

ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need

Wednesday 13th November 2024



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 **£1,346,939.83** ... hopefully we will be a good bit more to that this year!

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/donations.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 Monday and Wednesday, Mark Horton did the analysis for the Tuesday and Thursday and session and Julian Pottage completes the crew, writing up the 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

Board 1	♠ A107	Dealer N
	♥ Q63	Vul: None
	♦ QJ743	
	♣ 42	
♠ Q32		♠ J98
♥ AJ107		♥ 8542
♦ K65		♦ A92
♣ Q85		♣ 1073
	♠ K654	
	♥ K9	
	♦ 108	
	♣ AKJ96	

There will be two passes to South, who opens 1♣. While West's distribution is hardly classic for the call, many will make a take-out double, trading on the fact that Love All is the best time to become declarer if it is a competitive partscore deal.

Nothing is going to get E/W to declare on this occasion and, should they get together, their best spot is 1♥, which should be down only one.

Whether or not West doubles, North can respond 1♦ and South rebid 1♠. North is likely to bid INT and play there, making exactly after a heart lead. An overtrick can be made if South becomes declarer.

The top spot for N/S is to play a spade partscore, where nine tricks can be made, but it is not immediately obvious how South becomes declarer in NT other than if South seriously distorts his distribution by either opening ore rebidding INT.

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

=====

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Board 2 ♠ K1072 Dealer E
 ♥ 7 Vul: N-S
 ♦ Q92
 ♣ 107543

♠ J95 ♠ A6
 ♥ AQ1094 ♥ J8532
 ♦ J43 ♦ 85
 ♣ 98 ♣ KQJ6

 ♠ Q843
 ♥ K6
 ♦ AK1076
 ♣ A2

While the main suit is not one to write home about, most Easts will open 1♥ and South will double, planning to convert a club response to diamonds. In practice, West will raise to either 3♥ or 4♥ and that will be sufficient to shut out some Norths.

Will North come in over a 3♥ bid? Perhaps he will decide that he has just enough to bid 3♠, which will see South raise to game. But what if West raises all the way to 4♥? Many Norths will now pass, waiting for South to make a second double if holding the extra values required for 4♠ to be making. They may be waiting for a long time as, though South does have some spare values, the shape is not ideal for a second take-out call, and some Souths will surely pass.

Of course, there are some Norths who will never allow themselves to be silenced, but 4♥ will do its job at some tables and 4♥ down one for -50 should score very well. The 3♥ raise will silence considerably fewer Norths and, where North refuses to go quietly, N/S should get to 4♠. Playing the trump suit in the natural fashion – low to the queen then back to the ten, sees 4♠ home for +620 and a useful result for N/S.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3 ♠ 4 Dealer S
 ♥ KQ432 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 10976
 ♣ QJ4

♠ J9653 ♠ K1087
 ♥ A765 ♥ 109
 ♦ Q8 ♦ KJ4
 ♣ A6 ♣ K973

 ♠ AQ2
 ♥ J8
 ♦ A532
 ♣ 10852

South doesn't really have a weak NT opening but that will not stop some players from setting the ball rolling with 1NT. Holding five-four in the majors, West can use Landy or whatever call he has in his kitbag to show both majors, and that may silence North, whose long suit has just been promised by the player on his right. East will, of course, be happy to respond 2♠, and then it will be a matter of whether North is willing to make a take-out double. If he does so, N/S are likely to find the diamond fit, where even tricks are available, the same number as if they played in clubs or hearts.

It is quite likely that East will compete to 3♠ and if so that should be made easily enough for a solid +140. E/W can do better by doubling N/S in any three-level contract, but that is easier to say than to do.

If South opens 1♣, West will overcall, weak main suit notwithstanding, and E/W play in 3♠, while if South does not open the bidding West will do so and East again raise to 3♠.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4 ♠ 104 Dealer W
 ♥ K1076 Vul: Both
 ♦ AQ4
 ♣ KQ93

♠ Q72	♠ A9853
♥ Q854	♥ 93
♦ J1083	♦ 965
♣ 42	♣ J76

♠ KJ6
♥ AJ2
♦ K72
♣ A1085

Some double dummy play, particularly in the heart suit, can see N/S making slam in any of clubs, hearts or NT. In real life, N/S do not have the values to bid to any slam and are likely to settle for 3NT. If that is played by North, East will lead a low spade and declarer will play low from dummy so lose two spade tricks. One spade winner means that there will be 10 top winners, with a heart guess for the eleventh.

