

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION ♥♣



*Third Interclub – Heat B*

*13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021*

*Commentary by Ian Hamilton*

**1**

♠ A643  
♥ KJ10  
♦ K976  
♣ 65

♠ Q9  
♥ 86  
♦ QJ842  
♣ KQ87

♠ K10  
♥ 9732  
♦ A103  
♣ AJ104

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

Where south opens a weak NT N/S may have an uninterrupted auction to 2NT, south being minimum, and not accepting any invitation. A 1♣ opener could fetch a double or 1♠ overcall, and theoretically putting E/W into penalty territory.

South can do well in no trumps, winning the spade king in south and playing on hearts, then clubs. The defence can set up west's spades, but with no entry after the heart ace is dislodged cannot prevent a rather lucky nine tricks.

I cannot see too many doubled in 1♠ as west, but should this happen declarer can be held to three trumps, a heart and a club for the loss of 300 and a poor board, only bettered by those stretching to 3NT - and making it.

**2**

♠ AJ62  
♥ K643  
♦ Q10  
♣ A95

♠ 98  
♥ 109  
♦ AKJ876  
♣ K108

♠ K1073  
♥ A2  
♦ 942  
♣ QJ72

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

West may scrape up a 1♥ response when east opens 1♦. North may as well pass, but can double for takeout when east's 2♦ gets passed round.

This should allow N/S to play a spade contract, but it is hard to see many bidding game, which in any case requires a winning view regarding the trump queen, plus needs the club suit to play for three tricks.

Will we see most managing to get 140-170 on the card N/S, or will some steal it in diamonds E/W, where they should lose 100 at most? They could even escape for one down should the defence let the club king score, rather than making east play from hand all the time.

**3**

♠ 96  
♥ 43  
♦ K76  
♣ A98632

♠ Q87  
♥ A865  
♦ AQ10542  
♣

♠ 10432  
♥ 972  
♦ 3  
♣ KJ754

♠ AKJ5  
♥ KQJ10  
♦ J98  
♣ Q10

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

West could well come in with 2♦ or show a single suiter over either south's strong NT or Acol 1♥ opener. This is liable to be doubled if bid over the strong NT, but may escape punishment in the Acol sequence. North can get a spade ruff, and the defence three hearts and at least one trump in addition, a 500 penalty.

Left alone N/S could find themselves in 3NT, a spot which may make on a low diamond from west. Nine tricks with east on lead are much harder, and most will manage eight at most. 3♣ looks a reasonable contract, but the foul trump break puts paid to it too.

It looks like N/Ss best hope of a decent score is a penalty.

**4**

♠ AQ87  
♥ Q  
♦ A8  
♣ KJ10953

♠ 10432  
♥ 653  
♦ KQ654  
♣ 2

♠ J9  
♥ A8  
♦ 10972  
♣ AQ874

♠ K65  
♥ KJ109742  
♦ J3  
♣ 6

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

North will show his black suits, south his hearts and will probably jump rebid to 3♥ on the second round. North has more than enough to advance to the 4♥ game.

Declarer needs to be careful on a singleton club lead, ruffing the second round high. Trumps are just good enough to avoid a trump promotion, the wrong hand having the 8 spot. A club provides a pitch of a diamond.

On a passive lead, with the spade J/9 falling, a finesse of the 8 is about a 3:1 on shot - the Restricted Choice odds when two of three relevant cards fall (2:1 on when one of two honours fall). A diamond goes on the long spade.

Will many resist the singleton lead, leading the unbid suit, and setting up a diamond, holding declarer to 620?

**5**

♠ J1054  
♥ 3  
♦ 765  
♣ K10642

♠ Q98  
♥ K1074  
♦ K98  
♣ QJ3

♠ AK762  
♥ J85  
♦ AJ10  
♣ 87

♠ 3  
♥ AQ962  
♦ Q432  
♣ A95

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Should west support spades or seek a penalty when south overcalls east's 1♠ with 2♥? With south vulnerable some will certainly follow the latter course.

The former works poorly, declarer potentially held to eight tricks in spades, north getting two heart ruffs after the lead of the ace. No trumps are better, game possible when hearts can be double finessed for three tricks.

Should west pass, hoping for a re-opening double, east may fail to oblige, but the E/W penalty is still likely to be at least 200, probably 300, conceivably more.

