

## Aid 4 Ukraine Simultaneous Pairs

Friday 15 April 2022

Thank you for joining us – we felt so helpless and wanted to do something to help so hence this Simultaneous Pairs which we hope you have enjoyed.

It's been a simple affair – there are no overall master points, no prizes – just the hands to play and score to give you an overall result.

But more important it is to try and raise some money to send to UNICEF. If you haven't already donated, please please do so – if you go to :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp> there are various ways to send in your donation.

Again – thank you so much for your support. We really appreciate it !

All the best

*Anna & Mark - the ECatsBridge Team*

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

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

The balanced North and South hands, with their combined 25 HCP, don't mesh particularly well for 4♠, but 3NT looks more promising. While it's possible for N/S to stop in INT or 2♠, it's much more likely that South will invite game and that North will accept the invitation with four prime cards and a high-card maximum for an action or sequence showing a balanced 12(11)-14.

- (1) INT-2♥(transfer); 2♠-2NT; 3NT/4♠-Pass
- (2) 1♣-1♠; INT-2♣/2♦ (checkback); 2♥-2NT; 3NT/4♠-Pass
- (3) 1♥-1♠; INT-2♣/2♦ (checkback); 3♠-4♠; Pass

Or South might raise to 2NT without checking for three-card spade support. Or South might pass the INT rebid, taking a reasonable conservative view at Matchpoints. If South is trying to stay even with the field, however, he

will not pass INT because far more of his counterparts will bid than pass.

N/S's bidding will have an effect on the defenders' choice of leads against spades or notrump. If East leads a heart against 3NT declarer will take West's jack with the king and play ♠K, spade, ducking an honour but covering the eight or nine with the ten. In either case West will have an opportunity to discard and should be able to suggest a club switch, ideally by discarding an appropriate diamond. On a switch to the ♣10 by East after winning his spade trick declarer covers, and ducks West's queen. If West reverts to hearts declarer covers the nine and will soon have the six and seven equals against East's eight to build a third heart trick, his ninth winner. On the surface it doesn't seem to matter whether West switches to a diamond instead because that will establish the ♦Q for declarer's ninth trick. Looking more deeply into the play, however, we discover that having nine tricks and being able to cash them are two different things. When East wins the ♦K he switches back to clubs through dummy's nine. That knocks the ♣A out of declarer's hand while the diamonds are blocked so declarer can't take his two diamond tricks. But it's not over yet. Declarer wins the second club and leads the ♥10, which East must cover. Declarer continues with the ♥6 to develop his third heart trick. Later he uses the ♦A as the entry to cash the ♥7 and finishes by finessing against East's guarded spade honour, if spades have not yet been cleared.

North can actually make 3NT on any lead, including the evil-looking ♣10. In one of the more challenging variations in which West does not break a red suit when he wins his club trick (declarer ducks once) declarer can throw East in with the third heart. After cashing one more heart East must lead from the ♦K.

Although some of that seems a bit double dummy declarer will often reach a stage in the play where he can see that he won't come to nine tricks without doing something positive in hearts. Correct handling of the spades won't be unusual and if East does switch to the ♣10 it would be natural for declarer to cover with the jack and duck West's honour.

How about that apparently doomed 4♠? A diamond lead will beat it because East can play a club through declarer with profit. The jack of hearts will also set 4♠, but on the lead of the ♣K declarer can duck to both prevent the ruff and buy enough time to build a second club trick (if East doesn't play the ten declarer can lead the jack later to smother it) and he'll be able to discard a heart on a diamond.

The play in both game contracts is hardly straightforward and there will be enough declarers going down in 3NT or 4♠ to leave the pairs in partscores with a fighting chance to score reasonably.

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

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

East's strong notrump might end the auction, declarer taking eight, nine, or ten tricks, depending on the play of the club suit. If North discards a club a second-round finesse of the jack brings in four tricks, but in this scenario declarer might play off the ace-king of clubs and make the minimum. To make four club tricks legitimately on a heart lead declarer must lead a club to the jack when he wins the ♥A; then he can lead a club to the nine after running the diamonds. If declarer leaves his decision in

clubs until late in the hand and North keeps all his clubs, finessing the jack nets only three club tricks. Plus 120, plus 150 and plus 180 will all be fairly popular results.

Another possibility is that North will reopen 1NT with a conventional bid that shows both majors. It would seem that two rounds of trumps at any point should hold a N/S heart contract to eight tricks but if declarer can time the play to his advantage he can take only two minor suit ruffs in each hand before playing the fourth club and discarding his diamond loser as East wins the trick. Now East will have to lead from the ♠Q to allow a ninth trick. This won't happen if West starts a spade, which is far from obvious. After this start final contracts will include 2♥ and 3♥ by South, with the latter likely to be doubled with some frequency, 2NT and 3♣ by East, and 3♦ by West.

Any N/S plus will be terrific, and if their competitive bidding jostles E/W into a minor, minus 110 is sure to be good also, while minus 130 will be beat the minus 150s and minus 180s. Where East opens 1♣ or 1♠ systemically the bidding will be of a different species altogether:

North might double a 1♦ response to 1♣, and South should bid 2♥ or 3♥ over whatever East bids (pass, redouble or 1♠). E/W might reach 3NT or stop in a club or diamond partscore.

If West can raise 1♣ to 2♣, East might pass but he's more likely to bid 2♦, 2♠ or 2NT. Here 3NT will be a real possibility.

After 1♠-1NT, East will pass or raise, the latter landing West in 3NT.

The pairs in game will almost certainly take the club finesse, which will be very bad news for their opponents.

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

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

It's strictly a matter of style whether West overcalls 1♠ with 2♥ or doubles for takeout. East has enough to raise an overcall or to jump in diamonds in response to a takeout double and both actions should lead his side to game. With no semblance of a spade stopper 3NT really shouldn't be a possibility. The money lies in 4♥ and not 5♦, but if enough pairs miss game (presumably when East takes a conservative approach) even the much-maligned minor-suit game (here 5♦) will not fare too badly.

If the defenders play three rounds of spades against 4♥ declarer can take the ruff in East, cash the ♥A, come to the ♦A and clear hearts, ensuring that he can run the diamonds without incident or know enough in time to take the club finesse.

After two rounds of spades South might switch to the ♣9. If hearts are three-three and diamonds run declarer doesn't need the club finesse, but it would be wrong to rise with the ♣A not only on a strict percentage basis but also because South is likely to hold the ♣K for his opening bid (and perhaps a second bid in certain circumstances).

At favourable vulnerability North might raise spades, particularly over a takeout double (these days it's common to play very weak single raises in this position), which might create some awkwardness for E/W. For example: 1♠-(Dble)-2♠-(Dble); 3♠-? East's responsive double suggests two places to play and some legitimate values. West must act again but can he really afford to bid 4♥ without overstating his suit quality? A second takeout double creates more options for East, including defending 3♠ doubled, which would be a losing decision. East will pull to 4♦ and now West's 4♥ will be much more accurate. East would pass both an immediate and delayed 4♥.

But if North finds a raise to 2♠ South won't necessarily settle for 3♠. At the existing vulnerability he might well jump to 4♠, which is very much the right thing to do on this layout. Accurate defence beats 4♠ doubled three tricks but that's only 500 for E/W. The best they can do in this position is bid 5♦, which nets them 600.

Perhaps it's difficult to appreciate the merits of a raise to 2♠ with that woeful North hand but it's just another example of supporting with support, with the vulnerability to back you up. Would I recommend it? Oh, very yes.

#### Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

The top spot for E/W on their own cards is a diamond partscore, but finding the fit in that suit may not be easy, especially if West opens 1♣ and North overcalls 2♠, weak or intermediate (a matter of perception or upbringing). East really has no accurate bid over 2♠, even if a negative double does not promise anything specific about the unbid suits. Some will double anyway and will do well if West bids 3♦ or 4♦ and the partnership stops short of game. A handful of Easts might stretch to bid a natural, nonforcing 2NT and will be raised to 3NT, down 300 on the lead of the ♠J. 2NT is simply too much.

If East passes over 2♠, West will double on the way out. East will have to choose from among a penalty pass, 2NT (where that would be natural), 3NT and a gentle 3♦. Pass is the big winner this time. There are several ways to defeat 2♠ and very few ways to let it make, so the Easts who pass are likely to achieve plus 200 and a wonderful score.

West might open 1♦ rather than 1♣ as a matter of style or system. That leaves East with a palatable option in 3♦ over 2♠ and West will have to exercise some restraint to stay out of game; East might well accept a game try.

If North overcalls only 1♠, East will compete painlessly with 1NT. South will be tempted to show his hearts and many will not be able to resist. If West doubles N/S are headed for minus 500 or 800 if they stick it out in 2♥ doubled, and in this scenario a retreat to 2♠ will also be doubled.

If one of these unpleasant things befalls N/S with some frequency those plus 130s in diamonds won't be fabulous scores. It is widely reputed to be a bidder's game today but N/S might not agree after asserting themselves unsuccessfully on this deal.

If N/S sell out to 1NT and South leads the ♠J the contract can be beaten as long as South does not duck an unlikely early heart towards the king. That won't really happen but what might transpire is that South will lead a heart, which will allow declarer to take nine tricks: three in each minor, two hearts and one spade.

If South is going to lead a heart, E/W might as well be in 3NT . . .

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

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

Although South has a fairly good hand North does not, and their adverse vulnerability should keep N/S out of serious trouble. That is somewhat simplistic as any trouble will be serious here. For example if N/S should somehow go minus 100 or 200 or 300 they might expect to do well as E/W are on for plus 420. So they are, but only in theory. In practice virtually every E/W pair will be in 4♠ and vast numbers of them will lose a trick to the ♠Q after a takeout double by South, suggesting spade shortage.

All of this is pie in the sky, however. How on earth will N/S be able to buy the contract at any fathomable level when East has that hand opposite a voluntary raise? Whatever method West uses to raise spades over South's takeout double or 2♦ overcall, East will drive to game and there's no reason for South to think he can beat it so there won't be many doubled 4♠ contracts. It's interesting to speculate on whether a double of 4♠ by North is more or less likely to ensure that he will make his queen of trumps.

Declarers who rely on adages will tout the virtues of "Eight ever, nine never" in the post-mortem, but they will not earn the respect of their colleagues if they make drop the ♠Q on that basis to make 4♠.

I know some players who will overcall 1NT with the South cards, believing that it's important to get the strength of the hand across early and that the doubleton queen of the suit bid on the right is often useful in notrump. This may be the deal that convinces them that this is not such a good idea.

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

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

4♠ is an excellent contract for E/W although they don't really have the high cards for game. Declarer needs either the spade finesse (with trumps not four-one or five-zero) or the diamond finesse (or singleton queen offside or a guess) and no adverse ruff.

Here, however, South can switch to a diamond after two rounds of hearts and get a diamond ruff when North wins the ♠K. If South plays three rounds of hearts instead declarer can ruff with the jack and there will be no second chance for the diamond ruff . . . unless North discards rather than over-ruff. Now declarer might reasonably cross to the ♦A to pass the ♠Q. With nothing else to play, North will lead a diamond now and South's ruff might surprise everyone but South. Declarer will have to play low from dummy to avoid two down.

(1) 1♦-(1♥)-1♠-(1NT); Pass-(2♥)-3♠-All Pass

(2) 1♦-(2♥)-2♠-(Pass); ?

What can East bid? 3♣? 2NT? Too awful for words! 3♠? Perhaps that's the least of evils, and here it will get his side to the excellent but likely-to-fail 4♠.

(3) Pass-(1♥)-1♠-(Dble); Rdbl-(2♥)-3♠-(Pass); 4♠-All Pass

Is West worth 3♠ after East's passed-hand redouble? Perhaps, but it's a significant stretch, especially when North advertises length in the minors with his negative double.

(4) 1NT-(2♥)-4♥-(Pass); 4♠-All Pass

If East opens a weak notrump it's quite reasonable for West to drive to 4♠, here via a Texas Transfer. West doesn't know about the diamond fit.

(5) 1♦-(1♥)-1♠-(Pass); INT-4♠

Here West knows about the diamond fit and his hand improves significantly.

E/W can consider themselves unlucky if they bid 4♠ and fail and the E/W top will go to those pairs who are permitted to make their pushy game. Those who declare a spade partial and take ten tricks will also do very well and even nine tricks might produce a good score if there are enough pairs in game going down.

### Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

Believers in up-the-line responses to 1♣ will find the diamond fit immediately but at the same time will allow East to enter the auction with a 1♥ overcall where he would not have risked 2♥ over a 1♠ response. Now if N/S compete to 3♦ E/W are likely to double for penalty or go on to 3♥, both successful decisions.

If North responds 1♠ instead East will pass, then decide whether to reopen when South's INT rebid is passed around to him. Perfect defence (♥J, ducked, ♣K taken, ♥10 overtaken for a diamond switch to the jack, ♦A, ♥9 overtaken) will defeat INT two tricks for plus 200, but 100 is much more likely as East won't be inclined to switch after the second heart and if he doesn't, the diamonds are blocked. This time it will probably work better to protect with 2♥.

If East dares to intervene with 2♥ over a 1♠ response, West might take him seriously enough to bid four. Even if South doesn't lead a spade and declarer arranges to finesse the ♦J to discard a spade from dummy, 4♥ should still

be defeated with a timely trump switch from North.

If South opens 1♦ as a matter of style or because he's playing a strong club system West should not overcall, although some intrepid (alternative adjectives welcome) souls will do so. Now N/S are likely to find diamonds, and it will be attractive for East to back in with 2♥. They figure to be captains of their fate whatever happens after this. Against 3♦ (doubled, perhaps), the defence can take the ♥A, ♣A, club ruff, and exit safely. When West wins the first trump he can give East a club over-ruff with the ♦K, holding declarer to seven tricks, down 200 or 500.

Some will open the South hand with INT, covering several different ranges. A new dimension will be introduced when East uses an artificial treatment to show length in both majors. As long as West chooses hearts rather than spades, E/W will be in good shape.

N/S pairs who get out for minus 100 in diamonds or notrump will score particularly well on this subtly interesting partscore deal.

### Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

Look, ma – a real weak two-bid . . . unless ma taught you that this hand is too strong and too good a dummy for hearts and diamonds. While it may be a matter of taste at the expert level, most West players will look no further than 2♠ (or a Multi 2♦, where permitted). This will not be music to East's ears. The sad truth is that there is no perfect way for East to proceed. 2NT will get him information about side stoppers or (using Ogust responses) information about suit quality (potentially useful) and strength (not very important). Some pairs of scientific bent might be able to ask about singletons. The information East craves most, however, is whether West has a second suit, or perhaps three-card club

support. A 3♣ response, most commonly treated as forcing, is an alternative to 2NT, and so is a hopeful blast into 3NT, which generally does not invite correction.

Here the best contract for E/W is 4♠, which has strong chances when spades are four-three or someone has ten-nine tripleton. With the foul spade break, however, West won't make 4♠ unless North leads the ace of trumps "to have a look at dummy" or busily underleads the ♥A. If East asks for more information with 2NT and West shows, say, a maximum with a good suit, it would not be ridiculous for East to commit to spades with his somewhat thin trump support. Bad luck.