Twelve tricks can be made via a winning spade play after a heart lead but, without a heart lead four heart tricks requires a little inspiration. Declarer starts hearts by leading the jack to the queen and king, leads back to the nine and ace, and can complete the operation by leading the two to his seven. Good luck to anyone who finds that play.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5 ♠ Q1064 Dealer N
 ♥ 104 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 732
 ♣ Q832

♠ 83	♠ KJ7
♥ 763	♥ K9852
♦ AKJ5	♦ Q9
♣ AJ75	♣ 1094

♠ A952
♥ AQJ
♦ 10864
♣ K6

If South opens with a weak NT, nobody may have anything to say over that. West will lead a top diamond but what to lead at trick two will be hard to judge.

Obviously, a low diamond to partner's queen is the big winner, after which East can switch to the ten of clubs to trap declarer's king, but that would be an inspired play and some of the alternatives don't work out at all well for the defence.

Though INT can always be defeated, in practice it will be allowed to make a fair number of times when West picks a losing option at trick two.

If South opens 1♦, there may be two passes to East, who will overcall 1♥. West may raise to 2♥ – no more because East is a passed hand so game is not very likely – and 2♥ can be just made.

If South opens 1♣, West still has the wrong shape for a double so will pass, and again East may balance with 1♥ and be raised to 2♥.

Plus 110 should score well for E/W, with some collecting only +50 on defence to

INT or 2♠, and others conceding –90 defending against INT.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6	♠ K10	Dealer E
	♥ 10975	Vul: E-W
	♦ AQ10	
	♣ K1092	
♠ 953		♠ Q872
♥ QJ42		♥ K8
♦ 97		♦ J8543
♣ J653		♣ 84
	♠ AJ64	
	♥ A63	
	♦ K62	
	♣ AQ7	

Playing Acol, most Souths will open 1♠ and rebid 2NT or 3NT over the 2♣ response. Either way, they will declare the NT game. If West leads a low heart to the nine, king and ace, declarer does best just to play a heart back at him. Eventually, a second heart trick becomes established and declarer has a choice of black-suit plays for his eleventh trick. Not everyone will find the eleventh trick, but I would expect more to do so than not.

If playing five-card majors, South will open 1♣ and rebid 2NT over the 1♥ response. North will raise that to game, so the same contract will be reached at almost every table.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7	♠ A982	Dealer S
	♥ Q5	Vul: Both
	♦ A1084	
	♣ 765	
♠ QJ4		♠ K1053
♥ 103		♥ AJ874
♦ K763		♦ Q5
♣ AQ98		♣ J3
	♠ 76	
	♥ K962	
	♦ J92	
	♣ K1042	

If West opens a weak NT East will follow an invitational sequence to show his major-suits. What that will be depends on partnership agreements, of course, but it should become clear that there is no eight-card major-suit fit so, with West having a minimum opening, the likely contract is 2NT.

With spades shown by the dummy, North is likely to lead a low diamond against 2NT, declarer putting up dummy's queen and playing on spades. That sets up the possibility of the defence taking three diamond tricks as soon as South gains the lead to push a diamond through the king. That should be good enough to hold declarer to eight tricks.

If West opens 1♣/♦, East will respond 1♥ and West rebid INT. East will again invite game, this time probably via some version or other of Checkback, which will permit him to discover that West has only a doubleton heart. Again, 2NT just making is the likely outcome, though if West's opening bid is 1♦ North may choose to lead passively from the three small clubs, and that will be bad news for the defence.

In theory, the top E/W score will be +140 in a spade partscore, but it isn't clear why they should get to such a contract. A heart contract can be held to eight tricks and, with NT making +120, +110 could score quite poorly.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 8	♠ 965	Dealer W
	♥ K75	Vul: None
	♦ 109853	
	♣ Q3	
	♠ AJ74	♠ K3
	♥ A42	♥ J83
	♦ 2	♦ AK74
	♣ AKJ108	♣ 7542
	♠ Q1082	
	♥ Q1096	
	♦ QJ6	
	♣ 96	

E/W have a borderline slam on this board, 6♣ essentially coming down to how declarer plays the trump suit. With no obvious reason to play for clubs to be three-one, declarer will usually play ten from the top and bring home his slam.

Say that E/W start off 1♣ – 1♦ – 1♠ – ? Three Clubs jump preference, showing invitational values, looks about right with the East cards, and now it will be down to West whether he looks for slam or settles for 3NT. West has excellent trumps and control cards, so will surely be tempted by slam, though he should bear in mind that East may turn out to have only three-card club support.