It isn't usually advisable to play for a penalty when holding an 8-card major suit fit yourself, but today it works, and will certainly be found by some, particularly playing Acol, where east might only have four spades.

**6**

♠ A8  
♥ K98642  
♦ 7  
♣ J1043

♠ 62  
♥ AQ  
♦ K963  
♣ Q9876

♠ QJ1075  
♥ J753  
♦ 102  
♣ 52

♠ K943  
♥ 10  
♦ AQJ854  
♣ AK

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

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

This could finish in 2♥ by north after south has opened 1♦ and rebid 1♠, north rebidding his suit, and south giving up. South may advance with 2NT, probably finishing in an inferior spot. Admittedly, it does take a spade lead to sink 3NT. South is better raising hearts, as often the 6:1 major suit fit better than no trumps.

Declaring hearts, declarer plays on trump elopement lines, ruffing spades in north and a club in south. He cannot be denied the trump king in the end-game. Should the defence lead trumps the diamond suit can be set up via a ruffing finesse.

I cannot see too many, if any, 430s, so any 420 looks likely to be a joint top, anything higher improbable.

**7**

♠ QJ96  
♥ 1073  
♦ AJ742  
♣ 3

♠ 432  
♥ Q8  
♦ K865  
♣ K874

♠ AK875  
♥ K64  
♦  
♣ Q10962

♠ 10  
♥ AJ952  
♦ Q1093  
♣ AJ5

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

N/S are likely to have a free run, south opening 1♥ and rebidding 2♦ over north's 1♠. Normally the longest suit is bid first, but here north isn't strong enough for a 2 level response. North might take an optimistic view over the 2♦ rebid and jump to 3♥. Even so, bidding game looks a stretch. Alternatively, north might raise diamonds.

It is possible to make at least ten tricks in hearts, a club ruffed in north and the last pitched on the final diamond. Trumps can be picked up for one loser. The defence need to get a diamond ruff to stop the eleventh trick.

It looks as if there are also eleven tricks in diamonds, but the 4:0 break complicates matters. West is best to lead the heart queen, threatening a ruff, or clubs, which causes insuperable entry problems, or promotes the trump king when dummy ruffs clubs twice.

**8**

♠ J106543  
♥ Q8  
♦ 62  
♣ 962

♠ KQ98  
♥  
♦ K108754  
♣ KQJ

♠ 2  
♥ 1097653  
♦ AQ3  
♣ A53

♠ A7  
♥ AKJ42  
♦ J9  
♣ 10874

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

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

We could have a slam played in part-score on this one, east responding 1♥ to west's 1♦ and bidding at most 3♦ over west's 1♠ rebid.

The cards lie perfectly, trumps 2:2 and the spade ace short onside. The twelfth trick is a spade ruff.

Any that try 3NT should be beaten - south can double for the lead of dummy's first bid suit. The defence can get four hearts and the spade ace. Even if allowed to make 3NT it should score less than the 420 available in the diamond game - a rare triumph for the minor suit.

9

♠ K73  
 ♥ 9652  
 ♦ AJ6  
 ♣ 873  
 ♠ Q108  
 ♥ AQ1083  
 ♦ 10  
 ♣ KJ62  
 ♠ J9642  
 ♥ K4  
 ♦ Q943  
 ♣ 109

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

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

When east opens 1♥ and has to rebid his suit over the 2♦ response west probably probes with 3♣. Now east could well bid 3NT. The spade stop is not great, so he may pass the buck with a FSF 3♠ instead, which works better.

West can make 3NT with a good guess on an opening spade lead, losing at most a heart and three diamonds. Where east declares a spade lead sets up the king. Now, when south gets on lead in hearts he can change tack, playing the diamond queen, squashing the 10, and getting three tricks in the suit.

E/W are better in hearts where even the double dummy start of the diamond queen cannot force more than three defensive tricks, so long as the king isn't played early, it stopping the suit when the ace falls in three.

10

♠ A103  
 ♥ Q4  
 ♦ Q864  
 ♣ AQ102  
 ♠ KJ76  
 ♥ A7  
 ♦ J72  
 ♣ J953  
 ♠ 8542  
 ♥ 1063  
 ♦ AK95  
 ♣ 76

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

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

The problems caused by the Multi or Weak Two are exemplified here when west opens either. North has a decent hand, but with a dubious heart stop and only three spades has no entirely satisfactory bid.