More often, however, East will declare 3NT, where he can't legitimately be defeated. South will lead a club or perhaps the ♦10 and declarer will play clubs from the top, giving South his ten. Declarer will win the likely minor suit return, cash his remaining minor-suit winners and exit with the ♦4 to endplay North if he has kept his diamond length intact. Some declarers will manage a tenth trick when North parts with a diamond.

If North sticks his neck out to come in with 3♥ over 2♠, or 2♥ over a Multi 2♦, East will double for penalty if his methods permit him to do so. The result will not be pretty for N/S. If South is lucky North will not do this again for a while.

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

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

E/W can make 6♦ with inspired play and can take eleven tricks in notrump without doing anything special. Why then will some of them defend 3♠ undoubled? Because an increasingly large number of North players will open 3♠ and shut everyone out.

It's not that the North hand bears much similarity to any of the examples of a 3♠ opening that you'll find in most textbooks. It's

just that favourable vulnerability seems to have a more intoxicating effect on tournament players than it did in the past.

But why not a weak 2♠? That will be a popular choice, of course, but curiously, some would prefer a better internal suit for a weak two-bid and, coupled with the presence of a side four-card heart suit, will shy away from 2♠. But three – that's a different story. 3♠ really puts on the pressure and there are two opponents and only one partner. For a modern three-bid as dealer at favourable vulnerability, flaws are almost incidental. Please note that I am not advocating but merely reporting the results of the informal research I have gathered over the years. Especially in the expert and would-be expert community, there is little discipline left in this important aspect of the game.

Okay, so maybe you'd bid with the West hand if 3♠ came around to you, but what call would you choose? Double with no support for hearts? That's a flat-out bet that partner can pass for penalty with a trump stack or can bid 3NT with enough to make it. Could be right but it's a real gamble. 4♦ on a broken five-card suit? 4NT for the minors? Please. 3NT with no spade stopper and only a modest hand in high cards? I can live with that. Can you? As each of these choices is seriously flawed the cautious pass seems like the best bet. If 3♠ turns out to be a normal preempt, others will face the same problem and why should they choose the winning positive action? That's the rationale for passing. It makes sense. 3♠ goes roughly six down. Minus 300 not doubled. Not so hot if someone doubles, minus 1400 being just a tad worse than the 1370 for 6♦.

Of course, few will pass out a weak 2♠. Most will try 3♦ and East will either bid 3NT (can't always have everything stopped) or move towards 6♦ with a cue-bid or perhaps a (surely undiscussed in this situation) splinter bid in clubs. To go past 3NT in search of a minor-suit game at Matchpoints is always a dangerous idea and those who don't bid 3NT with the East hand in this position are likely to reach slam. To make 6♦ declarer must take the straight club finesse and ruff two clubs in dummy. If North still has his uppercuts with the ♦9 declarer may have to finesse the ♦8 to get home, but in practice he can afford one round of trumps on the lie of the cards. If South ducks declarer must not play a second round of trumps lest South play a third, leaving him a

trick short. Is that really so? Well, yes if declarer plays three rounds of hearts to discard his spade loser before drawing trumps. But no if declarer assumes spades are six-one and that South has the  $\heartsuit A$ . In that case he can draw trumps, take the club finesse and one club ruff and eventually squeeze North in the majors to get home.

### Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

$4\spadesuit$  is a very good contract for N/S with their combined 21 HCP and only an eight-card fit, and they might get there if South starts with a strong notrump, then “super-accepts” North’s transfer to spades. The North hand revalues very positively opposite “known” four-card support and he can’t tell how good the singleton heart will be. Although it’s a close decision I think there will be more who bid  $4\spadesuit$  than pass in this position. There are several popular ways of super-accepting a transfer these days, one of them being to show a weak doubleton. North would like the  $\diamondsuit K$  better opposite strength but here he can see that if the  $\diamondsuit A$  is inside he can get a useful diamond ruff in South and his clubs figure to be opposite strength.

With West on lead and East having no quick entry to underlead the  $\clubsuit A$ , declarer has time to draw trumps and get clubs going. Even on a heart lead and continuation when West wins the  $\clubsuit Q$ , declarer can make  $4\spadesuit$  by knocking out the  $\clubsuit A$  before the  $\diamondsuit A$ . South’s  $\heartsuit J$  is protected just long enough for declarer to get home.

West might come in over INT with a natural  $2\diamondsuit$  (not very popular in 2001) or some conventional bid that shows either an undisclosed one-suiter, diamonds and major, specifically the red suits, hearts and a minor, or hearts and another suit. North should bid (or transfer to)  $2\spadesuit$  whenever his methods permit him to do so and South might try for game

whether or not East competes further. N/S are less likely to reach game in one of these scenarios. Although spade contracts might be held to nine tricks from the North side on a low club lead there is no real reason for East to make that lead where West competes over INT.

Where South has to open  $1\clubsuit$  or one-of-a-major West will often show his diamonds. North will raise spades, of course, perhaps to game, but he is likely to pass after a  $1\clubsuit$  or  $1\heartsuit$  opening. If East tries 2NT, reasonably enough, N/S might not get back into the auction, selling out to  $3\diamondsuit$  when West retreats over 2NT.  $3\diamondsuit$  has good chances to go only one down for a good E/W result . . . unless it is doubled. Plus 200 will beat all the N/S partscores.

### Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

If N/S do not interfere E/W are likely to come to rest in  $2\heartsuit$ , a contract that is likely to be held to nine tricks on repeated club leads, promoting a trump trick for South’s jack-third. The most common auction will be  $1\spadesuit$ -INT;  $2\heartsuit$ -All Pass.

Might South protect with a double on this sequence? Even the most rabid balancers would think thrice about sticking their neck out here, where E/W might not have much of a fit and both might have reserves of high cards. No, the most promising opportunity for N/S to get into the auction comes at North’s initial turn to bid. Would I risk  $2\clubsuit$  over  $1\spadesuit$ ? I confess to being a devout passer, but my two-level overcalls in a minor aim for 3NT, not  $2\clubsuit$ . I am well aware, however, that many successful players will not pass with a suit as chunky as North’s, preferring to strike the first blow while the price is still low. Norths who overcall  $2\clubsuit$  will not be carried to the stratosphere by world-wise partners, but South will raise to at least  $3\clubsuit$  whether East passes or tries the effect

of a light negative double. If East passes, West might risk a takeout double of 3♣ but then East might drive to game, expecting more and having shown nothing.

If East doubles 2♣, West will compete to 3♥ and no one will do any more. If South jumps to 4♣ (whatever that means in his partnership) he might shut everyone out.

In a club contract East will do best to lead trumps. The ♠Q will not be a good choice on this layout.

That's a lot of ink devoted to a club overcall that may not be made very often, but you never know.

E/W plus 140 will be a popular result. If East musters a raise to 3♥ (probably too aggressive at Matchpoints) West might well bid four for a very poor score.

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

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

N/S don't want to be in 7♥ but if they get there they figure to make it. We'll come to that soon.

West doesn't have anything like a standard opening bid but at favourable vulnerability there will be some that start with an eccentric 3♣ or some specialised obstructive treatment. North will risk 3♥ over 3♣ and South will use some form of Blackwood to reach 6♥, discovering that the ♥Q is not present and accounted for. Nothing to it.

If West passes North will open 1♥ and South will respond 2♦ or 3♦. It would be a good idea for West to double to get both his suits into the picture because there might be a profitable sacrifice available, but East is not likely to go very far despite his modest spade fit. North will rebid hearts in any case and South will generally check on aces and/or key cards at his earliest convenience.

