



The 2023 Charity Challenge Pairs Thursday 16th March

We are raising funds for two support Charities this year -[Mind](#), that wonderful charity supporting people with mental health problems, and [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) ... the work they do is just amazing. Please help us raise lots of lovely funds for them.

Last year you managed to raise over £5,000 for the two charities we supported in 2022 which was just amazing and incredibly generous of everyone. If you haven't already done so, please [click here to go to the page](#) that gives you all the information.

You may already have heard that in addition to the normal Charity events we run, we have decided to "slot in" one for the **Turkiye – Syria Earthquake Appeal**, which will run for the week beginning 17 April – [click here for more information](#) about this one. Another new one is a charity event run by u3a, so if you know of people who would be interested in that please send them along [to this website](#) for more information.

July sees our [Summer Charity pairs](#) for Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation and then of course there will be the [Children in Need Pairs](#) in November – well we couldn't NOT run that could we !

Do join us for some of these events if you can – whether virtually or actually joining in "round the table". We love to have your company.

We do hope you have enjoyed yourselves, and you will know by know whether the commentator has got it right! We are very grateful to Mark Horton for writing the Monday and Thursday commentaries, to Mark Mortimer who penned the ones for Tuesday and Friday and to Brian Senior for doing the mid-week Wednesday commentary. This year the event will again be "hybrid" with some clubs playing face to face and others online, and I suspect that may well continue into the foreseeable future as people find what suits them best and what they are most comfortable with.

Thank you so much for joining us and please do so again in future !

Anna and Mark

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Board 1. None. Dealer North

<p>♠ Q J 6 4 ♥ A Q 7 5 ♦ J 7 ♣ A Q 2</p> <p>♠ K 9 3 ♥ K J 8 ♦ K Q 9 8 5 ♣ K J</p>	<p>♠ A 8 2 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 10 4 2 ♣ 8 7 6 5 4</p>
<p>♠ 10 7 5 ♥ 10 9 6 2 ♦ A 6 3 ♣ 10 9 3</p>	

If North opens 1NT (14-16/15-17) that is likely to be the final contract.

If North starts with 1♣ and the next two players pass West bids 1♦ and North might double, which will see NS find their heart fit.

Were South to respond 1♥ and West overcall 2♦ North must choose between 2♥ and 3♥ – the former perhaps being the sounder action.

If North begins with an Acol 1♥ South raises to 2♥, which North might be inclined to pass.

If NS play in hearts the position in the rounded suits is such that declarer should come to nine tricks. On a diamond lead declarer wins the second round and plays the ♥10 for the jack and queen. With no entry to hand declarer can cash the ♥A and then play on spades and one way or another will come to nine tricks.

Board 2. N/S. Dealer East

<p>♠ Q J 8 7 3 ♥ Q 10 9 5 4 ♦ A 5 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ A 10 9 5 ♥ A J 6 ♦ 10 3 ♣ 10 8 3 2</p>	<p>♠ 6 2 ♥ 8 3 ♦ K 9 8 4 ♣ A J 9 7 4</p>
<p>♠ K 4 ♥ K 7 2 ♦ Q J 7 6 2 ♣ K Q 6</p>	

If South starts with 1NT (12-14/13-15/14-16) North must choose between bidding 2♣ (and then bidding 2♥ over South's 2♦) or transferring to spades and then bidding hearts. The former has the advantage of not carrying the auction beyond the two-level.

If East doubles 2♣ West can bid 3♣ and now North might compete with 3♥.

If South opens 1♦ and North responds 1♥ South rebids 1NT. If North now bids 2♠ it is forcing (here South bids 3♥). The alternative is for North to respond 1♠ and then bid 2♥ over 1NT, which South can pass.

If NS play in hearts and East leads a spade for the nine and queen declarer does best to play a club. East takes the ace and plays another spade, West winning and returning a diamond. Declarer takes the ace, ruffs a spade and discards a diamond on a club. Now a low heart from dummy forces West to go up with the ace and return a spade to restrict declarer to nine tricks.

If West takes the ♠A immediately and switches to a diamond declarer will have an entry to dummy with the ♠K and can pick up the hearts for the same nine tricks.

Board 3. E/W. Dealer South

<p>♠ 4 2 ♥ K Q J 8 ♦ Q J 4 3 2 ♣ 10 2</p> <p>♠ K Q J 7 5 3 ♥ A 9 ♦ 5 ♣ Q J 8 5</p>	<p>♠ 9 6 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ A 8 7 6 ♣ A K 9 6</p>
<p>♠ A 10 8 ♥ 10 7 6 4 ♦ K 10 9 ♣ 7 4 3</p>	

If West opens 1♠ and East responds 2♣ a raise to 3♣ would not be forcing playing Acol. A jump to 4♣ shows a good hand (some pairs play it as Blackwood) while bidding 4♦ would be a splinter agreeing clubs. Suppose the bidding were to go 1♠-2♣-4♣-4♦-4♥ and North doubles. West can redouble to show first round control, but when East cannot cue bid 4♠ West should let matters rest in 5♣. This illustrates the downside of looking for the slam at this form of scoring.

If East responds 1NT (where playing a game forcing 2/1 system) West rebids either 2♣ or 2♠. After 1♠-1NT-2♣ East raises to 3♣ and West jumps to 4♠.

Clearly these is nothing to the play in a spade contract, but if EW stretch to 6♣ the defenders need to lead a heart.

