

*The ECatsBridge
Summer Charity Pairs
Wednesday 8th July 2026*



Thank you so much for joining us for our Summer Charity Pairs in aid of Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation both of which are charities that need as much funding as possible in order to continue their work.

We hope you enjoyed the hands and that they weren't too challenging – and whether or not you did well at least you can at least rest assured that you are helping to support two great charities.

We are very grateful to our commentators – Julian Pottage for the Monday set, Iain Sime for Tuesday's commentary, Mark Mortimer did the Wednesday commentary, Mark Horton had the fun of doing Thursday's and Liz McGowan undertook Friday's. The great question is – did they get it right ?? or did you do better ?

You will see that although there are actually 32 boards in the set, we have only asked for a commentary on the first 28, as very (very) few clubs play boards 29-32 and we don't want to overburden our commentators! So only the hand analysis is provided for those boards.

The results are at <https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/default.asp> and the link to make donations to the charities is :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp> - they are done through JustGiving and you will be able to see how much is raised there. If you are making a donation please check this page:

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/BeforeDonating.asp> which explains how to avoid that JustGiving "tip".

By the way, did you know we have a Facebook page ?

<https://www.facebook.com/ECatsBridge> ... do follow us so you can see what we are up to !

And keep enjoying your bridge won't you ...

All the best

Anna and Mark

The ECatsBridge Team

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Board 1

♠ K8763
♥ 5
♦ A743
♣ 1052

Dealer N
Vul: None

♠ AQ102
♥ 106
♦ KQ1082
♣ 93

♠ 54
♥ KJ32
♦ 9
♣ KJ8764

♠ J9
♥ AQ9874
♦ J65
♣ AQ

Some 'very intelligent' Bridge folk like to open a Lucas 2 style 2♠ with the North hand showing a 5 card major/an unspecified 4 card minor and less than an opening hand in terms of High Card Points (HCP). Who am I to argue with them, but 'Lucas' suddenly turns into 'Ludicrous' when presented with the South hand!

What to do? A good hand for sure, but where's it going over an essentially Weak 2? Pass - not tempting! Bid 3♥ - yes, very tempting! Whoops. We are already too high! Should have passed!

Let's assume the auction takes a more standard course and South opens a gentle 1♥ (many a West would come in with a respectable 2♦ at non- vulnerability) and North (not strong enough for 2♠ now) makes a negative double. South now just bids 2♥ (a jump to 3♥ would be too pushy in my estimation).

End of story and a good contract. Should we aim to keep Bridge, like life, simple, discuss?!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 2

♠ A42
♥ KQ95
♦ AK3
♣ A85

Dealer E
Vul: N-S

♠ K83
♥ 102
♦ Q8642
♣ KQ9

♠ 10976
♥ 63
♦ J109
♣ J1072

♠ QJ5
♥ AJ874
♦ 75
♣ 643

The auction is highly likely to go around to North, in 4th position, who will naturally open 2NT, showing a balanced 20 count. South makes a transfer to hearts bid of 2♦ and North could now just 'Super Accept' with a direct raise to 4♥, which seems perfectly sensible.

The other option for North, is to take a view that their hand might score better in No Trump (which it does as it happens) and bid 3NT. However, I imagine that most will be understandably seduced by the obvious 5/4 Heart fit and end up in 4♥.

Both contracts will make an easy 10 tricks but will struggle to make more, unless the defence slips up.

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

Board 3

♠ K3
♥ A9754
♦ KJ7
♣ Q76

Dealer S
Vul: E-W

♠ J95
♥ 86
♦ 94
♣ J109543

♠ Q108
♥ KJ2
♦ Q632
♣ K82

♠ A7642
♥ Q103
♦ A1085
♣ A

South opens a gentle 1♠. Whatever system you are playing North bids a natural 2♥ (even better if you happen to be playing 2 over 1 in which 2♥ is game forcing). South could now bid 3♦ to show an above minimum, but there is nothing wrong with a simple 3♥ invitation either.

Playing Acol, I imagine that most Norths will just settle for an easy 4♥, which is fair enough. Playing 2 over 1 however, North might manage a cheeky bid of 3♠ to show a Spade control (no harm done as this auction is game forcing in any case). Should South now investigate the possibility of the Heart Slam? As it happens, on the lie of the cards, it works.

After the standard play of the ♥A, then low towards the ♥Q, declarer will lose only one trump trick. After that, an unusual play in the diamond suit, will pick up 12 top tricks.