There will be Souths who gamble on seven but most will settle for 6♥, sensibly. Say that East finds the best lead of a spade. If the trump suit were the only issue, declarer would play the ace first; then, if an honour were to appear from East, declarer would finesse the ten, following the theory of Restricted Choice (which posits that the play of one of two cards of equal value is more likely to be a forced play than a random choice). Here, however, declarer has other considerations. With a spade loser to take care of he must discard spades from dummy on high diamonds or a spade from hand on a high club, and if West has shown length in clubs, there is genuine danger that one of declarer's early winners will be ruffed. Furthermore, it's odds-against that West will hold as many as three hearts. Catering to the more likely scenario in which East has three trumps, declarer should play ♥K, heart to the ace, intending to play high diamonds, leaving himself a late club ruff in dummy when it is safe. When trumps divide two-two declarer's careful play will net him an overtrick, the same result that will accrue to the declarers who simply rely on "eight ever, nine never."

In 7♥, however, declarer cannot afford a trump loser and the Restricted Choice play (ace, low to the ten after an honour drops) must be considered, particularly where there are no clues from the bidding. The play is tricky, though, because declarer's communications are fragile: how does he get back to the South hand for the diamonds if he takes a successful trump finesse against West's guarded honour on the second round? If he forms the opinion that West does have three hearts he might, after cashing the ♥A, lead high diamonds through West. On the actual lie it would take considerable foresight for West not to ruff the second diamond with his otherwise useless ♥9. If West ruffs in, declarer over-ruffs, cashes the ♥K and claims. Any West in this position who does not ruff the second diamond is entitled to a place in the sun. Please tell your local bridge columnist about it.

### Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

East has enough strength to compete over North's 1♠ opening but has no accurate call available. The technical answer is to pass, hoping to show both minors later if the opponents find a fit and stop at a low level. For whatever that's worth, some will overcall INT, borrowing a point or two, while other reckless souls will deem 2♦ or a fancy 2♣ an acceptable risk.

If East passes, South will respond INT and North will rebid 2♠. Now, with the opponents somewhat limited, some of the original passers will step in with a "minors" 2NT, but that is a truly dangerous move because N/S have not demonstrated that they have a fit or that they are both in the low range for their actions to date. Although N/S have a nine-card spade fit and some sort of play (roughly 25%) for 4♠ they can profitably stop to double any E/W contract for a penalty of at least 200 points and a very good score.

If East continues to show restraint South will have to decide whether to pass 2♠ or move forward with 2NT or 3♠. If he does invite game North's willingness to accept might depend on whether he can count on South for some spade support. With a balanced hand himself and some useful cards for notrump it would not be unreasonable for North to raise 2NT to 3NT. The nine-trick game is a better proposition than 4♠, which needs both the ♠K and ♥A onside. 3NT will make legitimately not only with the ♠K onside but also when the spade finesse loses and the opponents can't get a suit going. Here 3NT can be defeated on a club lead, East playing king-ace and low to establish his eight, or on a heart lead if East switches to clubs in the same manner. If the defenders start with two rounds of hearts declarer should realise that there's no point in ducking unless he's trying to hold down the undertricks. With

some trepidation he will win the ♥K and pass the ♠J, and his care will be rewarded when East is not only out of hearts but also the owner of both high clubs.

With diamonds five-two 4♠ will fail even if East doesn't cash his second high club immediately.

Although there will be some 600s, 500s and 200s for N/S the most common results will be plus 140 and minus 100. Some Easts hungry for a big board might take a chance and double 4♠, especially if N/S demonstrate some uncertainty in reaching game. Minus 200 will be particularly awful for N/S.

### Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

N/S will usually have the auction to themselves and many will bid INT-3NT. If West leads the ♣10 or ♣9, he won't be able to clear the suit later, but that's not what this deal is about in any case. Declarer can make 3NT on any club lead but the ace (which would allow West to switch to hearts in time) by winning in hand, crossing to a spade, and leading a diamond towards the closed hand. East can't afford to rise with the ace and would have no profitable return if he did, so declarer will win the ♦Q. Now he can drive out the ♣A safely for nine tricks. If West does not switch to hearts, East comes under pressure as declarer cashes his black-suit winners. He must keep a diamond to go with the ace lest declarer duck a diamond to the blank ace. Therefore East must release three hearts and declarer, if he reads the position, can play ace and another heart to score the ♦K in the end. Plus 430 will be a good score for N/S.

Many Souths will prefer to open 1♠ as a matter of style or because their hand is out of range (or perceived range) for INT. The North hand is really not worth more than 2♠ although some will do more. Some continuations:

- (1) 1♠-2♠; 2NT-3NT; Pass
- (2) 1♠-INT; 2NT-3NT; Pass (where INT is forcing or semi-forcing)
- (3) 1♠-INT; 2NT-3♠; 4♠-Pass (where 3♠ is forcing)
- (4) 1♠-INT; 2NT-3♥; 3♠-3NT; Pass/4♠ (where 3♥ is a transfer to spades)
- (5) 1♠-2♠; 4♠-Pass
- (6) 1♠-2♣; 3NT-Pass/4♠

Where North declares 3NT East will certainly lead a heart and declarer will come to at least ten tricks if he leads a diamond through East at his earliest opportunity. If he plays a club instead West can clear hearts while East has the ♦A as an entry and declarer will never score a diamond trick. Holding 3NT to 400 will seem reasonable but much will depend on how the play goes in 4♠.

West might well lead the ♦J against 4♠, which would give declarer a chance to make five. If East lets the lead run to the queen declarer can pass the ♦9 relatively early in the play. He will have time then to knock out the ♣A and take two heart discards, one on the ♣Q, one on the long diamond. Plus 450 will be superb, of course, but it may happen more often than you might expect. After all, what would you lead from the West hand on an informative auction?

In other variations declarer will face an insurmountable task in trying to take ten tricks because he can't both take his discard on the ♣Q (East can ruff it) and ruff a heart in dummy. Curiously, in spades it's a "three or five" hand for N/S.

### Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

I suspect that at some bridge clubs more than half the field bids INT-3NT with the N/S cards.

That won't shut out the East hand but it might well deprive him of the opportunity to show both majors wholesale. After all, how many pairs have discussed defensive bidding after the opponents bid INT-3NT, other than to assign a lead-directing meaning to a double? East will most often bid 4♠ in this situation and South will double. Should North pass 4♠ doubled? Not an easy decision as South's double may be based in part on some of the high cards he expects for North's 3NT bid. North might pull to 5♣ or 4NT, both of which West is bound to double. 5♣ will always be defeated and 4NT won't be permitted to slip through unless West leads a low diamond. We'll see about 4♠ in a moment.

If South opens 1♦ West will pass and North will bid some number of clubs or a rather atypical (I'd call it awful) INT. East often will have the opportunity to bid spades, then hearts or show them both with a cue-bid. At these tables E/W might declare 4♥ from either side of the table or North will go on to 5♣.

In some systems 1♠ is the appropriate opening bid for South. That might convince East to stay out of the bidding and N/S might finish in 3NT by South or 3♣ by North. Alternatively, East might introduce hearts over a 2♣ response or over a nonforcing 3♣ rebid.

South is more likely to pass than open, however, and West will face a similar decision, but with the vulnerability in his favour. Over 1♦ North will bid 2♣ or 3♣ and East will bid his suits in normal order, finishing in 4♥ or 4♠. Where West opens INT North may not compete because of the adverse vulnerability unless he can do so with a natural 2♣. E/W will invariably reach 4♠ or 4♥ from one side or the other.

If North is allowed to open in third seat he will usually try 3♣. Different styles and methods will come into play in this scenario and East will show a one- or two-suiter accordingly. N/S will generally sell out, perhaps doubling the E/W game.

