Commentary
for the
IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs

Thursday 5th November 2026

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for participating in the Irish Bridge Union (IBU) Simultaneous Pairs. This will be the last ever IBU Sims, as the IBU will no longer exist after the formation of a new 32-county Irish bridge body next January. Who knows, perhaps these commentaries will end up for sale on eBay as collectors' items!

The funds raised from these tournaments will be handed over to the new body by the IBU, so you are continuing to contribute to the development of Irish bridge, and your support is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the opportunity to test yourself against your fellow players across Ireland (and indeed overseas as well). As always, the deals, prepared randomly with no manual intervention whatsoever, provided plenty of tricky decisions. Thanks to the experts who have provided their commentary to help us to deal with the problems: Brian Senior (Monday), Enda Glynn (Tuesday), Paul Delaney (Wednesday), Enda Muphy (Thursday), and Karel De Raeymaeker (Friday).

Don't forget you check your standings in the overall results on the ECatsBridge Website. You'll find the daily commentaries there too.

We'll be back with the first ever Bridge Ireland Simultaneous Pairs in the first week of March. If your club hasn't played before and would like to sign up, please contact Head Office on 353-1-4929666.

Gordon Lessells,

President, Irish Bridge Union

Board 1	♠ AJ8753 ♥ K6 ♦ Q106 ♣ J9		Dealer N Vul: None
♠ 10 ♥ 7542 ♦ A843 ♣ A872			♠ KQ942 ♥ 108 ♦ 952 ♣ 1053
	♠ 6 ♥ AQJ93 ♦ KJ7 ♣ KQ64		

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

And so Mr Bond, we meet again! I feel like Ernst Blofeld (Goldfinger) or some other Bond villain. Back once more to tantalise and entrap you.

As always, I give the bidding and play as if I were playing with myself (stoppit!!) against myself and myself. What I'm not doing is resulting – miraculously arriving in the optimum contract on every deal. Rather, I'm suggesting bidding and play that I regard as long-run winners. Mind you, when John Maynard Keynes was challenged about the long-run implications of his economic policies, he laconically replied "In the long run, we are all dead". Quite so.

As we go along, I'll distil and number a few **Tips (11 in all)** which I think will stand you all in good stead going forward. We are playing strong NT and 5-card majors, weak 2's in 3 suits, 1♣ promises 2+ cards. RKCB is the 1430 variant. Our signals are smiles and snarls. Marquis of Queensbury rules apply.

Here we go with **Tip 1 – Checkback**. South needs to force to at least game over 2♠ but also wants to know if North has heart support. A new minor at the 3-level fits the bill. Here, 3♣ (Checkback) may or may not be natural – its just a forcing bid, saying "we are going to Game at least, do you have support for my major?" South is "checking back" to his major, asking about support. North does not have 3 hearts, so signs off in 3NT.

East will probably lead a diamond, and as long as West keeps his clubs, ten tricks is the outcome. Anyone playing in 4♥ is likely to make an overtrick unless West leads a trump and continues trumps when in with ♣A, thus preventing a club ruff in dummy.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 2	♠ 8		Dealer E
	♥ Q984		Vul: N-S
	♦ AJ10974		
	♣ K2		
♠ Q1073			♠ K964
♥ K32			♥ AJ10765
♦ Q6			♦ 8
♣ 10873			♣ A6
	♠ AJ52		
	♥		
	♦ K532		
	♣ QJ954		

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Dbl
2♥	3♦	3♥	5♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This deal is all about hand evaluation. If you didn't find a takeout double as South, words fail me. Or rather they occur to me in abundance, but this being a family show, I can't use 'em.

The key bid comes at South's second turn. EW have at least a 9-card heart fit. Partner has values and at least 5 diamonds. Clearly, the preponderance of partner's values lie outside the heart suit, therefore they will fit very nicely with South's hand. Give North a club honour and where are 3 losers going to come from? So it's a confident 5♦ bid. A situation like this is called a "30-point deck" – you are void in a suit where opponents have the honours, so not only have you no losers in that suit, but such values as partner does have are bound to complement yours. All of which leads us to **Tip 2 – bid aggressively in a 30-point deck situation.**

There are 12 easy tricks in diamonds, despite the 21 combined NS points (including the redundant HQ). Points schmoints, as the saying goes. Or as the late and very great Pat Walshe used to say - "Only grocers count points".