A good slam? On balance- No!. Too much has to be right so probably just settle for game on this one.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4

♠ 873
♥ AQ1076
♦ AQ4
♣ 108

Dealer W
Vul: Both

♠ J54
♥ K94
♦ 1072
♣ J962

♠ 1092
♥ 52
♦ 983
♣ A7543

♠ AKQ6
♥ J83
♦ KJ65
♣ KQ

After North opens an inevitable 1♥ playing 5 Card majors, South has a golden opportunity to utilise the excellent Jacoby 2NT convention (personally, I have no problem with just 3 card support for partner's major, particularly with such an excellent hand as this one but other may be sticklers for nothing but 4 card support whatever system you're playing!).

After a succession of control/cue bids - perhaps 3♦, 3♠, 4♥ (nothing much for North to say now) 5♣, 5♦ - to reach a nice 6♥.

Playing Acol with 4 card majors the auction may take a different course but will probably lead to the same result. If you should 'wish upon a star' and end up in the NT slam played by South (as it happens the optimum contract) **and** get lucky without a Club lead declarer (after taking the necessary double trump finesse) you will make all 13 tricks as away go the losing clubs on the 13th Diamond and Spade!

We ask ourselves again - a good slam? This time- on balance - yes! If a slam depends on a finesse (probably not more the one though!) just go for it!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5

♠ QJ32
♥ J43
♦ K753
♣ A3

Dealer N
Vul: N-S

♠ K5
♥ KQ95
♦ AJ42
♣ J64

♠ A109
♥ A10862
♦ Q96
♣ K10

♠ 8764
♥ 7
♦ 108
♣ Q98752

South opens 1♥ and West now has some difficulty, being short of a natural 1NT overcall, so reluctantly passes. Playing 5 card majors, North could either bid an invitational 3♥ or else some form of Bergen raise i.e. 3♣ showing 3 card support for Hearts and 9 plus HCP. South now takes a dim view of their hand and just bids 3♥.

The right thing to do, as the trump break is a severe imposition! Despite this declarer can make 9 tricks but it would require card play technique of the first order.

On a passive club lead (best defence), taking the Spade finesse early on and resisting cashing the ♥A. leading low to dummy's ♥J twice (after cashing the other top club and establishing a Diamond for an ensuing ruff). Then drawing West's remaining trumps to establish the spades for 9 tricks. T

he route to Bridge mastery is often about elegant card play!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6

♠ AK1032
♥ Q2
♦ Q842
♣ 75

Dealer E
Vul: E-W

♠ Q84
♥ J103
♦ KJ3
♣ KQ96

♠ 75
♥ K864
♦ 10765
♣ 432

♠ J96
♥ A975
♦ A9
♣ AJ108

South opens either 1NT playing Acol or else 1♣ playing a North American style strong NT and 2 over 1.

It's difficult to imagine the auction leading anywhere else than to 4♠ (although 3NT is also a sound contract as West is endplayed at trick one on any lead!).

4♠ is relatively easier after ♦A and low to dummy's ♦Q before taking the inevitable trump finesse.

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

=====

Board 7

♠ A8762
♥ AQ
♦ Q87
♣ 985

Dealer S
Vul: Both

♠ Q953
♥ 6532
♦ 64
♣ J73

♠ 104
♥ K108
♦ K1093
♣ AK106

♠ KJ
♥ J974
♦ AJ52
♣ Q42

South either opens an Acol weak NT or else 1♣ playing a 2 over 1 style system. Whatever, North will show their Spades via either a transfer of 2♥ or a natural bid.

It's likely that N/S will bid, hesitantly, to an invitational 3♠ (the combined points for game are just about there, but the spade suit is rickety and 3NT game is in trouble on a club lead).

Even 3♠ requires careful handling of the trump suit to provide only one loser. As it happens here, play ♠K then ♠J if West covers with the ♠Q or not- you only lose 1 trick in the suit (with such good pips i.e. 876).

If you're inclined to go for desperate finesse of the KJ early on you almost certainly lose 2 tricks in the suit!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8

♠ AK96
♥ Q964
♦ K1053
♣ 3

Dealer W
Vul: None

♠ J1084
♥ 5
♦ J972
♣ AJ75

♠ 52
♥ K1083
♦ A864
♣ K98

♠ Q73
♥ AJ72
♦ Q
♣ Q10642

4441 shaped hands can be problematic but there's widespread terror opening them amongst some, which is completely unwarranted in my humble opinion!

