



Commentary

for the

IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs

Wednesday 8th November 2023

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the IBU Simultaneous Pairs 2023, and for supporting the Irish Bridge Union (IBU).

As you probably know, the IBU is the confederation of the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Bridge Union, and has responsibility, on an all-Ireland basis, for sending teams to represent Ireland at World and European competitions. During the summer, one such team did battle on our behalf at the World Championships in Marrakech, finishing in a very creditable thirteenth place. The costs of such competitions, like most costs these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this Simultaneous Pairs, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the IBU, is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the chance to pit your bridge wits against your fellow players across Ireland (and for those still playing online, maybe overseas as well). As always, the hands (which are randomly generated by computer with no manual intervention whatsoever) provided plenty of tricky problems. Many thanks to our expert commentators Randal Milne (Monday), Enda Glynn (Tuesday), Brian Senior (Wednesday), Peter Goodman (Thursday), and Gay Keaveney (Friday) for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. Don't forget to check your standing in the national results at www.ecatsbridge.com/sims.

Peter O'Meara

President, Irish Bridge Union

Board 1	♠ 10986	Dealer N
	♥ 872	Vul: None
	♦ K65	
	♣ 862	
♠ 5	♠ QJ2	
♥ 1065	♥ QJ	
♦ AQ87	♦ J1092	
♣ AKJ53	♣ Q974	
	♠ AK743	
	♥ AK943	
	♦ 43	
	♣ 10	

South opens 1♠ in third seat and West has the first decision on the deal – overcall or double. I prefer a 2♣ overcall, planning to double at my next turn to get the other suits into the game. I would then be tempted to raise spades on the North hand. With a 4-3-3-3 hand a pre-emptive 3♠ might be a bit much, but 2♠ shouldn't come to too much harm.

East competes to 3♣ and South either bids 4♠ or makes a game try of 3♥. The latter is much the more successful, as there should be a loser in each suit in a spade contract.

Say that South settles for the 3♥ game try and North signs off in 3♠, now West might compete with 4♣. The best that N/S can do over that is to double and take it one off for +100, which is absolute par on the board.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 2 ♠ 3 Dealer E
 ♥ AQ53 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 984
 ♣ AJ1043

♠ AJ9854 ♠ K762
 ♥ K ♥ 1072
 ♦ A5 ♦ 1076
 ♣ Q962 ♣ K85

♠ Q10
 ♥ J9864
 ♦ KQJ32
 ♣ 7

Board 3 ♠ A7 Dealer S
 ♥ KQ5 Vul: E-W
 ♦ Q76
 ♣ J8743

♠ 4 ♠ KJ10632
 ♥ AJ872 ♥ 43
 ♦ K543 ♦ 1092
 ♣ AK10 ♣ 52

♠ Q985
 ♥ 1096
 ♦ AJ8
 ♣ Q96

West will open 1♠ in third seat and North will double. Yes, on the previous deal I overcalled on a 5-4-3-1 shape, and this time I am saying double, but this time I have four cards in the unbid major, and also a hand that is only worth one bid, so double gets my message across better than does 2♣.

East will raise spades. 4-3-3-3 is bad news for a pre-emptive raise as there is so little playing strength with no semblance of a ruffing value. Against that, the vulnerability is favourable, and two kings with four-card trump support may prove to be enough.

On this deal it would take a raise to 4♠ to make life difficult for South, who will bid 4♥ over anything less. West will save in 4♠ courtesy of the extra spade length and six-four distribution. The winning action for N/S is to take the push to 5♥. North has little to spare for the initial double so will usually pass. South, however, may bid on for the wrong reason, not so much because he is confident of making 11 tricks, but because 5♥ might be a cheap save against 4♠.

West may double 5♥, meaning that the top score for N/S may be +850 – normal play in the trump suit means that there are just two aces to be lost. Meanwhile, 4♠ should be down one, losing two red tricks and two clubs. Someone, however, is sure to be allowed to make 4♠, giving E/W a huge result.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

I would expect the majority to play in 2♠ on the E/W hands.

West will open 1♥ and North has the wrong shape to double and far too weak a suit to overcall, so should pass. Now a weak jump shift of 2♠ would suit the East hand perfectly and would probably end the auction.