And speaking of the grocery trade, I've just stocked up on our wine of choice for the session. You don't think I write this stuff sober, do you? I'm nosing a positively impish Chardonnay. Cheers!

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 3	♠ 64 ♥ QJ975 ♦ 6 ♣ J10653		Dealer S Vul: E-W
♠ J97532 ♥ 10 ♦ K54 ♣ A92		♠ AK108 ♥ AK3 ♦ Q10972 ♣ K	
	♠ Q ♥ 8642 ♦ AJ83 ♣ Q874		

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	2♥	Dbl	4♥
4♠	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Saints preserve us. Two slams in the first three boards. Such gaiety and frivolity. Not only that, we also have another tip! Bring back the Spanish Inquisition *(Monty Python moment – "no-one expects the Spanish Inquisition!")*

Tip 3 – "the only excuse for not pre-empting is that it isn't your turn to bid". Modern bidding theory strongly favours aggressive pre-emptive action, particularly non-vulnerable. Here, North is non vul against vul and South has passed. He's got 4 points, so he knows EW are cold for game at least. He should open a weak 2♥ every day of the week and twice on Sundays. Some pairs will play 2♥ as showing hearts and a minor (Tartan / Lucas / Muiderberg). Either way, EW should reach their slam. Once West finds a free bid of 3♠, East has slam in mind. Keycard Blackwood may not be best – if West responds 5♣ (as here) showing one, East may fear they're off the cashing DA and K. Better to bid 5♥, clearly a slam try which tells partner to focus on his values in the minors. West has an easy 6♠.

Sadly and tragically, North can lead his singleton diamond and get a ruff. Sic transit gloria mundi. Heigh ho. As JFK wryly observed, "nobody ever said life was fair". Damon Runyan's take was that "all of life is 6 to 5 against".

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 4	♠ Q854 ♥ AJ1098 ♦ 54 ♣ K6		Dealer W Vul: Both
♠ A6 ♥ K6432 ♦ KQ3 ♣ J82		♠ KJ10 ♥ 5 ♦ J109862 ♣ 973	
	♠ 9732 ♥ Q7 ♦ A7 ♣ AQ1054		

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	2♦	Pass
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

A great competitive pairs deal. First off, I would NOT recommend responding 1NT as East. It will go down at least 3 vulnerable. I think East should pass, downgrading for his singleton in partner's suit. He hopes to get a chance to bid diamonds later.

South has a normal takeout double and North a normal pass to convert for penalties. NOW East comes in with 2♦, showing pretty much what he has. North bids 2♠ (no need to get excited, South passed 2♦). Ten tricks cannot be prevented, as even on a diamond lead, declarer can play three rounds of clubs, pitching his diamond loser. There are just 3 spade losers, and 170 will score just fine.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 5	♠ 752 ♥ K109 ♦ J73 ♣ KQ63	Dealer N Vul: N-S
♠ 109 ♥ A742 ♦ 962 ♣ A975		♠ 843 ♥ J83 ♦ Q1084 ♣ 1042
	♠ AKQJ6 ♥ Q65 ♦ AK5 ♣ J8	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Are you sitting comfortably? Here comes **Tip 4 – avoid leading from Ace empty fourth (i.e. no honour bar the Ace) against NT contracts.** This proposition is heavily supported by statistics. West should therefore lead ♦6, second-highest from small cards. South wins and plays on Clubs. When West wins CA and continues diamonds, South must duck to ensure 10 tricks (otherwise it's just 9).