North could fairly open 1♥ (with no fear of a fake 'reverse' whatever South bids!). This works out well as N/S have immediately identified a 4/4 Heart fit. South will probably manage a jump 3♥ bid (but even that's pushy with a horrible singleton ♦Q!) and North quickly passes with little chance of making game.

9 tricks should romp home (despite the awkward trump break) with careful play by declarer.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9

♠ 5
♥ Q92
♦ AQJ97654
♣ 10

Dealer N
Vul: E-W

♠ KQJ32
♥ AK1074
♦ K
♣ Q5

♠ 10987
♥ J5
♦ 102
♣ 87632

♠ A64
♥ 863
♦ 83
♣ AKJ94

Many might open a pre-emptive 3♦ with the North hand, which is fair enough. But it's quite a good hand and the Diamond suit is very solid, so I might be tempted to open 1♦, but you decide?!

In the latter scenario South will bid a forcing 2♣ and West is now certainly worth a take out double with 5/5 shape in the majors. In the former, after a 3♦ opening South will surely pass but what does West do now? A double again or a cheeky but descriptive 4♦, showing both majors? 4♦ is an easy make but E/W might do well to compete with 4♠ in any potential auction, which is just one off on best defence.

I note that 3NT by N/S is a good contract, making 11 tricks on the fall of the singleton ♦K - but let's not go there!

The interesting illustration of this hand: pre-empts often lead to challenging and unpredictable auctions, even amongst the most accomplished players!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10

♠ AJ1082
♥ A1075
♦ J98
♣ K

Dealer E
Vul: Both

♠ Q53
♥ Q42
♦ Q4
♣ 98752

♠ K4
♥ 986
♦ A752
♣ AJ103

♠ 976
♥ KJ3
♦ K1063
♣ Q64

East opens an Acol weak INT or else, again, 1♣ playing a 2 over 1 style system. Both South and West have nothing much to say. To my mind North is now perfect for a Landy 2♣ overcall- showing both majors with 5/4 shape (one of my favourite 'conventions', which rarely fails to work out, in my humble experience). South, with 3/3 in the majors, could bid a waiting 2♦, asking partner to bid their better major and north will bid 2♠, where the auction closes.

The play is fairly straightforward and if you just play the trump suit for divided honours (losing just one in the suit) and East, somewhat unwisely, leads one of their minor suit Aces you'll probably pick up a nice 10 tricks for a good score!

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

Board 11

♠ Q63
♥ KQ1086
♦ QJ76
♣ 2

Dealer S
Vul: None

♠ J84
♥ 95
♦ 10932
♣ K943

♠ AK975
♥ AJ73
♦ 54
♣ QJ

♠ 102
♥ 42
♦ AK8
♣ A108765

Most Souths will open a gentle 1♣ and North bids a natural 1♥. Likewise- East bids 1♠. South has not much to do now apart from a weak 2♣. West is just about capable of a 2♠ raise- which might make if the defence is less than perfect.

Should North now risk 3♥? It's a bit of a gamble.

It might work, but the awkward trump break with East somewhat precludes success!

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

=====

Board 12

♠ Q85
♥ A95
♦ AKQ654
♣ Q

Dealer W
Vul: N-S

♠ 1076
♥ 82
♦ 983
♣ AJ842

♠ KJ93
♥ KJ743
♦ 2
♣ K53

♠ A42
♥ Q106
♦ J107
♣ 10976

North has a lovely hand and would probably open 1♦. In most systems, South will reply a 'dustbin' 1NT (without a 4 card major to show) and North might be just tempted to go for a slightly 'Gambling' 3NT with his lovely Diamond suit and good 17 HCP hand. If they elect to just bid an invitational 2NT South will surely just pass.

With a potential 3NT played by North, West is left with a pretty terrible lead away from all those KJ's!

Only an unlikely club lead away from Kxx will cause declarer any real problems. Any other declarer will pick up an easy 9 tricks off the top. Will be interesting to see how many bid and make the NT game on this deal!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13

♠ 9742
♥ 83
♦ AJ1053
♣ 53

Dealer N
Vul: Both

♠ AKQ6
♥ Q1074
♦ 964
♣ 92

♠ J8
♥ AKJ5
♦ K
♣ AKQJ108

♠ 1053
♥ 962
♦ Q872
♣ 764

A lucky board 13 for E/W!