This type of bidding problem is much more easily solved at Teams scoring. The problem is that, at matchpoints, if we commit ourselves to a club slam try but

then find that we want to stop in game, we may be forced to play in the poorer-scoring game of 5♣. At Teams, that wouldn't matter, as the difference between +400 and +430 is just a single IMP, but at matchpoints that difference could be very expensive.

Those who do settle for 3NT will have 10 top tricks if they get the clubs right, with a spade finesse resulting in 11.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9	♠ A104	Dealer N
	♥ J10965	Vul: E-W
	♦ J2	
	♣ J76	
	♠ K952	♠ Q
	♥ 7	♥ AQ842
	♦ Q73	♦ A109654
	♣ A9543	♣ 8
	♠ J8763	
	♥ K3	
	♦ K8	
	♣ KQ102	

After a pass from North, East will have a decision to make as to which of his two suits to open. This is one of the few examples of a hand on which I would not open in my longest suit, as opening 1♦ then rebidding in hearts is just too strong an auction for a hand with two such broken suits and only 12 HCP including a bare queen. I'd even prefer to pass then hope to come in with a two-suited overcall than open 1♦ with the hand.

So East opens 1♥ and South overcalls 1♠. Whether West bids INT or makes a negative double, North can raise to 2♠ and now East will want to introduce the diamonds. It would be nice to have a

Lebensohl variant at East's disposal here to allow diamonds to be shown without also showing a good hand. Failing that, I'm betting that most easts will bid 3♦ anyway and just hope to survive.

N/S can make nothing unless the defence slips up, while East can even make game in diamonds, albeit with a good guess or two along the way. Plus 150 for E/W should score very well and +130 also be OK, while any N/S plus score should score well for them.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10	♠ KJ9	Dealer E
	♥ 983	Vul: Both
	♦ 743	
	♣ AKQ5	
♠ Q65		♠ A43
♥ Q10		♥ J65
♦ AK95		♦ Q1086
♣ J843		♣ 1072
	♠ 10872	
	♥ AK742	
	♦ J2	
	♣ 96	

If West opens a weak NT, there will be two passes to South, who can come in with the bid that shows both majors in his methods. Say that this is 2♣, Landy; North will respond 2♦, asking for the longer suit, then pass the 2♥ reply. As it happens, nine tricks can be made in either major, though it is considerably easier in the eight-card heart fit than in the seven-card spade fit.

If West opens 1♦, North may double and East raise to 2♦. South will be happy to compete with 2♥, and that should be that. Were E/W to compete further in diamonds, they could be held to six tricks,

and down three vulnerable would be very bad for them.

If West opens 1♣, North may still double, though having fewer than four cards in all the unbid suits is far from ideal and pass may well be the wiser course. If East responds 1♦, South can double to get both majors into the auction but, more likely, will overcall 1♥. West can raise to 2♦ but North has plenty of high-card strength and will compete to 2♥ for a painless +140.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11	♠ 97	Dealer S
	♥ A4	Vul: None
	♦ J865	
	♣ K8654	
♠ J10542		♠ AK63
♥ J98		♥ Q1053
♦ A42		♦ 73
♣ AJ		♣ 932
	♠ Q8	
	♥ K762	
	♦ KQ109	
	♣ Q107	

If South opens a weak NT, he will often be left to play there, possibly going down two after a spade lead – declarer is likely to give up on clubs and retain the ability to set up and cash three diamond tricks.

An important point is that declarer should consider what will happen at other tables. He can see that E/W have a nine-card spade fit and can imagine that at tables where the opening bid is one of a minor they will find that fit and score a comfortable +110 or +140. Declarer's first goal in INT is to make sure that he does not concede more than -100, i.e. go

down two, as that guarantees that he beats all those N/Ss who defend against a spade partscore.

West cannot come in over 1NT with five weak spades in a balanced hand but, while a 2♣ Landy bid usually shows at least five-four in the majors, in pass-out seat and with neither side vulnerable it is a reasonable gamble to come in even with four-four. That works out very well as, even though North may compete in the minors, West will take the push to 3♠, which is unbeatable – if the defence takes its heart ruff the club trick goes away on the fourth heart.

