2♠ getting close, though it should lose a club, two diamonds, a heart and two spades at least.

Entertainment on hand one.

2

♠ J9742  
 ♥ A7654  
 ♦ 983  
 ♣ 983  
 ♠ AK  
 ♥ QJ103  
 ♦ 964  
 ♣ AJ42  
 ♠ 86  
 ♥ K9  
 ♦ KQ532  
 ♣ KQ65  
 ♠ Q1053  
 ♥ 82  
 ♦ AJ1087  
 ♣ 107

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Declarer needs to count his tricks here after presumably ending in 3NT on a spade lead. Hearts need to be played immediately, establishing nine tricks.

I trust nobody plays diamonds instead, going light when the ace is offside. Indeed, this play only works where the suit is 3:2 with the ace onside, a 34% shot, albeit in those circumstances 430 would result.

An exercise in proper declarer play.

3

♠ A1073  
 ♥ K8  
 ♦ J42  
 ♣ Q1065  
 ♠ 5  
 ♥ A9763  
 ♦ 86  
 ♣ 97432  
 ♠ KJ9842  
 ♥ QJ5  
 ♦ Q73  
 ♣ 8

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

Should south open a Weak 2♠ and west overcall 3♦ north could easily use the Law of Total Tricks (the sum of both sides longest fits) and jump to 4♠, holding a known ten card fit.

This proves to be way overboard, east getting a diamond ruff to add to two aces and the top diamonds. North does much better to let west declare, east unlikely to look for another fit. 3♦ might make, but should finish one light, maybe two light on an unlikely trump lead.

I can't see many getting this one right.

4

♠ A842  
 ♥ 92  
 ♦ KQ972  
 ♣ 94  
 ♠ 95  
 ♥ A64  
 ♦ 653  
 ♣ Q10652  
 ♠ 106  
 ♥ KQ8753  
 ♦ J104  
 ♣ KJ  
 ♠ KQJ73  
 ♥ J10  
 ♦ A8  
 ♣ A873

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

N/S should find their spade fit, whether or not east opens a third seat Multi or Weak Two in hearts. Game will probably be reached at most tables.

With diamonds dividing evenly there are eleven top tricks, so it is all about the bidding. Oddly, the Weak Two might help propel N/S into game, whereas left alone it may be missed.

Will many have less than 650 on the card?

5

♠ A10  
 ♥ K  
 ♦ AK1094  
 ♣ AQ872  
 ♠ KQ987543  
 ♥ Q10  
 ♦ 86  
 ♣ 9  
 ♠ J  
 ♥ AJ986543  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ K63  
 ♠ 62  
 ♥ 72  
 ♦ Q7532  
 ♣ J1054

Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

North is best to open 1♦ rather than 2♣, making it easier to show his shape and strength when east's 4♥ is passed round, he essaying 5♣, converted to 5♦.

Those that open 2♣ are struggling when 4♥ comes round, though they could try 4NT for the minors, hoping pard gets the right message. Unfortunately, 5♣ has an inescapable spade loser, so fails.

5♦ is a lucky make. East cashes a heart and switches to his spade singleton. Alas, when in with the club king, east has no spade, and declarer's loser is eventually discarded on the fifth club.

E/W are actually better to sacrifice in 5♥, but many will be reluctant to turn a possible defensive plus into a certain minus, and it is plus if N/S pick the wrong minor.

6

♠ A75  
 ♥ J92  
 ♦ A9732  
 ♣ A6  
 ♠ K1063  
 ♥ 10743  
 ♦ J1065  
 ♣ 2  
 ♠ QJ42  
 ♥ 6  
 ♦ KQ8  
 ♣ K9874  
 ♠ 98  
 ♥ AKQ85  
 ♦ 4  
 ♣ QJ1053

Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

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

South will overcall an east 1♣ with 1♥, and might well get to game in the suit.

Defending hearts, west will often lead his singleton club. Declarer can win the ace, draw trumps, then play a club. East needs to have kept all his clubs, and also duck the second round from dummy, or south makes eleven tricks.

Will many manage 200 or 450?

7

♠ KQ76  
 ♥ QJ1063  
 ♦ 3  
 ♣ 1043  
 ♠ 1085  
 ♥ A84  
 ♦ A9  
 ♣ AJ976  
 ♠ 932  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ KQJ765  
 ♣ Q85  
 ♠ AJ4  
 ♥ K952  
 ♦ 10842  
 ♣ K2

Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

Should south open 1♦ N/S may well buy the contract in 2♥, where they should easily record an overtrick.

