

The ECatsBridge Summer Pairs Thursday 4th July 2024



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.

Our thanks go to the commentators for the event – Julian Pottage for the Wednesday commentaries, Mark Horton did the ones for Monday and Friday and Brian Senior for the Tuesday and Thursday ... and by now you will know if they got it right!

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.

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.

Board 1	♠ KQ62	Dealer N
	♥ A2	Vul: None
	♦ K42	
	♣ K1084	
♠ 94		♠ AJ105
♥ 743		♥ QJ985
♦ J875		♦ Q10
♣ Q765		♣ J2
	♠ 873	
	♥ K106	
	♦ A963	
	♣ A93	

If North opens a strong NT and East passes, South can raise directly to 3NT, concluding the auction. However, East is likely to come in if he has a way to show both majors, the most popular being a 2♣ Landy bid. Now South may double to show values and West respond 2♥. North will pass that round to South. If South judges to make a penalty double, careful defence nets eight tricks for down three and +500 – a great result for N/S. However, South may settle for a jump to 3NT. The queen of hearts lead would make life very easy for North, but even on a less helpful lead he can manoeuvre to endplay East for a ninth trick.

Where North opens 1♣, East will probably overcall 1♥ and South may jump to 2NT, raised to game by North. This time a heart lead does not give a third heart trick to declarer, who will have to read the hand perfectly to force East to give him the necessary ninth trick.

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

Board 2	♠ A8532	Dealer E
	♥ KJ4	Vul: N-S
	♦ 743	
	♣ A7	
♠		♠ KQ1097
♥ Q2		♥ 10983
♦ AKQJ106		♦ 82
♣ 109532		♣ J6
	♠ J64	
	♥ A765	
	♦ 95	
	♣ KQ84	

There will be two passes to West, who will usually open 1♦ and North overcall 1♠. If East passes, a normal action when all his limited values are in an opponent's suit, South makes a 2♦ unassuming cuebid to show a constructive spade raise, and West may double to show good diamonds or, fearing an opposing major-suit contract, may take away some bidding space from his opponents by introducing his second suit or by jumping in diamonds.

In practice, this is a case of silence being golden, as N/S should be down a trick in 2♠, while the E/W limit is eight tricks playing in either minor. It follows that a more imaginative West who sees that he has only two cards in the majors so, trying to get in his opponents' way, starts

with some kind of pre-empt at his first turn, will go minus and regret his gamble.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 3

♠ K10543	Dealer S
♥ Q2	Vul: E-W
♦ 2	
♣ KJ1092	
♠ QJ8	♠ 972
♥ 87543	♥ AKJ10
♦ 8	♦ AQ4
♣ 7654	♣ AQ8
♠ A6	
♥ 96	
♦ KJ1097653	
♣ 3	

At favourable vulnerability it would be feeble in the extreme to open only 3♦ on the South cards. One could do that without at least one, and possibly two, diamonds, and the ace of spades. The serious options are 4♦ and 5♦, with the former perhaps the mainstream action.

If South opens 3♦ this runs round to East, who overcalls 3NT, which can be made if declarer is careful and uses dummy's spade entry to take the club finesse. And if spades are not led immediately by the defence, that spade entry can also act as an entry to the fifth heart.

Meanwhile, if South opens 4♦, East will surely double and West take it out into 4♥. Ace and another spade collects a ruff and down goes the contract.

As for a 5♦ opening, East will again double but this time West, seeing little likelihood of making an 11-trick contract, will leave it in and collect +500.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 4

♠ K983	Dealer W
♥ K853	Vul: Both
♦ A	
♣ 9743	
♠ J	♠ A
♥ AJ64	♥ 1097
♦ KQJ9862	♦ 1073
♣ 8	♣ KQJ1062
	♠ Q1076542
	♥ Q2
	♦ 54
	♣ A5

West opens 1♦ and North is just shy of what is required for a take-out double – put the ace into a different suit, still 4-4-1-4, and some would make the double.

System decides East's response to 1♦. If playing two-over-one GF, a natural and invitational jump to 3♣ fits the hand perfectly. That has the merit of shutting out South's long spades, I would think. When West rebids 3♦, East should raise to at least 4♦ and West may well go on to the diamond game. If he does so, he will usually be disappointed, as the defence has two chances to set up a heart for the setting trick. Four Diamonds can also be defeated, but this requires a heart opening lead from North to set up not only a heart trick but also a heart ruff. North has a guess with two king-to-four suits from which to choose, and some will find the heart lead, some not.

Playing Acol, East responds with a simple 2♣ to 1♦ and now South may come in with a spade bid – probably only at the two level as the suit is a little thin for a vulnerable jump bid. West will repeat the diamonds, and North probably jump to 4♠.

There is nothing to the lay in 4♠, declarer gaining the lead and playing a trump, after which there is just one heart and one club to be lost. Plus 620 will score well for N/S, while if E/W sacrifice in 5♦ doubled that will cost either – 200 or –500.