East must surely open 2♣ here (if this hand doesn't qualify for it I'm struggling to think of many that would!). Should West just play a waiting game with a 2♦ relay or give some form of positive response?

Personally, I'm always for the latter in these situations – it's helping partner, with the big hand, in the decision-making process. Both 2♥ and 2♠ would be constructive (2NT response is not a particularly helpful bid with both 4 card majors!). 6♥ is the optimum contract (and fairly easy to find on competent bidding methods) but 6♣ will, no doubt, be a popular choice also.

Naturally, we preclude a NT slam as N/S rattle off the first 5 tricks in Diamonds! The bitter irony for South though, on lead against a suit slam, will they lead away from their ♦Q in their right mind?! I wouldn't for one! Lead something else instead and declarer makes 13 tricks. Funny game!

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

=====

Board 14

♠ J6
♥ 84
♦ AKJ95
♣ 9432

Dealer E
Vul: None

♠ AK9
♥ 106
♦ 1063
♣ KQ876

♠ 8742
♥ KQ9
♦ Q87
♣ AJ5

♠ Q1053
♥ AJ7532
♦ 42
♣ 10

East will either open a weak 1NT or else 1♣ depending on system. Many a South will overcall a weak 2♥ here but naughty you with 4 spades also! West is definitely worth a natural 2NT raise here, which will probably be passed out.

East can make 8 tricks on any lead here, with 2 top Spades, 5 inevitable clubs and eventually a top honour in one of the red suits.

Although it will be interesting to note if many N/S steal the show with a cheeky 3♥, which appears to make even on best defence.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15

♠ K74
♥ A86
♦ QJ854
♣ Q4

Dealer S
Vul: N-S

♠ Q86
♥ J54
♦ AK102
♣ J85

♠ AJ52
♥ 10732
♦ 9
♣ K1072

♠ 1093
♥ KQ9
♦ 763
♣ A963

The bidding will probably go around to North, who will probably open either a weak INT or 1♦ depending on your preferred system. South might manage a weak Stayman 2♣ bid with both majors; fair enough, but with 9 HCP, and the reasonable expectation that partner has the diamonds covered, it might be best to bite the bullet and just pass.

If you elect to bid Stayman and partner now gives an inevitable 2♦ response, denying a 4 card major, as South you're now rather stuck for a rebid and will have to be bid 2♠ expecting opener to pass.

A contract which may or may not work out. INT played by North should romp home for 7 tricks, if declarer has the tempo to set up a few Diamonds.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16

♠ Dealer W

Vul: E-W

♥ AJ109

♦ Q74

♣ AK10872

♠ 97642

♥ 4

♦ 1098

♣ Q653

♠ AKQJ108

♥ 632

♦ AJ62

♣

♠ 53

♥ KQ875

♦ K53

♣ J94

An interesting deal in terms of bidding mechanics.

Most Norths will open 1♣ whatever their system and likewise, most Easts will surely just raise to game direct with 4♠ with too much consternation. South, on the other hand, is now presented with a real conundrum and, as is often the case in these scenarios, difficult to know quite what to do. They could punt 5♥ on the balance of probability that partner has some support in that suit or else, equally so, 5♣ (naturally in the knowledge that partner started with 6 of them!). South cannot really make a take out double of 4♠, as most play this as 'penalty' orientated over 4 of a major and that wouldn't work out too well here clearly!

My vote would be, marginally, for a 5♥ bid, which works out just fine. 5♣ is a great contract by N/S, as is 6♣ even when the unfortunate trump break is revealed. But surely, most East will still bid 5♠ and push N/S into a potential in slam in either Clubs/Hearts.

I am sure the traveller will be diverse at the end of this board. Let's keep a look out!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 17

♠ J96
♥ AQ1065
♦ J103
♣ 92

Dealer N
Vul: None

♠ K1054
♥ 842
♦ KQ986
♣ 3

♠
♥ KJ973
♦ 5
♣ AK108754
♠ AQ8732
♥
♦ A742
♣ QJ6

East opens a quiet 1♣ and South, an equally so, overcall of 1♠. West could now bid INT with a potential double Spade stop, a very fair bid- but might also just about manage a 2♦ forcing bid with their hand.

North will compete in Spades and East has not much to do apart from showing their nice Clubs again (the level dependent on North making a pre-emptive raise in Spades or not).