Only a club lead will defeat East in 4♥, even if South leads low and North puts up the king. Declarer can't get the spades going without losing a fourth trick. If West declares 4♥ a high club will work for the defence but on any other lead declarer can thread his way home because North's trumps get shortened before declarer's.

It might seem that 4♠ is destined to fail on a club lead with South developing a long trump by forcing declarer to ruff repeatedly. Curiously, 4♠ can be beaten legitimately only on a red-suit lead, although declarer must play with x-ray eyes to succeed after the defenders start their club force. Let's assume that declarer is Superman, that there is no kryptonite to harm him, and that he is at the height of his powers (which is just about the parlay required to make 4♠). Declarer ruffs the club lead and plays a diamond to dummy's nine, ruffs another club, and leads the ♦Q, which holds (it doesn't help South to cover. Now a heart to dummy for a third club ruff, the ♥K, and the ♠10 to South's jack in a position where South has one more trump than declarer and two poorly-positioned diamonds. If South plays ace and another trump declarer plays hearts and South eventually has to give dummy two diamond tricks. Otherwise South leads a diamond, declarer finesses and throws two hearts. South ruffs in after that but must give declarer the ♠K. If you know of anyone who made 4♠ playing this way he's either the reincarnation of the legendary par master Pietro Bernasconi (whose death last year deprived the bridge world of an extraordinary talent) or he's seen the deal before.

As 4♠ will virtually always fail and 4♥ will make only rarely those who save in 5♣ for minus 200 will not enjoy this deal. Those who are beaten 500 will enjoy it even less.

#### Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

If West opens the bidding his side might well buy the contract uncontested in INT from one side or the other. If declarer scores a trick with the ♦K and plays clubs the natural way, finessing through North, there are eight tricks there for the taking. Plus 120 should be an excellent result for E/W.

West needn't open at unfavourable vulnerability, however, and if he passes North will start with 1♣, 1♠, INT, or perhaps a Precision 1♦ (if this hand is not in range for INT). At these tables North will declare INT or 2♠, or South might become declarer in 2♠. E/W have four obvious tricks against a spade contract and will usually come to either a diamond ruff or a trick in the wash (when declarer runs out of trumps). Declarers who manage a ninth trick in spades will fare very well indeed.

In INT declarer must lose five clubs, two aces and the ♦K for two down. Minus 100 won't be a bad result for N/S if there are enough E/W pairs going plus 120min INT the other way.

Another contract that might be reached (although it's not easy to see how unless West opens 1♣ for systemic reasons) is 3♣. Would you bet on the declarer or the defence?

If you choose declarer you've got a winning ticket. Even if the defenders force West to ruff a spade and get their heart tricks at the right time declarer will always get home by playing North for the ♣Q, taking a ruff in East and eventually completing a trump coup. Here's how the play might go: heart lead ducked, spade ducked, heart to the ace, trump to the nine, diamond to the king, diamond to South, ♥J, spade to the ace, spade ruff in West, red-suit ruff in East, club to the Ace, red card to coup North's queen-eight of trumps at trick twelve.

#### Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

The North hand fits into several popular notrump ranges and might even be treated as appropriate for a 12-14 notrump if a point is deducted for the suspect heart holding. At many of these tables INT will be passed out and East will lead a spade or a diamond according to his philosophy. Many would look

no further than the stronger of two suits of equal length and their approach will be the winner here. To make INT after a diamond lead declarer will have to get the spades right: if he leads an honour from hand on the first round and the defenders cash their tricks he will learn that East has only four diamonds. By cashing ace-king of clubs he will discover that East has two or three of those and will also have seen two or (more likely) three hearts in the East hand. As East surely would have led a heart from ace-fifth he must hold at least two spades (2443) and therefore declarer should cash the second spade honour in his hand. When West shows out declarer can finesse against the ♠10 for three spades, a heart, a diamond and two clubs: plus 90.

On a spade lead and a heart switch declarer has seven top tricks and will take no more unless West discards a club. That will happen more often than it should and N/S plus 150 will be a very good result.

West will often protect against INT, however. Different defensive treatments will get E/W to 2♥ or 2♦, both of which will fare very well, yielding nine tricks. Both plus 140 and plus 110 will produce dramatically better results than passing out INT. From somewhere in the night you can just make out a hoarse voice whispering, "it's a bidder's game." A potentially interesting decision for East will arise where West's initial action is 2♣ to show hearts and a minor or 2♦ to show diamonds and a major. Should East try for four-four or four-five diamonds or commit to hearts, which might be a four-three. That's a tough choice at Matchpoints but perhaps the strategy should be to try for the safest contract in such situations because partner may have done something good for your side by reopening where many others will not.

If E/W do reach 2♦ or 2♥ and South is still in a position to act he might compete with a takeout double or perhaps 2♠, suggesting a four-card suit because he passed INT. 2♠ has chances to make but might simply push E/W a level higher. Which in turn might tempt North to bid 3♠. Where will it end? With a double, perhaps, creating a few windfall results for grateful beneficiaries. On the downside the difference between minus 50 and minus 100 may not be that significant.

If North opens with a suit bid the spade fit should come to light easily enough. If West is in the protective position he might well compete and all the aforementioned issues of level will be raised in a different scenario.

Lots of scope for enterprise and judgment on this subtly complex deal.

#### Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

With N/S at unfavourable vulnerability E/W are liable to buy the contract in 4♥ if they find their fit in that suit. Even if East has an artificial opening (usually 2♦ or 2♥, or in Italy, 2♣) to show a moderate hand with both majors he might look elsewhere because of the wide disparity in suit quality. On the other hand, such an opening gets the distribution across immediately while stealing some bidding space and I am sure that most who have it will wheel it out. That will get E/W to game in two bids and will usually end the auction. With the foul trump layout E/W will lose four tricks on normal defence. Another variation on this theme will arise quite often in Poland, where East will have a two-suited two-bid (either 2♥ or 2♠ or 2♦) that includes the possibility but does not promise both majors. That might delay E/W for a round of bidding but they will reach 4♥ too. So much for esoterica!

At other tables East will pass, open 1♠ or pretend that he has a weak 2♠ bid.

Where East passes South might describe his hand as a weak 2♦ if that's in his arsenal. As South is vulnerable North will usually try for game with 2NT, either natural or artificial. It's hard to imagine East continuing to remain silent and he will enter with a 3♦ cue-bid or simply bid his chunky spades. The former will work appreciably better because it will get his side to hearts, albeit a level too high unless West

shows remarkable restraint (also known as questionable judgment). Here North might double 4♥ for what is unlikely to be more than an extra 50 points and would often turn a normal minus 420 into minus 590.

If East opens 1♠ South ought to pass and West will respond INT. North, with what might be the best hand at the table from his point of view, will often double for takeout, counting on his support for all suits to compensate for his dull pattern. Although East will have reason to expect some hearts to turn up on his right he's likely to bid 2♥ anyway. South will compete to 3♦ or 4♦ but West's 4♥ will probably end the auction. An off-centre weak 2♠ from East will come around to North, who will double. It's not easy to predict what will happen after this start, but players who open 2♠ with this type of hand are rarely shy about mentioning their second suit. Thus 4♥ will often be reached. If East feels that he's done enough N/S will settle for 3♦ if East doesn't change his mind, or they will slide into 3NT after a constructive 3♦-3♣; 3NT-Pass. 3NT has five top losers but East will have to cash all three of his tricks in the suit early or late to defeat the contract. I suspect that there will be several N/S plus 600s.

N/S can't make more than 110 in diamonds unless West gets his ♥A ruffed at a point where it costs him a black trick, a most unlikely development.

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

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

Although a few West or East players might take some part in the auction it's much more likely that the vulnerability would dissuade them from any unsound action.