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

Board 5		
♠ A76	Dealer N	
♥ J94	Vul: N-S	
♦ Q6		
♣ J8654		
♠ QJ1098	♠ 542	
♥ KQ1076	♥ 82	
♦ 105	♦ K7432	
♣ A	♣ K97	
	♠ K3	
	♥ A53	
	♦ AJ98	
	♣ Q1032	

If South opens a weak NT West can overcall 2♣ to show both majors and, after a pass from North, East gives preference to 2♠.

Will North or South compete the partscore? Well, maybe, but they are vulnerable and neither has a clearcut action to take. If they do compete they can make 10 tricks in a club contract, at least with a double dummy view of the diamond suit. In practice, a heart lead and continuation is likely to mean only nine tricks.

The same inspired view of the diamond suit would also allow 3NT to be made, though of course N/S are well short of having the combined values to get to that.

Where South opens 1♣, West may make a Michaels Cuebid or similar to show at least five-five in the majors. Facing a three-card or longer club suit, North can compete with 3♣ and, as East has no enthusiasm for proceedings, that is likely to end the auction.

Where E/W are left to play in 2♠, the defence needs only to avoid opening up hearts to declarer's benefit. If they do force him to play the suit himself the lack of an entry to the East hand means that there are two heart losers to go with two spades and two diamonds, so down one.

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

Board 6		
♠ 42	Dealer E	
♥ J9643	Vul: E-W	
♦ AK52		
♣ J4		
♠ 109863	♠ AKQJ	
♥ Q82	♥ 1075	
♦ Q84	♦ J9	
♣ 32	♣ 8765	
	♠ 75	
	♥ AK	
	♦ 10763	
	♣ AKQ109	

The spade blockage means that N/S can make 3NT. Slightly less fortuitously, the heart position is friendly so that 4♥ can be made, diamond losers going on the long clubs, and also 5♣, with diamond losers going on the long hearts after they have been ruffed out. Five Diamonds, however, is doomed, with two top spades plus a trump trick to be lost.

If East passes, some Souths will open a strong NT, North transferring to hearts then showing the diamonds. South might simply bid 3NT, but suggesting a heart fit in case spades are wide open is a definite possibility. Still, N/S should be well pleased with themselves if they get to the heart game.

If East opens 1♣, anything could happen. Best for N/S is to pass it out and take it five down for +500, but that is unlikely to happen very often.

If South overcalls 1NT, we are back to North transferring then, maybe, showing the diamonds and N/S getting where they get to.

Perhaps South will pass, dreaming of a reopening double from partner? In practice, if West doesn't dredge up a 1♠ response North will overcall 1♥, and South may just blast 3NT or may cuebid. If he cuebids and North shows the diamonds, South may opt for hearts, fearing the spade suit.

What South cannot do is to double a 1♣ opening when holding only two-two in the majors.

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

Board 7	♠ 963	Dealer S
	♥ Q5	Vul: Both
	♦ AJ	
	♣ J109752	
♠ K7		♠ AJ108
♥ K10963		♥ AJ72
♦ 10642		♦ 97
♣ Q3		♣ AK8
	♠ Q542	
	♥ 84	
	♦ KQ853	
	♣ 64	

It is likely that there will be three passes round to East – North might try an aggressive 3♣ preempt if not vulnerable, but that would be a very dangerous effort at the actual vulnerability.

East has a top-weight strong NT opening and if that is what he opens West will transfer to hearts, planning to follow through with an invitational 2NT at his next turn. However, with both four-card support and a good maximum, East should break the transfer. The simple way to do that is to jump to 3♥, over which West will go onto game as East has, effectively, accepted the game try already.

There are two top diamonds to be lost and the queen of trumps to be found. There is no reason for declarer to do other than play trumps from the top, so almost everyone should come to 10 tricks for +620.

If playing Acol, East will open 1♥. Most Wests will raise to 3♥, giving East an easy reraise to 4♥. If a cautious West raises only to 2♥, East is worth a game try and, with a balanced hand, that should be 2NT, 17-19 non-forcing. Having already slightly underbid his hand once, West has an obvious acceptance and jumps to 4♥.

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

Board 8	♠ 8	Dealer W
	♥ 842	Vul: None
	♦ K764	
	♣ A10954	
♠ AQ1065		♠ KJ9742
♥ A5		♥ J97
♦ QJ8		♦ 53
♣ 873		♣ KQ
	♠ 3	
	♥ KQ1063	
	♦ A1092	
	♣ J62	

A lot of Wests will open 1♠ and, after a pass from North, East will raise to game. That cuts N/S out of the auction so 4♠ ends the bidding.

There are four inevitable losers in 4♠, so the contract should be down one.

If West opens a weak NT, East will transfer to spades and, if he does so at the two level, South may be able to double to show hearts. West has five-card spade support so will break the transfer, jumping to 3♠, and East will go on to the doomed game.