Board 4. All. Dealer West

<p>♠ 10 5 4 3 ♥ K J 2 ♦ 5 4 ♣ A K 9 5</p> <p>♠ A Q J 7 2 ♥ 8 3 ♦ A K 7 ♣ Q 7 4</p>	<p>♠ K 9 8 6 ♥ 9 7 4 ♦ 10 6 2 ♣ J 6 3</p>
<p>♠ — ♥ A Q 10 6 5 ♦ Q J 9 8 3 ♣ 10 8 2</p>	

A classic problem for the strong notrump brigade – do you start with 1♠ or 1NT. Here opening 1♠ sees partner raise to 2♠. If South then bids 2NT and corrects North's 4♣ to 4♦ showing the red suits, West will have to decide what to do if North jumps to 4♥.

If West starts with 1NT and South comes in with something should West introduce the spades? For example after 1NT-Pass-Pass-2♣* if West bids 2♠ North is sure to bid at least 3♥. If East then bids 3♠ South might infer that partner will have nothing wasted in that suit and bid 4♥.

If NS play in hearts and the defenders lead a spade, declarer ruffs and will probably play a top diamond, West winning and forcing dummy with a spade. If declarer plays a second diamond and the defenders play a third spade declarer can ruff and duck a club. If East wins and returns a diamond declarer ruffs, cashes the ♣AK and then has a high cross ruff with ♥KJ opposite ♥AQ for 10 tricks.

If EW play in spades there are eight tricks – a good save if enough pairs reach 4♥.

Board 5. N/S. Dealer North

<p>♠ A K 4 3 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ A J 4 2 ♣ 10 4</p> <p>♠ J 8 ♥ Q J 4 ♦ K 5 ♣ K Q J 8 3 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 9 6 5 ♥ A K 2 ♦ Q 10 9 3 ♣ A</p>
<p>♠ 7 2 ♥ 8 7 6 3 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 9 7 6 5</p>	

If North opens 1NT and East doubles South may get a sinking feeling. As in the old British television serial there is 'No Hiding Place'.

When North opens 1♦ East overcalls 1♠ and West will bid 2♣ if that is forcing, or start with 2♦. If East then bids 2NT West will raise to game.

If North begins with 1♣ East overcalls 1♠ and if West bids 2♣ East's rebid of 2♦ may see West try 2NT, which East will raise to game.

There are 10 tricks but suppose North leads a top spade and switches to a club. Declarer wins in dummy and plays a second spade and now North needs to cash the ♦A.

Board 6. E/W. Dealer East

<p>♠ Q 7 5 4 2 ♥ Q 9 7 5 ♦ Q 7 ♣ 10 3</p> <p>♠ K 10 8 ♥ K 10 8 4 3 ♦ 5 2 ♣ Q 7 4</p>	<p>♠ — ♥ A J 6 ♦ A K J 9 6 4 ♣ A K 6 2</p>
<p>♠ A J 9 6 3 ♥ 2 ♦ 10 8 3 ♣ J 9 8 5</p>	

If East opens 2♣ South might overcall. 2♠ is the obvious bid, while those with some methods might be able to overcall 2♥ to show two suits of the same colour. At the very least that will test EW's agreements.

After a natural 2♠ overcall West's actions will again depend on agreements. One option is to use a double to show a worthless hand (usually with spade values) reserving a pass to show real values. Bidding 3♥ with only one top honour is not ideal, but 2NT is a possibility. Whatever West does North can trade on the vulnerability and jump to 4♠. After 2♣-(2♠)-Pass-(4♠) the practical bid for East is 6♦.

Given a free run EW might start 2♣-2♥-3♦-3NT-4♣-4♦-4♥-4♠. If East then bids 5♣ West's 5♦ will leave East to choose between 6♦ and 6♥.

If East starts with a Strong 1♣ South can still overcall with North jumping to 4♠ over a natural 1♠. If South bids 1♥ to show two suits of the same colour and West doubles, North passes to show better hearts than diamonds, at the same time promising a better fit in a black

suit. If East rebids 2♦ South can bid 2♠ and we are back on familiar territory.

Declarer is sure to take at least 12 tricks in diamonds, but 6♥ should fail. On a spade lead declarer ruffs in dummy and runs the ♥J. North can win and play another spade ensuring a second trump trick.

If there was a way to get East to declare 6♥ only a club lead is threatening. Declarer wins in hand and runs the ♥J. North must duck in order to defeat the contract.

Board 7. All. Dealer South

<p>♠ K ♥ K 10 7 4 ♦ K 10 ♣ Q J 10 9 7 3</p> <p>♠ 10 4 2 ♥ 8 6 2 ♦ A 8 3 ♣ K 8 6 2</p> <p>♠ A Q J 9 6 5 ♥ A Q J 3 ♦ Q 9 7 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 3 ♥ 9 5 ♦ J 6 5 4 2 ♣ A 5 4</p>
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When South opens 1♠ North responds 2♣ and if that is game forcing it will be easy to raise South's 2♥ rebid. The choice is between 3♥ and 4♥ although here it probably won't matter which North selects, as South can cue bid in clubs and see North cue bid in diamonds. The only issue is that if South then bids 4♥, North might not continue with 4♠. Despite the lack of an ace, the major suit kings and good trump support justify going on and 6♥ should be reached.