As N/S are off three cashing aces they will do well to avoid a pilgrimage to the five-level in search of slam. If North raises 1♠ to 2♠ this shouldn't be a tall order, but many will do more. For example:

- (1) 1♠-3♠ (limit raise, five-card majors)
- (2) 1♠-INT; 2♥-3♠ (specifically a three-card limit raise, INT forcing)
- (3) 1♠-2♣; 2♥-2♠ (Acol style, natural, about 10-11 points)
- (4) 1♠-3♦ (artificial limit raise)

South needs to find just the right cards in North to have a good play for slam, including two aces. If he believes North will have at least one ace for his constructive sequence he may carelessly jump to 4NT to simplify the auction on a deal that requires considerable delicacy. Perhaps South should consider the deal this way: can I miss a slam by continuing to bid out my shape if I find North with either two aces and the ♥Q, or ace-and-one heart, a minor suit ace and at least jack-third of trumps? As the answer is clearly, "no, I can't," South should not launch into Blackwood. End of cheap commercial message advocating care and restraint.

With East holding all three aces it will be impossible to slip past any of them. Spades will always yield ten tricks, and the only discrepancies, apart from E/W accidents in diamonds or hearts, will be at the tables where South gets his side to the five level, fatally. Too easy? We'll see.

#### Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Ace and another diamond holds South to eight tricks in hearts: the defenders get the ♥A, a diamond ruff (declarer can't get back to his hand to draw trumps), a spade, a club and either a second club or a trump trick (if they force dummy). Similarly, if N/S play in spades, best defence, which includes a diamond ruff for West, holds them to eight tricks in that strain. N/S do best to play in diamonds, where they can take ten tricks, but they will rarely get around to bidding that suit.

It's really E/W's hand. They can make 3NT thanks to the spade finesse and the blockage in hearts, and can take ten tricks in clubs, a more likely strain, if they are permitted to play the hand there.

How will the bidding go?

- (1) 1♣-(1♠)-Dble-(2♥); Pass-(2♠)-2NT-(Dble); 3♣-(3♠)-4♣-(All Pass)
- (2) 1♣-(3♠)-Dble-(Pass); 4♣-(All Pass)
- (3) 1♣-(3♠)-Dble-(All Pass)
- (4) 1♣-(3♠)-3NT-(All Pass)
- (5) 1NT-(2♠)-Dble-(Pass); 3♣-(All Pass)
- (6) Pass-(1♠)-Pass-(2♥); Pass-(2♠)-Pass-(3♥)-All Pass
- (7) Pass-(1♠)-Pass-(1NT); 2♣-(2♠)-3♣-(3♥); Pass-3♠/Pass-(All Pass)
- (8) 2♣-(2♠)-2NT-(3♥); Pass-(3♠)-4♣-(All Pass)

It's easy to see that E/W might not get their diamond ruff against a major or that they might get pushed to 5♣ (less likely), or that they might double a N/S indiscretion and get all their tricks. There figures to be a full spectrum of scores on both sides of the ledger on this one. As is so often the case it will be good to be plus.

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

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

Both sides can take a large number of tricks with their longest suit as trumps but the precise number will depend on the defence and/or declarer's line of play.

Over North's 1♦ East will wish to enter the bidding at favourable vulnerability. System may preclude a weak jump overcall of 3♣ and the poor suit may dissuade some who have that option at their disposal. It's not a classic two-level overcall but I believe the majority of the

East players will take some action on the first round.

Over 2♣ South lacks the traditional requirements for a two-level negative double but with nine cards in the majors and no security in any later action most tournament players will double if they can. West will find it difficult to believe that everyone has his bid, but might not be willing to let East out below game. Possible actions include redouble, a 2♦ cue bid, a 3♠ splinter raise, 5♣, 2NT (where that is forcing) and a bash at 3NT. From this point forward there will be a wide variety of different continuations but it's most likely that West will commit to 5♣ rather than sell out to 4♠ or 4♥ (doubled). If South leads a diamond or a low spade, East will make 5♣, perhaps doubled. To defeat the contract South must lead a heart or the king of spades, retaining the lead for the killing heart switch.

If East overcalls 3♣ it's really too big a stretch for South to compete with a negative double, but some brave (substitute your own adjective here) players will do just that.

Whether South passes or doubles West will probably jump directly to 5♣, putting it to North. If South has doubled, North will feel that he must do something but he can't be sure that South has genuine length in both majors (three-level negative doubles in this situation suggest both majors but may be based on length in one major with support for opener's minor). Should he take a stab at 5♥ or double 5♣? If he decides to bid a major and finishes minus 100 or 200 he will beat the pairs who go minus 400 against 5♣. If he goes minus 500 (in 5♥ doubled) he will beat only the pairs who go minus 550 against 5♣ doubled!

N/S won't make 5♥ but can get home in 5♠ by getting the hearts right, leading the jack and ten on the first two rounds of the suit, smothering East's nine. Say that a club is led against a spade contract, forcing North. A diamond is ducked and the defenders win to play a trump. Declarer needs three entries to South to ruff a second club and lead hearts twice. In the meantime he has to retain control, so say that he wins the ♠A, plays ♦A, diamond ruff, club ruff, and draws trumps before leading the ♥J. West wins and forces South's last trump with another club. Now declarer must guess hearts correctly to avoid being held to only nine tricks. Once West shows up with only one

spade it makes sense to play him for three hearts and he would not go up with the ace from ace-third, so the winning play in the suit is strongly indicated.

This deal, one of the most interesting of the session will produce a wide variety of results.

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

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

Notrump range and style will determine whether N/S finish in INT or 2♥. E/W will have no obvious way to enter an auction in which they do not belong. The main candidates:

- (1) INT-2♦ (transfer); 2♥-Pass
- (2) INT-Pass
- (3) 1♣-1♥; INT-2♥; Pass
- (4) 1♣-1♥; INT-Pass
- (5) 1♠-INT; Pass

Other less likely possibilities:

- (6) 1♠-2♠; Pass
- (7) 1♣-1♥; 1♠-Pass
- (8) 1♣-1♥; 1♠-INT-Pass

In 2♥ West can arrange a third-round spade ruff but this will usually allow declarer a useful discard on South's fourth spade. The timing shouldn't matter. If the defenders eschew their spade ruff to plug away at diamonds, declarer can't reach his hand to draw trumps without opening up the clubs so it won't be necessary for East to win the first spade to play a club through. The defenders need to get their spade ruff only if declarer plays a club honour through West early (perhaps East will lead one at some tables) to build a club discard for a diamond. N/S plus 110 will be a very common result.

The play in INT is less predictable. On a diamond lead from West declarer can come to

seven tricks by playing ace and another heart, but that requires three-three hearts or king-and-one in West, a total chance of less than 40%. If instead he plays on spades he simply needs the heart finesse for seven tricks, taking two spades, two hearts, and ace-king-ace -- a straight even money chance. This line won't pay off on its main wager but its advantage is that it leaves some secondary chances in clubs after West has to exit passively with a heart. The ace-and-heart line will lead to declarer setting up a second heart trick for the defence when the suit does not come in, so there may be no chance for recovery.

West might lead a club against INT and now the contract might well yield a valuable overtrick. With East on lead against INT, diamonds will be the unbid suit and a fairly popular choice.

Spade contracts have a fighting chance for eight tricks, but seven would not be surprising.

N/S minuses will be treated badly in the scoring and plus 90 may not be enough to guarantee a good result.

### Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

Should South start with 1♠, 2♠ (or a Multi 2♦) or Pass? Acol players, most Scandinavians and those using a strong club system will consider 1♠ virtually automatic. 2♠ will be more popular in North America. The passers figure to be in a small minority.