Were South to declare a heart contract, which is not very likely when E/W have both the majority of the high cards and an 11-card trump fit, nine tricks are the maximum available.

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

Board 9 ♠ Dealer N
 ♥ AQJ92 Vul: E-W
 ♦ K753
 ♣ 9873

♠ Q1097	♠ J6532
♥ 107643	♥ K
♦ 96	♦ J1084
♣ KJ	♣ AQ5

♠ AK84	
♥ 85	
♦ AQ2	
♣ 10642	

Should North open the bidding with 10 HCP? Some will do so, taking into account that their five-card suit is a good one and that the vulnerability is in their favour. If they do open 1♥, the next question will be, 'Should East overcall 1♠ on a weak suit, with a bare king in the opponents' suit, and at adverse vulnerability. Some will swear that it is right to bid, but I am not convinced.

East will be glad to have passed when South responds 1♠. If North now rebids 2♣ or 2♦, South can just jump to 3NT, concluding the auction.

With spades bid on the right and hearts on the left, what should West lead against 3NT? A spade looks very risky, as does a club. A diamond is safe enough, though it could pick up a slightly different holding for declarer in partner's hand. I wouldn't be surprised to see a fair number of Wests leading a heart, and now declarer has a big decision to take. Yes, left to himself he would probably have led to the queen, intending to repeat the finesse should that win the trick, but there is a realistic alternative now of playing low from dummy and using the power of the eight. That is a big winner on this layout, as East wins the bare king in either scenario but, if the king beats the queen declarer has only eight tricks at best, while if the king beats fresh air declarer can later finesse the ♥9 and has four heart tricks and nine in all.

If North does not open the bidding the thin game is unlikely to be reached. South may open a weak NT and North transfer to hearts. There are eight or nine tricks available in a heart contract, nine usually requiring that declarer drop the bare king of hearts. If South opens 1♣ and rebids 1NT over the 1♥ response, North will take out into hearts. If South opens 1♣

then rebids 1♠, North can give jump preference to 3♣, assuming that the 1♠ rebid promises genuine clubs. Three Clubs ends the auction and makes exactly unless declarer is sufficiently inspired as to drop the bare king.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10 ♠ 7 Dealer E
 ♥ AKQJ5 Vul: Both
 ♦ 943
 ♣ AK107

♠ QJ10983	♠ 542
♥ 42	♥ 1086
♦ Q10	♦ K82
♣ J43	♣ 8652

♠ AK6	
♥ 973	
♦ AJ765	
♣ Q9	

Six Hearts is a good slam for N/S, and 6NT also a playable and successful contract.

Say that N/S are playing Acol with a weak NT. South will open 1♦ and rebid 1NT over a 1♥ response. North can use some kind of Checkback to discover that South has a maximum with three-card heart support. Once South confirms that he also has a diamond control, North may well just drive to slam.

Say that the lead is a spade. In 6♥, declarer wins the ace, draws trumps in three rounds, then ducks a diamond. He wins the return, plays the ace of diamonds and the second top spade, on which he discards his last diamond. He can now ruff a diamond and, with the suit three-two, that sets up a twelfth trick without having to worry about the jack of clubs. Of course, if the defence leads a club at any stage this all becomes unnecessary.

In 6NT by South on a spade lead, South can win and cash all the hearts, pitching diamonds from hand, then lead a low diamond to the jack. That picks up a second diamond trick if East has K10 or Q10 doubleton. Most of the time, this will not be the case, but there is still the chance of

four club tricks, either because of the actual position or because a defender is squeezed if guarding both minors – and even the six of spades could act as a threat against one or other defender.

Plus 1440 should score very well, while +1430 also rates to be above average.

Not so many people play strong jump shifts these days, but North could get his strength across immediately if playing them by responding 2♥ to the 1♦ opening.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11	♠ 1093	Dealer S
	♥ J1073	Vul: None
	♦ 4	
	♣ KQ986	
♠ K4	♠ AJ762	
♥ AQ6	♥ 9842	
♦ KQJ1075	♦ A63	
♣ A10	♣ 2	
	♠ Q85	
	♥ K5	
	♦ 982	
	♣ J7543	

A club lead dooms a NT slam on this one, but 6♠, or the much superior 6♦ both make, and 6♦ is an excellent contract and where you would like to play, looking at just the E/W hands.

If West opens 2NT, as some will for sure, slam is likely to be missed as diamonds will never come into the equation. If playing simple Stayman, East will respond 3♣ and follow up with 3♥, Smolen, to show five spades and four hearts. When West bids 3NT in response to that, East will pass. There are overtricks to be had in 3NT, how many depending on what risks declarer is willing to take after a club lead – six rounds of diamonds will cause South some pain.

The notionally weaker opening bid of 1♦ offers far better prospects of reaching slam. Say that East responds 1♠ and West rebids 3NT,

showing a powerful hand with good long diamonds, too strong for an invitational 3♦ rebid. With three-card trump support, two aces and a likely ruffing value, it is clear for East to go on. If East bids 4♦ to make it clear what is going on, West can cuebid 4♥ and that covers East's only worry. Whether East now cuebids 4♠ or asks for key-cards, someone will very shortly be in a position to bid the slam.

