ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for BBC Children in Need

Tuesday 10th 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

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Board 1	♠ Q1095 ♥ 102 ♦ AQ54 ♣ AQJ	Dealer N Vul: None
♠ 86 ♥ J93 ♦ K3 ♣ 876543		♠ 72 ♥ Q764 ♦ 10986 ♣ 1092
	♠ AKJ43 ♥ AK85 ♦ J72 ♣ K	

What a nice way to start a session. N/S are cold for 7♠ or 6NT and have to answer two questions, Six or Seven, and spades or NT?

The actual auctions followed will depend on system. It should be routine to find the spade fit, and for someone, presumably South, to eventually take control and ask for key-cards. Then comes the tricky bit.

Everyone should get to slam, and they should either bid 7♠ or 6NT, not 6♠. Why? Because this is matchpoints and if North has shown a balanced 15+, South knows of 34-36 combined HCP. Either there are 13 tricks in a spade contract, or 7♠ is on a finesse but then declarer has the rest if the finesse fails. There could be a big bonus for playing 6NT for +990 rather than 6♠ for +980, and similarly if there is an overtrick.

Can someone count the 13 tricks for 7♠? Maybe, if not, they might think they are close to 13 tricks and will risk its turning out to be on a finesse. Not today, 7♠ needs no finesses, but 7NT does. When the ♦K proves to be onside, those who bid to 7NT get the top score.

Not that anyone will play there, but have you been wondering why the double dummy analysis says that 6♥ can be made?

Hearts can be played for one loser by starting with the five from South. If West plays low, the ten forces the queen and the jack and nine fall under the ace-king, leaving the eight to win the fourth round. So West must put in the jack. Declarer next leads the ten, running it if East plays low, winning the king then cashing the ace to drop the nine if East covers.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 2	♠ AQ10865 ♥ K86 ♦ ♣ Q974	Dealer E Vul: N-S
♠ J93 ♥ AQ3 ♦ QJ105 ♣ AJ6		♠ 2 ♥ J95 ♦ AK92 ♣ K10832
	♠ K74 ♥ 10742 ♦ 87643 ♣ 5	

Most Easts will open 1♣ and West respond 1♦. North will overcall 1♠ and East raise to 2♦.

If South passes, with 15 HCP facing an opening bid, West will cuebid 2♠ asking for more information but particularly a spade stopper. With a minimum and no help in spades, East will go back to 3♦, and West is likely to close proceedings with a jump to 5♦.

If South raises to 2♠ over 2♦, West can double to ask for more information, thereby saving a whole level of bidding compared to making a 3♠ cuebid. It should make no difference to the final contract, though North will no doubt bid for a second time having elicited support from partner.

Five Diamonds is a perfectly good contract but, with diamonds splitting five-zero, clubs four-one, and the ♥K offside there is just too much work to be done, and the best declarer can do is down one.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 3	♠ 72 ♥ K86 ♦ J1075 ♣ QJ98	Dealer S Vul: E-W
♠ J1098 ♥ QJ107 ♦ A92 ♣ 32		♠ AK643 ♥ A9542 ♦ 4 ♣ K7
	♠ Q5 ♥ 3 ♦ KQ863 ♣ A10654	

South opens 1♦ and Acol players will be able to make a simple raise to 2♦ with the North cards. A 3♦ cuebid from East is best played as showing at least five-five in the majors, just as would 2♦ have shown had that been available.

If South likes to involve North in the decision making he may bid 4♣ now, so that North can judge defensive prospects based on the degree of double fit. When West commits to a major-suit game, that will see North take the save in 5♦ doubled for –300. Other Souths may just take the decision themselves, not necessarily the best approach for long-term partnership harmony, but effective enough on this occasion.

The likelihood is that the opening lead against four of a major will be a diamond. That being the case, it doesn't matter who Is declarer. However, in theory the contract is better played by East, who can make 12 tricks on any lead, while a club lead holds West to 11.

West can get the hand played the right way up by cuebidding 4♦, asking partner to pick a trump suit, rather than just bidding 4♥/♠ himself.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	3	-	-	-
S	2	3	-	-	-
E	-	-	6	6	5
W	-	-	5	5	2

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Board 4	♠ AKJ86 ♥ KQ6 ♦ J ♣ QJ53	Dealer W Vul: Both
♠ 107 ♥ J752 ♦ K954 ♣ A94		♠ Q54 ♥ A109 ♦ 106 ♣ 108762
	♠ 932 ♥ 843 ♦ AQ8732 ♣ K	

North will open 1♠ and, if playing Acol, South will respond 2♦. With 17 HCP, North has to force to game so rebids 3♣, and South gives preference to spades, using the principle of fast arrival by jumping to 4♠, showing a lack of slam interest by leaving no space in which to explore.