If West originally leads away from either of his Aces, there are 11 easy tricks and a joint top score. If South plays in 4♠, there are just 10 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 6	♠ QJ82	Dealer E
	♥ KQ	Vul: E-W
	♦ K105	
	♣ A1092	

♠ K7653		♠ 9
♥ AJ98		♥ 107653
♦ 32		♦ AQ876
♣ 54		♣ 73
	♠ A104	
	♥ 42	
	♦ J94	
	♣ KQJ86	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Maybe you want to rebid 1NT as South? Not for me. After 1♣-1♠, South sees the red suits wide open, so a raise to 2♠ is by far the most descriptive rebid (it does NOT promise 4). Slice it and dice it as you will, the bottom line is that NS have 26 combined points but no game. Cue much weeping and gnashing of teeth. Lots of 100s and 150s for EW.

It's enough to drive a man to drink. Speaking of which…….

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 7	♠ QJ83		Dealer S
	♥ 7542		Vul: Both
	♦ K5		
	♣ 972		
♠ K754			♠ A2
♥ AJ9			♥ Q83
♦ 873			♦ QJ1094
♣ QJ8			♣ 643
	♠ 1096		
	♥ K106		
	♦ A62		
	♣ AK105		

West	North	East	South
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Those of you who count 10s as half a point may upgrade the South hand to a strong NT opener. Not the worst idea in the world.

Careful defence beats 1NT. Spade to the Ace, ♦Q switch. South needs to win in hand to keep ♦K as an entry to the spades. West must be careful to hold up ♠K to the 3rd round of the suit.

A club switch from East at trick 2 looks likely to let 1NT out for a great NS result.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 8	♠ A97		Dealer W
	♥ AQJ10		Vul: None
	♦ 8		
	♣ Q8732		
♠ KQ85			♠ J4
♥ K9			♥ 8653
♦ Q1073			♦ A6542
♣ KJ5			♣ A10
	♠ 10632		
	♥ 742		
	♦ KJ9		
	♣ 964		

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	2♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Time for another tip! **Tip 5 – be prepared to overcall at the one level on a good four-card suit that you want partner to lead.**

Here, North absolutely wants a heart lead if East winds up declaring. Bidding 1♥ ensures he'll get it. If South raises hearts with just 3 it isn't the end of the world. The alternative is for North to make a takeout double – nothing wrong with it, but I'm a 1♥ guy.

On this deal, 9 tricks in diamonds should be a common occurrence.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 9	♠ 5	Dealer N
	♥ 10765	Vul: E-W
	♦ AKQ109	
	♣ A103	
♠ 87632		♠ KQ
♥ QJ9		♥ AK84
♦ 74		♦ 53
♣ Q52		♣ J9876
	♠ AJ1094	
	♥ 32	
	♦ J862	
	♣ K4	

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♥	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

I love watching PMQs at Westminster (I had a sheltered childhood). The questioner asks about the PM's appointments for the day, and the PM replies "I refer the honourable lady/gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago". Then the questioner asks the question they really want to ask. It's delightfully dotty and quintessentially British.

Anyway, here I refer you to the answer I gave on Board 8. We're playing pairs, mes enfants. East must act over 1♦ but cannot double for fear of spade excitement from partner. Since he wants a heart lead if South declares, a 1♥ overcall it is. As Sherlock Holmes almost said "Once you eliminate the wrong options, you must by definition be left with the right one".

But soft! I feel another Tip coming on!! Sacre bleu! Zut alors!! Plume de ma Tante! My inner Robespierre is rampant. **Tip 6 – when partner opens one of a minor and opponents overcall 1♥, Double shows 4 spades and 1♠ shows 5 spades.** This is a situation that occurs frequently. There are variations on the theme, but the key is to agree something. Here, 1♠ from South shows 5. North will retreat to 2♦ and South is worth 3♦ but that should be that.

There are 11 tricks due to the very favourable ♠KQ doubleton with East. Plus 150 should be pretty good, as there are only 8 tricks in NT (even on a club lead, East gets in on a spade and the defence can now take their 4 heart tricks).

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 10

	♠ AJ972 ♥ 76532 ♦ Q104 ♣	Dealer E Vul: Both
♠ 64 ♥ K8 ♦ AJ85 ♣ K10763		♠ KQ10853 ♥ J ♦ 92 ♣ A984
	♠ ♥ AQ1094 ♦ K763 ♣ QJ52	

West	North	East	South
		2♠	Dbl
3♠	4♠	Pass	5♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Great deal. South has a takeout double of 2♠ and West bids 3♠ to increase the pre-empt (he's got honours in the other 3 suits that rate to work well over South's double). At this point North must be thinking slam. No losers in the black suits, 5 hearts in support of partner's presumed 4. 4♠ is the best way to say this, as a bid of 5♣ is likely to be read as natural.