This deal will, no doubt, reveal a battle for supremacy in the Black suits with a lot of pairs going off in the process either way! Another interesting one for the traveller at the end!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18

♠ 10876	♠ 95	Dealer E
♥ Q853	♥ 762	Vul: N-S
♦ QJ	♦ 1086542	
♣ AK8	♣ 75	
	♠ AKQ4	
	♥ J	
	♦ AK97	
	♣ J932	
	♠ J32	
	♥ AK1094	
	♦ 3	
	♣ Q1064	

This is an interesting hand, from both a bidding and play perspective. Firstly, should East (lets assume playing Acol) open 1♦ or 1♠ in this high point range? You decide.

Personally, my vote would be for 1♠ but that's just me! Most sane Souths will overcall an extremely valid 2♥ here. Over to West - do you still play Jacoby 2NT over interference by opponents? If you don't (OK - it precludes a natural No Trump bid, appreciated, but notice that you have best of both worlds here) you might like to consider it, because it usually works out well.

North, raising partner's Hearts with that rubbish would be considered School of The Absurd! So we eliminate that unappetising possibility and back to East, who might like to consider a 3♥ bid to show shortage- then the auction, via a succession of cue bids, perhaps 4♣/4♦, will probably lead to 6♠.

The slam is not a given but neither is it hopeless. It all depends on the play of that tricky Club suit. To plonk down the ♣AK in vain expectation of the ♣Q doubleton falling is way against the odds (however it would be the best line if you need to win 3 in the suit, as says Hugh Kelsey in his little masterpiece ' Bridge Odds for Practical Players'!)

With such good pips in clubs (i.e. 8 and 9)-the best play might be to advance the ♣J, and, if South goes to sleep and covers it with ♣Q come back to hand with a top diamond and deep finesse the ♣8! If you're brave enough to let the J♣ run, when South plays low, you will make 12 tricks anyhow. The other play would be to throw your losing club on the 4th top diamond, then try to ruff out the clubs but this isn't working because the suit breaks 4/2 and you have only one trump left in dummy (after wisely drawing trumps!) to cater for 2 club losers in hand and only 11 top tricks.

What with all this theory on how to best play the hand, I imagine most will go for the safe option and settle for 4♠!

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

=====

Board 19

♠ A1062
♥ J97
♦ A
♣ KQJ97

Dealer S
Vul: E-W

♠ K9
♥ Q62
♦ KQ976
♣ 1032

♠ 8543
♥ 843
♦ 1085
♣ A54

♠ QJ7
♥ AK105
♦ J432
♣ 86

Another one of note in the bidding department!

Most Norths will surely open 1♣ here (beware of a speculative strong INT opening with a singleton diamond; it doesn't tend to work out too well in my experience - as is the case here - more gory details below!) and South responds a quiet 1♥. North rebids 1♠ in turn and now South is certainly worth a non promissory Fourth Suit Force of 2♦ (the contract is not stopping short of game, but which one?). North has really no other option now, than bidding 2♥ to show 3 card support for partner and, no doubt, most Souths will try 4♥, in the full knowledge that they could have a frequently awkward Moysian 4/3 trump fit.

4♥ is a good contract, however you play the trump suit i.e. either finessing the ♥J or else playing ♥A and low to ♥J (Yes, it's also in Kelsey 'Playing For The Odds!'). In addition, taking an obvious Spade finesse and working on those nice clubs for a probable 11 tricks.

A 5♣ contract also works, but it's an inferior scoring choice. Let's go back to 3NT played by N/S and a Diamond lead? Going for minus one. Whoops! Beware of that singleton Ace in No Trumps!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20

♠ J7543
♥ KJ62
♦ J5
♣ 63

Dealer W
Vul: Both

♠ 1082
♥ 943
♦ KQ432
♣ 102

♠ KQ6
♥ AQ105
♦ A9
♣ AJ94

♠ A9
♥ 87
♦ 10876
♣ KQ875

This is the moment for E/W with little chance of N/S getting in on the act. East will open 2NT with a balanced 20 HCP and West surely just raise to 3NT, simple as that!

If South decides to be friendly and leads their ♣K, declarer will probably make 10 tricks on a successful heart finesse also. If they make the best lead of a Diamond, declarer will find it a bit more tricky but should find their 9th trick through establishing 2 clubs tricks , 3 Diamonds, 2 hearts and 2 Spades with good intermediaries in that suit.