If South starts with a Strong 1♣ the auction might continue 2♣-2♠ and now North's options will include 2NT and 3♥. After 2NT South bids 3♥ when 4♦ by North should be an advance cue-bid agreeing hearts, when 6♥ will be in the picture. The situation is less clear if North rebids 3♥, as if South raises to 4♥ North might decide to let matters rest. South might try 4♣ over 3♥, but that is not without risk, as it may appear to be offering support as opposed to being a cue bid for hearts.

Not for the first time there is nothing to say about the play.

Board 8. None. Dealer West

<p>♠ K 8 5 4 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ A K 10 6 ♣ Q 5</p> <p>♠ 9 7 6 3 2 ♥ J ♦ 8 7 5 4 3 ♣ 3 2</p> <p>♠ A J 10 ♥ A K 6 4 2 ♦ J ♣ A J 7 4</p>	<p>♠ Q ♥ Q 8 7 3 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ K 10 9 8 6</p>
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With such a bad hand there may be the odd West who puts the ball into play, which might cause NS a problem.

Casting that issue aside if North opens INT South responds 2♦ and then bids 3♣. When North then bids 3♥ South can continue with 3♠, pinpointing the diamond shortage. However, North's hand is nothing to write home about and a sign-off of 4♥ is in order. If North decides to cue bid 4♦ South does not have anything to spare, but those who push on to a slam may be rewarded.

If North starts with 1♦ South responds 1♥ and if the auction continues 1♠-2♣ North can bid 2♥. Then South continues with 2♠, but there is a long way to go before a slam is bid.

The situation does not change much if North opens 1♣ promising 2+♣. After 1♥-INT South can use checkback to discover North has three hearts and a minimum and take things from there.

As it happens the play in 6♥ should not be too difficult, especially if East leads the ♠Q. Declarer wins in dummy and cashes a top heart. When the jack appears declarer should continue with a low heart, East winning with the queen and switching to the ♣10. Like it or not declarer has to hazard the finesse.

Board 9. E/W. Dealer North

♠ 10 7 6 5 2 ♥ 7 ♦ K 9 8 3 ♣ J 5 3 ♠ A K 9 4 ♥ A K ♦ 10 4 2 ♣ Q 10 8 6 ♠ — ♥ 10 9 8 6 5 4 3 ♦ A J 6 5 ♣ K 2	♠ Q J 8 3 ♥ Q J 2 ♦ Q 7 ♣ A 9 7 4
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If East is minded to open INT South's options will include a preemptive jump to 3♥. Given the vulnerability West is likely to bid 3NT. If South overcalls 2♥ West either looks for a spade fit or opts for 3NT.

If East opens 1♣/1♦ South must choose between 1♥, 2♥ and 3♥. As they say, *'you pays your money and you takes your choice'*.

Were East to pass (this hand rates only 9.35 on the *Kaplan Rubens Hand Evaluator*) and South open 3♥ West might try 3NT, although it is not without risk facing a passed partner.

3NT should go down, but if North leads a heart declarer might have some chance. One option is to win in hand and advance the ♣Q (it offers a 2.8% chance of finding South with a singleton jack). That will work if South fails to switch to diamonds.

Declarer might also try the old ruse of playing a diamond at trick two, intending to play the ♣Q later, but although that might work if North withholds the king, it has little chance if North goes up with the ♦K.

4♠ is doomed – declarer is unlikely to take more than eight tricks.

Anyone who plays in 3♥ doubled will discover it cannot be defeated.

Board 10. All. Dealer East

♠ A K 4 3 ♥ A 9 7 6 4 ♦ A 8 ♣ 7 3 ♠ Q J 9 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 10 9 5 2 ♣ K Q 9 2 ♠ 10 8 6 2 ♥ K Q 10 8 ♦ Q 7 ♣ A 8 5	♠ 7 5 ♥ J 3 ♦ K J 6 4 3 ♣ J 10 6 4
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If South opens 1♣/1♦ North bids 1♥ and then goes on to game over South's raise.

Where South passes and North opens 1♥ game is sure to be reached.

If North happens to open INT South can locate the heart fit via Stayman.

Is there any chance that NS can locate the 4-4 spade fit?

After 1♣-1♥-2♥ North could bid 2♠. If South then bids 3♠ North might try 4♦ when South's 4♥ would be offering a choice of games.

If East does not lead a diamond against 4♥ the defenders should take three tricks. It's worth noting that if North is in 4♠ eleven tricks are possible – the fifth heart providing a discard for a losing diamond. In practice with West likely to lead a top club the same would apply if South is declarer.

Board 11. None. Dealer South

♠ A J 9 6 5 3 ♥ A 4 ♦ A Q 9 ♣ 9 5 ♠ 7 4 2 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ 10 5 ♣ A 8 7 4 3 ♠ K Q 10 8 ♥ K J 8 2 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ 10 2	♠ — ♥ 10 7 6 5 ♦ K J 8 7 3 ♣ K Q J 6
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If North opens 1♠ and East doubles, South raises according to system. For example, after 1♠-(Dble) South can bid 2NT to show a good raise in spades. That allows West to bid 3♣ and North bids 4♠. Then the question is should East go on to 5♣?

If North is in 4♠ and East starts with two rounds of clubs, West will win and switch to the ♦10. If declarer puts in the queen East wins and must exit with a heart. If declarer puts up dummy's jack the contract should fail, the winning line as the cards lie being to win with the ace, draw trumps and ruff out West's queen. Interestingly declarer is more likely to find the winning line if East remains silent, as once the spade void comes to light declarer would expect East to have doubled holding the ♦KJ, the ♣KQ and the ♥Q.