I can see some overcalling 2NT and losing the first six hearts. Those that double are likely to play in 2♠, though 3♦ is a more comfortable spot.

In practice, 2♠ proves to be playable, and losses can be kept to two hearts and three trumps, the short hand taking the heart ruff. In 3♦ a spade loser is pitched on the third heart, and only a further spade need be lost, declarer later getting two spade ruffs in north.

Perhaps best is to defend 2♥. South has a club ruff, and declarer may still lose to the heart queen, losing 200.

11

♠ QJ4  
 ♥ 1042  
 ♦ K652  
 ♣ AK8  
 ♠ AK98  
 ♥ A6  
 ♦ AQ87  
 ♣ Q94  
 ♠ 107632  
 ♥ QJ95  
 ♦  
 ♣ J1053  
 ♠ 5  
 ♥ K873  
 ♦ J10943  
 ♣ 762

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

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

When east makes a pre-emptive jump to 4♠ over his Acol 1♠ west should resist the urge to advance, east promising little but long trumps. Some play 3NT as the same hand type, but with one defensive trick - a useful arrangement.

5 card majors open west 1♦ and could play there, probably going light. East is better to bid 1♠, but will await the dummy with some trepidation when raised to game.

With a trump loser declarer is perhaps fortunate that there is no defensive club ruff in addition, and that the heart finesse succeeds.

So fortune will favour those getting to the spade game, so long as they don't advance beyond it.

12

♠ Q  
 ♥ AJ954  
 ♦  
 ♣ KQJ8753  
 ♠ K765  
 ♥ 873  
 ♦ A1063  
 ♣ 109  
 ♠ A109842  
 ♥ KQ10  
 ♦ QJ2  
 ♣ 6  
 ♠ J3  
 ♥ 62  
 ♦ K98754  
 ♣ A42

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

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

South has a tricky bid when east bids spades over north's 1♣. Double is perhaps best, planning on bidding diamonds next, the classical way to show a weakish single suiter not strong enough for a forcing 2 level response.

South will need to re-think when north bids 4♥, maybe over a west spade raise. He should realise that north must be shapely with longer clubs, correcting to 5♣.

I can see a few in the wrong spot here, a north heart contract defeated badly on a diamond and spade force. Those that do get to 5♣ should only lose a heart and spade, ruffing the heart suit good.

However, I can see many N/Ss missing game, though this is better than going light in the wrong one.

**13**

♠ KJ7  
♥ J74  
♦ A10973  
♣ QJ

♠ 10652  
♥ K108  
♦ 8  
♣ A10862

♠ Q84  
♥ 96532  
♦ KQJ6  
♣ 5

Dealer: North  
Both Vulnerable

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

Acol opens north a weak NT and gets to 2♥ after a transfer. When south passes the completion west might risk a double for takeout, getting to a making E/W black suit contract, though this is risky with only three spades.

A north 1♦ will see either a direct south raise or 1♥ response, then the 1NT rebid converted to 2♦. It is easier for west to compete now, east marked with diamond shortage.

North's 2♥ should be beaten on the lead of east's singleton, he getting two ruffs, though some may go passive and let it home. 2♦ is a comfortable make.

E/W are much better declaring, able to make a lot of tricks in clubs, fewer in spades, but still for a better score than the small penalty on offer.

**14**

♠ A63  
♥ 3  
♦ QJ9762  
♣ 762

♠ K107  
♥ A9  
♦ AK83  
♣ AJ108

♠ J82  
♥ K108762  
♦ 10  
♣ KQ9

Dealer: East  
Neither Vulnerable

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

E/W could get a penalty here when east opens 1♦ or 1♣ and doubles in the protective seat when south overcalls a weak 2♥, passed round. West can pass for penalties, his other option 2♠. Defending hearts, the defence should get seven tricks so long as they don't play clubs for declarer, a 300 penalty.

Should south simply overcall 1♥ west might stretch to 1♠ and eventually partner torture him into declaring 3NT. This spot doesn't look great, but assuming the spade knave is picked up, although north can deny west an entry, south's diamond can be removed and south end-played to either cede three club tricks or a west entry.

A good one to bring home.