However, I suspect that the majority still play strong jump shifts, in which case East will respond only 1♠. Don't be dissuaded from responding just because you hold only 4 HCP – just add a point for each of the fifth and sixth spades if you insist on going by point-count, but hopefully we can all see that this hand is worth a bid.

Some may rebid INT on the West hand if that shows a strong NT for their partnership, but really there is no reason not to show the second suit by bidding 2♦, and East will conclude the auction by rebidding 2♠.

As soon as East gains the lead, he can lead a spade to the king, followed by a low spade, and this will hold his losers in the suit to two. It is wrong, once the king scores, to continue with the jack or ten as, if the suit breaks three-three it is not necessary to play an honour on the second round, while if the actual layout is in place leading low will save a trick.

2♠ should be the popular spot, but whether this will make or go one down will be dependent on declarer's play of the trumps. Some will lead to the jack or ten and follow up with a second honour, thereby losing three trump tricks, while others will lead to the king and follow up with an honour, again losing three trump tricks, so +110 should score well.

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

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

Board 4	♠ K4	Dealer W
	♥ K102	Vul: Both
	♦ 10972	
	♣ A642	
♠ 10632		♠ J985
♥ Q8653		♥ A4
♦ 85		♦ KQ4
♣ J7		♣ KQ93
	♠ AQ7	
	♥ J97	
	♦ AJ63	
	♣ 1085	

Board 5	♠ J95	Dealer N
	♥ Q92	Vul: N-S
	♦ J95	
	♣ 9642	
♠ 104		♠ K72
♥ AJ106543		♥ 8
♦ Q106		♦ A843
♣ 7		♣ Q10853
	♠ AQ863	
	♥ K7	
	♦ K72	
	♣ AKJ	

If East opens a strong NT after two passes, West can use scrambling Stayman to get out into 2♠ – the scrambling part becomes unnecessary, of course, when East responds 2♠ to 2♣. There should be three trump losers and one in each side-suit, so 2♠ should be down one.

If East's method is to open 1♠, that should also silence South, who has an opening bid but not enough distribution to justify a double. West can raise to 2♠, and that will probably be that.

However, suppose that East has to open 1♣. Now South can double because partner is only committed to responding at the one level. If West passes, North responds INT and plays there. North may also bid INT if West scrapes up a 1♥ bid, and again may play there.

If East leads clubs and manages to avoid crashing partner's jack, the defence can come to three club tricks, a diamond and a heart. If, on the other hand, East attacks spades, and the clubs never get established, a ninth trick is possible. N/S should never get to game, so a +600 would be truly exceptional, but +150 should score well, with many scoring only +120.

There will be two passes to South, who will open 2NT. Will some Wests overcall in hearts, taking away their opponents' Stayman and transfer methods? On this deal North wasn't going to use any system anyway – either he raises to game or he passes. The former would be a matter of routine at teams scoring, where the size of gain or loss is important and there is a substantial premium on bidding and making a vulnerable game. At matchpoints, where the frequency of the gain or loss is more important, it is much less clear. I'm guessing that the majority will raise to game if there is no overcall, and maybe double, whatever it means, if there is an overcall, and in the latter case South may bid 3♠.

So, depending on whether or not West overcalls, we may see 3♥ doubled, down a couple, or South declare 3♠, 4♠, or 3NT.

The natural lead of ace and another heart dooms even 3♠ as East is ruffing and there is no quick dummy entry to take the spade finesse.

On a heart lead against 3NT, declarer may win and play ace and another spade. The contract cannot be beaten provided declarer reads the play correctly. Of course, spades can be picked up without loss by starting with the jack from dummy to pin the doubleton

ten offside, but there is no easy dummy entry for such a play.

3♥ doubled down two is cheap if enough people bid and make game the other way, but I think that N/S will be down more often than not, while stopping in 2NT and just making may also score quite well.

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

Board 6		♠ Q6	Dealer E
		♥ A1095	Vul: E-W
		♦ J74	
		♣ QJ96	
♠ 7542		♠ A10983	
♥ QJ8		♥ 62	
♦ A10		♦ K982	
♣ 10742		♣ 85	
	♠ KJ		
	♥ K743		
	♦ Q653		
	♣ AK3		

Unless East has a system bid to open this hand, which would be a questionable decision at this vulnerability even if available, South will get to open the bidding. A strong NT will see North use Stayman then raise the 2♥ response to game. A 1♣/♦ opening will see North respond 1♥ and most Souths will raise that to 3♥, with North going on to game. And, finally, a 1♥ opening is raised to 3♥ and South goes on to game.