Where South opens one of a suit, West will overcall and East raise to 3♠ by one route or another. Three Spades is cold, while N/S can only afford to compete as far as the three level, ans being doubled at the four level should cost –300.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12	♠ K9842	Dealer W
	♥ A42	Vul: N-S
	♦ J7	
	♣ J85	
♠ A1076		♠ J3
♥ J106		♥ Q873
♦ AQ965		♦ 1082
♣ 2		♣ K964
	♠ Q5	
	♥ K95	
	♦ K43	
	♣ AQ1073	

West will open 1♦ and North overcall 1♠, though it would be nice to have a better main suit when vulnerable. East has just enough for a negative double and now perhaps South, with the best hand at the

table, may start with a redouble to show good general values.

It isn't easy to say with any confidence how the auction should develop from here. E/W are unlikely to compete beyond 2♦, while North will be trying to show weakness at each available opportunity, while South will be pushing to go higher.

N/S can make 2♠, 2NT or 3♣, while the E/W limit is seven tricks in a diamond contract. With some N/Ss getting too high, the first priority for N/S will simply be to go plus.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13	♠ J8763	Dealer N
	♥ 1075	Vul: Both
	♦ A1087	
	♣ 10	
♠ 952		♠ KQ
♥ A32		♥ KQ8
♦ Q5		♦ J96
♣ KJ983		♣ AQ754
	♠ A104	
	♥ J964	
	♦ K432	
	♣ 62	

Playing Acol, East will open 1♣ and West raise invitationaly to 3♣. East's 3NT then completes the auction.

If playing strong NT, that is what East will open – the hand is not worth an upgrade, making it too strong for a 1NT opening, because the decent five-card club suit is balanced by the king-queen doubleton, which is a negative feature. West will raise to 3NT, and that should be that.

East has eight top tricks and a spade or a diamond lead, while allowing the defence to set up three winners in the suit, also gives declarer a ninth trick. That should be all, so +600 will be a popular result.

If South leads a heart, declarer can win and cash all the clubs to put pressure on the defenders to find several discards between them. However, while one or two defenders may discard too often from a suit, this will be a rare event as the pressure is not strong, and a tenth trick should be a rare outcome.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14	♠ K5	Dealer E
	♥ Q54	Vul: None
	♦ AKQ94	
	♣ Q52	
♠ J2	♠ AQ83	
♥ AJ93	♥ K1087	
♦ 763	♦ 108	
♣ J874	♣ K103	
	♠ 109764	
	♥ 62	
	♦ J52	
	♣ A96	

If East opens with a weak NT, there will be two passes to North, who will double. If that ends the auction, South will lead a spade, declarer probably calling for dummy's jack, which goes to the king and ace. Given that North has shown the bulk of the missing points, it is natural for declarer to get the heart right, bringing his total winners to six. The defence also has six winners ready to cash, five diamonds plus the ace of clubs.

The outcome will be decided by what happens when declarer wins the fourth

heart in the dummy and leads a club off the dummy. Put in the ten and there are seven tricks, put up the king and it is the defenders who have seven tricks. As declarer will not be sure of the exact position of the diamond honours, he will have no strong indication as to who has which club honour. South needs a high card to explain his pass of the double, but the ♦K, for example, along with the ♣Q, would fit the bill just as well as the actual position.

If East opens 1♣, West will respond 1♥ and North probably overcall 2♦, though 1NT is also a possibility. East is likely to raise to 2♥ in either case, and with a successful heart guess West can come to nine tricks.

If North declares any contract the most he can make is 1♦.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15	♠ AK94	Dealer S
	♥ K104	Vul: N-S
	♦ 52	
	♣ A832	
♠ 65	♠ QJ	
♥ 9652	♥ AQ83	
♦ A876	♦ 1094	
♣ J96	♣ K754	
	♠ 108732	
	♥ J7	
	♦ KQJ3	
	♣ Q10	

Another weak NT, this time for North and, if that is the opening bid, South will transfer to spades then pass the completion. When I say completion, that applies whether North responds with a simple 2♠ or breaks the transfer with a

jump to 3♠ to show a good hand with four-card spade support. I am in favour of breaking the transfer on a hand of this nature. Firstly, it makes life difficult for an opponent who might have balanced over a simple 2♠, while also making it possible to bid the occasional good spade game when South would have passed a simple 2♠.

On the actual deal, E/W were unlikely to be coming into the auction, and neither should South go on to game. However, 4♠ can be made if played by North, as the spades fall in a friendly fashion and West can only get on lead once. He can lead a heart through, but now the defensive club trick will go away, while if he instead leads a club through it is the second defensive heart trick which disappears.

