



## The 2026 Celtic Simultaneous Pairs

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May

We are so pleased to welcome you once again to the Celtic Simultaneous Pairs, supporting the Celtic Nations. Funds raised will be used to support bridge within your own Bridge Union, whether that is the Scottish, Welsh, Northern Ireland or Irish Bridge Union.

We really hope you enjoyed the event and found the hands fun and challenging. Hopefully the commentators managed to get it right but by now you will be able to judge that for yourself !

Anna Newton,  
Simultaneous Pairs Organiser  
on behalf of the SBU, WBU, NIBU and IBU

### Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Traditionally Acol opens the E hand 1♠ raised to 2♠ by W. E rebids 2NT and W bids 4♠. If E opens 1♣ some pairs will get to 3NT which is held to nine tricks on the passive diamond lead. Assuming a high club lead and, when this holds, a trump switch, the play in 4♠ requires careful timing. E should realise that he cannot ruff two clubs in dummy so he has to find a parking space for one of them. Furthermore, he has to play the diamond suit for one loser. At trick two he should cash the ♥A and plays another heart which S will win to play a second spade. Declarer should win in hand to play a diamond to the queen. N wins his king and exits with his last spade. Declarer now plays the ♣A and ruffs a club, cashes the ♥Q to throw his other club loser and finesses the ♦10 for ten tricks.

### Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

This could turn out to be a highly competitive deal after E opens 1NT. W may have a conventional way to show one or both minors but if not he should bid 2♣ in order to sign off later in 3♣. North will bid his spades and is likely to buy the contract in 3♠ which on a non trump lead will make by taking 2 ruffs in dummy. On a trump lead careful play is needed. At trick two N should play a heart and the defence do best to let E win to play another trump. Declarer ruffs a heart and crosses to the ♦K to ruff another heart, establishing the suit. He continues with the ♦A and another diamond which he ruffs in dummy, and finally plays a winning heart, throwing his losing diamond as E makes his trump trick.

If EW buy the hand in clubs, they should make eleven tricks simply by drawing trumps, knocking out the top diamonds and guessing hearts correctly.

*Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.*

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

Sound bidders will find themselves in 2♥ after E gives preference over West's 2♣ rebid. Aggressive players will be in 3NT and surely lose four diamond tricks and the ♠A or, if a diamond is not led, the ♠A, ♣K and three diamond tricks.

W has nine tricks in hearts on all leads except a diamond. After the ♦KA and a low one W is in some difficulties and on best defence will not make more than eight tricks; if he is careless and draws trumps he will go down because he will lose trump control

*Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.*

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

Another competitive deal for those Norths brave enough to bid 2♥ over W's INT opening. S competes to 3♥ which will go one down on the singleton club lead but can be made on any other lead provided that N draws one trump before successfully playing on ♣s. Superficially EW have ten tricks in spades but the poor spade division leads to insurmountable difficulties. On a heart lead and return declarer ruffs and plays a diamond to the queen and ducks a diamond. S wins and plays the ♥K ruffed by E. Declarer ruffs a diamond, overruffed by N who returns a club to the ace in dummy. Declarer has ♠K7 in dummy and AJ8 in hand. His best chance of

making 4♠ is to attempt to draw trumps but if he tries this he will finish with seven tricks, though he can cross-ruff to bring his total to eight.

*Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.*

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

It would not be surprising to see all denominations on the score slip on this deal. Strong no-trumpers might open the N hand INT and declare in no-trumps or spades; weak no-trumpers may open 1♦ or 1♥, leading to final denominations in those suits; or where E overcalls in clubs he may become declarer in that strain.

How successful all these contract will be is anyone's guess: 3♣ by E will probably make 9 tricks; INT by N will make 8 tricks on a club lead; 2♦, 2♥, 2♠ could all be a struggle, and the 7-card fits may well go down.

*Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.*

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

1♣ – 1♦ – 1♠ – 3NT looks to be the normal auction. Most routes seem to lead to ten tricks, but if E leads a spade and declarer ducks in dummy then W needs to switch to the ♣10 to hold declarer to nine tricks.

*Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.*

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

A difficult hand to bid: slam is with the odds but how many will make it without the aid of a trump lead? But then, how many will bid it? EW may bid the slam if E jumps to 3NT after W has opened 1♥ and N overcalled 1♠. W will continue with 4♣ but E will sign off with 4♥. W is worth another bid, 4♠, and E may jump to slam based on his excellent club fit.

The W hand qualifies as an Acol-two opener for those pairs who still play them. If W opens 2♥s and E bids 3NT then W should continue with 4♣. Again, E should jump in hearts (this time to 5♥) because of his club fit and W should bid the slam. If E introduces his poor quality diamond suit, this may turn out to sabotage the EW bidding.