If EW play in 5♣ doubled there should be nine tricks.

Board 12. N/S. Dealer West

<p>♠ 10 9 ♥ Q J 6 4 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ A K 5 2</p>	<p>♠ A K Q 4 ♥ A 5 ♦ 10 7 4 ♣ 10 9 8 3</p>
<p>♠ J 6 5 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ K Q 8 2 ♣ Q 7 4</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 3 ♥ K 10 9 7 3 ♦ A J 9 ♣ J 6</p>

If East opens INT that is likely to end the auction.

If East starts with 1♣/1♦ and South overcalls 1♥ West doubles and North shows support for hearts, perhaps via a modern 2NT or a traditional cue bid – you can play 2♣ to show a good raise to at least 2♥, or 2♠ to promise a good raise to the three-level. With tremendous trumps East is likely to compete to 3♠.

If NS play in hearts West must avoid leading a top diamond, which would allow declarer to score nine tricks. In theory a club would also be bad, but declarer would need to play low from dummy.

If EW play in spades and South leads a heart declarer wins and will probably take two rounds of trumps. If declarer then deems it safe to play a diamond, South can win, cash the ♥K and then switch to the ♣J to hold declarer to eight tricks.

To avoid this declarer must draw the outstanding trump, play a diamond to dummy and then exit with a heart. If North wins and

tries exiting with a heart declarer ruffs in hand pitching a club from dummy and plays a second diamond to secure nine tricks.

Board 13. All. Dealer North

<p>♠ 6 4 2 ♥ J 7 ♦ 5 3 ♣ K Q J 10 9 7</p>	<p>♠ J 10 8 ♥ 8 6 2 ♦ K Q 10 6 ♣ 8 6 3</p>
<p>♠ A K ♥ 10 5 4 3 ♦ J 7 4 2 ♣ 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 7 5 3 ♥ A K Q 9 ♦ A 9 8 ♣ A</p>

If North decides to open 3♣ South has an awkward choice between 3♠, 3NT and a conservative pass. Whatever the merits of these actions, both 3♠ and 3NT will lead to makeable contracts.

Where North passes initially, if South opens 1♠ and North raises to 2♠ the spade game will be reached.

If South starts with a Strong 1♣ and North responds 1♦, South's 1♠ rebid is likely to result in 4♠ being the final contract.

Playing in spades is more complicated, especially if West leads a diamond. Declarer takes the ace, plays three rounds of hearts pitching a diamond from dummy, ruffs a diamond, comes to hand with a club and ruffs a diamond, pitching a heart on a club before playing a trump. If East follows with the eight and declarer plays the nine West wins and exits with a diamond forcing declarer to ruff and guess how the trumps lie. East might try covering dummy's spade with the jack on the first round of the suit. If South covers with the queen, the defenders will score three tricks.

3NT is uncomplicated, declarer always recording 11 tricks.

Board 14. None. Dealer East

♠ Q 7 5 4 3	
♥ —	
♦ A K 10 3 2	
♣ 8 6 2	
♠ K J 8	♠ 10 9
♥ A K J 2	♥ Q 9 7 6 4
♦ 7 6	♦ J 9 4
♣ A 10 9 5	♣ K Q 4
♠ A 6 2	
♥ 10 8 5 3	
♦ Q 8 5	
♣ J 7 3	

If West opens INT (14-16/15-17) North is sure to bid something. One possibility is 2♠ to promise spades and a minor. What happens next may depend on agreements but if East makes a value showing double West is likely to bid hearts. It might be a bad idea for South to redouble suggesting something useful in spades making it more likely that EW will reach the major suit game.

Suppose North overcalls 2♦ to show spades and another suit. Now East can bid 2♥ and South raises to 2♠. West will probably bid 4♥, although one might like to be able to bid 3♣ as a game try, asking for help in clubs.

If EW do get to 4♥ and West is the declarer North will cash a top diamond. Even if it the ace and South encourages North is unlikely to underlead the king when South could win and test declarer with a low spade switch. After three rounds of diamonds declarer ruffs, cashes three hearts in hand, crosses to dummy with a club, and draws the outstanding trump. If declarer is confident North is 5-0-5-3 he can cash the clubs for 10 tricks.

Board 15. N/S. Dealer South

♠ A 10 7	
♥ J 8 6 3	
♦ A 9 5 2	
♣ Q 4	
♠ Q 6	♠ J 8 5 4 2
♥ 9 7 4 2	♥ A K Q
♦ 10 8 6	♦ 4 3
♣ J 9 8 5	♣ 10 6 2
♠ K 9 3	
♥ 10 5	
♦ K Q J 7	
♣ A K 7 3	

If South opens INT (14-16/15-17) North looks for a heart fit and then bids 3NT. Other routes should also lead to the nine trick game, although starting with 1♣/1♦ will allow East to overcall 1♠.

If East has been able to bid spades and West leads the ♠Q declarer will already be sure of 10 tricks, but other leads may not help. Say West leads a diamond. Declarer wins in dummy with the nine and plays a heart., East winning and returning a diamond. Declarer wins in dummy and plays another heart. If East wins and switches to a club declarer needs to divine the heart position and exit with a heart to secure the overtrick.