Say that a club is led against 6♦. Declarer can win the ace, cash the king of diamonds, and play three rounds of spades, ruffing high. On the actual layout, that produces two extra spade winners, so declarer draws trumps ending in dummy and takes a club and a heart discard, then takes the heart finesse for the overtrick. Had trumps been two-two, declarer could have taken a club ruff so not required the heart finesse.

If spades do not break in such a kindly fashion, declarer can ruff the club loser, ruff another spade high, then lead a diamond to the ace. If trumps are two-two, the fifth spade provides a discard and the heart finesse is once again for the overtrick. If diamonds are three-one, the long spade cannot be cashed so declarer needs the heart finesse for the contract.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	7	5	6	5
W	1	7	5	6	5

=====

Board 12	♠ J954	Dealer W
	♥ Vul: N-S	
	♦ K10764	
	♣ AQJ7	
♠ KQ1086	♠ A2	
♥ AK107	♥ 65432	
♦ AQ	♦ J985	
♣ K2	♣ 106	
	♠ 73	
	♥ QJ98	
	♦ 32	
	♣ 98543	

Most Wests will open 2NT to get the general hand-type and strength across, though a few may prefer to start with 1♠ as one of the major-suit cards rates to get lost in the shuffle

after a 2NT opening. No matter, the final contract will almost always be 4♥ played by West.

North is endplayed at trick one. A club or a diamond gives a trick immediately, but the majority will lead a spade unless West has bid the suit. Declarer will run that round to the ten then cash a top hearts, getting the bad news. A spade to the ace is followed by a second heart to the jack and king, and declarer will take a club pitch on the king of spades. South ruffs the spade, cashes the queen of hearts, and plays a club through. North wins the ace and plays a second club, eventually coming to the king of diamonds for the setting trick.

It is possible to let 4♥ make. North might lead a minor suit at trick one and now there are only two heart losers and one in the minors. Also, on the line described above, if South puts a diamond through rather than a club after cashing the queen of hearts, declarer can rise with the ace and take a second club discard on the spades, losing just two hearts and one diamond. Nonetheless, 4♥ down one should be the popular outcome – well, popular with N/S, at least.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13

♠ J984	Dealer N
♥ J72	Vul: Both
♦ Q53	
♣ 532	
♠ KQ10	♠ 763
♥ A9853	♥ Q64
♦ 962	♦ A74
♣ A8	♣ QJ74
	♠ A52
	♥ K10
	♦ KJ108
	♣ K1096

If South opens a weak NT that may end the auction and West lead a low heart. When declarer plays low from dummy, most Easts will put in the queen, but this is likely to cost a trick in the long run, even though declarer does not

have a sure entry to dummy's jack. If East can divine that this is the heart position so play to the first trick declarer wins the ten but the king then falls under the ace and the defence has the rest of the suit. This first trick is quite important, as Easts' play may make the difference between down one and down two, vulnerable. With E/W making a heart or NT partscore, the difference could be a lot of matchpoints.

Where South has to open 1♣/♦, West will overcall 1♥ and East raise to 2♥. There are between eight and nine tricks available in 2♥, the key being declarer's heart play. While South is known to hold the bulk of the missing high cards, there is still room for North to have the ♥K, so declarer will do well to hold the trump losers to one.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14

♠ K652	Dealer E
♥ A	Vul: None
♦ QJ2	
♣ AKQ103	
♠ J74	♠ Q1098
♥ Q10763	♥ KJ542
♦ K104	♦ 873
♣ J6	♣ 5
	♠ A3
	♥ 98
	♦ A965
	♣ 98742

N/S are cold for 6♣. Say that North opens a natural 1♣, promising four or more cards in the suit. South can respond 3♣, limit raise, and when South shows up with two aces North will be able to bid Six. That fifth trump plus two aces means that South should be very happy to co-operate in a slam hunt once North instigates one.

If North's 1♣ opening does not promise four cards, South will respond 1♦, North rebid 2♠, and South perhaps jump to 4♣ to show genuine club support. If North now cuebids 4♥,

South will co-operate and slam should again be reached.

The above, of course, assumes that E/W will not get involved in the auction. At Love All, East might scrape up a 1♥ overcall. South could cuebid to show a constructive raise to 3♣ or more, but might content himself with a simple 2♣ raise if facing a potential three-card suit. Now West can make a pre-emptive heart raise, perhaps to 3♥, as the 3-5-3-2 shape suggests a lot of losers, making 4♥ a bit over-aggressive despite the assumed 10-card fit. If South has shown a constructive club raise, North might cuebid 4♥ now and South, with the other two side-suit aces, is surely worth a 6♣ bid.