Those pairs who manage to play in 3NT will score very well on a spade lead.

*Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.*

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

N will open 1♥ and be raised to 3♥ by S with his eight-loser hand; N, with his good distribution and well-placed high cards, should go on to game. Those S players who raise to only 2♥ are likely to miss the well-fitting game. The contract is much better than the diamond guess. On a club lead declarer wins, ruffs a club and draw trumps before exiting with a spade. If

the spades are 3-3 or there is a blockage the defence have to open up diamonds or give a ruff and discard. If the chances in spades fail, declarer has to guess the diamond.

*Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.*

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

After North's INT opener most South's will use Stayman and discover the 4-4 heart fit. Now, although South has only 9 HCP, he should invite game because of his good distribution and powerful side suit in spades. Those who play a 15-17 INT will find the spade fit and should also reach game.

The hands fit well and declarer is on a heart guess for eleven tricks. When declarer plays the ♥A and the ten drops from W, should he play the queen on the next round or should he duck? The Theory of Restricted Choice points to a duck of the heart – with K10 W had no choice but with J10 he might have played the jack. Of course, not all Es will play low to give declarer a guess.

Those who play in 4♥ will be held to 10 tricks when E leads his singleton spade.

*Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.*

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

At most tables, E will open 1♥. Over S's double W will bid 1♠ and E rebid INT – it is better to show the range and general nature of the hand than to rebid 2♦.

A club lead should hold declarer to 8 tricks but it's a difficult position for S to read. When he gets in with the ♥A how does he know he can cash the club suit? It is a good hand for the Smith Peter convention, whereby a peter (high-low) on the suit declarer first plays shows a liking for the suit led.

An intrepid N may choose to bid 2♣ at some point, the likely effect of which is to push EW into a potentially higher-scoring heart contract. If NS persist with 3♣ then E must double since plus 100 will not be a good result.

If E rebids 2♦ instead of INT, then EW will play in hearts. In 2♥ South will probably lead the ♦Q. Declarer is threatening to take 9 tricks (1 spade, 4 trumps, 3 diamonds and 1 club) and the defenders' task is to switch to clubs soon enough to start the force on declarer – if declarer runs out of trumps he will be unable to enjoy the long diamond. However, that defence is hard to find and many declarers will score 140.

*Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.*

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

This deal lends itself to a smooth sequence: S opens 1♥, 1♠ from N and 2♣ from E. 2♦ from S and 2♠ from N should close the auction. If E perseveres with 3♣ then S must double for 300 although he needs to take care not to concede a red-suit trick to dummy. Cashing ace king of both red suits and then a trump is the best defence. If EW are playing intermediate jump overcalls they will drive NS to an uncomfortable level. 3♦ looks to be booked for one down with a heart ruff in dummy. However, spades are likely to make nine tricks on any lead.

*Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.*

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

EW may be given an easy passage to 2♥ after INT from E and a transfer from W. S leads a spade and N must switch to a diamond. If N returns a spade declarer has time to establish the fourth club for a diamond discard provided that he plays clubs immediate whilst he has a fast entry to hand with the ♥K.

The big bonus will go to those NSs who get into the bidding, either directly over INT or by S doubling 2♥ for take-out. Nine tricks are certain, but there are ten if the defenders don't switch to clubs in time.

*Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.*

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

N opens with a weak no-trump and where E passes, S will introduce his hearts, either naturally or via a transfer. He should probably content himself with a partscore at matchpoint scoring, but if he makes a game try, North should reject with his minimum and 4-3-3-3 distribution. There has four black losers on a spade lead and he will probably lose a trump as well. However, if after a transfer sequence E were to lead a singleton diamond declarer may guess the heart and make ten tricks. Where E bids spades over INT, either naturally or conventionally, EW are likely to buy the contract. Whatever the lead, one heart can be

ruffed in the W hand to give declarer 6 spades and 3 clubs. Should the defence fail to find the trump lead then two ruffs can be taken and 10 tricks made.

*Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.*

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

The material is there for another competitive auction and yet it might be thrown in at some tables. NS make ten tricks in diamonds with the ♥K well-placed. EW make nine tricks in hearts. 4♥ looks close to making but in practice is difficult even on a favourable lead. Say S leads his singleton club and declarer leads a low heart at trick two. The defence win, cross in diamonds to take a club ruff and then play a spade. Declarer can win and draw trumps but he has only 4 clubs, 1 spade and 4 hearts. It works better for declarer to play the ♥A and another heart, for then the defence are helpless: they cannot play diamonds and spades simultaneously. A spade allows declarer to win, cash the clubs and cross to the ♥Q to make 5 clubs, 4 hearts and 1 spade. A diamond forces dummy to ruff but declarer can come to hand in clubs, cash the other club and enter dummy with the ♠A to run the clubs whilst E follows – now declarer has 5 clubs, 3 hearts, 1 spade and one ruff in the dummy for ten tricks, 4♥ has no chance if the defence start with two rounds of diamonds. Declarer runs the ♥Q but the defence play a spade which declarer wins to finesse the heart and draw trumps. That he has only three ♣ tricks is a great disappointment to him.

*Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.*

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

When W opens INT this seems to be a tedious affair with EW making nine tricks in 3NT. However, there is much in the bidding: suppose East bids Stayman and West responds 2♥. If East now bids a forcing 3♦, W can hardly bid 3NT without a spade stop and may well choose 4♥. The strong no-trump players are also likely to get to 4♥ if North overcalls 1♠ over the 1♣ opening – for the lead and to be disruptive.

Ten tricks are available with the aid of a spade ruff but some declarer may play towards the ♦Q, thus threatening to make 11 tricks. To hold declarer to 10 tricks the defence have to start with two rounds of spades and then play a third round on winning the ♦K in order to promote a trump trick for N.

*Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.*

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

Some aggressive Ns will choose to open 3♦ with such a good suit. Any S who knows his partner should pass, but many will bid a forcing 3♠, raised to 4♠ by N. The success of the contract is likely to depend on the defence. On a club lead a successful diamond guess will see declarer home. On a heart lead declarer plays a diamond which W wins to play the ♥J and another heart. E wins to play a trump won by

declarer who can ruff a club in dummy and throw another on the  $\heartsuit K$ . He ruffs a diamond and ruffs a club but there is no way out of dummy without W overruffing with the  $\spadesuit Q$ .

$3\heartsuit$  will make more often than it fails. E will surely lead a heart. Declarer should duck as a matter of good technique and win the second round to play a diamond. If W ducks, declarer could win and take the club finesse for a heart discard. If W plays the ace or declarer finesses, the defence should cash their heart and need to leave E on lead to play a low spade through dummy for if declarer can get to hand with the club suit intact he will finesse for a spade discard and nine tricks.

*Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.*

	$\spadesuit$ 10 7 3	
	$\heartsuit$ 8 7 5 4 3	
	$\diamondsuit$ 9 7 6 5 2	
	$\clubsuit$	
$\spadesuit$ Q J 9 4 2		$\spadesuit$ A 8
$\heartsuit$ K 10 9		$\heartsuit$ Q 6 2
$\diamondsuit$ Q J 4		$\diamondsuit$ 10 3
$\clubsuit$ A 3		$\clubsuit$ 10 8 7 6 5 4
	$\spadesuit$ K 6 5	
	$\heartsuit$ A J	
	$\diamondsuit$ A K 8	
	$\clubsuit$ K Q J 9 2	

South will open 2NT at most tables and North has to decide on his course of action: Stayman and pass the response is one possibility, a  $3\heartsuit$  transfer is another.

$3\heartsuit$  looks to have an easy 10 tricks but  $3\heartsuit$  will not do nearly so well. If the defenders start with two rounds of spades, declarer will win the second, take the ruffing club finesse, cross back to hand to discard dummy's spade on a top club. He can now play the  $\heartsuit A$  and another heart, but if W wins this trick, both defenders have a high trump which they can make separately, and there is a certain diamond loser to come, so  $3\heartsuit$  must go one down.

*Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.*

	$\spadesuit$ A 10 5	
	$\heartsuit$ A 10 9	
	$\diamondsuit$ J 7 5 4 2	
	$\clubsuit$ 9 3	
$\spadesuit$ 6 4 2		$\spadesuit$ K Q J
$\heartsuit$ Q J 7 6 4 3		$\heartsuit$ K 8
$\diamondsuit$ K Q 10		$\diamondsuit$ A 9 8 6 3
$\clubsuit$ J		$\clubsuit$ A Q 10
	$\spadesuit$ 9 8 7 3	
	$\heartsuit$ 5 2	
	$\diamondsuit$	
	$\clubsuit$ K 8 7 6 5 4 2	

The auction is likely to start  $1\heartsuit$  from E, Pass from S (the vulnerability does not make preempting look inviting),  $1\heartsuit$  from W and 2NT from E. W now has a decision to make. If he simply rebids  $4\heartsuit$  that is where he will play, but if he shows his secondary diamond support, East may well rebid 3NT.