Board 16. E/W. Dealer West

♠ A Q 7 2	
♥ A 6	
♦ 10 9 6	
♣ 7 5 4 3	
♠ 8 5 4 3	♠ K 9
♥ J 9 7 5 4	♥ K Q 10 3 2
♦ K 5 4	♦ 2
♣ A	♣ K Q J 9 6
♠ J 10 6	
♥ 8	
♦ A Q J 8 7 3	
♣ 10 8 2	

If East opens 1♥ and South overcalls 2♦ West raises hearts according to agreements, which should result in game being reached. In the sequence 1♥-(2♦)-3♥ North might double, suggesting values in the unbid suits and at least tolerance for diamonds, but that might not be enough to persuade South to bid 5♦ over 4♥. The situation is the same if the auction starts 1♥-(3♦)-3♥ – North can double.

The play in 4♥ is straightforward, declarer losing to the three missing aces. If South plays in 5♦ the defenders should collect five tricks.

Board 17. None. Dealer North

♠ 10 7 6	
♥ 10 5 4 3	
♦ Q	
♣ K 10 9 5 2	
♠ Q 9 3 2	♠ J 8 5
♥ A J 6	♥ Q 7 2
♦ A 8 7	♦ K J 6 4 2
♣ J 4 3	♣ 8 7
♠ A K 4	
♥ K 9 8	
♦ 10 9 5 3	
♣ A Q 6	

If South opens INT (14-16/15-17) that is likely to end proceedings.

After an opening bid of 1♣/1♦ if North responds 1♥ an Acol style INT rebid will conclude the auction.

I suppose that on occasion West might double an opening bid of 1♣. If North then bids 3♣ East might try 3♦.

If the contract is INT West will probably lead a spade after which declarer is unlikely to score more than seven tricks.

If NS play in clubs, declarer should take nine tricks by taking advantage of the heart position. The strongest line is to win the likely trump lead with dummy's ten and immediately play a heart to the eight. If West wins and returns a trump you draw trumps ending in dummy and play a second heart to the nine.

If EW play in diamonds declarer should manage eight tricks.

Board 18. N/S. Dealer East

♠ Q 10 4 3 2	
♥ A 10 9 8	
♦ 9 8 5	
♣ A	
♠ A J 7	♠ K 8 5
♥ 7 6 5	♥ J 2
♦ A K Q 10 7	♦ J 6 2
♣ K 7	♣ J 8 6 3 2
♠ 9 6	
♥ K Q 4 3	
♦ 4 3	
♣ Q 10 9 5 4	

If West opens INT North is likely to overcall. After a major showing 2♣ South will bid hearts.

If West starts with 1♦ North overcalls 1♠ and East bids INT, which West will raise to 2NT.

If West's opening bid is a Strong 1♣ North might intervene immediately, although the possibly sounder option is to pass and then use your normal defence after the likely INT rebid on the next round. In either case the heart fit should be located.

If NS play in hearts declarer should secure nine tricks by playing on spades.

If EW play in notrumps there are seven top tricks. Barring a spade lead by North declarer can only get up to eight tricks by taking an inspired view in clubs.

Board 19. E/W. Dealer South

♠ J 9 3	
♥ A 6 4	
♦ 6	
♣ K J 10 8 6 5	
♠ 10 2	♠ A K Q 8 6 4
♥ K J 9 8	♥ 10 2
♦ A K 9 7 3	♦ J 10 5
♣ Q 7	♣ A 9
♠ 7 5	
♥ Q 7 5 3	
♦ Q 8 4 2	
♣ 4 3 2	

Those who do not object to treating a 2-4-5-2 as a notrump distribution can open INT if they are in range. If North overcalls 3♣ East will either jump to 4♠ or (if systemically available) transfer to 4♠.

If West opens 1♦ and North overcalls in clubs EW should arrive in 4♠.

There is a huge advantage in making West declarer in 4♠. If North makes the plausible lead of the ♦6, declarer plays dummy's jack and can subsequently cash six rounds of spades before going back to diamonds. The last one will find North looking at ♥A ♣KJ and having to either allow dummy to score two club tricks or pitch the ♥A presenting a trick to declarer's king.

With East as declarer a club lead will hold declarer to 12 tricks.

Board 20. All. Dealer West

♠ A Q 8 5 2	
♥ 9 7 3	
♦ A 4 2	
♣ K 5	
♠ J	♠ 10 9 7
♥ K 6 2	♥ 10 4
♦ K J 10 3	♦ 9 7 6 5
♣ A J 7 6 3	♣ Q 10 8 2
♠ K 6 4 3	
♥ A Q J 8 5	
♦ Q 8	
♣ 9 4	

If West opens 1♣ North overcalls 1♠ and South will respond according to agreements, the spade game being reached in short order.

If West opens 1♦ in the Precision style things do not change much so far as reaching 4♠ is concerned.

On this deal the opening lead is vital. If East leads a club, West wins and returns the suit and declarer draws trumps and takes the heart finesse. If West ducks, declarer can return to hand with a spade and repeat the finesse, ensuring 11 tricks.

On a diamond lead declarer should lose three tricks.

Board 21. N/S. Dealer North

♠ A K	
♥ 8 7 4	
♦ 7 5 4	
♣ Q J 7 5 3	
♠ J 8 7 6 5 4 2	♠ 3
♥ Q	♥ J 10 9 6 3
♦ Q J 10 8	♦ K 9 6 3 2
♣ 10	♣ 9 4
♠ Q 10 9	
♥ A K 5 2	
♦ A	
♣ A K 8 6 2	

I am willing to admit that I would open the East hand whatever the methods, be they a weak 2♥, a two-suited 2♥ or a Multi 2♦. They all pose a problem for NS.