Where south passes, as they will in Acol, it could be west opening either 1♣ or a weak NT. Vulnerable, opposite a passed partner, north may well keep schtum, it far from clear a heart part-score is available.

E/W can actually make 3♦ or even 3NT (maybe with overtricks) but could lose out, letting N/S steal a plus.

This hand is an example of the significant advantage often gained by being the first bidder.

8

♠ K104  
 ♥ K632  
 ♦ 104  
 ♣ 9862  
 ♠ 86  
 ♥ A1075  
 ♦ A9862  
 ♣ Q4  
 ♠ A932  
 ♥ QJ94  
 ♦ 7  
 ♣ AKJ10  
 ♠ QJ75  
 ♥ 8  
 ♦ KQJ53  
 ♣ 753

Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

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

It is hard to believe that E/W cannot be denied 6♥, even on a spade lead with trumps 4:1 off-side and only 25 balanced HCP between the two hands.

E/W should certainly find their heart fit, and should at least get to game. Deep Finesse has a whale of a time, pitching a spade from west on clubs and cross-ruffing. The defence just make the trump king.

Will many have 480 on the card?

9

♠ J8  
 ♥ K7642  
 ♦ K32  
 ♣ AJ10  
 ♠ 1062  
 ♥ AJ109  
 ♦ Q9864  
 ♣ 9  
 ♠ Q75  
 ♥ Q5  
 ♦ AJ5  
 ♣ Q8653  
 ♠ AK943  
 ♥ 83  
 ♦ 107  
 ♣ K742

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

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

North will play 1NT after he opens 1♥ and rebids the weak variety over a south 1♠. Where a weak 1NT is opened north more likely plays 2♠ after a transfer.

Defending 1NT best is a hard to find a top diamond, holding 1NT to 90. More likely a club runs to north. Declarer is best to try and run the spade knave, ducking if covered. East can counter by playing a heart to the ace. The diamond queen switch ensures five defensive tricks, defeat if covered.

2♠ can make four spade tricks, a heart and three clubs after a good guess, making 110, and is the best spot in theory.

In practice, many will be light in either contract, guessing wrongly in clubs.

10

♠ KQJ4  
 ♥ 75  
 ♦ AJ654  
 ♣ J7  
 ♠ A1092  
 ♥ 982  
 ♦ 93  
 ♣ AQ102  
 ♠ 86  
 ♥ KJ103  
 ♦ KQ872  
 ♣ K9  
 ♠ 753  
 ♥ AQ64  
 ♦ 10  
 ♣ 86543

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

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

East will likely be declaring 1NT after opening 1♦ or a weak NT. South does best to lead spades. Dummy ducks and north leads a heart. The major suit tennis rally continues.

Declarer can make four clubs, two hearts and a spade, making 90, but never makes a diamond. In real life few will find the spade lead. There are eight tricks on any other defence.

Remarkably, double dummy the best spot is hearts, where 110 is possible. I can't see many in this strain, and most of the no trumpers will make 120 anyway.

11

♠ 86  
 ♥ Q97  
 ♦ Q1073  
 ♣ AQJ2  
 ♠ QJ974  
 ♥ 43  
 ♦ K64  
 ♣ K84  
 ♠ A  
 ♥ 852  
 ♦ A9852  
 ♣ 10965  
 ♠ K10532  
 ♥ AKJ106  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ 73

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

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

N/S could find themselves in either 3NT, or more likely 4♥ when south's bidding shows him to be at least 5:5 in the majors. West may well lead trumps defending hearts, a diamond against no trumps.

3NT proves relatively straightforward, there being five hearts, three clubs and at least one diamond or spade, an overtrick possible on misdefence.

4♥ can't be beaten, but declarer could easily go astray, getting the spade king ruffed, costing a trick, and possibly the contract. Spades need to be played twice from dummy so that east ruffs a loser (or discards).

A nice exercise in card-play.

12

♠ 10843  
 ♥ 73  
 ♦ K432  
 ♣ KJ3  
 ♠ Q972  
 ♥ 104  
 ♦ AJ86  
 ♣ 1084  
 ♠ KJ6  
 ♥ AKQ52  
 ♦ 97  
 ♣ Q76  
 ♠ A5  
 ♥ J986  
 ♦ Q105  
 ♣ A952

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Like #10, this looks like 1NT by east, this time after either an Acol 1♥ or strong NT. South is effectively end-played on opening lead. Only a diamond doesn't actually give away a trick, but helps declarer's tempo.

A club lead looks best. This gives up a trick, but pretty well guarantees five defensive tricks.

However, I bet a few make more than 120 E/W.