**15**

♠ AK54  
♥ Q6  
♦ Q632  
♣ A65

♠ Q972  
♥ AJ1094  
♦ KJ  
♣ J9

♠ J103  
♥ 832  
♦ 1075  
♣ K872

Dealer: South  
N-S Vulnerable

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

Over a north strong NT east may well show his majors. west getting to E/W's best spot of 2♥. An Acol 1♠ by north could see a 2♥ overcall, though this time east declares. This contract should only lose the obvious top tricks, east's remaining spade going on west's clubs, or ruffed.

E/W may be better defending north's 1NT, which they should beat at least 100, probably 200 maybe even 300. The Acol 1♠ is unlikely to run into serious trouble, though passed out it could also lose 200.

Competing non-vulnerable against vulnerable opponents isn't always right. They are potentially going light in hundreds, as here.

**16**

♠ J76  
♥ AQ752  
♦ 943  
♣ 103

♠ 109532  
♥ J  
♦ Q876  
♣ K52

♠ K  
♥ K103  
♦ KJ10  
♣ AQJ864

Dealer: West  
E-W Vulnerable

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

South has a quandary when north responds 1♥ to his 1♣. A 3♣ rebid could end the auction. Today, a seriously off-shape 2NT works best, north able to use a checkback facility to establish three hearts in south, declaring 4♥. Alternatively, south could simply raise hearts at his second bid, ready to apologise should a 4:3 fit result.

With the minor suit honours nicely placed, and the heart knave singleton, eleven tricks in hearts should be recorded. Any that get to 3NT should also survive, and may even make the same eleven tricks. Although west can cash three tricks at the start he isn't likely to.

**17**

♠ AKQ742  
 ♥ 86  
 ♦ 10432  
 ♣ 6  
 ♠ 10963  
 ♥ AQ10  
 ♦ AKQ85  
 ♣ 10  
 ♠ J5  
 ♥ K75  
 ♦ 7  
 ♣ QJ85432  
 ♠ 8  
 ♥ J9432  
 ♦ J96  
 ♣ AK97

 Dealer: North  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

North has a classic Multi or Weak Two in spades, and this may well buy it (south bidding 2♠ over a Multi, being playable in hearts). West might venture into the auction with diamonds.

Declaring spades on a diamond lead N/S should lose 100, east ruffing above south. Should E/W declare they are unlucky that it is north with the diamond guard, the defence able to get six tricks against either a diamond or no trump contract, and five against an east club contract.

The end result is a hand that disobeys the rules. Normally, at love all you are best declaring at a low level. If you lose 50-100 the opponents are usually able to make more declaring. Either that or you go plus in your contract. Not today.

**18**

♠ Q9872  
 ♥ J1053  
 ♦ AJ7  
 ♣ 3  
 ♠ A  
 ♥ AK  
 ♦ Q10542  
 ♣ A7542  
 ♠ K654  
 ♥ Q98  
 ♦ K9  
 ♣ Q1098  
 ♠ J103  
 ♥ 7642  
 ♦ 863  
 ♣ KJ6

 Dealer: East  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

West should get to 3NT, opening 1♦ and rebidding 2♣ over east's 1♠. East has enough for a club raise, and west for the nine trick game.

In clubs, holding a nine card fit missing the king and knave, the percentage play is to cash the ace, then lead to the queen. With only an eight card fit best is two finesses through the ace.

The end result is that declarer is liable to go light, north getting his spades going and having the diamond ace as an entry. Of course, declarer can succeed by picking up diamonds or playing the club suit to advantage.

I hope nobody overcalls north with spades at adverse vulnerability - 1♠ can taken for 800, though in practice probably escapes its just desserts.

**19**

♠ J2  
 ♥ 953  
 ♦ A874  
 ♣ AJ75  
 ♠ AK7543  
 ♥ A  
 ♦ QJ95  
 ♣ Q3  
 ♠ 109  
 ♥ K762  
 ♦ 63  
 ♣ 109862  
 ♠ Q86  
 ♥ QJ1084  
 ♦ K102  
 ♣ K4

 Dealer: South  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

The vulnerable west either opens 1♠ or has to double or overcall a heavy 1♠ when south opens a thin 5 card major 1♥. North has decent support for south, whereas east is effectively broke, with no entry to his only high card of note.

Defending spades, the defence can avoid breaking diamonds or leading a second heart, instead playing trumps, without losing their trick in the suit. West can certainly be held to seven tricks, possibly six, for perhaps a 200 penalty.