For all that 10 tricks can be made, 4♠ is a poor contract and we would only want to be in it after we had come to 10 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16 ♠ J7653 Dealer W
 ♥ KJ1032 Vul: E-W
 ♦ KQ5
 ♣

♠ Q109	♠ K8
♥	♥ A98765
♦ 763	♦ 92
♣ KQ108742	♣ A63
♠ A42	
♥ Q4	
♦ AJ1084	
♣ J95	

West has a 3♣ pre-empt, which gives North an unpleasant decision to make. North could double to get all three suits into the auction, or cuebid 4♣ to show a major two-suiter, but while he has the

club shortage which to some degree makes it his responsibility to get his side into the auction, he just barely has opening values and either action risks getting far too high. As for making a simple overcall? In which suit should that be, the higher ranking 3♠ to prepare a rebid over a 3NT response, or the stronger heart suit?

Today, 4♣ would find the five-three spade fit and, with a defensive heart ruff coming with the longer trump holding, 10 tricks can be made for +420.

Double sees South bid diamonds, and probably at the five level. The defence should come out on top in 5♦, which can be beaten by a couple of tricks. It may also see East raise the level of the pre-empt, bidding 4/5♣, the latter also perhaps happening after a 4♣ cuebid from North. If N/S were about to play the making 4♠, 5♣ doubled would be a paying vulnerable against not save as it would be down only one.

Making 4♠ should score very well for N/S, while going plus scores well for E/W.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 17 ♠ 10 Dealer N
 ♥ 1083 Vul: None
 ♦ AKJ63
 ♣ J542

♠ AQJ94	♠ 865
♥ A742	♥ 5
♦	♦ Q97542
♣ A983	♣ Q107
♠ K732	
♥ KQJ96	
♦ 108	
♣ K6	

If East passes in second seat, South will open 1♥ and West overcall 1♠. Two Diamonds from North, perhaps 2♠ from East, and a pass from South. Now West is worth a game try, perhaps 3♣, and North may compete with 3♥. East will not be interested in going further – the 2♠ bid would already be too much for some Easts, so will pass and hope that partner doesn't go too high.

If West does bid for a third time, the third one should perhaps be a penalty double, and after a trump lead the defence should prevail without too much drama.

If left to play a spade contract, West can make nine tricks, the same number also being available in a club contract and eight in diamonds, surprisingly enough.

There will be a few 2♦ openers with the East cards. South will probably overcall 2♥ and perhaps West 2♠. North has a good hand in support of hearts and will raise to at least 3♥ and possibly 4♥. The latter should be doubled and at least down two for a very poor N/S result. If North bids only 3♥ and West doubles that when it comes round to him East will take it out into 3♠ and West, aware that East did not bid 3♠ freely at his previous turn, should respect this decision and settle for partscore.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18	♠	AJ74	Dealer E
	♥	K76	Vul: N-S
	♦	A3	
	♣	10842	
	♠	86	♠ 95
	♥	54	♥ AQ10983
	♦	KJ1072	♦ 65
	♣	AQ97	♣ K63
	♠	KQ1032	
	♥	J2	
	♦	Q984	
	♣	J5	

East has a classical weak 2♥ opener and that will often buy the contract.

South would bid 1♠ over a 1♥ opening but an overcall at this level shows opening values, and South is some way short of having those. West has no interest in bidding on, and while North could double his distribution is not ideal, particularly when vulnerable and with only bare-minimum opening strength.

N/S would make 2♠ if they bid to that contract, but if either of them bid the other would take the auction too high so they would go minus. Meanwhile, a heart contract is a peaceful affair. Declarer has two top spades to lose, and taking two finesses in trumps sees one heart loser.

The diamond guess is for the overtrick. In isolation, it looks to be pretty much a 50-50 proposition. However, there is a chance that clubs might be three-three, when playing South for the ♦A results in 10 tricks when successful, so a greedy declarer might guess that way for that reason.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19 ♠ A984 Dealer S
 ♥ KQ54 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 7
 ♣ AKQ9

♠ QJ53 ♠ 2
 ♥ A6 ♥ J9832
 ♦ AQ96 ♦ J5432
 ♣ J54 ♣ 32

♠ K1076
 ♥ 107
 ♦ K108
 ♣ 10876

If West opens a weak NT, North will double and East run. That may be to a simple 2♦ or 2♥, or may be via a bid that shows two suits, perhaps 2♦ showing diamonds and a higher-ranking suit. Two Diamonds is the place to get to, of course, as West has four-card support, and that enables declarer to come to eight tricks.