Despite the four-four trump fit and combined 26 HCP, the heart game is a pretty poor one. The problem is the spade duplication, which means that three honours are being wasted winning one trick in a two-two fit. That leaves potential for a lot of losers in the red suits.

There are three top losers plus an unavoidable trump trick, and it doesn't matter whether or not West takes a diamond ruff – at least that would mean no need to guess how to play the suit for only two losers.

With most N/S pairs going down in 4♥ – and 3NT is even worse on a spade lead – anyone who stops short of game and scores +140 should do very well on the board.

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

Board 7		♠ 95	Dealer S
		♥ 932	Vul: Both
		♦ J763	
		♣ Q854	
♠ A10643		♠ K872	
♥ J108		♥ Q764	
♦ Q98		♦ 4	
♣ A6		♣ 10932	
	♠ QJ		
	♥ AK5		
	♦ AK1052		
	♣ KJ7		

South has another 2NT opening, but he won't enjoy it. This time there is no reason for North to raise to game, so 2NT should end the auction, and five rounds of spades will make a bit of a mess of the South hand.

South will throw a heart on the third spade and should pitch diamonds on the next two. West will no doubt switch to a heart, and declarer will win and play on clubs. If East has erred by discarding a club on the fifth spade, declarer will have seven tricks for -100 and quite a decent score. Otherwise, there are only two club tricks and West gets the queen of diamonds at the end for down two.

Actually, I say that declarer will throw a heart on the third spade, followed by two diamonds. That is the natural thing to do without giving the matter much thought, but it is actually better to flip the order of those plays, throwing two diamonds then the heart. Why? Because that makes it harder for East to abandon a heart quite so easily, meaning that he is more likely to throw a club from a four-card holding.

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

Board 8	♠ 94	Dealer W
	♥ J10754	Vul: None
	♦ AQ104	
	♣ 54	
♠ AQ1083		♠ K2
♥ A92		♥ 86
♦ 53		♦ K762
♣ K102		♣ QJ973
	♠ J765	
	♥ KQ3	
	♦ J98	
	♣ A86	

West will open 1♠ and Acol players will have just enough for a 2♣ response. West rebids 2♠ and plays there. There will be usually be a trump loser, because declarer will look to ruff a heart in dummy, so will not be able to pick up jack-to-four, but that still leaves declarer with an overtrick.

Strong No-Trumpers will respond INT and, unless that is played as forcing, West will pass it out. Will North balance? It isn't completely safe with a wide-range hand sitting over us, and the opposition have not had a fit auction, nonetheless, it is matchpoints and it is neither side vulnerable. A takeout double with the intention of correcting a 2♣ response to 2♥ is a reasonable gamble, and offers some prospect of finding a diamond fit should one exist. In practice, however, it just gets North to 2♥ after South has responded 2♣.

2♥ will often be made, the defence needing to come to a diamond ruff as their sixth trick. King and another spade followed by a diamond switch sees declarer duck and now West has no way to get to the East hand to be given the ruff. It looks as though getting the ruff requires that East lead the low spade, West to win and switch to a diamond, and now the ♠K is the necessary entry. I can't see anyone finding that defence.

What about three rounds of spades? If declarer errs by ruffing high, a fourth spade when West wins the ace of hearts could promote a second trump trick for the defence. That can be avoided by the simple expedient of discarding the losing club on the third spade.

Where North doubles INT for takeout, East can redouble to show a non-minimum, and one or other of East (if 1♠ promised five) and West may compete to 2♠,

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

Board 9	♠ 53	Dealer N
	♥ 862	Vul: E-W
	♦ 10987	
	♣ Q1076	
♠ KQJ106		♠ 97
♥ 43		♥ KQJ97
♦ AQJ4		♦ K532
♣ 53		♣ J9
	♠ A842	
	♥ A105	
	♦ 6	
	♣ AK842	

South opens 1♣ in third seat and West overcalls 1♠. If 1♣ promised four cards, an aggressive North might pre-empt to 3♣. Though East can double for takeout, that would make it easy for South to compete to 4♣ over west's 3♦ response.