N/S could be better declaring hearts. With west on lead they only lose the obvious four top tricks, a diamond loser eventually going on the club knave and a third spade ruffed high in north. A diamond lead from east gets five defensive tricks, but north will never declare.

**20**

♠ KQ4  
 ♥  
 ♦ AQ1085  
 ♣ J10843  
 ♠ A82  
 ♥ A64  
 ♦ 7632  
 ♣ Q76  
 ♠ J65  
 ♥ KJ108752  
 ♦ KJ4  
 ♣  
 ♠ 10973  
 ♥ Q93  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ AK952

 Dealer: West  
 Both Vulnerable

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

East could well bid 3♥ over a north 1♦, despite the vulnerability, south conceivably making a values double. This might pave the way to N/S declaring 5♣, where they can easily record the due tricks when the diamond honours ruff down short, losing just a trump and the spade ace.

However, I can see 3♥ coming round to north at many tables and a red card appear. South could easily leave this in for penalties and find it unbeatable, despite getting a diamond ruff, a bit unlucky neither club top stands up.

So big scores possible either way.



**21**

♠ AJ108  
 ♥ 764  
 ♦ 862  
 ♣ K106  
 ♠ KQ73  
 ♥ K8  
 ♦ Q753  
 ♣ AJ5  
 ♠ 94  
 ♥ QJ1092  
 ♦ J1094  
 ♣ Q8  
 ♠ 652  
 ♥ A53  
 ♦ AK  
 ♣ 97432

 Dealer: North  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

I suppose south might open 1♣ (not very lead-directing) or a weak NT in 3rd seat. West has a strong NT overcall or opener, though Acol opens 1♠. Either way, west or east could well find themselves declaring 1NT.

This spot should be defeated, a club lead best, taking out east's club entry to the heart suit prematurely. A spade from south is equally effective, setting up six quick winners. They also get the club king, as the queen is needed as a dummy entry to the hearts, assuming the defence have held up for one round.

A spade from north puts the defence under some pressure, but they can still prevail. Will many let 1NT through?

**22**

♠ Q10852  
 ♥ 102  
 ♦ AKQJ9  
 ♣ 6  
 ♠ 763  
 ♥ K9863  
 ♦ 43  
 ♣ 975  
 ♠ AKJ9  
 ♥ Q4  
 ♦ 65  
 ♣ K10843  
 ♠ 4  
 ♥ AJ75  
 ♦ 10872  
 ♣ AQJ2

 Dealer: East  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

South has no sound intervention, so east's 1♣ should run to north, he venturing 1♠. Opposite a protective call south should deduct an imaginary king from his values, thus is worth at most 2NT, maybe even 1NT. However, north has a full opener, so should advance, perhaps trying diamonds on the way. Most should reach game somehow, but protective seat bidding is murky, and some could miss it.

3NT looks as if it has only eight tricks. However, east comes under pressure on the diamonds, and eventually has to give declarer a spade, a second club finesse, or allow a heart to be set up by baring the queen.

5♦ is a much easier spot, for the same score, and might even manage an overtrick should east fail to find a red suit switch after his top spade lead.

**23**

♠ K10643  
 ♥ AJ76  
 ♦ KJ9  
 ♣ 5  
 ♠ 87  
 ♥ Q984  
 ♦ Q102  
 ♣ Q1032  
 ♠ AQJ92  
 ♥ 105  
 ♦ 643  
 ♣ 984  
 ♠ 5  
 ♥ K32  
 ♦ A875  
 ♣ AKJ76

 Dealer: South  
 Both Vulnerable

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

I am not sure I would reverse into 2♦ after south's 1♣ has fetched 1♠ from north. 1NT is better in Acol, showing the HCP and red suit stops. In practice, it probably doesn't matter a lot, 3NT likely reached one way or other. It is tempting for east to double for the lead of dummy's first bid suit, spades. However, without an outside entry, this is ill-advised.

Many will only make nine tricks, but even on a spade lead, if diamonds are cashed, then hearts, west has had to throw his last spade, and can be end-played with the last heart to lead clubs.

The diamond position is interesting. When declarer finesses the knave and cashes the king west needs to play the known card, the queen. Declarer could easily finesse to the now bare 10, and maybe even go light.