If West opens 1♦, North has a routine double and now East can make a pre-emptive raise to 3♦. North will make a second double when that comes back around and South probably respond 3♠. Some Norths will go on to game now and 4♠ can be made, despite the four-one trump split, as East can never gain the lead and West finds himself unable to land a telling blow. Ten tricks are by no means assured, however, so while there will be some +420s, there will also be some -50s.

If West's system requires a 1♠ opening, things get a little murky as North has no ideal action due to having the wrong shortage for a take-out double. If he doubles anyway, South will respond INT and North raise NT. Played by South, nine tricks can be made in NT. It looks as though the defence should be able to defeat 3NT by leading diamonds, but see what happens – West's ♦6 blocks the suit, South's ten acting as a strange sort of second stopper.

It is also possible that North might overcall 1♠ with INT and play there. Now a diamond lead would hold declarer

to eight tricks, but as the hearts are stronger East is more likely to lead a heart, and now there will be at least nine tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20 ♠ Q94 Dealer W
 ♥ Vul: Both
 ♦ KJ98742
 ♣ K92

♠ KJ2 ♠ A10876
 ♥ A2 ♥ J7653
 ♦ A653 ♦ Q
 ♣ 10843 ♣ A7

♠ 53
 ♥ KQ10984
 ♦ 10
 ♣ QJ65

If West opens with a weak NT, North may overcall 3♦ and that will bully East into making a committal decision immediately – bid 3♠ followed by 4♥, so driving to game, or start with a take-out double and be willing to pass a 3♥/♠ response.

On this occasion there is only one benefit in doubling, as we will come to shortly. Surely, if West does have a four-card major, we should be happy to get to game in the nine-card fit, so double merely complicates matters for little benefit.

The horrible heart split means that 4♠ is impossible. Indeed, declarer will have to be careful to even come to nine tricks in a spade contract, though the defence cannot actually prevent this.

The winning action for E/W is to double 3♦ for penalty and, if East does make a take-out double, West may leave it in, given that he does not have a major to

bid. Declarer may be forced to get the diamonds right by his lack of a dummy entry, but that will still mean down one for -200.

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

=====

Board 21	♠ AKJ2	Dealer N
	♥ Q4	Vul: N-S
	♦ KJ9	
	♣ KQJ10	
♠ 1087		♠ Q9543
♥ K8653		♥ 97
♦ 7		♦ A10843
♣ 8632		♣ 5
	♠ 6	
	♥ AJ102	
	♦ Q652	
	♣ A974	

North opens 2NT and South uses whatever type of Stayman is at his disposal. That should quickly ascertain that there is no four-four major-suit fit.

There is a four-four club fit, but only those with fairly sophisticated methods will be able to both find it and have an intelligent look at slam prospects. Most are more likely to get into a quantitative NT slam invitation, an invitation which North should decline.

Six No Trump is a poor slam, requiring something extra even after if the heart is onside, and with that king offside 11 tricks are the limit. Six Clubs is rather better, on paper. It usually still requires the heart finesse, but with clubs three-two a ruff would bring the number up to 12 with no need of any more good news. Except that on the actual layout there is a defensive diamond ruff, as well as the failing heart finesse, so down goes the slam.

Those who stop in 4NT can take 11 tricks for +660 and a comfortably above average score.

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

=====

Board 22	♠ AKQ105	Dealer E
	♥ Q	Vul: E-W
	♦ A1065	
	♣ 1054	
♠ 42		♠ 973
♥ K753		♥ AJ9
♦ J72		♦ K9843
♣ 7632		♣ KQ
	♠ J86	
	♥ 108642	
	♦ Q	
	♣ AJ98	

Yet another possible weak NT opening, this time for East, will see that opening bid passed around to North, who may double or, more likely, overcall to show either just spades or perhaps spades and a minor. South might raise to 3♠ to invite game and, should he do so, North will no doubt accept the invitation. However, South should bear in mind that there is no premium on getting to thin games at matchpoints, and that North might have competed on a considerably weaker hand such that even 3♠ might not be secure, North's principal goal being simply to get E/W out of INT.

As it happens, 10 tricks can always be made in a spade contract, but I don't think anyone who stops short of game in the face of an opposing INT opening should feel too guilty.