For all that the above suggests that 6♣ can always be reached, I suspect that it will be missed a lot of the time and that +920 will score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15 ♠ J98 Dealer S
 ♥ K74 Vul: N-S
 ♦ J9865
 ♣ A5

♠ AQ1065	♠ 43
♥ 93	♥ AQ105
♦ A102	♦ Q74
♣ KJ3	♣ 10872

 ♠ K72
 ♥ J862
 ♦ K3
 ♣ Q964

If West opens 1♠, East will respond INT and that should be that. The cards lie very well for E/W, so the play should be just about how many overtricks declarer can come to. Nine tricks looks about right, as there is no suit the defence can play on to any great effect apart, perhaps, from an unlikely diamond lead from South.

If West opens INT, that will also end the auction. The play will be more challenging played from this side of the table, because

North will lead a diamond and now declarer must be careful to make the maximum number of tricks. However, if he ducks a diamond he will still be in control though, while nine tricks can still be made, eight is a distinct possibility.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16 ♠ Dealer W
 ♥ 852 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AQ107532
 ♣ 752

♠ 954	♠ Q108
♥ KJ109	♥ A74
♦ 86	♦ K9
♣ AQ64	♣ KJ1098

 ♠ AKJ7632
 ♥ Q63
 ♦ J4
 ♣ 3

North will open 3♦ and East, while having opening values and with diamonds the shortest suit, is not really suitable for a take-out double with neither four-card major, nor for a 3NT overcall with only 13 HCP, so should pass.

Will South be able to resist the urge to introduce his own long suit? Very unlikely. For one thing, E/W could still have game on in the other major, so it is a good idea to bid spades in an attempt to shut them out or give North the opportunity to bid 4♠ over an opposing 4♥ should he have some spade support.

If South responds 3♠, North will scurry back to his own long suit, and South should pass 4♦, which goes down a couple of tricks. If South insists on playing it in spades, there are only seven tricks on accurate defence, so 4♠ is down three for a poor score.

Any South who is willing to pass out 3♦ will score well as that is down only one, while West is not coming in if 3♦ gets round to him. As it happens, West can make 10 tricks in a heart or club contract, East nine, so the deal does belong to E/W, but there is no good way into the auction and, even if they did find one, they

might go minus, which would be disastrous on this deal.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 17

♠ Q873	Dealer N
♥ Q764	Vul: None
♦ A52	
♣ J10	
♠ J52	♠ AK6
♥ KJ3	♥ A95
♦ 7	♦ KQ1064
♣ K98732	♣ AQ
	♠ 1094
	♥ 1082
	♦ J983
	♣ 654

E/W can make either 6♣ or 6NT, but will rarely bid a slam. It is also not automatic to find a line to make 12 tricks. However, say that East is declarer on the ten of spades lead. Declarer can unblock the clubs, not knowing that he can actually afford to overtake the queen due to the jack and ten being doubleton, cross to the king of hearts and riddle out the clubs. North, who has the guard in all the other three suits is crushed on the run of the clubs. If he unguards either major-suit queen West's jack becomes a winner, while if he keeps fewer than three diamonds a diamond to the king followed by a low diamond back brings down the ace and creates a second diamond winner as the twelfth trick.

Of course, there are other less successful lines of play available, ones which do not require all the defensive values to be with North. A simple soul might rely on the finesse of the jack of hearts and, when that loses, there are no second chances.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 18

♠ AJ863	Dealer E
♥ 10972	Vul: N-S
♦ 10	
♣ AQ8	
♠ Q2	♠ 54
♥ QJ6	♥ AK853
♦ AK842	♦ J95
♣ K43	♣ 976
	♠ K1097
	♥ 4
	♦ Q763
	♣ J1052

With spades two-two and the ♣K inside there are no fewer than 11 tricks available to N/S in a spade contract. They will, however, do well to bid to game, particularly as the vulnerability does not encourage a save over a possible opposing heart game.

If there are two passes to West and he opens a strong NT, North may use a Landy 2♣ to show both majors. News that his opponent has hearts may discourage East from getting involved, and South may jump to 3♠, though that is by no means compulsory. Should North bid on over that – probably not if he remembers the old saying that there is no premium for bidding thin games at matchpoints.

If West opens 1♦, North is more likely to overcall 1♠ than make a take-out double. East will make a negative double and South jump to 3♠ – this time there is a known nine-card fit and there is also the other major to be shut out.

Three Spades may end the auction. If West cannot bear to pass, he may make a responsive double, which sees East respond 4♥. If left there undoubled, 4♥ would be down town for -100, an excellent result for E/W with N/S making all those tricks in a spade contract, but North may double and collect +300, or may 'see' South's heart shortage due to the E/W

bidding and take a stab at 4♠, expecting to be able to take at least two heart ruffs in dummy.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19 ♠ AKJ8 Dealer S
 ♥ 7642 Vul: E-W
 ♦ KQJ8
 ♣ 7

♠ 732	♠ 95
♥ AQJ10	♥ K83
♦ 4	♦ 109762
♣ QJ653	♣ K108

 ♠ Q1064
 ♥ 95
 ♦ A53
 ♣ A942

There will normally be two passes to North, who has the annoying 4-4-4-1 distribution which is always tricky to handle.