After 1♠-(Pass)-INT, East will double, bid 2♥ or 3♥ (intermediate). If he doubles and South rebids 2♠ West would love to introduce his minors wholesale with an artificial 2NT or a conventional double, but most will not have such a club in their bag. Some will pick a minor (probably clubs because East might be prepared to convert to diamonds with an offshape double) but more will pass. North will

compete to 3♠ but might pass if West takes no action. East will protect with 3♥ if given the opportunity but shouldn't volunteer 4♥ over 3♠. Where East overcalls 2♥ not everyone will rebid 2♠ with the South cards but North might reopen with 2♠. It's not clear where it will end but it will take some restraint for East to bid 2♥ and remain silent thereafter. The Easts who jump to 3♥ initially will probably buy the contract undoubled.

If South opens 2♠ North might boost to three. Would anyone *not* bid 4♥ with the East hand? Give N/S a credit for setting that problem. If North passes 2♠ East has some choices. He would bid 3♥ with quite a bit less so he might double. Or bid 4♥. Or try 2NT. None of these bids is right or wrong but on this occasion it will be better for East to take the most conservative approach.

With no lead standing out South might well opt for a passive diamond against a heart contract. That turns out to be the best lead and the defenders should get three spades, a diamond, a club, and (unless declarer plays ace and low) two hearts. The ♣K or the ♠A will blow a trick. E/W scores in hearts will range from minus 100 to minus 1100 and will include many results between those extremes.

In spades declarer figures to lose a heart, a ruff, a diamond, a club and at least one trump trick (two if South ruffs the third round of hearts with the ♠A, leads low to the jack and queen and ruffs the fourth with the ten; there will be many good players who play the trumps just that way). N/S scores in spades will range from plus 110 to minus 500.

Where East reopens 2♠ with 2NT, West might try to wriggle into a minor but is more likely to pass. North is unlikely to double and might not want to expose himself to minus 200 by competing to 3♠, so 2NT may well end the auction. Perhaps declarer will do better but four tricks looks like the expected result. Minus 400 won't be a delight.

### Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

E/W can make 6♣ or 6♥ as long as they don't do anything inferior in the heart suit and the N/S sacrifice in 6♠ is too expensive (even if West breaks hearts East can get two diamond ruffs). The prevailing vulnerability is generally not ideal for marginal sacrifices and once you're going down more than the value of the opponents' game contract you ought to think twice before taking a save against slam. One reason is that much more often than you would expect the apparently "easy" slam is not reached by a significant percentage of the field and you would get a poor score even if the slam were cold. On the other hand if slam can be defeated you turn a joint top into a near bottom by sacrificing. There's more to it than that, of course, and backing your judgment at the six or seven level can be very rewarding when you're right and the penalty you incur is less than the value of the slam "nearly everyone" was bidding.

Should North overcall 1♣ with 1♠? It's an ugly example of the genre, to be sure, but five-card spade suits don't grow on trees and many Norths will look no further. East will introduce hearts and South will jump-raise to 4♠. West might pass if that would be forcing in his methods, intending to remove a double to 4NT, suggesting doubt about strain for offense. Over this East may well jump to 6♣, and he will surely bid one slam or the other if West bids 5♥ directly over 4♠.

If North passes over 1♣, South might not come in with 1♠ or an imaginative weak jump overcall of 2♠ after East's 1♥ response. Left alone, West will rebid 2♣ or 2♥ according to his beliefs. In either case East will either bid spades, support clubs strongly or splinter in diamonds. The last of these actions will cause West to think particularly highly of his assets. Indeed, if

East held the ♥K instead of the ♠A 7♣ would be virtually laydown and 7♥ playable.

If South overcalls 1♠, Wests using Support Doubles will have a temporary solution to a modest problem. How much this will help East when North jumps to 3♠ or 4♠ is not clear. His hand would revalue more positively, for example, opposite a known long club suit and shortage in hearts. With the spade fit revealed, it may be assumed that West has short spades with only three hearts and thus at least five clubs. Over 4♠ East might take a shot at 6♣, not only because he expects the hand to fit well but also because there will be no practical way to approach slam cooperatively in this jammed auction. If North bids only 3♠, 4♣ by East would not be forcing without specific agreement to the contrary. East could cue-bid 4♠ to try for slam and West will go along with this suggestion in a variety of ways, including 5NT to ask East to choose a strain.

I am usually sceptical about the field reaching a 26-point minor-suit slam (six of those points being virtually useless) but here I think 6♣ will be quite a popular contract, especially if N/S compete in spades and bully their opponents into a successful guess.

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

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

The South hand is not a textbook 3♣ opening but in third position at favourable vulnerability most experienced tournament players will not wait for a seven-card suit or consider the ♦A (a sure defensive trick) a fatal flaw.

3♣ will set a difficult problem for West. A case can be made for 3♠, 3NT, a hopeful pass or even a heart-flawed takeout double. 3NT figures to be the popular choice but there will also be strong support for 3♠. Both these actions are likely to end the auction.

The play in 3NT is particularly interesting. The biggest thing declarer has going for him is that the defenders will have trouble maintaining communications. He has to worry about the defenders developing a second heart trick while he goes about conceding two spades and a diamond and furthermore, he has no obvious ninth trick. As long as declarer decides not to play North for the ♥J, however, he can take nine tricks in notrump.

Let's see how the play might proceed with North leading a club. Declarer wins the queen and starts diamonds, South taking the third to continue clubs. Declarer wins and plays ace-queen of spades. If North wins and returns a spade declarer wins and plays the ♥Q. If North wins, he can try to exit with his last spade but declarer underplays, leaving North with the lead. The forced heart return allows declarer to play the king from dummy with good effect. If North wins the second spade and cashes the ♥A instead and plays a heart declarer succeeds by playing the ♥K. If North ducks the spade, declarer plays the ♥Q. If North ducks declarer exits with a spade and gets the required red tricks in dummy in the end.

Declarer will fail in most relevant variations if he plays with the odds and credits North, the hand with the long hearts, with the ♥J. Say that South sees the potential endplays coming and switches to the ♠3 when he wins the third diamond. Declarer wins the ace and plays the ♥Q, ducked. Now declarer cashes the ♣A and plays the ♠Q. If North wins he gives declarer the remaining spades (or declarer can even throw North in with the fourth spade), or he gives dummy a heart and the long diamond. If North ducks the second spade, a third spade endplays him.

Curiously, the play in 3♠ is very similar, with declarer able to prevail against best defence on the same general lines. If North tries to get off play by sacrificing a trump trick, declarer can counter by under-ruffing at the crucial moment.

If South passes in third seat he will surely come in with 2♣ or 3♣ after 1♠-(Pass)-1NT. West has a decent penalty double at either level and East has no reason to take it out. That would be minus 100 or 300, for uncertain results. The winning lines of play in 3♠ or 3NT are far from clear and E/W might score well for any plus score.

These days, however, many tournament players would by agreement treat a double in this position as takeout. At those tables West will bid 2NT (3NT is an overbid and might reasonably be used to show a long solid spade suit with side stoppers rather than a jack more than 2NT) or, perhaps, pass. His main hope would be that East could reopen with a cooperative takeout double (which would suggest 2(45)2 or 2443 shape and about a 10-count, which he could pass for penalty. That would be a questionable decision, however, because opposite such a hand E/W would figure to be on for 600-odd in 3NT. Alternatively, if East were to pass out 2♣ or 3♣ that might yield a modest plus where others were going minus with the E/W cards. That would be more realistic.