After an opening 2♥ South doubles and North will want to be able to respond with a constructive 3♣. After that NS should be able to reach 6♣. Bidding 7♣ is not out of the question, but contracts that require a perfect fit are never easy to reach. If South is able to determine that North has the ♠AK and the

♣Q there is still the problem of covering a potential heart loser but South might decide that North is unlikely to hold three hearts if East has opened the bidding. (South will still have to consider the possibility that West will be able to ruff the first round of hearts.)

Where East passes and South opens 1♣ West can overcall 3♠. If 1♣ can be based on 2+♣ North might bid 3NT. If South elects to bid on there is a fair chance that a slam will be reached although things might be unclear after something like 4♥-4♠-4NT.

It's a deal that illustrates the advantages of defensive bidding. If you reached 7♣ well done indeed!

Board 22. E/W. Dealer East

♠ A J	
♥ Q J 8 3	
♦ 10 9	
♣ A J 10 5 4	
♠ K 5 2	♠ Q 3
♥ 7 6 2	♥ A K 10 4
♦ K Q 6 4	♦ J 5 3
♣ 9 7 2	♣ K 8 6 3
♠ 10 9 8 7 6 4	
♥ 9 5	
♦ A 8 7 2	
♣ Q	

If East is in range for INT South might overcall, but although the shape is good the lack of values is an issue. A Multi Landy 2♦ might work well, as the overcall can be based on a weakish hand so here North would respond with a pass or correct 2♠.

If South does not overcall, North will probably compete, South bidding 2♠ wherever possible.

The outcome on part score contracts can be difficult to predict as they frequently offer many possible twists and turns. If South plays in 2♠ a trump lead should be a killer – otherwise declarer should take eight or nine tricks via the ruffing finesse in clubs, depending on whether the defenders cash their heart tricks in time.

If East is allowed to play in INT and South leads a spade declarer will have every chance of recording eight tricks, although some guesswork may be required if North plays the ♠J on the first round of the suit. Declarer wins with the queen, plays a diamond to the dummy and then plays a heart, intending to put in the ten.

Board 23. All. Dealer South

<p>♠ 7 6 ♥ 8 4 ♦ J 10 9 6 ♣ 9 8 5 4 2</p> <p>♠ A K Q 10 ♥ A J 7 2 ♦ 8 7 5 4 ♣ 3</p>	<p>♠ 9 8 5 ♥ 10 9 5 3 ♦ A Q ♣ A Q 7 6</p>
<p>♠ J 4 3 2 ♥ K Q 6 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ K J 10</p>	

If South opens INT (12-14/13-15) and West shows the majors East will jump to 4♥.

When the opening bid is 1♣ West doubles and East either jumps to 4♥ or starts with 2♣.

If East is the declarer in 4♥ and South leads a spade one possibility is for declarer to win in dummy, play a club to the ace and the ♥9 for the queen and ace. If South wins the next heart and exits with a heart declarer wins in hand, ruffs a club and plays three rounds of spades, ruffing. Then exiting with a club endplays South.

Alternatively, declarer might decide to ruff a club at trick three and then take the diamond finesse. South can win but should score no more than one trump trick.

If West is the declarer and North leads the ♦J declarer can afford to finesse, South winning an returning the suit to dummy's ace. A heart for the queen and ace is followed by a diamond ruff, a spade to the queen and another diamond ruff. South overruffs and exits with a heart but declarer wins in dummy, comes to hand with a spade and cashes two more hearts. The last of these squeezes South, who is down to ♠J4 ♣KJ and forced to unguard one of the black suits.

Board 24. None. Dealer West

<p>♠ 10 8 4 3 ♥ A Q 5 3 ♦ K Q 5 2 ♣ 8</p> <p>♠ K 7 6 5 ♥ K ♦ A J 7 4 ♣ K J 4 3</p>	<p>♠ A ♥ J 7 2 ♦ 10 9 8 6 ♣ A Q 9 5 2</p>
<p>♠ Q J 9 2 ♥ 10 9 8 6 4 ♦ 3 ♣ 10 7 6</p>	

If West opens 1♣ and North doubles East will have a decision of sorts, especially facing a potentially short 1♣. One option is to bid 2NT to show a limit raise or better in clubs. In that scenario West might decide to risk raising to 3NT, hoping that partner has some help in hearts or that South does not lead the suit.

If West opens 1♦ East responds according to system (note to self – is an inverted raise possible with this type of hand?). If East bids 2♣ West raises to 3♣ and

If East is in 3NT and South leads a heart that makes it clear he does not have the jack, North wins and switches to a spade. Declarer wins perforce with the ace and runs the ♦10, North winning and exiting with a spade. Declarer must duck that, win the next spade and then cash five rounds of clubs. On the last of these North will be looking at ♠10 ♥Q ♦K5. Parting with a red card is out of the question, but when the ♠10 is discarded declarer exits with a heart, forcing North to lead into dummy's diamond tenace.

Board 25. E/W. Dealer North

<p>♠ 8 4 ♥ A 10 7 ♦ K 10 9 6 ♣ A Q 8 7</p> <p>♠ Q 2 ♥ K 8 5 ♦ 8 7 5 3 2 ♣ 10 6 4</p>	<p>♠ K J 9 7 6 5 ♥ J 4 2 ♦ A J ♣ J 9</p> <p>♠ A 10 3 ♥ Q 9 6 3 ♦ Q 4 ♣ K 5 3 2</p>
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If North starts with INT East is likely to overcall, a natural 2♠ and a Multi Landy 2♦ probably attracting the most support. If South doubles and West bids a pass or correct 2♥ East bids 2♠. At the prevailing vulnerability it is clear for South to double, hoping for at least the 'magic 200'.