If playing strong NT and five-card majors, North will have no option but to open 1♦. When South responds 1♠, North is borderline between a raise to 2♠ and to 3♠. The majority will probably like their side-suit singleton sufficiently to opt for 3♠, and South will go on to game.

If playing Acol, the traditional approach was to open the middle of three touching four-card suits. However, opening 1♥ with the intention to rebid 2♦ over a 2♣ response, inviting preference back to those four low hearts, cannot be right. While a long way from being ideal, better is to open 1♦ and, if need be, repeat the chunky four-card suit.

On this occasion, if North opens 1♦ it doesn't matter what basic system is in use, South will respond 1♠ and the problem will not arise.

Superficially, there are only two losers in a spade contract, but it is not quite possible to negotiate all the ruffs necessary to come to 11 tricks as, in the process, West will be able to take a diamond ruff as a declarer tries to get back and forth between his hand and dummy. If declarer is careless, he might even concede

two ruffs and go down in a contract which can be made very easily.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20 ♠ K864 Dealer W
 ♥ K6 Vul: Both
 ♦ 10942
 ♣ KQ6

♠ 753	♠ Q2
♥ 42	♥ AQ1087
♦ Q873	♦ J5
♣ AJ54	♣ 9873

 ♠ AJ109
 ♥ J953
 ♦ AK6
 ♣ 102

North is close to having an opening bid but the hand just doesn't feel like an opening bid and most are likely to pass at this vulnerability. East might open light in third seat though, again, being vulnerable will dissuade the majority, leaving it to South to set the ball rolling.

If South opens a weak NT, will North invite game or just pass? Probably he will use Stayman then raise the 2♠ response to 3♠ to invite game and, with a good weak NT, South will go on to game.

If system dictates that South open 1♣ or 1♦, North will respond 1♠ and South raise to 2♠. If North now invites game, South can again accept the invitation, though I have no doubt that some will stay out of the borderline game.

Say that the lead is a diamond. Declarer's first priority is to try to find a discard for the third-round diamond loser. He wins the ace of diamonds and leads a club to the king. Now, mindful of the awkward entry situation, he leads a spade to the jack and, when that scores, leads a second club up. West will grab the ace this time and perhaps return a trump. Declarer wins the ace and leads a heart to the king and ace. Winning the diamond return in the North hand, he takes the diamond discard on the queen of clubs then leads a heart towards the

jack. That establishes both the jack of hearts and a heart ruff, and that means that there are 10 tricks. Not everyone will reach game, and not everyone will make it, so +620 should score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 21 ♠ J5 Dealer N
 ♥ AK653 Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ72
 ♣ A9

♠ Q1072	♠ A63
♥ 10	♥ J874
♦ A953	♦ 1086
♣ KQJ3	♣ 864

 ♠ K984
 ♥ Q92
 ♦ K4
 ♣ 10752

North opens 1♥ and most Souths will respond 1♠, a few of those playing five-card majors preferring to raise to 2♥. Either way, West is non-vulnerable, with sound opening values, and four cards in each of the unbid suits, so can make a take-out double.

Facing a 2♥ raise, North may be tempted to make a game try of 3♦, and South would accept such a try as king-doubleton is an excellent holding facing a game try. However, the four-one trump split means that there is a loser in each suit despite the favourably placed ace of spades, so 4♥ should be down a trick.

If South's response was 1♠, North may rebid 2♦ to show both the second suit and the fifth heart, and that will relieve East of the obligation to respond to the double, which he will be quite happy about. South will give preference to 2♥, and that may end the auction as North cannot assume that partner will hold a third heart for his simple preference.

E/W can be held to six tricks in the trump suit of their choice, so N/S's best approach is to play for a penalty, +300 being available. However, because N/S have a heart fit, it will

be tough for them to judge to do other than declarer the hand in hearts, the only question being at what level. Plus 140 should be a solid result, with some pairs getting too high so going minus.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22 ♠ A942 Dealer E
 ♥ K1094 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AJ10
 ♣ K8

♠ Q7	♠ K105
♥ 72	♥ AQJ63
♦ 986532	♦ 7
♣ J43	♣ AQ62

 ♠ J863
 ♥ 85
 ♦ KQ4
 ♣ 10975

East will open 1♥ and that will be followed by two passes. With a balanced 15 HCP and a sound heart stopper, North is likely to overcall 1NT, a bid for which the hand would be a minimum if made in second seat but is a maximum when made in the pass-out seat.

If 1NT ends the auction, East has no attractive lead so will probably choose ace followed by queen of hearts. That enables him to set up the fifth heart, but at the price of allowing declarer a second trick in the suit. Though North has only six tricks at double dummy, in practice he will usually manage a ninth, as East can be endplayed for a second time later in the play after giving up the extra heart trick.