If East opens 1♦, South's hearts and all-around hand are too weak to come in and, if West also passes, it will once again

be up to North to get N/S involved in the auction. This time the overcall will be 1♠ and South will again make a simple raise. I would imagine that the majority will stop short of game so that +420 will score very well for N/S.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 23 ♠ KJ108 Dealer S
 ♥ AQ Vul: Both
 ♦ 9
 ♣ AK10642

♠ 964	♠ AQ732
♥ 108763	♥ J5
♦ J1053	♦ 42
♣ 7	♣ QJ98

♠ 5
♥ K942
♦ AKQ876
♣ 53

When South opens the bidding, North will have visions of a possible slam auction looking at his 17 HCP and promising distribution. However, South's opening will be 1♦, which is the first hint of a possible misfit, and that hint will be strengthened a little when South can only repeat the diamonds over North's 2♣ response.

North will continue with 2♠ and now South will have the option of bidding diamonds for a third time, or of bidding either 3NT or 3NT.

Those whose methods mean that they are in a game-forcing auction may opt to stress the diamonds by bidding them for a third time, while others may like the potentially running diamond suit sufficiently that they will jump to 3NT as 2NT would be passable.

Most roads will lead to 3NT, sometimes played by North, sometimes by South, with a smaller number of pairs getting uncomfortably high when North is not yet willing to give up on slam prospects.

The play is very awkward due to declarer's considerable communication difficulties. Nine tricks are easy enough by plying on diamonds and overtaking the ♥Q to get at the long tricks, but this is matchpoints, and declarer would like an overtrick or two if that is a possibility.

Declarer is more likely to leave diamonds alone and play on clubs, where the four-one break will be an annoyance. However, declarer isn't the only one with communication difficulties and East will find himself employed to put declarer into either his own hand or dummy at a point which is beneficial to his cause.

Ten tricks can be made, but I would not be surprised if there were a fair number making only nine. With the added bonus of beating those who get too high and go minus, +630 should score very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 24 ♠ QJ7653 Dealer W
 ♥ 10 Vul: None
 ♦ K10
 ♣ J874

♠ 94	♠ A10
♥ AQ652	♥ J983
♦ Q82	♦ 43
♣ 632	♣ AKQ95

♠ K82
♥ K74
♦ AJ9765
♣ 10

North opens with a weak two bid and East overcalls 3♣. If South competes with

3♠ now, will anyone have anything to add? Not obviously, though I suppose that West might scrape up a take-out double. That would work out very well for E/W, as East will respond 4♥ and that can be made with an overtrick. Meanwhile, 3♠ can be made exactly by N/S, 10 tricks are available in a club contract and 11 in NT for E/W.

Could anyone actually get to 3NT on the E/W cards? Well, if East falls in love with the ten of spades sufficiently that he overcalls 2NT instead of 3♣, and then South bids 3♠, might West bid 3NT? There are five heart tricks, five clubs and the ace of spades. If East overcalls 2NT and South passes, West will transfer to heart and now 4♥ will be reached, but surely South will bid 3♠, and even if not may save in 4♠ if 4♥ is reached?

East could, I suppose, double the 2♠ opening to get hearts into the picture. That works out well on this deal but it could so easily go wrong and I am not a fan of that approach to the hand.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 25

♠	K983	Dealer N
♥	J109	Vul: E-W
♦	KJ842	
♣	6	
=====		
♠	AJ10	
♥	A743	
♦	Q653	
♣	QJ972	
♠	Q76542	
♥	865	
♦		
♣	A543	

For a change, East has a strong NT. If that is his opening bid, will South come in with

2♠? The vulnerability is in South's favour and, as long as North is well trained to know that this is just a bid to disturb INT and compete the partscore, it will rarely come to too much harm.

Say that South does bid 2♠, West will make a take-out double and North raise to at least 3♠. East, with a maximum and a double spade stopper might try 3NT now, and if left to play there can establish 11 tricks for a useful +660.

Of course, if N/S believe that 3NT is making, they can always save in 4♠ at the cost of just -300.

If East opens 1♣ or 1♦, South can again bid 2♠, this time as a weak jump overcall, the side-suit shape offering compensation for the weak main suit. A negative double now gets E/W to 3NT, unless North raises to 4♠, of course. But West may decide that, with a likely spade raise looming from North, it is more helpful to let partner know immediately about the guaranteed fit already discovered in East's minor. If West is content to bid a quiet 3♣/♦, East will again bid 3NT if North allows that bid. If West cuebids 3♠, showing a stronger hand with support for East's minor, East will again bid 3NT.