South has nothing to spare for his original double. North's 4♠ hardly promises a minor suit Ace. 5♥ is therefore plenty. The favourable lie of ♦J means that Robert is your mother's brother.

If you opened 1♠ as East, your side is probably going to double NS in some number of hearts, making.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 11	♠ QJ86 ♥ 74 ♦ 9875 ♣ A95	Dealer S Vul: None
♠ 543 ♥ K862 ♦ Q63 ♣ 643		♠ AK72 ♥ QJ95 ♦ 10 ♣ QJ108
	♠ 109 ♥ A103 ♦ AKJ42 ♣ K72	

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	Pass	2♣*	2♦
2♥	3♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Tip 7 – Always compete for the partscore, especially non-vulnerable. East must act in the passout seat, which in turn means you need a system of overcalls when opponents open 1NT. In particular, you need a way to show both majors, and 2♣ is a common choice. 2♥ is likely to make for a good score, in spite of the double dummy position.

That's why, for the second time on this deal as prescribed by Tip 7, it pays to compete for the partscore, so South bids 2♦. North's 3♦ is the third manifestation of Tip 7. 3♦ is one down, but minus 50 beats minus 110 (2♥ making) every day.

Why am I so gung-ho about East getting into the auction? Well I don't know about you, but my partners always lead a diamond against 1NT on these hands. Yuk! Anyway, 1NT makes, and plus 90 for NS is a really good result.

Weak NTers will open 1♦ as South, and yet again Tip 7 applies! North will respond 1♠ and East MUST compete with a takeout double. 3D-1 is again the likely outcome.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 12	♠ J82	Dealer W
	♥ J97	Vul: N-S
	♦ KJ105	
	♣ AJ7	
♠ 975		♠ 43
♥ K1084		♥ Q2
♦ 74		♦ AQ983
♣ 8542		♣ Q1096
	♠ AKQ106	
	♥ A653	
	♦ 62	
	♣ K3	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣*	Pass	4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

* Drury (see below)

Heavens to Murgatroyd. Two more Tips on one deal! Musht be the wine or shomething.

Tip 8 – agree with your partner whether or not you open balanced 11-counts.

Tip 9 – adopt the Drury convention.

North has 11. My preference is to pass balanced 11-counts, but it's best to have an explicit agreement one way or the other. If you open on 11 and rebid 1NT you are showing 12-14 and partner with 12 or 13 himself might sail into game. Not for me, mes enfants.

Over South's 1♠ opening, the Drury convention is that a response of 2♣ to one of a major shows a really good support hand ***for a hand that passed originally***. So combining it with Tip 8, North can bid 2♣ Drury on his 11 count. Why is all of this such a good idea? Because light openings in third seat are very common, and Drury allows responder to show excellent support and good values at a low level without "penalising" partner for an enterprising opening.

On this hand, the Drury 2♣ response makes 4♠ automatic for South, and it takes a diamond lead to beat it. On a heart lead, South puts in the 9 and beats the Q with the A. He can now play on diamonds, and gets to pitch a heart loser on an established diamond.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 13 Dealer N Vul Both

	♠ J9876432 ♥ ♦ J63 ♣ J5	
♠ 5 ♥ J107 ♦ Q98 ♣ AK8432		♠ KQ ♥ A8 ♦ AK10752 ♣ Q109
	♠ A10 ♥ KQ965432 ♦ 4 ♣ 76	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	3♥
4♣	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥	Pass	6♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

I cannot tell a lie, I'm headed for slam in a minor here. Once West ventures 4♣ vulnerable, East has a lot in hand. Both 6♣ and 6♦ fail (as does 5♦ by East), due to the heart ruff. All the while, the highly unlikely spot of 6NT is cold.