But East may not be satisfied with bidding only once on his semi-three-suited 16 HCP hand. If he rebids 2♣, West will have a close decision whether to pass, show heart preference, or introduce the diamonds. Of the three options, bidding 2♦ looks the most flexible, as it allows East to either pass or go back to hearts, while either passing or bidding 2♥ would tend to be committal.

Two Diamonds is the place to be on the E/W hands. Though 2♥ can also be made, the play is easier in a diamond contract, as declarer can get to his hand more readily than with a different trump suit.

The other possibility is that East might double INT, if that is played as asking partner to bid rather than the much less frequent double for penalties. Double keeps spades in the game as well as hearts and clubs, though in practice the best trump suit is likely to be missed when West responds 2♦ and East corrects to hearts. Well, that is just fine, as, as we have already discussed, 2♥ can be made and that may provide the top score.

If N/S find the spade fit, they should be held to seven tricks, losing two hearts, two clubs, and two spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 23 ♠ AK Dealer S
 ♥ 754 Vul: Both
 ♦ 1096
 ♣ KJ942

♠ QJ63	♠ 10954
♥ AQJ10	♥ 86
♦ Q8	♦ J752
♣ Q108	♣ 763

♠ 872
 ♥ K932
 ♦ AK43
 ♣ A5

South has a weak NT and, if that is the opening bid, West is just shy of being able to double. West will be well pleased to not have doubled when North invites the NT game and South accepts.

The club position is just as South would have wanted, meaning that there are nine top tricks. If West has led a spade, which looks normal to me, nine tricks should be the limit, with the ace of hearts poised over the king should either declarer or East play on the suit. A heart

opening lead will give an overtrick, and +630 should score very well.

If South opens 1♦, West will double and North, perhaps, redouble. E/W will wriggle into the four-four spade fit and, while 1♠ can be beaten by a trick, that would be insufficient compensation for the missed vulnerable game, and anyway nobody is close to having a double of 1♠, so N/S should ignore the possibility of taking a penalty and bid to 3NT.

And if South has to open 1♣? Well, in the modern game a lot of people seem to ignore the need for support for an unbid minor, and will make a take-double on this hand because it is four-four in the majors. This is particularly the case where the 1♣ opening does not promise genuine clubs and the next player just wants to get in to show opening values.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 24 ♠ J52 Dealer W
 ♥ Q864 Vul: None
 ♦ 109
 ♣ AKJ6

♠ AQ108	♠ 7
♥ 972	♥ KJ53
♦ J842	♦ Q653
♣ 103	♣ 9874

♠ K9643
 ♥ A10
 ♦ AK7
 ♣ Q52

Bearing in mind that Love All is the best time to declare on a competitive partscore deal, with both sides going down only in fifties, North will often upgrade and open in second seat, whether that means opening INT or opening 1♣. On this deal it will not matter whether North opens or not as N/S have a combined 27 HCP and a five-three spade fit, so were always going to bid to game, the only question being 3NT or 4♠.

Four Spades should be an unlucky contract, with three trump losers plus a heart, so down

one. Three No Trump is less clear and, to some degree depends who is declarer. Yes, at double dummy 3NT always fails by a trick, but double dummy is not real life and it is easy to see how the contract might be allowed to make.

Say that North is declarer and has not shown the hearts, e.g. 1♣ – 1♠ – INT – 3NT. If East leads a diamond, the defence should prevail, but a heart lead gives declarer his eighth trick and he can establish a ninth by playing on spades.

If North passes and South opens a strong NT then shows spades in response to Stayman, West will expect dummy to contain four hearts to explain the use of Stayman, so should lead a diamond, and again the defence prevails.

It will be interesting to see how often 3NT makes and how often it is defeated.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 25 ♠ A54 Dealer N
 ♥ Q932 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 52
 ♣ K965

♠ KQ97	♠ 10632
♥ 87	♥ 106
♦ KQ876	♦ A10
♣ 108	♣ AQJ72

♠ J8	
♥ AKJ54	
♦ J943	
♣ 43	

East will open 1♣ and South overcall 1♥. If E/W play the popular style where bidding 1♠ would show five now, West will instead make a negative double to show only four spades. North can raise hearts to the three level with his four-card support. The hand is neither a pre-emptive raise nor a full-blooded constructive raise to this level, but one of those will have to be made unless the partnership also plays something called a Mixed Raise. If playing these, there is a bid to show exactly

that, a sort of in-between hand with four-card support. A jump cuebid of 3♣ is as good as any bid to give this meaning.

Should East bid 3♠ freely on a minimum opening hand? Some will, and West will go on to game, while some will argue that a 3♠ on a minimum makes it too difficult for West to know when to bid on to game and when not. The latter group will pass and wait for partner to show extras via a double of the opposing 3/4♥. This latter group may still get to game, but some will stop in 3♠ and score poorly on the board. Well, they can console themselves with the fact that, whilst in practice they are scoring badly, 4♠ is a poor contract, requiring both black suits to behave, so those who stop short of game have earned a moral victory as compensation for their poor score.