Those playing 2-over-1 GF are far too weak for a 2♦ response so may raise 1♠ to 2♠ instead. North might just bid 4♠ and hope for a suitable dummy, or might make a game try, attempting to avoid dummies that make game a poor proposition.

The obvious game try is 3♣, and South will love the bare king and his side ace, so will jump to 4♠.

Alas, with the ♠Q and ♥A both offside, declarer can't quite manage 10 tricks. A heart can go away from dummy on a club, but declarer doesn't quite have the communications to take both a heart and a club ruff without running into trouble. Accurate defence leads to down one.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 5

	♠ J10975 ♥ AQ5 ♦ QJ104 ♣ 9	Dealer N Vul: N-S
♠ A64 ♥ J7 ♦ A8653 ♣ J82		♠ 832 ♥ K10642 ♦ ♣ AKQ76
	♠ KQ ♥ 983 ♦ K972 ♣ 10543	

After a pass from North, East opens 1♥,

Playing Acol, West responds 2♦ and East, with only 12 HCP, has to rebid 2♥. Unless North decides to balance with 2♠ – dangerous at this vulnerability and against an auction in which E/W have not promised a genuine fit – 2♥ will end the auction.

The friendly lie of the heart suit means four winners and only one loser, so 10 tricks are made for +170. That friendly heart layout also allows 11 tricks to be made in a club partscore for +150.

Those playing 2-over-1 GF will have to respond 1NT, and East will rebid 2♣. West can bid a slightly heavy 2♥ or a light 2NT. I favour 2♥, but some will surely feel that they are too strong to make the same bid as if they had only half their actual strength. If West bids 2NT, East will repeat the clubs, and now West should pass out 3♣.

Suppose that West gets to 3NT and North leads a spade. West should win the spade lead and play immediately on hearts. With the spades blocked that same friendly layout allows nine tricks to be made.

If declarer ducks at trick one South might switch to a diamond, while a spade continuation allows the defence to unblock the suit while North still has the heart ace with which to get in. And if South ducks twice South is guaranteed to switch to diamonds.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 6	♠ KQ74 ♥ AQ10943 ♦ A10 ♣ J	Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ 10 ♥ 8765 ♦ K84 ♣ AQ432		♠ A2 ♥ J ♦ J765 ♣ 1098765
	♠ J98653 ♥ K2 ♦ Q932 ♣ K	

While the South hand has serious flaws, at this vulnerability a weak two bid looks normal, and North will raise to 4♠ – quick, clean, and simple.

A heart lead sets up a defensive ruff to hold the contract to 10 tricks, while any other lead allows declarer to come to an overtrick.

E/W have an 11-card club fit and can make 4♣, but it is hard to see how they can get into the auction.

If South does not open, North will open 1♥ then raise the 1♠ response to at least 3♠, giving South an easy reraise to game.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 7	♠ AK ♥ KQ75 ♦ A3 ♣ Q7643	Dealer S Vul: Both
♠ 8753 ♥ A98 ♦ Q10852 ♣ A		♠ Q109 ♥ J1062 ♦ K9764 ♣ 9
	♠ J642 ♥ 43 ♦ J ♣ KJ10852	

At this vulnerability, South is likely to be disciplined and not open an off-centre 3♦ pre-empt. There will be two passes to North, who opens 1♣. Assuming that being vulnerable discourages East from getting involved, South may respond 1♠, just in case there is a four-four fit. Not today. North rebids 2NT and South can earn a surprisingly good score for his side by simply jumping to 5♣, which is cold with just the two aces to be lost.

Five Clubs will score well because of the NT obsession many players have when playing matchpoints. Banking on being able to run the clubs, they settle for 3NT, and a diamond lead sees that going two down.

Should E/W get involved, they have a 10-card diamond fit and 5♦ doubled is a paying save, down –500, if played by West. Played by East, it might still be down only –500, but a heart lead would eventually lead to down three for –800 as it breaks up the late endplay on North.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 8	♠ 6 ♥ AQ8732 ♦ K98 ♣ A86	Dealer W Vul: None
♠ K98 ♥ K54 ♦ J107 ♣ KQJ3		♠ QJ103 ♥ J10 ♦ Q632 ♣ 952
	♠ A7542 ♥ 96 ♦ A54 ♣ 1074	

If West opens a a weak NT, North will overcall, and East is just too weak to make a take-out double so will pass, and that will be that.

There isn't much to the play, declarer having to lose two clubs, a heart and a diamond, so nine tricks for +140.