The only defence to hold declarer to 10 tricks in no-trumps is a major-suit lead followed by a club switch. Other defences allow declarer to make 11 tricks (on a club lead and club continuation from N when he is in with the  $\heartsuit A$ , declarer will rise, expecting to make the rest of the tricks – when diamonds fail to break he will be disappointed but when N has the  $\spadesuit A$  as well, E is back on track for 11 tricks).

$4\heartsuit$  might also make 11 tricks – it all depends on how many diamond ruffs S can get: an initial diamond lead beats the contract, but winning the first heart and switching to a diamond should be worth a lot of matchpoints.

*Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.*

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

Those who have the methods to show eight playing tricks in clubs will no doubt use them. The rest of us open 1♣. The N hand is idea for a 3♦ pre-empt: good spot cards and the promising 6-4-2-1 distribution. Partner is a passed hand so we need to disrupt the opponents' bidding whilst looking for a possible sacrifice. W will re-open with a double and no doubt some Es will pass and collect 500 – or maybe only 300. Those EWs who reach 4♠ will fare better, maybe even making 12 tricks.

*Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.*

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

Most routes will lead to 3NT by N after he has opened 1♠. E will surely lead a diamond and it looks as if eleven tricks are there with the aid of two finesses. However, the distribution is such that W can be squeezed in the majors for a twelfth trick. If the diamond is covered, win and run the ♣9. When it holds, cash the ♥AQ and repeat the club finesse. Cashing the minor suits forces W down to four cards – two of which must be hearts (otherwise declarer has 4 heart tricks) and two of them spades. This allows declarer to play a spade and duck, later making an extra spade trick. To prevent this happening, W must keep ♠K10, not ♠KQ. Then declarer cannot afford to duck a spade or E will win with the jack and cash his diamonds.

There are other ways of playing the squeeze which involve ducking a trick early in the hand: for instance, if declarer ducks at trick one W may blindly return a diamond (a spade would destroy the communications for the squeeze).

*Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.*

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

S will open INT third-in-hand. W may be tempted to enter the auction, especially if he has a method to show both majors but there are a number of reasons why this is unsound: bare aces are a poor holding, partner is a passed hand and the vulnerability is not favourable for aggressive competition – the opponents are vulnerable and if they are going down they will go down in hundreds. Having said that, EW are likely to make two of a major but how will INT fare?

On a passive club lead (surely right at matchpoints), declarer has to cash his clubs. If he now plays a heart to the king the defence win and have seen nearly all of S's points. Thus W cashes the ace of diamonds and leads a low spade. E plays the jack of hearts at this point and declarer is held to five tricks. A similar result is achieved if declarer runs the ♥10 provided that W ducks, because declarer is squeezed later in the play.

Of course, declarer will do better on a major-suit lead: a spade lead with E's entry removed allows declarer to make at least six tricks depending on the heart view, while on a heart lead declarer threatens to make seven tricks – if he wins the heart and plays one back W will do well to find the winning defence.

*Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.*

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

Should W bid over S's 1♦ opener? 2♣ is unspeakable and expensive and 1♠ is unattractive with such poor pips, but much safer. Left to their own devices NS will reach 4♥. The singleton club lead will hold declarer to ten tricks ... unless W plays the jack, allowing the contract to make with two overtricks!

If W overcalls 1♠ this is unlikely to have much effect on the outcome. E may raise preemptively to 3♠. This may be doubled and go for 500, but it is more likely that NS bid 4♥ regardless. Now when E fails to lead his partnership suit, it will be easier to read him for a singleton.

*Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.*

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

This is not a hand for the overbidders. In an uninterrupted auction EW will start 1♣ – 1♦ – 2♦ and then E has to decide whether to bid 2NT or 3NT. 3NT will fare very badly, probably going three down, while 2NT will surely see West rebidding 3♦, a contract which should make ten tricks. If N makes an unsound double of 1♣, S may well bid up to 3♠ and lose 200 or 500. Well deserved too.

*Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.*

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

A minor is the best scoring contract for NS, making 110 or 130 whilst INT should make no more than seven tricks. At most tables the bidding will be 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♦ – 3♦, and there is no reason for S to bid on. If EW find their club ruff they will hold declarer to 9 tricks. In fact, as there is no defensive ruff to take against clubs, 3♣ is a better final contract. If W finds an unsound 2♥ overcall he is likely to do well – N will surely bid 3♣ and now East's raise to 3♥ might well end the auction. This contract may make though is likely to go down – if declarer draws trumps he does not have the entries to pick up spades for one loser, while if he does not draw trumps he will lose a spade ruff.

*Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.*

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

1♣ is clearly the best opening bid on the E hand but no doubt some aggressive souls will open 2NT or even 2♣. Over 1♣ S will overcall with 1♠ which will be passed to E. His most practical shot seems to bid 3NT.

Generally 3NT will make eleven tricks on a low spade lead unless S switches to a diamond when he wins the ♣A. Of course, avid readers of bridge books will be aware that this is one of those positions where they should lead the ♠Q at trick 1. This caters for the actual

distribution and leads to the defeat of the contract.

*Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.*

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

E will open 1♦ at most tables and S will overcall 1♠. W with two spade stops and 13–15 points should bid 3NT. When the ♠8 is led S should duck the jack as a matter of good technique. This forces W to play the ♦A and a diamond to his queen to play a high spade. S can now clear the suit. Declarer runs his diamonds and the eleventh trick comes down to the ♣ guess. S is known to have eight cards in spades and diamonds to N's five so playing N for the ♣Q is in order, but there are some risks because S has established his spades. Note that if S wins the ♠A at trick 1 E can take the club finesse with safety and cash his minor-suit winners to squeeze S in the majors for twelve tricks.

*Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.*

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

S will open 1NT and N transfers into spades. N is worth one effort towards game and no doubt will choose 3♠. When S bids 3NT N will be quite happy as his good intermediate cards favour a no-trump contract. 4♠ has little chance with the hearts wrong, but 3NT depends on the lead.

The choice at matchpoints is between the passive club or an active (attacking) lead. The

suit that requires the least from partner is a heart, so that will be chosen by many players. Declarer wins with the nine in hand and plays a spade towards dummy on which W plays the king – this will force S to use an entry in order to cash the suit later. E wins the next spade and a heart return give the defence five tricks. A diamond lead allows the contract to make since the defence can only make two diamond tricks whichever card is led. A passive club is also likely to succeed as it makes declarer's entry situation very difficult.

*Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.*

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

W's opening 1♠ may be passed round to S who bids 2♦. W shows his ♥ suit and North has a problem? Modern expert technique when the opponents have bid two suits is to bid the suit in which you have a stop, so N bids 3♥ and S, with a good spade stopper, bids 3NT. No doubt some Ns will double 1♠ and unless S bids 3NT immediately, game might be missed. On the ♥K lead, declarer must duck three rounds in case the suit is 4-4 with E having a late entry. Declarer wins the fourth round, throwing 1 club and 2 spades. S cashes his diamonds, discovering that W is 5-5-0-3. He watches W's discards carefully and either drops the ♣K or throws W in with the ♠A to lead away from the ♣K.

*Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.*

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

N will open 1♣ with E overcalling 1♠ and S passing. Some Ws will no doubt bid an immediate 3NT but that might be a silly contract if E were short in either minor. 2♣ is more sensible with W bidding 2♥ over 2♦ in case E has a singleton club. This is normally treated as forcing and, whether E bids 2♠ or 2NT, W will bid 3NT.

Played by W on a club lead, declarer wins, unblocks the spades and plays a diamond. If he plays the ♦J he will make 10 tricks, but if he plays the ♦K he will make only 9 for S will return a heart.

The contract is more difficult if played by E on a heart lead. Declarer will lose 2 hearts, 1 club and needs to guess the diamond to make his contract.

*Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.*

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

E opens 1NT but N's 2♠ bid will end the auction. On the normal diamond lead N wins the ace throwing a heart and plays on trumps. He will make eight tricks. An inspired heart lead defeats the contract: W wins, cashes the ♠A and returns a heart with E cashing two tricks and then giving W a ruff. That's five tricks with the ♣A to come.

*Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.*

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

A question of maybes. If EW can get into diamonds, perhaps after a natural 2♦ overcall from E, they will make a slightly fortuitous eleven tricks. If they defend N's 1NT opening it will make six tricks on a diamond lead, though double dummy a lead of a low card in a major followed by a diamond switch would lead to three or four down.

*Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.*

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

Many Norths will not open with a weak 2♠ even if playing such methods, because of the good heart suit on the side. Maybe some players will open 1♠ and might buy the contract in 2♠ for a good result. If E opens 1♦ W has a tricky problem in choosing between 3♦, which is a straightforward make, and 2NT, which is a rather trickier contract. If N leads a spade and dummy's ♠J holds, declarer must play the ♦A, unblocking the ten (to provide a late entry back to hand with the seven), the ♦K and another high diamond. A spade return allows W to cash his eight tricks. If S returns a club instead declarer must duck and then cross to his ♦7 and cash only one spade before playing a heart to the king. Note that this is the second board in the set where the ♠Q lead would be very successful, holding declarer to a maximum of seven tricks.