Sic transit gloria mundi. Them's the breaks. If you can meet with triumph and disaster…….

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	1	-
S	-	-	1	1	-
E	4	4	-	-	6
W	5	5	-	-	6

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Board 14	♠ K875		Dealer E
	♥ QJ107		Vul: None
	♦ KQ10		
	♣ 74		
♠ 62			♠ AQJ43
♥ A			♥ 865
♦ A96			♦ 72
♣ AKQJ1083			♣ 952
	♠ 109		
	♥ K9432		
	♦ J8543		
	♣ 6		

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Having had our slam cruelly fail on the previous deal, here comes swift recompense. After a strong 2♣ sequence, the key bid is 4♣ by East. This is a strong bid, much stronger than 5♣. 3♠ would be silly, since 3♣ has just told you what's going to be trumps.

On the ♦K lead, you need the spade finesse. After drawing trumps, two spade finesses and a spade ruff deliver an overtrick, with ♣9 as the entry back to the long spade.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	7	1	-	4	6
W	7	1	-	4	6

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Board 15 ♠ A5 Dealer S
♥ AK87 Vul: N-S
♦ K943
♣ A94

♠ J1063 ♠ 87
♥ Q95 ♥ J10643
♦ Q ♦ A5
♣ KJ1032 ♣ Q865

♠ KQ942
♥ 2
♦ J108762
♣ 7

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Heavens to Betsy – 3 slams in a row!! I'm in urgent need of Vitamin C(hardonnay). I haven't been this excited since the Eagles reformed. Or since I first clapped eyes on Sophie Marceau. Or Sofia Coppola. Nurse!!! Mr Murphy in the isolation ward has become restive and requires immediate sedation and/or more Chardonnay.

Meantime, 12 tricks roll home once ♦Q obligingly pops up singleton onside.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	6	-	5	2
S	-	6	-	5	2
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

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Board 16	♠ 109875	Dealer W
	♥ QJ	Vul: E-W
	♦ K8	
	♣ J1076	

♠ AQ4	♠ 6
♥ A964	♥ K8732
♦ AQ10	♦ J9732
♣ K54	♣ 82

	♠ KJ32
	♥ 105
	♦ 654
	♣ AQ93

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

What's this? Suppressing a fit in partner's suit in order to become declarer in 3NT? Denounced from the pulpit, that's what I'll be.

From West's viewpoint, he's got a flat 4333 shape, 19 points and two AQs. Why put that hand on the table for the defenders to see? Why allow the lead to come through those AQs?

There are 11 tricks in 4♥. If North leads a spade against 3NT, that's also 11 tricks and a very good score. A club lead holds 3NT to 9 tricks.

So you see, there's method in my madness. Sadly, there tends to be madness in my method a lot of the time.

Zut alors! 16 boards done and not a child in the house washed. Nous had better get nos skates on.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 17	♠ J64		Dealer N
	♥ KQ		Vul: None
	♦ J9654		
	♣ Q104		
♠ Q2			♠ 1073
♥ 97			♥ AJ8642
♦ Q1087			♦ AK
♣ AK985			♣ 73
	♠ AK985		
	♥ 1053		
	♦ 32		
	♣ J62		

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♥	1♠
Dbl	2♠	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	3♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

I refer the honourable lady/gentleman to Tip 7, board 11 – compete aggressively for the partscore, especially non-vulnerable. West cannot sell out to 2♠, so he makes a second takeout double. East knows West has at most 2 hearts (he did not raise them), and at most 2 spades (bid and raised by oppos). So 3♥ shows six. East is not worth 3♥ over 2♠, that would show more values than he's got.

I expect to see a number of 170s dotted around the landscape. To hold 3♥ to nine tricks, the defence must cash just one top spade and then switch to a trump. In with the second spade, trumps are continued. Declarer can cash ♦AK and enter dummy in clubs to pitch his spade loser on ♦Q, but South ruffs. The defence take 2 spades and 2 trumps.