If West has to open 1♣, North will overcall 1♥ and East double, promising exactly four spades. That would discourage South to bid his empty five-card spade suit, and West would rebid 1NT.

Were North to pass over 1NT, that would end the auction. A low heart lead enables the defence to collect five heart tricks, two top diamonds, and two black aces for down three and +150. That would score very well with the field scoring +140 in 2♥, but of course North will not pass. North will rebid the long hearts and nobody will have anything to add to that.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 9	♠ J10876 ♥ J62 ♦ KJ5 ♣ 102	Dealer N Vul: E-W
♠ AKQ5 ♥ 95 ♦ Q1073 ♣ A43		♠ 3 ♥ 843 ♦ A98 ♣ KJ9865
	♠ 942 ♥ AKQ107 ♦ 642 ♣ Q7	

At most tables there will be two passes to South, who will open 1♥ – as much for the head as in hope of buying the contract. West has the right shape and strength to overcall 1NT but no semblance of a heart stopper, so will double, and North will probably bid 1♠.

East is not just worth a free bid, with a decent six-card suit and an outside ace, the hand is well worth a jump to 3♣. That relieves South of the obligation to bid so he will pass and it will be down to West's judgement.

How likely is it that a passed hand will have what it takes to make 3NT, when West can offer no help in hearts? I wouldn't criticise West for passing and hoping for a safe plus score. Some, however, will have their eyes set on game and will cuebid 3♥ to ask for a stopper – switch East's red suits around and 3NT can be made easily enough.

However, East does not have a heart stopper, so will go back to clubs. Facing a hand that can try for game facing a hand that could not open the bidding, the East hand is pretty good, with no wasted jacks and queens in the major suits. If he bids only 4♣ West should be allowed to pass it out; so with six clubs to king-jack and an outside ace East should jump to 5♣, where he will play.

Five Clubs is not such a great contract. It requires clubs to play for no loser, and declarer will need to be able to organise to ruff a heart in dummy, so probably hearts need to be not more than five-three and clubs two-two. However, it makes and West's 3♥ cuebid is a reasonable try. Those who bid 5♣ will score well, while those who go minus on the E/W cards will not.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 10	♠ J93 ♥ AKQ75 ♦ 876 ♣ K5	Dealer E Vul: Both
♠ K542 ♥ J4 ♦ KQ1032 ♣ 32		♠ 876 ♥ 96 ♦ A94 ♣ AQJ108
	♠ AQ10 ♥ 10832 ♦ J5 ♣ 9764	

The quality of East's club suit is sufficient to turn a borderline opening bid into a clear 1♣ or weak NT opening.

If East opens 1♣, West will respond either 1♦ or 1♠ according to system, and North will overcall 1♥ or 2♥ as required, Whatever East now does, South can make a weak raise to 3♥, and this may shut E/W out of the auction.

If 3♥ ends the auction, the fact that both the ♣A and ♠K are offside means that the contract will be down one. However, this is OK, as E/W can make 4♦ or, if it comes to that, 4♣ or 3♠. Minus 100, then, need not score at all badly.

If South raises only to 2♥, West will surely double and, as we have just discussed, whatever East's response, it should be a making contract. Of course, West can double after a 3♥ raise, but it is not such a secure action and not all will risk it, West must, after all, assume that he is facing a weak NT type until proven otherwise.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 11	♠ K3 ♥ 103 ♦ 654 ♣ AJ10543	Dealer S Vul: None
♠ J105 ♥ KQJ976 ♦ QJ7 ♣ 7		♠ A96 ♥ A854 ♦ AK832 ♣ 2
	♠ Q8742 ♥ 2 ♦ 109 ♣ KQ986	

Assuming a pass from South, West has a close decision whether to open at the one level or two level.

Ten HCP is within the range for many people's weak two openings, but this hand has honour combinations in three suits, 3-3-1 distribution in the side suits rather than 3-2-2, and the main suit is excellent. I think if we open 2♥ with this hand, and then open 2♥ with some of the garbage hands that get opened these days we are putting too much strain on partner to bid effectively facing such a wide range of hands. My vote, therefore, goes to 1♥, unless playing 'constructive' weak twos that go up to 11 or 12 HCP, as some do.

Given N/S's huge club fit, North's decision whether to overcall 2/3♣ or to pass will have a major effect on how the bidding progresses. It could, however be a case where the more N/S bid the more likely it is that E/W will get to their cold slam as both players realise that their partner will have nothing wasted facing their club shortage.

Say that North does overcall. Whether that is 2♣ or 3♣, South is likely to raise to 5♣ whatever East does, and East will end up guessing to bid 6♥.