The friendly lie means that there are 10 tricks in a spade contract and what is friendly for one side is unfriendly for the other, so there are only eight tricks in a heart contract. Nonetheless, N/S should be very pleased to be permitted to declare a heart contract, especially if not doubled.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26 ♠ KJ Dealer E
 ♥ AJ98532 Vul: Both
 ♦ 76
 ♣ 106

♠ AQ93	♠ 1076
♥ KQ10	♥ 74
♦ J1032	♦ AQ85
♣ A9	♣ 8752

♠ 8542	
♥ 6	
♦ K94	
♣ KQJ43	

West has a strong NT and, if that is the opening bid, North will overcall to show hearts via whatever bid the partnership use to do so. I think that the 2-7-2-2 shape and vulnerability should dissuade North from making a jump overcall as the hand has too many losers. East

doesn't look to have quite sufficient to make a take-out double, so N/S are likely to be left to play in 2♥. With the top spades and diamond onside, 2♥ should be made exactly, losing two trumps and one trick in each side-suit.

If E/W play four-card majors, West may open 1♠, North overcall 2♥, and East compete with 2♠. If that ends the auction, repeated club leads could cause declarer a problem and see the contract fail by a trick. The superficially attractive ace and another heart to give South a ruff weakens the defensive trump holding and declarer needs only to play ace and another spade to be successful.

North might make a pre-emptive overcall at the three level but, despite South's high cards, 3♥ is doomed. Again, because of the 2-2-2 side-suit shape, if West opens 1♣/♦ a 2♥ overcall is probably wiser than 3♥. It is likely to win the contract, as East lacks the values to double and West lacks the distribution. Of course, facing a 1♦ opening, East could compete with 3♦, but that runs the risk of West expecting more and going on to 3NT. If North can resist the temptation to lead his long suit, 3NT should not be allowed to make.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 27 ♠ KQ2 Dealer S
 ♥ A93 Vul: None
 ♦ J986
 ♣ J54

♠ 1043		♠ AJ986
♥ J4		♥ 10
♦ AK105		♦ Q43
♣ A972		♣ Q863
	♠ 75	
	♥ KQ87652	
	♦ 72	
	♣ K10	

South has a classic 3♥ opener and West is just short of a double – with these limited values he would need to have four cards in the other major to get involved in the auction at this stage.

Now it starts to get interesting. If North passes, East has the right shortage to come in and might either make a 3♠ overcall, which gets the fifth spade into the game but rather overstates the overall playing strength of the hand, or can double, losing the fifth spade but keeping all options open for West.

We can see that 3♠ is the big winner, as West raises to game and it is just up to declarer to bring it home, which essentially comes down to how to play the club suit. Restricted Choice suggests playing South for ♣K10 rather than ♣J10, but against that South did open with a pre-empt. Does that reduce the chance of South holding the ♣K?

If East doubles 3♥, there is no way that West will be able to bid spades on ten-to-three, and with his opening values he may commit to a minor-suit game by jumping to 4NT. Five Clubs, of course, has three inescapable losers even with a winning club play. And if West thinks that the safest way to ensure a plus score is to pass out the double? Well, 3♥ is just on the club guess, so for some this will prove to be the worst option of all.

Finally, North might rise 3♥ to 4♥. If someone finds a take-out double of 4♥, at least passing it means a plus score, but getting to spades will require that East overcall 4♠, all on his own. Now that would be a brave call.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 28 ♠ AJ62 Dealer W
 ♥ J107 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 875
 ♣ 863

♠ KQ984		♠ 753
♥ AQ4		♥ K83
♦ 92		♦ 10643
♣ QJ9		♣ 1052
	♠ 10	
	♥ 9652	
	♦ AKQJ	
	♣ AK74	

Even if happy to open a weak NT with a five-card major, the West hand looks a little good for that action with all its high cards in combination with other high cards. Say that West opens 1♠ and there are two passes to South. The South hand is a classic double and North will, I suppose, respond INT.

South has enough with which to invite game, so raises to 2NT, and North, with a minimum for the INT bid, passes.

Whether or not declarer is given a second spade trick, 2NT can always be held to eight tricks. If declarer plays on hearts for a ninth trick, West just sets up the long spades, while if declarer ducks a club that is the defence's fifth winner – of course, they do have to recognise that fact and cash their winners, so 3NT could make once in a while.

If West does open a weak NT, South will double and E/W can only survive by wriggling out into 2♣. That can be doubled but should be down only one for –100, which is just fine with +120 readily available to N/S in NT.

If West opens a strong NT, it is not quite as clear, as not everyone will have a penalty double available to them. Again, if South does double, West needs to run to the relative safety of his five-card spade suit. One No Trump doubled by West will be no fun – except for those sitting N/S, of course.

Makeable Contracts

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