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

=====

Board 21

♠ AQ1052
♥ KQ8
♦ Q
♣ A1042

Dealer N
Vul: N-S

♠ KJ6
♥ 9
♦ AKJ10965
♣ K5

♠ 97
♥ A106532
♦ 8743
♣ Q

♠ 843
♥ J74
♦ 2
♣ J98763

North opens an obvious 1♠ and some Wests (yes, you know who you are!) might risk a weak 2♥ overcall, but it would be a most risky ploy at vulnerability. South might also 'risk' a 2♠ raise, but it's also pretty horrid! Over to West, who has a great hand but how many of those lovely diamonds to bid? Why not just try 5♦?! It prevents N/S languishing in Spades for one.

Anyhow, a chance for East to display masterful card play! North would do best to lead either ♥K/Q and declarer then ruffs in dummy and immediately advances the Q♣ (key play to quote the great Andrew Robson in his daily Times Bridge column!). North has to go up with their A♣ right away (not point ducking) and, in turn, well and truly endplayed at trick 3! If they return a heart, declarer just ruffs in hand, draws trump in one round (breaking 1/1) and throws one of their losing Spades on the ♣K and they now just give North a top spade for 11 tricks. If North returns either of the black suits at trick 3, the same 11 tricks for declarer.

Bravo to you if you bid 5♦ and Brownie Points added if you found the neat line of play!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22

♠ Q8
♥ 7
♦ A1073
♣ Q109876

Dealer E
Vul: E-W

♠ 103
♥ J10643
♦ QJ64
♣ A2

♠ AKJ962
♥ A8
♦ 92
♣ 543

♠ 754
♥ KQ952
♦ K85
♣ KJ

East opens a steady 1♠ (in just about every system!) and many Souths will opt for a 2♥ overcall, but it's far from a great bid with such a rickety suit and may be asking for trouble of the big variety! (but the favourable vulnerability might sway it). West could, potentially, make some form of Support double and North might try 3♣, which is somewhat of the school of 'wishful thinking' but works out here with partner having ♣KJ! In any case, East should push on to 3♠ (after anything mildly positive from partner) and where the auction is likely to end.

Declarer should romp home with 9 tricks if they can engineer a club ruff in dummy's short trumps and play the suit for the drop of SQ doubleton.

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

=====

Board 23

♠ K1064
♥ 8
♦ AQ1054
♣ J93

Dealer S
Vul: Both

♠ AQ73
♥ A92
♦ K
♣ AK752

♠ 9852
♥ QJ754
♦ 972
♣ 4

♠ J
♥ K1063
♦ J863
♣ Q1086

The majority of Wests would surely open 1♣ here. Quite a few Norths would try a take out double here - fair enough. With a horrible singleton club, East really has to bid 1♥ with 5 of them, despite only having 3 HCP.

N/S may identify their nice Diamond fit but E/W are likely to steal the show in Hearts, but only in a part score as there's no chance of game on the trump split and other lie of the cards here.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 24

♠ AJ95
♥ AJ10
♦ Q842
♣ K2

Dealer W
Vul: None

♠ Q87642
♥ 53
♦ J9
♣ 763

♠ 3
♥ KQ72
♦ 1053
♣ Q10854

♠ K10
♥ 9864
♦ AK76
♣ AJ9

Should West open a Weak 2♠ here? Yuck I say to that! (But it would certainly set the cat amongst the pigeons!).

Say West refrains from such dubious tactics and North is given free rein to bid a Strong INT opening (works well here). South might sense a whiff of slam in something.

If N/S have the bidding mechanics to find it, 6♦ is an excellent contract and cannot be beaten. 6NT played by South is not such a great prospect on a heart lead.

But wait a minute, on a Spade lead a chance for a 'virtuoso' performance by declarer?!

Winning 3 spade tricks off the top, 4 Diamonds, 3 clubs on the finesse of the ♣J and then throwing West in with a Heart (as they've probably guarded them with their life!), they are endplayed in a form of Strip Squeeze into your ♥AJ for 12 tricks. How brilliantly clever!

Back to the real world! I imagine a few creative N/S will be in the Diamond Slam but, I suspect, the majority of the field will end up in a perfectly safe 3NT (particularly if West risks all with a 2♠ opening!).