If North does not overcall, East will make a game-forcing heart raise – maybe 2NT, maybe a 4♣ splinter bid. East will not accept a sign-off from West as he needs so little for slam to be good. His next call may be 4NT, discovering that a key-card is missing, and he will just gamble that there is no third-round diamond loser and bid the small slam.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 12	♠ Q982 ♥ 872 ♦ K98 ♣ Q52	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ 763 ♥ QJ93 ♦ Q ♣ A8764		♠ AK4 ♥ K ♦ J1076543 ♣ K3
	♠ J105 ♥ A10654 ♦ A2 ♣ J109	

There will be two passes to East. The popular choice will be to open 1♦ but You could sell me on 3♦, making life as difficult as possible for the opposition, who will often have a contract of their own to find.

A 3♦ opening probably silences everyone, and with the slow spade loser going away on a heart there are 10 easy tricks.

The more popular 1♦ opening will see South overcall 1♥ and West bid 1NT. There would be eight tricks in 1NT, but East will rebid the diamonds – we are not dealt a seven-card suit to put dummy down in 1NT. Two Diamonds will often end the auction, West's 1NT bid dissuading North from competing with his three low hearts and 4-3-3-3 shape when vulnerable.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 13	♠ 874 ♥ K72 ♦ QJ84 ♣ J97	Dealer N Vul: Both
♠ ♥ AQ93 ♦ K1072 ♣ K8543		♠ K9653 ♥ J108 ♦ 96 ♣ AQ6
	♠ AQJ102 ♥ 654 ♦ A53 ♣ 102	

There will be two passes to South, who will open 1♠. West has an obvious double and, if 1♠ promised five, North might raise to 2♠, while if it promised only four he is more likely to opt for 1NT.

A spade raise on his right gives East a horrible choice – pass with 10 HCP, double with completely the wrong distribution, or bid a natural 2NT? And if East chooses to bid 2NT, what does West do? Is this an exception to the rule that doubling then bidding a new suit shows a hand that is too good for an immediate overcall? If so, then he can correct to 3♣ just to improve the contract, but if East would take 3♣ as a strong forcing bid, West is stuck with having to pass out 3♣.

Life is easier if North responds 1NT, when East can double to show general values, or if North passes, when East can bid 1NT.

The trick is to get to a club or heart partscore on the E/W cards, with +130 and +140 available respectively. Any game contract should be defeated, while the limit in NT is seven tricks at double dummy, but may be one or two tricks better than that depending on the opening lead.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 14	♠ K1092 ♥ K105 ♦ QJ4 ♣ A42	Dealer E Vul: None
♠ A854 ♥ 97 ♦ A8762 ♣ 107		♠ 6 ♥ AJ8642 ♦ 1053 ♣ Q98
	♠ QJ73 ♥ Q3 ♦ K9 ♣ KJ653	

East will open with a weak two bid. I wouldn't bid with the South hand, which is borderline in terms of high-card strength with a doubleton heart queen which may not prove to be very useful on offence, and of course a diamond response to a double could prove awkward.

I would, however, double with the North hand. Firstly, the hand is better in high-card terms, and there are a number of minor honours helping to solidify the hand. Secondly, North has at least three cards in all the unbid suits, and North is in pass-out seat, where it is necessary to take a risk because there is no-one else left if he passes. And, of course, Love All is the vulnerability at which to strain the hardest to become the declaring side if it is a competitive partscore deal.

South might drive to game facing a double. Those using Lebensohl in response to a double may not have to make a committal jump to 4♠, being able to follow a route which shows four spades and a game-force. And if they believe in the old adage that queen-doubleton is always a stopper, could even show four spades plus a heart stopper – which would give North an interesting choice of games.

Off three aces and needing to find the queen of clubs, N/S wouldn't mind whether they were in game or stopped in a spade partscore – until they discovered that the club was onside and that either 4♠ or 3NT is unbeatable.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 15	♠ K105 ♥ 62 ♦ 1093 ♣ K10874	Dealer S Vul: N-S
♠ 9863 ♥ A84 ♦ J64 ♣ J32		♠ QJ ♥ KJ73 ♦ AQ87 ♣ A95
	♠ A742 ♥ Q1095 ♦ K52 ♣ Q6	

The cards lie well for N/S, with clubs three-three and the jack onside, the missing spade honours dropping, and the ♦A and ♥J both onside. However, N/S will not often win the auction.

If South stretches to open a weak NT, there will be two passes followed by a double. North will run to 2♣ and now it is not clear what E/W will choose to do, but doubling for down one and +200 works out best.

If South opens 1♣/♦, North may respond 1NT and East again double. This double is take-out of the opener's suit, so West may respond 2♠, and now E/W are in difficulties.