Just a point (and another Tip) to add here. In the unlikely event that NS compete to 3♠, EW absolutely have to double. If they don't, they collect 100 and a really bad score, whereas 300 would be a near top. **Tip 10 – be prepared to double aggressively at Pairs, even for one down.** If it makes, c'est la vie, just one bad score. But in the long run it's a winning strategy.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 18	♠ 52		Dealer E
	♥ 53		Vul: N-S
	♦ 3		
	♣ KQJ97542		
♠ Q97			♠ AJ103
♥ Q7			♥ J109
♦ 1098765			♦ AK42
♣ 86			♣ 103
	♠ K864		
	♥ AK8642		
	♦ QJ		
	♣ A		

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♥
4♦	5♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			

I refer the honourable lady/gentleman to the answer I gave to Board 3, and specifically to Tip 3 in relation to the need to pre-empt early and often.

West has huge diamond support and near-zero defensive values, and is non-vul. He's got a million losers and it seems clear that NS have game their way. So it's 4♦ for me, but I wouldn't take issue if you opted for 5♦. If you bid 2♦ or 3♦, I know where you live.

North comes under pressure. An 8-bagger with six losers, vul against not. Are you a man or a mouse? Bridge is a bidder's game, folks. It's rarely wise to pre-empt a pre-emptor, so letting 4♦ off can be defended. My rationale for bidding 5♣ is that West's pre-empt is telling me it's our hand.

Fortune smiles. Homer nods. 5♣ rolls home. 5♦x is only off 2. I'm reminded of something our highly distinguished international, Hugh McGann, once told me: "On hands like these, nobody really knows who can make what. Bidding one more is commonplace".

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 19	♠ Q83		Dealer S
	♥ J107		Vul: E-W
	♦ 32		
	♣ Q9742		
♠ AKJ10			♠ 52
♥ A654			♥ K32
♦ 104			♦ KQJ987
♣ J83			♣ 106
	♠ 9764		
	♥ Q98		
	♦ A65		
	♣ AK5		

West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♠	2♣	2♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

I refer the honourable lady/gentleman to the answer I gave to Board 8, specifically to Tip 5 therein in relation to overcalling good 4-card suits at the 1-level. West is not suitable for a takeout double because of the doubleton diamond. He CANNOT pass, that is simply losing bridge. We must compete, possums. So an imperfect 1♠ it is. Do you or do you not want a spade lead? Yiz can always tell it in confession. North's 2♣ shows 5, since 1♣ only promised 2. East will mention his diamonds and nobody has reason to disturb that.

9 tricks most likely. Even a losing spade finesse (playing opener for ♠Q) allows a heart pitch on the winning spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 20	♠ AK4		Dealer W
	♥ K52		Vul: Both
	♦ Q108		
	♣ KQ102		
♠ J108762			♠ 5
♥ 74			♥ Q10863
♦ J652			♦ AK74
♣ 5			♣ 873
	♠ Q93		
	♥ AJ9		
	♦ 93		
	♣ AJ964		

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Surely 3NT+2 is the average of the night?

I'm sitting here writing this bedecked in a Spain football shirt, having wagered purposefully on them winning the World Cup. Not once, not twice, but thrice. They drew 0-0 with Cabo Verde in their first game (a result which turned out much better than it seemed). The bookies reacted by doubling Spain's odds, so yours truly got stuck in a few times. VAMOS MUCHACHOS!! ARRIBA ARRIBA!! HASTA LA VISTA, BABY !!! The Milky Bars are on me.

Wait, wait. You're trying to tell me East will lead a low diamond, and declarer will finesse in hearts for 12 tricks? Nah, no way dudes. That's about as likely as a guy dropping out of a degree course in Journalism and French, then later becoming Minister for Finance. Or a different guy becoming Minister for Finance without having a bank account. Never happen here, guv. This is Ireland.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 21	♠ K108543		Dealer N
	♥ 7		Vul: N-S
	♦ A87		
	♣ AK5		
♠ Q6			♠ J72
♥ AK2			♥ 10985
♦ K6			♦ QJ43
♣ 1098632			♣ Q4
	♠ A9		
	♥ QJ643		
	♦ 10952		
	♣ J7		

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

As with Board 20, this is a big "centre of gravity" hand, ie 9 tricks in spades is going to be near universal. You cash ♣AK and ruff a third club in dummy. Losing a spade, a heart and 2 diamonds. 140 to the good guys. Next board.