13

♠ 532  
 ♥ 652  
 ♦ K1094  
 ♣ 985  
 ♠ AQ86  
 ♥ AKJ93  
 ♦ 87  
 ♣ K7  
 ♠ J10  
 ♥ 1087  
 ♦ Q532  
 ♣ Q1064  
 ♠ K974  
 ♥ Q4  
 ♦ AJ6  
 ♣ AJ32

 Dealer: North  
 Both Vulnerable

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

South surely doubles east's 1♥ opener, and north can only bid 2♦. Left alone, this should go at least two light for a 200 penalty.

With west passing the double, denying decent values, this is probably the best outcome for E/W. Bidding again is liable to end in a 2♥ contract. Although this makes, maybe with an overtrick, the score is inferior.

Will most E/Ws pass the test, and opt for defence?

14

♠ 9863  
 ♥ QJ82  
 ♦ QJ3  
 ♣ KQ  
 ♠ AQ742  
 ♥ 963  
 ♦ 10874  
 ♣ 6  
 ♠ K  
 ♥ A1074  
 ♦ AK9  
 ♣ 108432  
 ♠ J105  
 ♥ K5  
 ♦ 652  
 ♣ AJ975

 Dealer: East  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

At love all everyone will want to be into the action, but it is not easy for either side to get to a sensible spot after west responds 1♠ to east's 1♣. I can see many easts rebidding and then declaring 1NT, this spot light on a black suit lead, albeit not always found.

North just might double west's 1♠, probably getting the partnership into trouble.

Looks like one best defended - unusual at love all.

15

♠ Q6  
 ♥ AJ  
 ♦ AK  
 ♣ KJ98643  
 ♠ AJ9432  
 ♥ 103  
 ♦ Q75  
 ♣ 72  
 ♠ 75  
 ♥ K9654  
 ♦ 642  
 ♣ AQ5  
 ♠ K108  
 ♥ Q872  
 ♦ J10983  
 ♣ 10

 Dealer: South  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

A weak 2♠ by east over 1♣ certainly messes up N/S, this presumably passed back to north, who might double, more likely simply rebids 3♣, probably playing there.

It takes a brave south to convert 3♣ to 3NT. Those with a better score than 130 are those norths who double, south now having a variety of winning options, the most straightforward being to pass, collecting 500 on a club lead.

Of course, 3NT is there, but it is hard to see many bidding it, the ♠10 proving a valuable card.

16

♠ K9872  
 ♥ 4  
 ♦ 10962  
 ♣ 732  
 ♠ J103  
 ♥ A10  
 ♦ AKJ7  
 ♣ 10985  
 ♠ A  
 ♥ QJ952  
 ♦ 8543  
 ♣ KQJ  
 ♠ Q654  
 ♥ K8763  
 ♦ Q  
 ♣ A64

 Dealer: West  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

Acol will almost certainly miss the best spot here, west opening a weak NT and declaring the 9 trick game after a heart transfer. This goes light on a spade lead.

5 card majors have a chance, west opening 1♦ and rebidding 1NT over east's 1♥. If this denies four spades east could manoeuvre the partnership into 5♦ after failing to find three hearts opposite. In practice, most will be in 3NT. 5♦ just loses the club ace and a trump.

Maybe some norths will fail to lead the weakish spades against 3NT. This lets the contract home, declarer knocking out the club ace and having nine tricks when the diamond queen falls and the heart finesse succeeds.

17

♠ J973  
 ♥ 73  
 ♦ 7643  
 ♣ K52  
 ♠ A1054  
 ♥ Q94  
 ♦ J5  
 ♣ Q1073  
 ♠ K6  
 ♥ AK10862  
 ♦ AQ102  
 ♣ 4  
 ♠ Q82  
 ♥ J5  
 ♦ K98  
 ♣ AJ986

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

At love all south might well open a light 1♣ or Weak NT. The latter will get doubled. N/S can run to 2♣ if system allows, but are still liable to lose a substantial penalty.

1♣ should escape punishment, west doubling, then bidding hearts, probably ending in game. The perfect fit in hearts is unlikely to be diagnosed unless west gets to open 1♥, and even then getting to the heart slam is tricky in the extreme. It is a poor spot, needing a diamond finesse, and declarer able to ruff the fourth diamond.

Very well done any who manage it. Most will have 480 on the card, when hearts are 2:2 and the diamond finesse works.

18

♠ KJ10942  
 ♥ 75  
 ♦ 107  
 ♣ Q83  
 ♠ Q753  
 ♥ 108  
 ♦ AQ82  
 ♣ 952  
 ♠ A8  
 ♥ AQ42  
 ♦ KJ5  
 ♣ J1076  
 ♠ 6  
 ♥ KJ963  
 ♦ 9643  
 ♣ AK4

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

The par spot of 2♠ by north is unlikely to be reached. An east 1♥ silences south, and east probably tries a 15-17 NT over west's 1♠, and might even get to 2NT.