But many Souths will pass and it will be East who opens the bidding. A strong NT may buy the contract. One No Trump goes down at double dummy, but South will often lead the ten of hearts, and that gives the seventh trick. The queen of clubs lead is the killer, but will not be a popular choice.

If playing weak NT, East will open one of a suit and rebid 1NT. That may give South the clue to avoid a heart lead, but a spade takes out the entry to the long clubs and the contract is again likely to be made.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 16	♠ 1062 ♥ J104 ♦ 65 ♣ 97652	Dealer W Vul: E-W
♠ AK4 ♥ 87 ♦ Q87432 ♣ 104		♠ Q75 ♥ Q952 ♦ A ♣ AKQJ8
	♠ J983 ♥ AK63 ♦ KJ109 ♣ 3	

Will West open a weak 2♦ with that weak suit and at adverse vulnerability? Those who believe that pre-emptors should be colour blind will no doubt do so, but many will not. It is unlikely to matter a great deal, as E/W have a combined 27 HCP and no trump suit, so will inevitably arrive in 3NT, the only variety being as regards what route they took to get there and what clues that has given to the defenders.

If West has passed, East will open 1♣ and perhaps rebid hearts, which will see a spade opening lead. That may be the chosen lead whatever the auction but, if the suit is unbid, some will surely lead a heart, good if led by North, but not so good from South.

Ast will sometimes manage an overtrick, but the popular result will be 3NT just made.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 17	♠ 10862 ♥ 986 ♦ J72 ♣ Q93	Dealer N Vul: None
♠ Q9 ♥ AQ4 ♦ Q854 ♣ K1085		♠ A743 ♥ 107532 ♦ 9 ♣ A42
	♠ KJ5 ♥ KJ ♦ AK1063 ♣ J76	

If South opens a strong NT, there will be two passes to East. I wouldn't overcall a natural 2♥, but I would bid 2♣ to show both majors, getting a quiet 2♥ response from West, who will have noted that I am a passed hand.

If South opens 1♦, West has the wrong shortage for a take-out double so should pass. However, when 1♦ comes round to East his passed hand status offers him some safety from over-optimistic partner's and he can double. West should respond 1NT and will probably play there,

Hearts could not be more friendly, and the ♠K is onside. Ten tricks are available in a heart contract for a useful +170. A diamond lead gets the defence off to a good start against 1NT, but nine tricks for +150 can still be made.

And if South is left to declare either 1♦ or 1NT?

One Diamonds is not so bad, down probably only one for –50 and an excellent score. One No trump is no fun at all and on a club lead is at least down three,

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 18	♠ J105 ♥ Q8752 ♦ A94 ♣ 43	Dealer E Vul: N-S
♠ 96 ♥ J96 ♦ 62 ♣ AQJ1075		♠ K8743 ♥ K10 ♦ KQJ103 ♣ 6
	♠ AQ2 ♥ A43 ♦ 875 ♣ K982	

East opens 1♠ and, if playing 2-over-1, 1NT has to be the response. East rebids 2♦ and now West bids 3♣, showing long clubs but a hand below invitational strength. Though it looks as though 3♦/♠ might be slightly better than 3♣ on the actual deal, in the long run it will be better for East to admit defeat and pass out 3♣ clubs. Three Diamonds should show a more constructive hand than this one.

North can make 2♥ but will almost never be allowed to play there. The two level is also the limit for E/W, who can make either 2♦ or 2♠, while 3♣ can be down two, though it might escape for down one.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 19	♠ KJ42 ♥ A1064 ♦ 1032 ♣ A2	Dealer S Vul: E-W
♠ 10863 ♥ K8 ♦ J5 ♣ Q9753		♠ 75 ♥ 92 ♦ KQ94 ♣ KJ864
	♠ AQ9 ♥ QJ753 ♦ A876 ♣ 10	

This one's a bit of a non-event. South will open 1♥ and North has just about enough to justify using his artificial game raise. South will do what the system requires of him, perhaps show the shortage, perhaps the second suit. With such a minimum for the initial response, North may now just sign-off in 4♥, and that is that.

The heart finesse works but the discard on the fourth spade comes from the wrong hand, so there are still two diamonds to be lost. Eleven tricks for +450 should be the almost universal outcome.

Six Spades can be made as there is a club ruff in the short trump hand as well as a discard on the fifth heart, but who is going to get to a spade contract?

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 20	♠ 3 ♥ AK106432 ♦ Q ♣ Q753	Dealer W Vul: Both
♠ 104 ♥ 9875 ♦ KJ65 ♣ K98		♠ A982 ♥ QJ ♦ A974 ♣ AJ10
	♠ KQJ765 ♥ ♦ 10832 ♣ 642	

Seven-four is a 4♥ opening for me, but that is not going to work out well unless the opposition misjudge.