At the few tables where South does not enter the bidding, West will rebid 2♣, leaving East to choose between 2♥ and 2♠ in most standard systems. There is a variation of a scientific method currently in vogue that treats a 2♦ rebid over 2♣ as a puppet to 2♥, showing hearts or certain extra-value hands, with a 2♥ rebid showing five hearts and two spades. Lacking such machinery East should probably settle for 2♠ unless he is certain that West won't pass 2♥ with a singleton heart. West will continue with 2NT in either case. Plus 150 should be a very good score unless significant numbers of E/W pairs make 3NT or collect 300 from 3♣ doubled. Plus 120 might prove decent also but will have to contend with the potential 140s in 3♠.

#### Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

The West hand is not ideal for a vulnerable three-bid, even in third position, but 3♣ will be a remarkably popular choice nonetheless. North would not have an easy time describing his somewhat peculiar hand without obstruction so the 3♣ opening won't

inconvenience him as much as West would like. Still, it's not as if doubling will solve all his potential problems. If partner were to respond 3♦, for example, should North rebid 3♥ or 3NT? And over a 4♦ response? Raising 3♠ to 4♠ would be enough, but North could still envision a slam over a 3♥ response: xx Kxxxx xxxx xx, would be enough.

As it's just too pessimistic and unilateral for North to bid 3NT over 3♣, everyone in this position will double. South's reaction, however, will not be universal. 3♦, although it could be the winner opposite a minimum double with only three spades, is unduly pessimistic. A jump to 4♦ disregards spades, the most likely strain for game opposite a typical takeout double. 3♠ caters to the higher-scoring strain but could be bid with a yarborough. 4♠, while it needn't deliver a long suit, does put all of the partnership's eggs in one basket. Once South decides not to settle for a minimum response, his most flexible action is a 4♣ cue bid, particularly if the partnership style is to promise two places to play with such actions (this is reinforced by the fact that South is a passed hand and will very rarely have a strictly one-suited slam try too strong for a jump). South plans to bid 4♠ over 4♦ or 4♥, promising spades and diamonds in both cases. If N/S get that far, how should North react to the cue bid?

4♥ would not be forcing and North must try for slam so his main choices are a return cue-bid of 5♣, intending to bid 5♥ over 5♦, or to jump to 5♥. The latter might well be read as a big heart suit, too strong for 4♥ over 3♣, perhaps with secondary spades. Whatever action North takes he is a favourite to reach either 6♠ or 6NT unless he is willing and able to check on key cards for spades, learning that two key cards are missing.

Where West passes in third seat, North should settle for a 1♥ opening. He has so many features to show that a 2♣ opening would take away too much valuable bidding space. After 1♥-1♠, West might well bid 2♣ or 3♣ and North might overvalue his hand for spades but RKCB will often keep him out of slam. Left alone North will either splinter in diamonds or jump shift in clubs before supporting spades strongly. South will love his ♥K and fair spades and might cooperate with a slam move, after which North will need to use RKCB to stay out of slam.

But why stop short if you're going to take twelve tricks with normal play? In spades declarer needs to bring in trumps for no loser so he will go to the ♥K at his earliest convenience and lead a spade honour. Each player will have his own opinion about whether the jack or queen is the card more likely to be covered (West will usually cover with K10 doubleton in any case) and whether it is desirable to have him cover. If West covers most declarers will finesse against East's ten on the way back, thus it's best for the defence this time if West does not cover. Now declarer has the option of playing for king-third in West, doubleton ten in East. It's certainly possible to go wrong. If West never bids and a club is led declarer may try to knock out the ♦A first and will run into a surprise ruff. Ouch!

In notrump West will do best to withhold his ♦A on the first round. If he takes it immediately declarer will need only two spade tricks, assuming he doesn't bank on hearts three-three (he can't test hearts before deciding because of the entry position).

N/S tops will go to those who bid and make 6NT with the successful 6♠ bidders close behind. Otherwise, the progression will be 690, 680, 660, 650, with variations for the occasional significant penalty in an E/W club contract.

### Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Although South has a very "empty" eleven-count, most players will open the bidding, nonvulnerable because it's an easy hand to rebid. West will overcall 1♦ and North will bid 1♥. Holding only one spade, a good suit of his own and a fit for clubs it makes no sense for North to trap pass, hoping to defend 1♦ doubled. Over 1♥ East will join in with 1♠ and South should raise hearts, either directly or via

a Support Double, while the price is right. In any case West should raise to 2♠, after which E/W might buy it there or get pushed to 3♠ (which might well be doubled) or sell out to 3♣ or 3♥.

On the lie of the cards N/S can make 4♥ on their four-three fit: if the defenders lead spades, declarer takes two ruffs in the long-trump hand, cashes king-queen of trumps, and crosses to a club to draw the remaining trumps with the ace, completing a dummy reversal. Else he gets a diamond ruff in South to take five trumps and five clubs. Plus 170 (yes, there will be a few plus 420s) should be an excellent score for N/S. As long as the defence gets around to trumps early enough the "safe" club contracts should be held to ten tricks but plus 130 might be a bit below average.

It's not certain how East will do in spades but it's possible that he will lose seven tricks on a diamond lead. He can't really afford to cash the ♠K and pass the ten because he will either lose three club tricks if he draws a third round of trumps, or will lose a second trump trick on a club force if he does not. If declarer plays two high trumps, intending to play on diamonds he will indeed lose seven tricks for minus 100, 150, 300 or 500.

This is an everyday bread-and-butter deal that separates the winners from the losers, although not always on the basis of skill. If you sell out too soon or if the opponents find their highest-scoring strain you can't score well, but if you do too much to buy the contract you leave yourself open to a killing penalty double. By the same token, if it's your hand and you don't punish an aggressive competitive action you can fare just as poorly. Bridge can be a cruel and difficult game.

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

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

At favourable vulnerability who would not be tempted to open the West hand with a weak 2♠ (or a Multi 2♦)? Some, whose weak two-bids might be worse or simply different, will open 3♠. Unless North settles for a heavy 2NT over 2♠, N/S figure to reach 3NT on momentum. For example: (2♠)-Dble-(Pass)-3♣; (Pass)-3NT-(All pass), or where N/S are playing *lebensohl* advances, South might settle for 2NT rather than a constructive 3♣. Not every North will drive to 3NT in this last scenario.

As long as declarer takes the second round club finesse he will take ten tricks in notrump for a good score. N/S can also take eleven tricks in either minor but 150 won't provide much cause for celebration, and 600 won't be great if the field reaches 3NT with some frequency.

E/W can afford to compete to 3♠, where N/S need to double and arrange their heart ruff for 500, but it's not clear which side will do better for that result as so much will depend on N/S's willingness to bid game.

If West opens 3♠ North should overcall 3NT because if he doubles and 3NT is the right contract his side won't get there.

Where West passes as dealer North will open 1♥, 1♦ or a strong 1♣. East will pass over 1♥ and South is more likely to respond 1NT than to pass. West might risk 2♠ now and North will double, bid 2NT or jump to 3NT, according to system and philosophy. If South sits for a double of 2♠, West might get out for 100 as the heart ruff might not materialise. If South pulls to 3♣ or bids a nonforcing 3♣ over 2NT, N/S might miss game. If West does not bid North will rebid 2NT or 3NT.

If East comes in with 1♥ or 2♥ over a 1♦ opening, South will raise to 2♦ or 3♦ (where that is a weak action) or occasionally show his clubs. N/S are likely to reach 3NT after these starts but might finish in 5♦ or miss game. Where North opens a strong club East will surely bid 2♥ and it's not at all clear how N/S will cope with that.

We can see that the excellent lie of the club suit makes everything sweetness and light for N/S but imagine how few tricks they would take in 3NT if the club finesse lost. There's a fine line between success and failure and it's easy to take the positive result for granted. The best game contract for N/S is 5♦, as long as the defenders lead spades. On a heart lead and continuation declarer might not get home without clubs coming in even if diamonds are three-two.