Where east opens a strong NT south hasn't enough to bid. Again, east may play there or get raised uncomfortably high.

Declaring NT, a heart lead helps east's cause, and an eighth trick can be established in clubs. Even without help eight tricks could result, south eventually end-played to lead hearts at the end.

Any who hold E/W to seven tricks should have a great board, despite +110 theoretically on offer.

19

♠ K1085  
 ♥ A93  
 ♦ Q1087  
 ♣ A4  
 ♠ AQJ42  
 ♥ J765  
 ♦ 92  
 ♣ 86  
 ♠ 97  
 ♥ K10  
 ♦ KJ653  
 ♣ 10975  
 ♠ 63  
 ♥ Q842  
 ♦ A4  
 ♣ KQJ32

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

This looks like 3NT by N/S. South could declare if an off-shape weak NT is opened. North probably holds the reins if 1♣ is overcalled by a (mighty thin) west 1♠.

Deep Finesse manages ten tricks, but that involves running a top diamond from north, pinning west's 9, plus doing something similar to the defensive spade holding, two tricks possible when east's 9 falls.

I strongly suspect that some will be light, and 430 a serious rarity.

20

♠ J4  
 ♥ A10953  
 ♦ A32  
 ♣ K32  
 ♠ Q9752  
 ♥ KJ7  
 ♦ J864  
 ♣ Q  
 ♠ 10863  
 ♥ Q  
 ♦ Q105  
 ♣ J8765  
 ♠ AK  
 ♥ 8642  
 ♦ K97  
 ♣ A1094

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

I reckon that 4♥ will be the contract here at the vast majority of tables, north at the wheel.

The best lead is a diamond, south winning and playing a heart to the ace. Declarer can play the club king now, and finesse east's knave. However, west ruffs and plays another diamond, having a trump for the third club and a diamond to cash.

There is scope for the defence to go wrong. They may miss the diamond lead, or west split his heart honours, burning a trump trick.

So not a universal 420.

21

♠ 10932  
 ♥ 654  
 ♦ 543  
 ♣ 754  
 ♠ QJ  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ Q10987  
 ♣ KQJ83  
 ♠ AK874  
 ♥ AQ108  
 ♦ K2  
 ♣ 109  
 ♠ 65  
 ♥ KJ932  
 ♦ AJ6  
 ♣ A62

 Dealer: North  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

If an east 1♠ is followed by a 2♥ overcall west could easily double. Left in, declarer makes his aces and two trumps on best defence - an 1100 penalty.

3NT is the other runner, most likely declared by east with the heart stopper. With south on lead only the minor suit aces are lost, but 460 will surely be topped by several larger penalties.

Opposite a passed partner south would be wise not to overcall vulnerable with a defensive hand and a poor suit.

22

♠ 9642  
 ♥ A6  
 ♦ AKQ63  
 ♣ K7  
 ♠ 85  
 ♥ J10854  
 ♦ 72  
 ♣ 10642  
 ♠ AK7  
 ♥ K92  
 ♦ J10954  
 ♣ J9  
 ♠ QJ103  
 ♥ Q73  
 ♦ 8  
 ♣ AQ853

 Dealer: East  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

An east weak NT may escape punishment when west transfers to hearts, though in theory 2♥ can be carted for 500 or even 800.

Where 1♦ is opened south will double, and N/S either finish in 3NT or 4♠, should the 4:4 fit be elicited.

4♠ is an easy make with an overtrick, losing just the top trumps, so should do best. 3NT can be held to ten tricks on a heart lead, the defence getting a heart trick in addition.

23

♠ Q82  
 ♥ AQ76  
 ♦ AQ2  
 ♣ 965  
 ♠ 75  
 ♥ K108  
 ♦ 9743  
 ♣ AQ84  
 ♠ K4  
 ♥ 543  
 ♦ K1085  
 ♣ KJ72  
 ♠ AJ10963  
 ♥ J92  
 ♦ J6  
 ♣ 103

 Dealer: South  
 Both Vulnerable

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

North has a tight decision over a weak 2♠ or Multi by south, particularly if enquiry shows a minimum. The same decisions likely await if south passes and north opens a strong NT or Acol 1♥.

Today, the heart finesse succeeds and a third round diamond winner can be set up for a heart pitch. Alternatively, a third heart is ceded, the fourth round providing a diamond pitch.