**24**

♠ 10  
 ♥ Q9732  
 ♦ AQ10875  
 ♣ 7  
 ♠ Q85  
 ♥ AKJ8654  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ 94  
 ♠ K43  
 ♥ 96432  
 ♣ Q8532  
 ♠ AJ9762  
 ♥ 10  
 ♦ K  
 ♣ AKJ106

 Dealer: West  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

Some will open 4♥ as west. Double by north is an error. South will certainly take out. Better to pass and hope for a takeout double, or at least a pass and a plus score.

Sadly, south will bid 4♠ anyway. This looks as if it could get home, but if west cashes a heart, then switches to his diamond, declarer cannot quite do it.

Where west opens 1♥ the auction may not get so high on the N/S misfit, and they could manage to stay in part-score, recording a plus, or get defending west's hearts for a better one.

**25**

♠ A1052  
♥ Q5  
♦ 74  
♣ KQ952

♠ KQ73  
♥ 642  
♦ KJ1086  
♣ 6

♠ J984  
♥ AKJ  
♦ A2  
♣ AJ108

♠ 6  
♥ 109873  
♦ Q953  
♣ 743

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

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

Whether east doubles north's 1♣ or overcalls a heavy 1NT the E/W spade fit should be established, and game ensue, though either could declare.

Making 4♠ should not be beyond most declarers, but the all-important overtrick could be, despite there being only one obvious loser. So long as trumps are picked up, which is not a certainty, easiest may be to simply cede a club to north after he has split his honours, the other club loser ruffed in dummy.

Anyone playing to set up diamonds almost certainly loses an extra trump and could even go light.

It is contracts like these that can make the difference between an average and good score at pairs.

**26**

♠ K9765  
♥ 9  
♦ K10954  
♣ 93

♠ 108  
♥ J1043  
♦ J2  
♣ KQ754

♠ AQ43  
♥ AQ8765  
♦ 3  
♣ AJ

♠ J2  
♥ K2  
♦ AQ876  
♣ 10862

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

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

East could get over-excited when west raises hearts, carrying the auction to an unmakeable slam.

It looks as if it all depends on the ultimately losing heart finesse, but in fact slam is not even that good. Declarer has to destroy a club trick to access dummy for the trump finesse, the end result being that the spade finesse is required too. As it happens, it scores.

It looks as if most will manage eleven tricks. But how many will be in the failing slam?

**27**

♠ K107  
♥ Q85  
♦ J873  
♣ AQ7

♠ 986  
♥ 62  
♦ A94  
♣ 106543

♠ A32  
♥ AJ10  
♦ K1062  
♣ J92

♠ QJ54  
♥ K9743  
♦ Q5  
♣ K8

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

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

I can see N/S getting too high here should south open 1♥, as many will at love all. North has no good bid, 2♦ perhaps best, over which all south can do is rebid hearts, raised by north, possibly to game.

4♥ has no hope, but declarer might survive in 3♥, as west may well lead a club, allowing declarer to ditch a diamond on the third round of same, subsequently losing only two trumps, a spade and a diamond.

Even where south passes north will be there with 1♦ or a weak NT, and south may feel he has some catching up to do, again with considerable risk of getting overboard.

Will many go plus N/S, staying low?

**28**

♠ KJ5  
♥ A98  
♦ 952  
♣ K1095

♠ 2  
♥ KQJ107654  
♦ K104  
♣ 3

♠ A9763  
♥ 3  
♦ AQJ  
♣ A742

♠ Q1084  
♥ 2  
♦ 8763  
♣ QJ86

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

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

At favourable vulnerability and holding a good eight card suit a 4♥ opener stands out by west, normally promising about eight tricks. Were east confident of a good suit opposite he might risk slam, though this could be wrong on some days when west's high cards outside trumps turn out to be a couple of queens.

Today, you cannot beat 6♥ with a big stick, and those advancing will get a great board. Note the importance of aces. East's diamond ace turns west's king into a sure trick. Give east the K/Q of one or both black suits instead and slam is hopeless.

So we finish with another tough judgement call, one of many in the set, though this did not have any play complexity, unlike some of the offerings, which it is hoped proved enjoyable.

Ave HCP	N 9.96	S 10.00	E 10.00	W 10.04	Balanced	N 12	S 8	E 7	W 14
Voids/singletons	N 2/13	S 0/16	E 4/9	W 2/9	7+ suit	N 1	S 1	E 2	W 2