

Friday 28 January 2022

Our January Charity Pairs, raises funds for UNICEF to help children in danger through the world.

They need so much help now, not just because of war, famine, the need for medicines, clean water but now there is the added threat from the coronavirus. Please help us raise as much money as we can – send your donations to us and we will gather them together and pass them on to UNICEF from bridge players all over the world.

Just go to : <https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/FAQ/howtopay.asp> and you will see how to do it ... there is no specified amount but we do suggest £3 per player if you can manage that !

**Help us to help these children who are in such need. Please. And please read the bit at the end of the commentary about future events.**

### Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

♠ J 9 3 ♥ J 8 3 ♦ J 7 3 ♣ A 9 8 5	♠ K 10 5 2 ♥ K Q 6 5 ♦ A 5 ♣ K J 6	♠ 7 6 ♥ A 10 4 ♦ K Q 6 2 ♣ Q 10 4 2	♠ A Q 8 4 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ 10 9 8 4 ♣ 7 3
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A good hand for the weak no trump rather than the strong one – if North opens the latter, he will play there and can take no more than seven tricks on best defence. A 1♥ opening should result in the auction 1♥-1♠-3♠-Pass, and with a winning guess in clubs, South can come to nine tricks whatever the defenders do. In these KJ positions, it is correct more often than not to play the opening leader for the ace – if he didn't have it, he might have led the suit.

### Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

♠ K 6 5 ♥ Q 5 4 ♦ A J 10 9 8 5 ♣ Q	♠ Q 9 8 4 ♥ K ♦ 6 3 2 ♣ A K J 10 4	♠ J 3 2 ♥ J 10 9 8 7 6 3 2 ♦ Q ♣ 5	♠ A 10 7 ♥ A ♦ K 7 4 ♣ 9 8 7 6 3 2
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East might well open 3♥, raised to 4♥ by West and setting an awkward problem for North-South. If they go quietly, they can defeat 4♥ provided they attack spades early enough. If North risks a takeout double and South bids 5♣, West will in theory have to start with ace and another diamond, otherwise South can make the contract with best play. However, since this involves drawing trumps, knocking out ♠K and ducking a diamond to East's singleton queen before cashing the last spade, any South who manages it can claim a large brandy from North!

**Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

South has an in-between sort of hand – too good for a weak two in spades, not quite good enough for an opening at the one level. Even 2♠ is not certain to make, though South can succeed by taking the winning view in diamonds. But if South chooses to open at the one level, no mortal North is going to let the bidding die in 2♠, and I expect minus scores for North-South to be far more common than pluses.

**Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

East-West are likely to bid 1♠-2♥-2♠-3♦-3NT. North will probably lead a middle club honour, after which West can actually take no fewer than eleven tricks if she guesses everything right in the play. But in practice, the struggle is likely to revolve around declarer's search for a tenth winner – nine tricks are easy enough to come by with the favourable lie of the cards. 630 to East-West ought to be a decent score, 600 may be a little below average.

**Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.**

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

With 10 points opposite 13 and no great fit, North-South may very well settle for a part score after Pass-1♠-2♦-2♥-2♠. As it happens, though, both 4♠ and 3NT are lucky makes with some good decisions in the play (in 4♠, for example, declarer will need to take a heart finesse). Any North-South pair who do bid and make game will score close to a top, while plus 170 in a spade part score will still be a decent result. Any plus for East-West ought to be worth a substantial number of match points.

**Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.**

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

Although East has the worst hand at the table (indeed, the worst hand of the evening), a large number of match points may swing on his opening lead. North will play in four spades at most tables, and if East is inspired enough to lead a diamond, the contract will be defeated for an excellent score. If South's opening bid of 1♥ is overcalled by West with 1NT, doubled by North and passed out, West may come to six tricks for minus only 200 and a fair result, since I expect North-South plus 420 to be the most popular outcome.

**Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.**

<p>♠ J ♥ A 10 6 4 2 ♦ 8 7 5 3 ♣ K 8 4</p> <p>♠ A K 9 7 3 ♥ J ♦ 9 6 2 ♣ A 7 6 3</p> <p>♠ Q 10 6 5 ♥ K 9 5 3 ♦ 10 4 ♣ J 10 2</p>	<p>♠ 8 4 2 ♥ Q 8 7 ♦ A K Q J ♣ Q 9 5</p>
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If, after 1♠-2♦-2♠, East not unreasonably tries 3NT, he will wish he hadn't – the defence can take the first five hearts and a trick in the wash. 4♠ is beaten if North leads ♥A and continues the suit – provided that South does not signal encouragement with the nine! – since this defence will cause West to lose trump control. On a trump or diamond lead, the defenders can still prevail by switching the attack to hearts – but on a club lead, West wins with the queen and, provided he plays trumps safely, can just get home.

**Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.**

<p>♠ K J 3 ♥ Q 9 5 ♦ A K 5 ♣ 10 8 6 3</p> <p>♠ 9 8 6 4 ♥ A J ♦ J 8 7 2 ♣ A 9 2</p> <p>♠ 10 2 ♥ 8 7 4 3 ♦ Q 9 6 3 ♣ Q 7 4</p>	<p>♠ A Q 7 5 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ 10 4 ♣ K J 5</p>
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If North opens a weak no trump before East can do the same, he may well steal the hand. Since East-West can make game but may not bid that high, it will be up to them to defend accurately to hold North to four tricks for a reasonable score. If North instead opens 1♣, should East make a takeout double? Certainly he should, but even then East-West will need to take some aggressive views to reach 3NT or 4♠, both of which can be made with careful play.

**Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

<p>♠ K 10 9 7 ♥ Q 6 ♦ K Q 10 8 7 ♣ J 10</p> <p>♠ 6 3 2 ♥ 9 5 ♦ 6 3 ♣ K 8 7 6 5 4</p> <p>♠ A Q 8 5 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ A J 9 5 2 ♣ 3</p>	<p>♠ J 4 ♥ A J 8 7 3 2 ♦ 4 ♣ A Q 9 2</p>
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Those North-Souths who reach game in spades will score best on this deal – but getting to the eight-card fit as opposed to the ten-card diamond fit may not be so easy. If North opens 1♦ and East overcalls 1♥, South will do well to introduce spades rather than committing his side to playing in diamonds. If North passes and East opens 1♥, it will be harder for North-South to reach the best spot – though some might double on the South hand, intending to convert clubs to diamonds, and some might even overcall 1♠.

**Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.**

<p>♠ J 8 ♥ A K 10 8 5 ♦ A Q 10 6 ♣ 10 8</p> <p>♠ A Q 7 5 ♥ J 9 7 2 ♦ 9 5 ♣ A K 7</p> <p>♠ 10 6 4 3 2 ♥ Q 3 ♦ K J 4 ♣ J 5 4</p>	<p>♠ K 9 ♥ 6 4 ♦ 8 7 3 2 ♣ Q 9 6 3 2</p>
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West's weak no trump may attract an Aspro overcall of 2♣ by North, showing hearts and another. If South now bids 2♦ to deny hearts, and North passes, this appalling method will record yet another dismal result, since (a) you cannot make as many tricks in diamonds as in hearts, and (b) you would score less well even if you could. Especially at pairs, there is a good case for North not to bother with his convention and just overcall 2♥. If East-West are using four-card majors and a strong no trump, they might do very well here after 1♥ by West and INT by East, for unless North doubles this to show hearts, South will lead a spade and eight tricks will be made.

**Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.**

♠ 3 ♥ A J 9 8 7 3 ♦ J ♣ 10 8 7 6 5  ♠ A Q 9 8 ♥ K 5 ♦ 9 6 5 2 ♣ K 9 4	♠ 7 6 5 ♥ 4 2 ♦ K 10 8 7 3 ♣ A J 3  ♠ K J 10 4 2 ♥ Q 10 6 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ Q 2
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North-South can make 4♥ easily enough – whether they can bid it is another matter. If South opens 1♠, is North good enough for a response of 2♥? Not by modern standards, certainly – and if he responds INT, he may very well find himself playing in that inelegant contract. Perhaps South should open INT, five-card major notwithstanding – but will North do more than transfer to 2♥ over that? Pairs who use a forcing INT response to a five-card major opening will be able to bid 1♠-INT-2♦-2♥-3♥-4♥, and will score very well for their pains.

**Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

♠ A Q J 6 ♥ J 9 8 4 2 ♦ 8 4 3 ♣ 5  ♠ K 2 ♥ Q 10 6 5 ♦ 10 2 ♣ A 10 8 7 2	♠ 10 9 4 ♥ 7 3 ♦ K 7 5 ♣ K J 9 4 3  ♠ 8 7 5 3 ♥ A K ♦ A Q J 9 6 ♣ Q 6
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This set of deals has not contained a slam until now – North-South can make twelve tricks in spades or in diamonds, though any pair who actually reaches the six level ought not to be overly proud of themselves! After Pass-1♦-1♥-1♠, should North raise to 2♠ or to 3♠? I would say the former, since the singleton club is a dubious asset, and three small cards in partner's first suit is not a great holding. But South has just about enough for a further move, and North can then bid game.

**Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.**

♠ Q J 8 ♥ 10 3 ♦ 9 7 6 5 4 ♣ J 10 2  ♠ A 10 5 4 2 ♥ J ♦ A Q J 3 2 ♣ A 7	♠ K 7 6 3 ♥ A 8 7 ♦ 10 8 ♣ Q 9 6 3  ♠ 9 ♥ K Q 9 6 5 4 2 ♦ K ♣ K 8 5 4
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What should South open after two passes? 1♥, 3♥ and even 4♥ are possibilities. Over the last of these, West will bid 4♠ and East may feel that he is worth a slam try of 5♥. West ought not to accept this, since even with the ♦K well placed, 6♠ cannot be made on the lie of the cards. 650 to East-West will be the most common result, but I would not be surprised to see one or two pairs over-reach to a minus score.

**Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.**

♠ A Q J 9 4 ♥ A K 4 ♦ Q ♣ Q 10 8 5  ♠ 10 7 5 ♥ Q J 2 ♦ J 6 3 ♣ J 7 3 2	♠ 8 6 2 ♥ 7 6 5 ♦ K 10 7 2 ♣ A K 4  ♠ K 3 ♥ 10 9 8 3 ♦ A 9 8 5 4 ♣ 9 6
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What should North rebid after 1♠-INT? 2NT best describes the values, and leaves room for South to show a five-card heart suit, so that would be my choice. 2♣ is a good alternative, to be followed by 2NT over 2♠. If North follows that route, West may find the unfortunate lead of ♥Q, after which South can make an overtrick. Even if North does not mention his clubs, West may choose a heart lead in preference to a club anyway – but fourth highest of the longest suit works better here, and minus 400 won't be a bad score at all for East-West.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

It's possible that this deal will be passed out, but these days I imagine that North will open 1♥ or 1NT in third position. If he chooses the former, East-West are likely to compete to 2♠ or 3♠, scoring a comfortable 140. They can do better still in defence to 1NT, taking eight tricks for 200. That will serve North right, of course – to open a weak no trump on a minimum facing a passed partner, vulnerable at pairs, is usually suicidal.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Should West open her longest or her strongest suit? I have always been a firm believer in "longest first", but on this hand even I might make an exception. It ought not to make much difference – 1♠-2♣-2♥-3NT-4♥-Pass is a sensible auction, and West can come to eleven tricks with accurate play. Plus 650 will score well for East-West, since there are bound to be a few "accidents" in the bidding or the play at some tables.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

South may make life awkward for his opponents with a weak jump overcall of 3♣ after East opens 1♦. West doesn't really have enough for a forcing 3♠ – the best he can do is make a negative double. But North can raise the stakes with 4♣, over which East-West will do well to reach the comfortable 4♠. North-South had better resist any temptation to sacrifice, for minus 500 will be close to a bottom score.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

With a combined 23-count and no fit of longer than eight cards, East-West can – remarkably – take no fewer than eleven tricks in spades or no trumps, provided that West is declarer. Of course, this requires some double-dummy play; three finesses in diamonds through North and two in spades through South are followed by three rounds of hearts, end-playing North to lead away from ♣A. Easy game, this bridge – but any East-West pair who get beyond a part score will do very well, even if they don't quite manage all their tricks.

**Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

After North-South bid 2♣-2♦-2NT-3NT, what should West lead at pairs? I think I would choose a club – any minor honour with East will help to set up tricks while retaining ♠A and ♦K as entries. Of course, East doesn't have anything in clubs – but the lead turns out to give nothing away, and makes the search for an eleventh trick more difficult for South. A diamond lead, on the other hand, should make it relatively simple for South to pick up the second overtrick that will make a big difference to his side's score.

**Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

4♠ is a perfectly good contract on the East-West cards – until you look at the North-South cards and realise that the defenders can take two hearts, ♣A and a club ruff. This defence is quite likely to be found, for a typical auction will see East bidding diamonds and South bidding hearts, after which North will have good reason to lead a heart rather than a “safe” diamond.

**Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.**

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

There will be a wide variety of final contracts on this deal. If North starts with a strong no trump, East-West may intervene in spades, after which South will do well to steer his side into a part score in clubs rather than hearts. If North begins with 1♦, East will overcall 1♠, South may make a negative double, and West should raise to 2♠. Now North-South can collect a plus score either by passing this out and defeating it, or by reaching the safe haven of 3♣ – but neither of these is an easy task. It's one of those hands where any plus score will be worth at least 60% of the match points.

**Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.**

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

Should West open the bidding after two passes, and if so, with what? I imagine most will go for 1♥ – after all, that is the suit West wants led. What of North – should she pass, double, or overcall 2♦? Can East-West reach their par contract, which is 3♠ making exactly for 140 and a very fine score? For the answers to these questions, see the travelling score sheet – it's no use asking me!

**Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.**

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

North-South can make 4♠ in some comfort, so the challenge will be for East-West to find their sacrifice in 5♣ (only one down on any defence) or even 5♦ (one down unless the defenders find their club ruff). But I doubt that very many pairs will achieve this – it's difficult to see that East will bid at all during the auction. If South opens 1♠ and West overcalls 2♦, North may feebly raise to only 2♠ – now East could venture a competitive double, giving his side some sort of chance.

**Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.**

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

Another easy game for North-South – but it's possible that they will not bid at all! East-West may start 1♠-INT-2♦-2♠ – when this comes round to South, he can re-open with a double, over which North may be tempted to pass. But if West is careful, he can always come to six tricks for minus only 300. Of course, if West not unreasonably passes, North-South will score an untroubled 420 or 450 in 4♥ – a trump lead, or spade lead and trump switch, can hold declarer to ten tricks.

**Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

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

With the favourable lie of the cards, this is a slam for East-West – there is no defence to 6NT, and if West is declarer and North leads a diamond, there is no defence to 7NT either. No one is going to play in a slam, of course, and at most tables East will declare 3NT on the lead of ♥J. Now, he will have to take some good views to make even twelve tricks – he must not cover with ♥Q, he must win with ♥A, and run the black suits, later throwing North in with ♥K to lead away from ♦K. If he does all of that, he will deserve a “thank you, partner!” from West.

**Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.**

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

If East passes and South opens 1♥, West has a pretty sound weak jump overcall of 3♦. That won't save him from minus 800 if North passes and South doubles (or if North doubles for penalty, of course). North may prefer 3NT rather than try for a penalty – especially with a partner who is likely to pass out 3♦ on the grounds that “I only had a minimum, partner”. If that happens, he can make ten tricks – beating the 620s in 4♥, but losing to the 800s from 3♦.

**Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.**

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

North may open 4♠ after two passes – but the dummy will be a severe disappointment to him, and he ought to go two down. Since the opponents can't make more than 2♥, this will not be a wonderful result, though it will be common enough. Those Norths who adopt the more prudent approach of opening 1♠, then bidding 3♠ after INT by South (or a pass by South and a double by West) will find their caution will be rewarded on this occasion.

**Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

North will have more success in 4♠ this time, taking eleven tricks easily enough. But if the auction starts with 1♠ from North, 2♥ from East and 2♠ from South, North may decide to take a match-point gamble with 3NT. That's not an unreasonable thing to do in the abstract – but bridge isn't played in the abstract, and after five rounds of diamonds, North will be a sadder and (one hopes) a wiser man.

**Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.**

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

South may open the bidding in third position, and playing four-card majors, he may very well choose 1♥. West will double, and East ought to respond 1NT rather than 2♣. Now East-West need to exercise some caution – West should raise to only 2NT and East should pass, because there are no more than eight tricks available. This is easier said than done, though, and I expect quite a few pairs to stretch to the no trump game. Some of them may well make it, though, for the winning defence of attacking spades early may not be attractive to either North or South.

**Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.**

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

A deal on which the final contract will be 3NT at thousands of tables, and the only question is overtricks. If North is declarer and East leads his fourth highest diamond, he may regret it – there are now twelve winners available by means of a minor-suit squeeze on East. Of course, North may risk the club finesse in the endgame instead, and emerge with an awful result. When South is declarer, he is likely to make eleven tricks whatever the defence.



**Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.**

♠ K 10 7 5 ♥ A K ♦ K 6 2 ♣ Q J 7 2 ♠ A 8 6 4 3 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ 4 ♣ 10 9 5 4 ♠ 9 ♥ Q 10 9 6 5 4 ♦ Q J 10 ♣ K 6 3	♠ Q J ♥ J 8 2 ♦ A 9 8 7 5 3 ♣ A 8
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North-South had better play in no trumps here, for the vile distribution enables the defenders to take the first five tricks against hearts by means of a couple of diamond ruffs, while East-West can collect no more than their three aces against 3NT. But if South opens with a weak 2♥, it will be very difficult for North to envisage that 3NT is the winner on this occasion – unless, of course, North is South’s husband.

**Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.**

♠ J 3 ♥ A K ♦ A J 9 7 3 ♣ 5 4 3 2 ♠ K Q 10 8 5 ♥ J 8 5 4 3 ♦ K 4 ♣ J ♠ 9 6 2 ♥ 9 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ A Q 10 8 7 6	♠ A 7 4 ♥ Q 10 7 6 2 ♦ Q 10 2 ♣ K 9
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An awkward competitive deal – if West opens the bidding, his side may proceed without intervention to 4♥, losing four obvious tricks. But –100 isn’t too bad, since North-South can score 130 in clubs if left to their own devices. Anyone who bids and makes a part score will do pretty well in terms of match points, while the top score will go to those North-Souths who push their opponents to 4♥, then double them in it for plus 200.

Remember that we are planning to run other Charity events during the year – the **Charity Challenge** for 2022 will be raising money for two Cancer Charities, which have been so badly affected by COVID ... Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie with the funds split between them. That will be held from 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March with different hands each day and we are sure it will be a “hybrid” event with some clubs playing online and others face to face, but we are getting used to that aren’t we ☺

In July there will be the **Summer Charity Pairs** – that will be another full week of pairs, starting on 4<sup>th</sup> July and with different hands each day through to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July ... this will raise funds for Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

Then comes November and our **Children in Need event** – As ever, different hands each night and I am looking at the dates being from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November rather than starting on the Friday. We don’t yet know when the BBC will be doing their CiN “night” but I am guessing it will either on 18<sup>th</sup> so our dates should be just fine.

Do keep an eye on the website – obviously we will publish the amounts raised for the various events, and of course it’s quite different with individuals donating but hopefully we can raise some goodly amounts for charity – the charities are all having such a tough time of it at the moment, so hopefully by doing these events we can all help a bit.

Thank you for joining us, thank you for your support – really truly we appreciate it so much.

Best wishes

Anna & Mark

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