Hopefully, most will make either 170 or 620, those bidding game the profiteers.

24

♠ K832  
 ♥ A1083  
 ♦ AQ543  
 ♣ AKJ763  
 ♥ Q  
 ♦ K75  
 ♣ 1098  
 ♠ Q10942  
 ♥ J94  
 ♦ 6  
 ♣ KJ76  
 ♠ 85  
 ♥ A10765  
 ♦ QJ942  
 ♣ 2

 Dealer: West  
 Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	6	7	-	1
S	1	6	7	-	1
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

We could have tricky high-level decisions here, after north doubles 1♠ and east bounces to game. Most souths will surely bid a red suit, hearts the better scoring.

Should south get playing 5♥ two overtricks are there when the percentage play in hearts picks up the suit, the diamond finesse scores, and two spades are ruffed in north.

Declaring diamonds, two spades cannot be ruffed without the trump king scoring, twelve tricks the limit.

E/W might push to the five level. If this is simply doubled south can get two ruffs for an 500 penalty, but many will only get 300 or 100. The risk is pushing N/S to slam.



25

♠ J43  
 ♥ K103  
 ♦ Q1032  
 ♣ A54  
 ♠ K7652  
 ♥ AQ72  
 ♦ K6  
 ♣ K6  
 ♠ A109  
 ♥ J98  
 ♦ 94  
 ♣ QJ972  
 ♠ Q8  
 ♥ 654  
 ♦ AJ875  
 ♣ 1083

 Dealer: North  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

This an unusual hand in that E/W can theoretically make the 4:3 4♥, not losing a spade, these pitched on clubs, only the minor suit aces and a heart lost. By contrast, the 5:3 4♠ spot can lose two aces and a heart, plus has a trump loser.

Some norths could make the seemingly passive lead of a trump, costing the contract. More credibly, the defence play ace and another diamond, declarer winning and playing on clubs. Declarer cashes top trumps and pitches hearts on winning clubs.

Will many succeed? I bet most do. It is hard to switch to a heart after the diamond ace.

26

♠ AQ1095  
 ♥ A75  
 ♦ K102  
 ♣ KJ  
 ♠ K83  
 ♥ 83  
 ♦ AJ986  
 ♣ 864  
 ♠ J64  
 ♥ KQ1096  
 ♦ 54  
 ♣ Q75  
 ♠ 72  
 ♥ J42  
 ♦ Q73  
 ♣ A10932

 Dealer: East  
 Both Vulnerable

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

This looks like 1NT or 2NT by N/S, either north declaring the strong variety, or south responding 1NT to an opening 1♠, and being left there, alternatively passing a 2NT raise. The occasional south might stretch to game.

Declarer isn't exactly flush with south entries, and some will struggle, though E/W are hampered too. West cedes a tempo with a diamond lead, as does east with a heart.

In the end, declarer can set up four spade tricks with a good guess in the suit, can make the king and knave of clubs and force the defence to allow five tricks outside spades one way or other.

In practice, many will only make eight or fewer tricks.

27

♠ A532  
 ♥ KJ5  
 ♦ 76  
 ♣ 8432  
 ♠ K109764  
 ♥ Q9  
 ♦ A102  
 ♣ Q10  
 ♠ 8  
 ♥ 10842  
 ♦ KQJ984  
 ♣ 65  
 ♠ QJ  
 ♥ A763  
 ♦ 53  
 ♣ AKJ97

 Dealer: South  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

N/S could get to either 5♣ or 4♥, despite west bidding spades and east maybe diamonds. In practice, part-score may be more popular.

The cards lie well for N/S, the major suit finesses working, the result being that both games are unbeatable.

Will many get there, indeed even play the board?

28

♠ 106  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ AK108  
 ♣ Q87532  
 ♠ 875  
 ♥ Q1082  
 ♦ Q53  
 ♣ K104  
 ♠ KQ32  
 ♥ AKJ43  
 ♦ 642  
 ♣ J  
 ♠ AJ94  
 ♥ 965  
 ♦ J97  
 ♣ A96

 Dealer: West  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

My guess is nobody will play this one.

For what it is worth east may well open 1♥ in third chair, and could well steal N/S's contract, maybe two light in 3♥, when N/S can make 130 declaring clubs.

This completes an interesting set, with some fortuitous contracts succeeding, and others possible with a good view.

It is hoped they were enjoyed.

Ave HCP	N 9.93	S10.07	E 10.32	W 9.68	Balanced	N 16	S 11	E 9	W 15
Voids/ Singletons	N 3/4	S 0/10	E 0/13	W 0.8	7+ Suit	N 1	S 0	E 1	W 1