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	4	6	5	4	6
S	3	6	5	4	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 25

♠ AQ5
♥ 105
♦ Q9
♣ KQJ1065

Dealer N
Vul: E-W

♠ 8743
♥ J764
♦ A7
♣ A94

♠ KJ106
♥ K3
♦ KJ2
♣ 8732

♠ 92
♥ AQ982
♦ 1086543
♣

Just about every competent bridge player on the planet will open 1♣ with the North hand! Should you muster a take out double with the East hand? Just about.

South might love to bid something, but there's nothing much they can do apart from a nebulous redouble. West could just bid cue 2♣ conventionally, to show both majors. North is certainly worth a repeat 3♣ (although this isn't a great contract as it happens) and East can now bid their Spades naturally.

Another Battle of The Black Suits which may lead to carnage for all concerned! I imagine that the traveller at the end will lead to much wailing and gnashing of teeth!

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

Board 26

♠ 1072
♥ 3
♦ 10973
♣ QJ963

Dealer E
Vul: Both

♠ A85
♥ A72
♦ AJ8
♣ K1085

♠ 9643
♥ Q1084
♦ K6
♣ A74

♠ KQJ
♥ KJ965
♦ Q542
♣ 2

Most sensible Souths will surely manage 1♥ here.

A 1NT direct overcall from West with only one top Heart stop and 15 HCP is not a perfect bid but what else is there to do quite frankly? But what a stroke of luck. East has good Hearts also! They may be tempted to make an invitational raise of 2NT, which West would do well to pass (although 3NT appears to be making).

Let's go back a bit though. Say West elects to make a take out double (instead of 1NT) over South's 1♥ and East, quite fairly, elects to leave it in!

Might be a humbling and painful experience for poor South!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 27

♠ Q843
♥ 10875
♦ A963
♣ Q

Dealer S
Vul: None

♠ A97
♥ 63
♦ QJ52
♣ K1092

♠ J5
♥ KJ
♦ K1074
♣ J8643

♠ K1062
♥ AQ942
♦ 8
♣ A75

A rather straightforward deal for once! South, naturally, opens 1♥ and North is certainly good for a jump of 3♥ in any system.

With the promising 13 HCP and singleton Diamond, South should bid the 4♥ game with some confidence.

Double dummy suggests 12 tricks in Hearts but would be a quite ridiculous proposition on a combined 21 HCP between the hands!

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

Board 28

♠ 1092
♥ Q1072
♦ Q1085
♣ Q6

Dealer W
Vul: N-S

♠ AQ43
♥ J6
♦ K7
♣ A10752

♠ KJ85
♥ K5
♦ AJ93
♣ K84

♠ 76
♥ A9843
♦ 642
♣ J93

The final deal of an interesting session/set of boards and a good one for E/W to end with! N/S have nothing much to say here.

West either opens 1♣ or else a Weak INT (yes, some wouldn't with 2 doubletons, but it's never put me off for one!) and East tries a 2♣ Stayman bid. With the 4/4 Spade fit identified, E/W have an easy 4♠ contract. 3NT also plays well but the Heart position is precarious, certainly on the bidding at least.

It's close to a Spade Slam but declarer is always losing an inevitable ♥A and Club, however they play this suit. The final traveller of the day may well be the flattest!

Enjoy your Bridge!

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 29

♠ J875
♥ 732
♦ 63
♣ 9542

Dealer N
Vul: Both

♠ KQ94
♥ J85
♦ AJ5
♣ KI03

♠ 2
♥ AKQ
♦ K8742
♣ QJ87

♠ AI063
♥ 10964
♦ Q109
♣ A6

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 30

♠ K932
♥ A876
♦ 53
♣ 743

Dealer E
Vul: None

♠ AQ65
♥ KJ105
♦ 109
♣ QJ5

♠ J10874
♥ Q4
♦ AKQ872
♣

♠
♥ 932
♦ J64
♣ AK109862

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 31

♠ KQ10
♥ KJ98
♦ 10952
♣ 63

Dealer S
Vul: N-S

♠ J763
♥ Q2
♦ K76
♣ Q1095

♠ A9852
♥ A65
♦ Q
♣ AK84

♠ 4
♥ 10743
♦ AJ843
♣ J72

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 32

♠ K10953
♥ KJ876
♦ 6
♣ AQ

Dealer W
Vul: E-W

♠ AJ2
♥ AQ532
♦ A875
♣ 3

♠ 864
♥
♦ QJ43
♣ KJ6542

♠ Q7
♥ 1094
♦ K1092
♣ 10987

Makeable Contracts

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

=====