If North opens 4♥ and East doubles, South has to pass. West has no great confidence that he can make anything, nor indeed that he is going to beat 4♥ doubled, but passing and hoping for the best is his best option – and a highly successful one as it picks up +800.

If North opens only 3♥, East will double and West will not have a clearcut action. Passing is still the big winner, but the heart holding suggests that most of the time there will be no defensive heart trick and that partner will be short in hearts, meaning that playing rather than defending may be the right thing to do. If West responds 4♦ to the double N/S will go plus.

I'm a big fan of pre-empting to the maximum, one more rather than one less, but on this deal the smaller pre-empt works much the better.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 21

	♠ K943 ♥ Q4 ♦ K832 ♣ KJ3	Dealer N Vul: N-S
♠ 75 ♥ AJ8632 ♦ 5 ♣ A975		♠ AJ106 ♥ K109 ♦ AJ94 ♣ 102
	♠ Q82 ♥ 75 ♦ Q1076 ♣ Q864	

If North opens with a weak NT East will be some way short of what is required for a double so will pass, as will South. West, however, has an easy 2♥ overcall and East can either bid or invite game. That decision will be decided by just how much leeway East wants to give West for perhaps making a very light overcall just to get the opposition out of 1NT.

If East raises to 4♥, that will be that, and the double spades finesse provides an eleventh trick.

If East raises only to 3♥, it will be up to West to decide whether his six-four distribution outweighs the relatively low point-count. Some will bid on to game, some will not, so a combination of two pessimistic choices may see the good game missed, otherwise it is reached.

If North opens 1♣, East will double and West jump to 4♥. If East opens 1♦, the hand shape is not ideal for a double but that will be a popular choice and West will again jump to 4♥.

If East does not come in over 1♦, South will raise but not enough to shut out West, who will overcall in hearts, and East will raise to game.

Missing game should score very poorly.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 22	♠ K ♥ AKJ52 ♦ 10973 ♣ 972	Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ AJ98 ♥ 43 ♦ KJ864 ♣ 106		♠ Q542 ♥ Q87 ♦ AQ52 ♣ 53
	♠ 10763 ♥ 1096 ♦ ♣ AKQJ84	

South will usually open 1♣, despite having only 10 HCP. Three Clubs is an alternative, but the support for both majors means that this comes with a substantial risk of missing a better spot.

West overcalls 1♦, North bids 1♥, and East will raise diamonds, perhaps to the three level? That will shut South out for now, but when 3♦ comes back round to North he can make a take-out double and, on getting heart support from South, go on to game.

On a non-diamond lead declarer can simply cash the top hearts then play on clubs, losing just one spade and one heart. Or he can take the heart finesse and again just lose the two tricks.

A diamond lead is a little more challenging. Say that East leads the ace…

If declarer ruffs and takes the heart finesse, a second diamond beats the contract as declarer has no entry to hand to draw trump, so will lose a spade and two diamonds from this point for down one.

So declarer ruffs but plays a spade at trick two to cut defensive communications. He ruffs the diamond return, ruffs a spade, takes a third diamond ruff, then comes back to hand with a second spade ruff to cash the top hearts. When the queen doesn't fall, declarer just plays on clubs. He loses a spade, a heart, and one diamond.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 23

	♠ 532 ♥ Q3 ♦ AJ63 ♣ AK96	Dealer S Vul: Both
♠ 109874 ♥ 542 ♦ Q9 ♣ J107		♠ AQJ ♥ KJ987 ♦ 542 ♣ Q8
	♠ K6 ♥ A106 ♦ K1087 ♣ 5432	

There will be two passes to North, who has a weak NT.

If North opens 1NT that may silence everybody. East is not strong enough to double, and is too balanced for a 2♥ overcall to be a sound proposition, especially as E/W are vulnerable.

A heart lead is won with the queen and declarer plays on clubs to establish an extra trick. Hearts are cleared, and it will be down to the diamond guess. Playing to ensure the contract means cashing the ace and king, and when the queen falls there are nine tricks. Take a losing finesse into West and the result is only seven tricks.

If North opens 1♣/♦, East will overcall 1♥.

If the opening bid is 1♣, not promising genuine clubs, South might bid a slightly heavy 1NT, playing for partner to have a weak NT until proven otherwise. That would be that and, as declarer has a double heart stopper, the outcome should again come down to the diamond guess for seven or nine.