If North starts with 1♣/1♦ East overcalls 1♠ and South doubles. I wonder what a bidding panel would do now with North's cards. It would not surprise me to see INT attracting support. However, for my money 2♥ is the 'money bid'. The absence of a spade raise suggests South will have some length in the suit, so the 4-3 heart fit should play well.

If East plays in spades a trump lead is a strong possibility. Declarer wins with the nine and probably exits with a club. North winning and returning a spade. South takes the ace and now the simplest defence is to switch to the $\heartsuit Q$ which should ensure two down. The trap to avoid is playing on clubs, as declarer will ruff the third round, draw the outstanding trump and then cash another spade. If North discards a heart declarer can duck a heart, ruff the club exit and duck another heart for seven tricks. If North pitches a diamond declarer can play two rounds of the suit, ruff the club exit and then play a heart, covering South's card for seven tricks. On a club discard declarer plays two rounds of diamonds. If North wins and plays a third diamond declarer discards a heart and must score the $\heartsuit K$ and another spade.

If North plays in hearts and East leads the $\clubsuit J$ one option for declarer is to win and play a heart to the nine. If West wins and returns the suit declarer might easily emerge with 11 tricks by drawing trumps ending in hand and then playing a diamond towards the queen.

If NS play in notrumps a spade lead should restrict declarer to six tricks.

Board 26. All. Dealer East

\spadesuit 7 4 \heartsuit K J 10 9 5 \diamondsuit J 9 7 \clubsuit J 10 6	\spadesuit K J 9 6 5 \heartsuit Q 8 4 \diamondsuit 4 3 \clubsuit Q 5 2
\spadesuit 10 3 2 \heartsuit A 3 2 \diamondsuit K \clubsuit A K 9 8 7 4	\spadesuit A Q 8 \heartsuit 7 6 \diamondsuit A Q 10 8 6 5 2 \clubsuit 3

If South opens $1\diamondsuit$ West overcalls $2\clubsuit$ and North is somewhat short of a $2\heartsuit$ bid and will probably pass rather than bid $2\diamondsuit$. If East makes a defensive raise to $3\clubsuit$ South is likely to come again with $3\diamondsuit$. If West competes with $4\clubsuit$ North might raise to $4\diamondsuit$, but in this type of auction the decisions are not easy.

If South plays in diamonds good guesses in the red suits should lead to 11 tricks being recorded.

If West plays in clubs and North leads a diamond, South wins and switches to a heart.

Now declarer should take the ace and draw trumps as otherwise North can win with the king and might find a spade switch, giving the defenders the first five tricks.

Board 27. None. Dealer South

\spadesuit 5 3 \heartsuit 3 \diamondsuit 9 8 6 5 4 3 \clubsuit Q 10 6 2	\spadesuit A 9 8 6 \heartsuit J 7 6 2 \diamondsuit Q J \clubsuit A 9 7
\spadesuit J 10 7 \heartsuit A K Q 8 \diamondsuit A 10 \clubsuit K J 4 3	\spadesuit K Q 4 2 \heartsuit 10 9 5 4 \diamondsuit K 7 2 \clubsuit 8 5

If West opens $1\clubsuit$ East responds $1\heartsuit$ and West rebids $3\heartsuit$. If East then bids $3\spadesuit$ West can cue bid $4\clubsuit$ and pass East's $4\heartsuit$.

If West starts with a Strong $1\clubsuit$ and East responds INT (balanced positive) West can ask for a major via $2\clubsuit$. (It is also possible for East to respond $1\spadesuit$ to show a balanced positive.) After $1\clubsuit$ -INT- $2\clubsuit$ - $2\heartsuit$ if West bids $3\heartsuit$ East can cuebid $3\spadesuit$ and then bid $4\heartsuit$ over West's $4\clubsuit$ which should end the auction.

If West begins with an Acol style $1\heartsuit$ and East responds 2NT the rebid will be in accordance with partnership agreements. For example, if West rebids 3NT East can cue bid $4\clubsuit$ and then bid $4\heartsuit$ over West's $4\diamondsuit$.

$4\heartsuit$ should not present any difficulties but the defenders need to find good opening leads. North must avoid starting with a club while South must leave the spade suit well alone.

Board 28. N/S. Dealer West

\spadesuit J 2 \heartsuit 5 \diamondsuit A Q J 6 5 4 3 \clubsuit 6 3 2	\spadesuit 10 9 8 \heartsuit Q J 9 8 7 3 \diamondsuit K 10 8 \clubsuit 7
\spadesuit Q 6 5 4 3 \heartsuit K 6 4 2 \diamondsuit 9 \clubsuit Q 10 8	\spadesuit A K 7 \heartsuit A 10 \diamondsuit 7 2 \clubsuit A K J 9 5 4

A few players holding West's cards will be able to open with a bid promising a weak hand with

both majors. Assuming North passes and East jumps to 4♥ South will have little alternative to bidding 5♣, although doubling will also work as North will bid 5♦.