(To quote Columbo "Just one more thing, sir". You're West. NS have told you in spades (pun intended) that they've no ambition beyond 2♠. You certainly don't fancy your chances of beating that. You're non-vul. So I would give serious consideration to bidding 3♣ in the passout seat. 3♣ is likely to buy it and drift 2 off, but minus 100 rates to be a very good score. Hats off to any West who did that).

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 22	♠ Q62 ♥ QJ1062 ♦ K ♣ AQ32		Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ 10753 ♥ 85 ♦ QJ9854 ♣ 5			♠ AJ ♥ AK74 ♦ A6 ♣ KJ764
	♠ K984 ♥ 93 ♦ 10732 ♣ 1098		

West	North	East	South
		2NT	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT/5♦?			

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the grey twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

Those are the inspirational words of Teddy Roosevelt, and they will reward you handsomely here. As I've observed earlier, Bridge is a bidder's game. So that East hand is a 2NT opener every day of the week for me, including Holy Days of Obligation. And as West opposite 2NT, I'm incapable of passing. On hands like these, you either make 6 or 10 tricks in NT, and 8 or 11 in diamonds, and there's no way of knowing.

So you look for a spade fit first, and when there's no joy on that front you flip a coin and bid 3NT or 5♦. They both make as the diamonds lie. If South leads a diamond against 3NT (very likely), you need to put in the 9.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 23	♠ 64		Dealer S
	♥ AQ9742		Vul: Both
	♦ 1042		
	♣ 54		
♠ KQ103			♠ 8
♥ KJ10			♥ 53
♦ J853			♦ AKQ9
♣ 106			♣ AKQ732
	♠ AJ9752		
	♥ 86		
	♦ 76		
	♣ J98		

West	North	East	South
			2♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

I refer the honourable lady/gentleman to Tip 3, Board 3 ("The only excuse for not pre-empting is that it isn't your turn to bid"). A 2♠ opener from South puts the feline right into the aviary. What do you want East to do? He's WAY to good for 3♣, he's worth 20 points. Double runs the risk of hearing 4♥ from the ox, which I suppose we can convert to 6♣.

If I'm West, I'm passing the double and taking the money, if nobody minds. I've a ten-count, 5 of 'em in the enemy suit. Partner rates to have hearts for the double, and he could be stretching in fourth seat. I'm certain 2♠ vul is going down and I doubt 3NT is on (even if it is we may get 800 from 2♠).

2♠ is likely down two, as EW cannot prevent a club ruff without conceding a natural trump trick. 500 may be ok. 3NT is cold. 5♣ goes down on a heart lead (or ♠A and heart switch), because a third round of hearts promotes South's ♣J. 5♦ is down off the top.

I'm going to say that 500 will be above average but I've been wrong before.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 24	♠ 10985		Dealer W
	♥ Vul: None		
	♦ Q985		
	♣ 109765		
♠ K42			♠ J3
♥ K1075			♥ QJ842
♦ KJ4			♦ A1063
♣ AK2			♣ J4
	♠ AQ76		
	♥ A963		
	♦ 72		
	♣ Q83		

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

A not uncommon situation. Partner transfers into a suit and you have 4 of them. **Tip 11 – agree a method of transfer breaks.** A transfer break means disobeying the command to bid 2 of the major partner is transferring into. You only do it if you have 4-card support (and thus you know you have at least a 9-card fit). The simplest approach is to bid 2NT with a maximum 1NT opener and 3 of the major with a minimum.

Note also that 3♦ is called a "re-transfer". It means "OK partner, I hear you. You've got a max and 4 hearts, so we are going to play in hearts, but you need to be declarer, so please bid 3♥ now". If East had 0-6 points he'd pass 3♥, but the big hand would be hidden (ie declaring). Here he has the values to raise to 4♥ but again, better to have West declaring.