If the opening bid is 1♦, so nearly always delivers at least a four-card suit, South may cuebid 2♥ to show a constructive raise to at least 3♦. Some Norths will cuebid 3♥ in reply, asking for a stopper, and that will get them to 3NT, and the fate of the contract will yet again be decided by declarer's diamond play. Or, an adherent of the theory that 'queen-doubleton is always a stopper', might try 2NT with the North cards, showing a willingness to consider game but not committing to it.

There will be a few +600s but also some minus scores.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 24	♠ 97 ♥ 10642 ♦ 54 ♣ J10653	Dealer W Vul: None
♠ K642 ♥ AKJ9 ♦ AQJ10 ♣ A		♠ QJ108 ♥ 75 ♦ 93 ♣ KQ974
	♠ A53 ♥ Q83 ♦ K8762 ♣ 82	

I'm not a big fan of opening 2NT with a singleton, but this West hand may be one of those where 2NT is the least of evils. It isn't as though bidding will necessarily be easy after starting with 1♦ or 1♥. On the actual hand, for example, when East responds 1♠, what does West rebid? A 4♣ splinter? Sure, but when East signs off in game West still has an ace to spare, so must he keep bidding and, if so, with what?

So West opens 2NT and East uses some version of Stayman and finds that there is a four-four spade fit. With the promising club side-suit, it is entirely possible for there to be a good slam but, equally, game may be the limit. If East makes a 4♣ cuebid, West will co-operate, indeed, may just take control and drive to slam, If, however, East simply signs off in 4♠, West cannot afford to bid on as East could have responded with three or four HCP with a little distribution.

As the cards lie, slam is cold, though in theory it is a below 50% proposition, so we should not actually want to be in it. A red-suit lead from North will be a good start for declarer, who can win, unblock the club, and play on spades, and should come to 12 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 25

	♠ KQJ10 ♥ 94 ♦ K1054 ♣ K98	Dealer N Vul: E-W
♠ A63 ♥ AQJ83 ♦ ♣ J10432		♠ 84 ♥ 72 ♦ AQ82 ♣ AQ765
	♠ 9752 ♥ K1065 ♦ J9763 ♣	

There seem to have been a lot of weak NTs in this session, and here is another one.

If North opens 1NT, East doesn't have a sensible action other than to pass – yes, 2NT might show both minors, but that would normally be at least five-five, and this is not the vulnerability at which to be only five-four.

Facing a weak NT opening, South should respond with Stayman, with the intention of passing whatever the response. West may overcall 2♥ immediately, or may wait until N/S have unwound and South has passed the 2♦ Stayman response. It's really quite difficult to judge how the auction will go after a 1NT opening and Stayman response, but E/W can make 4♥, 3NT with overtricks, or 7♣! No, I don't expect anyone to be in that rather fortunate contract.

If North opens 1♦, East could overcall 2♣, but there is some risk attached with the lack of intermediates in the main suit and the prevailing vulnerability. If East therefore chooses to pass, South will respond, probably 1♦ to give the best chance of finding a fit, and now West can overcall a simple 1♥ and perhaps show the clubs at his next turn – these days, the fact that an opponent opens 1♣ must not bar us from bidding clubs in a natural sense and declaring a club contract.

There may be pairs in each of the three cold games, 3NT, 4♥ and 5♣. There will also be some who miss game altogether, as the auction will sometimes get quite messy.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	1	4	1	5
W	7	1	4	1	5

==========

Board 26	♠ QJ10 ♥ Q10432 ♦ 753 ♣ A8	Dealer E Vul: Both
♠ 874 ♥ K ♦ K10964 ♣ 10654		♠ K3 ♥ J ♦ QJ82 ♣ KQJ972
	♠ A9652 ♥ A98765 ♦ A ♣ 3	

When East opens 1♣, South can cuebid 2♣ to show at least five-five in the majors. If 1♣ promised genuine clubs, West might compete with 3♣ now, but many will pass.

With five hearts plus a useful holding in the other major and a side ace, North will jump to the heart game at most tables. The friendly layout means that all 13 tricks can be made.

I doubt that many Norths will do more than jump to game, yet a small slam is very good, being successful if either hearts are one-one or the spade is onside. Can South bid on over 4♥? Well, South does have great controls and an extra eleventh card in the majors. He might go on, but to do so is not without risk. There could easily be a loser in each major plus the ace of clubs from South's perspective, and getting to Five on a slam hunt and going one down is a very painful experience.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 27	♠ QJ76 ♥ K9753 ♦ AKQ ♣ 10	Dealer S Vul: None
♠ 1053 ♥ AQ842 ♦ 73 ♣ J98		♠ AK842 ♥ J6 ♦ J42 ♣ 762
	♠ 9 ♥ 10 ♦ 109865 ♣ AKQ543	

The South hand can be dealt with in a variety of ways, but maybe 3♣ will be the most popular choice. If so, that will usually be the final contract. If, on the other hand, anyone opens 1♣, it will be natural to reach 3NT. Which pairs will be the happier? The ones who opened at the one level and reached 3NY, but only because clubs split three-three. If they do not, 3NT is likely to fail after East's low spade lead.