If West passes and North opens 3♦ South might try 3NT, hoping to avoid a heart lead. That is conservative opposite a second in hand vulnerable pre-empt, but if South bids 4♣ and North rebids 4♦ South might keep the ball in play with 4♥. North's alternatives to 4♣ include a raise to 5♣ and a cue bid of 4♥.

If South is in 3NT and West leads a spade declarer can win with dummy's jack, come to hand with a club and play a diamond to the queen. If East takes that declarer has the rest, so ducking is best. If declarer comes back to hand with a club and plays a second diamond West's discard makes it easy to take dummy's ace and give up a club for 11 tricks.

Six of either minor is reasonable, but the cards don't cooperate this time.

Board 29. All. Dealer North

♠ A Q 3	♠ J 10 4 2
♥ 9 7	♥ J 5 3
♦ 8 5 4 2	♦ J 3
♣ A J 9 3	♣ 10 7 5 4
	♠ K 9
	♥ A Q 10 8 2
	♦ K 7
	♣ K Q 6 2
	♠ 8 7 6 5
	♥ K 6 4
	♦ A Q 10 9 6
	♣ 8

If East opens 1♥ West responds according to system – for example playing Acol, after 2♣ East rebids 2NT and West raises to game. Were South to overcall 2♦ West would probably have to fall back on a double despite the lack of a fourth spade.

If East starts with INT West raises to game.

If East begins with a Strong 1♣ and West responds INT the nine-trick game will be reached, but with West as declarer.

If West is the declarer in 3NT and North happens to hit on the lead of the ♦J, declarer will have no chance.

With East as declarer if South starts with a spade declarer can win in dummy and run the ♥9, finishing with 11 tricks.

If South leads a diamond declarer wins with the king and faces a typical matchpoint dilemma, that of settling for nine tricks or risking a heart finesse. It is slightly more complicated than that as if South leads the ♦10 and North plays the jack declarer can win and cash four clubs followed by three spades. That will force South to either release a diamond allowing a throw in or unguard the ♥K (if South sees this coming an early discard of two hearts is best).

Board 30. None. Dealer East

♠ A K Q 9	♠ 10 4 3
♥ K 9 3	♥ J 10 8 6
♦ 7 5 4 3	♦ 9 8 2
♣ K 6	♣ Q 9 4
	♠ 8 7 6 2
	♥ 7 4
	♦ A J 6
	♣ 10 7 5 2
	♠ J 5
	♥ A Q 5 2
	♦ K Q 10
	♣ A J 8 3

If South starts with INT there are some players who would make a penalty double with the West hand, ending the auction.

Where South opens 1♣ West overcalls INT and will play there, possibly doubled by South.

If West begins with an Acol style 1♥ East responds 1♠. In these days of light openings and responses more players are using INT as a natural bid with the South hand, but the lack of a spade stopper is a concern. Here, if West prefers to raise to 2♠ rather than double EW will be in their best spot.

If South is in INT West starts by cashing four spades and will probably switch to a diamond. If East wins and returns a club (or a heart) or even another diamond, declarer will only score six tricks.

By the same token if West plays in INT seven tricks are available.

If EW play in spades and the defenders start with a trump declarer can afford to play three rounds of the suit and then play on diamonds, easily securing eight tricks thanks to the location and distribution of the missing cards.

Board 31. N/S. Dealer South

♠ A K 10 7 ♥ A 8 3 2 ♦ K 3 2 ♣ K 3	♠ 5 3 ♥ J 10 4 ♦ J 10 6 5 ♣ A Q 9 2
♠ Q 9 8 6 4 ♥ K 9 7 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ J 7	♠ J 2 ♥ Q 6 5 ♦ 9 8 7 ♣ 10 8 6 5 4

If West opens 1♠ North overcalls INT. If East doubles South is likely to run, finishing in 2♣ doubled.

If East doesn't double that will end the auction.

If East leads a spade against INT declarer wins and plays a heart to the queen. With hearts 3-3 declarer should take 6 tricks. There are some traps to avoid in the event of subtle switches by West after winning the ♥K. On a low club (!) declarer must withhold the king. If West switches to the ♦Q and it holds, continuing with a low diamond forces declarer to make a guess (not so difficult perhaps).

2♣ doubled rates to be one down – on a spade lead by West declarer can win with the jack and continue spades, overruffing East on the third round. Then a diamond to the king is followed by another spade, ruffed and overruffed. Now declarer can play a club for the king and ace and must score two more tricks.

Board 32. E/W. Dealer West

♠ K J 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ J 7 6 4 ♣ K Q 10 9	♠ 10 8 4 2 ♥ A Q J 6 4 ♦ 5 ♣ 8 6 4
♠ A Q 5 ♥ K 10 9 8 ♦ A K 8 2 ♣ 5 2	♠ 9 6 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ Q 10 9 3 ♣ A J 7 3

If West opens INT East must choose between transferring to hearts or employing Stayman. In either case the heart fit comes to light and EW should be able to stop in a part score.

If West opens 1♣/1♦ East responds 1♥ and passes West's raise to 3♥.

After an Acol style 1♥ East raises. If that is to 3♥ then West will probably go on to game.

4♥ appears to have no chance but suppose North starts by leading the top clubs. If they hold and North plays a third club (nothing is better) declarer ruffs and plays to eliminate the diamonds, drawing two rounds of trumps along the way. In the four-card ending declarer has a heart and three spades in each hand and plays a spade, covering South's card. North wins but must then offer up a ruff and discard or lead into the split spade tenace.

To avoid this grizzly fate South must win the second round of clubs and switch to a spade.