4♥ is cold on any lead. And if North leads a diamond, it runs to declarer's Jack, and now the suit is picked up via the finesse of the ten, for an overtrick and a top or joint top.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 25	♠ AK		Dealer N
	♥ KQ1095		Vul: E-W
	♦ AQ105		
	♣ J10		
♠ J109632			♠ Q87
♥ A2			♥ 863
♦ KJ9			♦ 32
♣ A4			♣ KQ985
	♠ 54		
	♥ J74		
	♦ 8764		
	♣ 7632		

West	North	East	South
	2NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

An unapologetic 2NT for me. 19 points but look at those lovely 9s and 10s ("impletion", as the great Andrew Robson terms it). The defence have 5 clubs and a heart – one down.

Quelle dommage, I hear you say! Nous sommes cold for 3♥, n'est-ce pas? Mais attend un moment. If nous open 1♥ il then va Pass Pass 1♠. En ce cas, EW sont going to compete tout le chemin to 3♠, qui est absolument froid!

Minus 50 pour 2NT-1 – il n'ya rien!! As Al Pacino said in his signature role as Lt Col Frank Slade (Scent of a Woman) – "Are you listening to me, son – I'm giving you pearls here".

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 26	♠ 94 ♥ 104 ♦ KQJ654 ♣ K73	Dealer E Vul: Both
♠ 76532 ♥ K6 ♦ 82 ♣ AQ65		♠ AK108 ♥ A8732 ♦ A73 ♣ 4
	♠ QJ ♥ QJ95 ♦ 109 ♣ J10982	

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
1♠	2♦	3♠	Pass
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

All roads ought to lead to 4♠, and the kind trump break means you make slam easily, but on a diamond lead 4♠ is plenty.

Two deals to go. Time for a shameless plug. The Irish Bridge Journal is a free quarterly magazine, viewable at cbai.ie. Articles by national and international experts, as well as by Irish improvers and juniors – something for everyone. The doyen of Irish bridge, Séamus Dowling, described it in his Irish Times column as "a magazine of the highest standard". And I hear on the grapevine that the Editor is a very fine fellow indeed. Two calls to action in particular. One – enter the Bidding competition! There are prizes for non-experts. Two – if your local club has an upcoming longevity milestone or if you just want to promote it, just compose something suitable and send to enda1612@gmail.com .

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	2	4	7	3
W	1	2	4	7	3

==========

Board 27	♠ 8762		Dealer S
	♥ AK		Vul: None
	♦ AQJ102		
	♣ K9		
♠ 10			♠ K3
♥ J10654			♥ 9873
♦ 63			♦ K974
♣ Q10872			♣ A54
	♠ AQJ954		
	♥ Q2		
	♦ 85		
	♣ J63		

West	North	East	South
			2♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Please don't tell me you want to open 1♠ as South. You've got 7.5 losers and a very watery 10-count. 2♠ is clearcut. If the ox wants to get excited, let him.

Said ox duly plonks you in 4♠, A club lead (small of course from dummy, West isn't leading away from the Ace). That's 11 tricks. But on a heart lead, declarer wins and picks up the trump suit via a finesse. Now comes a diamond finesse, East winning ♦K. If East does not now cash ♣A he does not get it. 4S+2 would be a huge score.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 28	♠ A75		Dealer W
	♥ J65		Vul: N-S
	♦ K83		
	♣ KJ73		
♠ K84			♠ Q93
♥ 432			♥ AQ987
♦ 10			♦ AQ964
♣ A109642			♣
	♠ J1062		
	♥ K10		
	♦ J752		
	♣ Q85		

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	1♥	Dbl
2♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

I close by referring the honourable lady/gentleman to Tip 6, Board 9: – if partner opens one of a minor and opponents overcall 1♥, double from responder shows 4 spades and 1♠ shows 5 spades.

Maybe some Easts can overcall 2NT to show the red suits, which is ok also, but whenever I do that on these hands, partner invariably has 5 spades.

That said, on this deal I expect 2♥ to be commonplace and 9 tricks to be the norm.

And now, if you'll excuse me, I must away. Apres moi le deluge. It's been a real slice. The revolution will not be televised. It's goodnight from me and it's goodnight from him.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========