Some think they are unlucky when their suit fails to split three-three. They should not, as a three-three break is only about a 36% chance, and four-two is actually the most likely division.

Though it looks pretty silly on this deal, where E/W have neither the fit nor the strength to make a game, even a 4♣ opening is worthy of consideration, South having a lot of playing potential but little defence to a major-suit contract. Today 4♣ just makes 11 tricks for +150, just the same as 3♣, so no harm done.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 28	♠ 4 ♥ K52 ♦ A9742 ♣ 10643	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ QJ2 ♥ A108 ♦ 653 ♣ 9752		♠ 76 ♥ J974 ♦ QJ108 ♣ AQJ
	♠ AK109853 ♥ Q63 ♦ K ♣ K8	

At favourable vulnerability, East might open in third seat, either a weak NT or 1♣/♦ being possible.

East's action, or inaction, should not make a significant difference to South. As long as he doesn't get carried away and bid 4♠ at some point, South should reach a spade partscore and the play be just a matter of overtricks. With no encouragement from partner, South really should not bid beyond 3♠, even if he may well make game.

It will usually be possible to make 10 tricks, though 4♠ is a poor contract, requiring the club and heart aces to be well placed and at most one spade loser. Declarer can unblock the king of diamonds and get to dummy with the king of hearts to cash the ♦A for a heart discard. There are now just three losers, one spade, one heart and one club.

How can the tenth trick be prevented? It takes a club lead to the ace and a heart switch to the eight and king, knocking out the dummy entry while the diamonds are still blocked. Well done to anyone who finds this defence.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 29 ♠ A9 Dealer N
♥ AQ6543 Vul: Both
♦ K63
♣ Q9

♠ KQ86 ♠ J73
♥ J97 ♥ 82
♦ Q1098 ♦ AJ2
♣ 52 ♣ AKJ64

♠ 10542
♥ K10
♦ 754
♣ 10873

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 30 ♠ AK4 Dealer E
♥ QJ1032 Vul: None
♦ 5
♣ KJ109

♠ 9653 ♠ QJ7
♥ A7 ♥ K9854
♦ AQ76 ♦ K10932
♣ 873 ♣

♠ 1082
♥ 6
♦ J84
♣ AQ6542

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 31 ♠ 104 Dealer S
♥ AK4 Vul: N-S
♦ K963
♣ Q765

		♠ KQ96 ♥ J2 ♦ Q87 ♣ 10832
♠ 8732 ♥ Q9853 ♦ J4 ♣ KJ		
	♠ AJ5 ♥ 1076 ♦ A1052 ♣ A94	

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 32 ♠ KJ10 Dealer W
♥ Q32 Vul: E-W
♦ K109762
♣ J

		♠ 96 ♥ A10865 ♦ A843 ♣ 106
♠ Q8753 ♥ 974 ♦ ♣ 98532		
	♠ A42 ♥ KJ ♦ QJ5 ♣ AKQ74	

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 33 ♠ Q74 Dealer N
♥ AK10 Vul: None
♦ AQ63
♣ J105

♠ AJ95		♠ 1063
♥ 42		♥ Q875
♦ 10874		♦ J952
♣ A72		♣ 64
	♠ K82	
	♥ J963	
	♦ K	
	♣ KQ983	

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 34 ♠ J54 Dealer E
♥ 1074 Vul: N-S
♦ 104
♣ 87652

♠ 6		♠ AKQ10732
♥ AK96		♥ J53
♦ KQJ982		♦ A3
♣ KQ		♣ 10
	♠ 98	
	♥ Q82	
	♦ 765	
	♣ AJ943	

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	6	5	6	6
W	2	6	5	6	6

==========

Board 35 ♠ 10972 Dealer S
♥ 3 Vul: E-W
♦ 10654
♣ KJ107

♠ KQ		♠ 3
♥ AKJ109		♥ 7542
♦ K932		♦ QJ7
♣ 92		♣ Q8654
	♠ AJ8654	
	♥ Q86	
	♦ A8	
	♣ A3	

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 36 ♠ QJ93 Dealer W
♥ K82 Vul: Both
♦ 53
♣ KJ106

♠ A852		♠ K10
♥ AJ943		♥ Q65
♦ J76		♦ K10
♣ 3		♣ Q98754
	♠ 764	
	♥ 107	
	♦ AQ9842	
	♣ A2	

Makeable Contracts

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

==========