All roads, then, seem to lead to East declaring 3NT, unless N/S save in 4♠ doubled, but there could be a twist in the tale at tables where N/S do save in 4♠. E/W's winning action is to simply accept the push and play in 4NT. But will all E/Ws who are put to the test manage to do that, or will West sometimes bid five of the minor? The trump position means that 5♦ is hopeless, while even if 5♣ is not defeated by a diamond ruff it scores much less well than 3/4NT.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26

♠ K5	Dealer E
♥ J108	Vul: Both
♦ J9863	
♣ A65	
=====	
♠ Q972	♠ 104
♥ 9742	♥ 65
♦ AK	♦ Q10542
♣ KQ9	♣ 10743
=====	
♠ AJ863	
♥ AKQ3	
♦ 7	
♣ J82	

When South opens 1♠, West has the wrong distribution for a take-out double and is not strong enough for a 1NT overcall, so should pass. When North responds 1NT and South rebids 2♥, West's other four-card suit, West will be happy to have kept out of trouble by passing.

North will give false preference to 2♠. It is not only that a five-two fit may play better than four-three, but also giving false preference leaves the door open for South to make a third bid should he be strong. With a maximum for the initial 1NT response and fitting cards in both partner's suits, North would welcome a third bid from partner and would be happy to get to game facing an invitational hand. Hence, it makes sense to bid 2♠ in case partner does have a good hand. Conversely, if the North hand was the same shape as in real life but with just the queens of hearts, diamonds and clubs, just 6 HCP, North would not welcome a third bid from partner so should pass 2♥, not giving him a chance to take the bidding higher on a board where North would not accept a game invitation.

Knowing that 2♠ will be based on two-card support as often as not, South should not get excited. Yes, he has 15 HCP when he might have had only 11, but game is still a long way off facing simple preference, so South should settle for 2♠.

Played by South, nine tricks are possible in 2♠, with the possibility to endplay West to give a second club trick. Not everyone will find the winning line, however, so many declarers will be glad to have stopped safely at the two level. Nine tricks are actually slightly easier to come to in a heart contract, with declarer able to take a cheap diamond ruff in hand and high spade ruffs in the dummy. The defence can lead trumps to reduce declarer's ruffing potential, but then the endplay comes back into the equation.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 27

♠ J32	Dealer S
♥ 1054	Vul: None
♦ KQ96	
♣ J32	
=====	
♠ AK94	♠ 1087
♥ 9	♥ 8762
♦ 1072	♦ AJ43
♣ KQ764	♣ 98
=====	
♠ Q65	
♥ AKQJ3	
♦ 85	
♣ A105	

Some Souths will open a strong NT, powerful heart suit notwithstanding. West will compete if he has a way to do so with this combination – some member of the ASPTRO family or perhaps a Raptor Double (four-card major and longer minor), would make this possible. But many will have to pass as their options all

involve either holding both majors or one long major.

A INT opening may be passed out, and after a club lead has given declarer and extra trick, he will have eight in all for a handy +120.

If West does compete, E/W can make seven tricks in either black suit. In practice, that would have to be spades, because South will introduce the hearts over two of a minor.

The majority of Souths will open 1♥, enabling West to double. North may bid INT now, and if that ended the auction a club lead would hold declarer to seven tricks. On a spade lead, however, there would once again be eight tricks, just as when the contract is played by South.

If N/S are playing five-card majors, North may raise to 2♥. Eight tricks are easy enough, particularly after West leads a top spade so declarer is assured of a spade trick. If West leads or switches to a club, there could even be an occasional declarer making nine tricks for a very good score.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 28	♠	876	Dealer W
	♥	84	Vul: N-S
	♦	84	
	♣	J109742	
	♠	KJ9	♠ Q542
	♥	A1032	♥ QJ96
	♦	K1096	♦ AJ73
	♣	85	♣ K
	♠	A103	
	♥	K75	
	♦	Q52	
	♣	AQ63	

Those tens and nines, coupled with the favourable vulnerability, may see a lot of Wests opening the bidding. If that opening bid is a weak NT, East will use Stayman then raise the 2♥ response to game. If West opens 1♣/♦, East will respond 1♥, West raise to 2♥, and East drive to game. He may need to check that West actually has four-card support, but that is easily enough done by bidding 2♠ and, when West bids 3♥, East can go on to game.

There are two black aces to be lost, but the heart finesse is successful, so the contract is secure. The overtrick requires a winning diamond guess, and unless the opening lead was a diamond, thereby solving the problem immediately, it really does look to be a guess.

Plus 450 should score well, with +420 below average unless a lot more pairs than I expect miss the good game.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====