More likely, North will not raise at all. East will respond 2♥ and West probably repeat the spades. Either 2♥ or 2♠, or indeed 3♦, can be made exactly, all for +110, while 3♣ is the limit for N/S. South will compete if this can be done at a sensible level but, even at favourable vulnerability, if the opposition have bid both majors by the time it comes back to him he may consider discretion the better part of valour.

If N/S go plus they should score very well, while any minus score less than -110 should also be okay.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 10 Dealer E
Vul: Both

♠ 9872	♠ 54
♥ K107	♥ QJ4
♦ KJ2	♦ 8653
♣ QJ7	♣ 9532

♠ AKQJ63	♠ 10
♥ 985	♥ A632
♦ Q109	♦ A74
♣ 10	♣ AK864

It is far from clear where N/S will end up on this one. They have 25 HCP between them and can make 11 tricks in either clubs or hearts, while an opposing spade contract can be held to just West's six spade tricks. Perhaps 4♥ on the four-three fit is the most likely outcome?

If N/S do play the heart game West will probably lead out two top spades. Declarer ruffs and leads a heart to the ten, wins the return and draws trumps – 11 tricks. If, however, West leads or switches to the singleton club, declarer has to win and play three rounds of trumps to again come to 11 tricks.

Against a spade contract the defence lead two rounds of clubs. Declarer ruffs and cashes some spades then leads a heart up. North wins the king and plays the third club. Declarer ruffs and, if he has drawn all the missing trumps has none left so the defence can cash all the rest of the tricks. If declarer did not draw all the trumps, he will now play a second heart to the queen and ace, and now a fourth club forces him once again as North throws his last heart. West is held to just the

spade winners, not having time to establish and cash a heart trick.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 11 Dealer S
Vul: None

♠ 63	♠ QJ10854
♥ AJ74	♥
♦ 94	♦ KJ106
♣ AJ965	♣ K82

♠ K92	♠ A7
♥ K109532	♥ Q86
♦ AQ	♦ 87532
♣ Q3	♣ 1074

All roads should lead to E/W declaring an easy spade game, where there are just the two black aces to be lost.

West opens 1♥ and some might overcall 2♣, though the club suit doesn't really warrant such enterprise with only 10 HCP. That would see East bid 2♠ and West raise to game.

Where North does not overcall, East responds 1♠ and West has a decision whether to rebid his own six-card suit, or to raise partner with only three cards. I could find people who would swear that one of these approaches to six-three hands was definitely winning bridge and the other losing bridge. Personally, and particularly when playing four-card majors, I rebid the long suit, but it is clear that on some deals raising partner will work out better.

If West raises 1♠ to 2♠, East has an easy raise to game. If West repeats the hearts, East has an interesting evaluation problem. He would probably have opened the bidding at the one level, and there is the old adage that an opening bid facing an opening bid should get to game. And yet, East is void in partner's rebiddable suit, suggesting significant wastage

in a spade contract. So perhaps east should be content with an invitational bid over 2♥? If playing weak jump shifts, 1♠ followed by 2♠ over 2♥ should be invitational, and that keeps the bidding low when it needs to be kept low. If playing strong jump shifts, 1♠ followed by 2♠ could be quite weak, meaning that a jump rebid of 3♠ is required to invite game. Of course, West should bid on even facing a 2♠ rebid, so game should always be reached.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 12

♠ Q10876	Dealer W
♥ K	Vul: N-S
♦ K87	
♣ J832	
♠ A32	♠ 9
♥ Q94	♥ AJ2
♦ 932	♦ AJ10654
♣ A1094	♣ KQ7
♠ KJ54	
♥ 1087653	
♦ Q	
♣ 65	

Would you believe that 3NT can be made, even on a spade lead. Not in real life, but at double dummy. Declarer wins the ace of spades and runs the ten of clubs, after which he leads a heart and, when North has either singleton or doubleton king the communications are there to untangle four club tricks, three hearts, and two aces. In real life, 3NT will go down on a spade lead but make overtricks if South is on lead and chooses a heart.

In real life, duck the spade lead and continuation and win the third round. Take a diamond finesse, and the defence cashes out the spades. Declarer bares the ace of hearts to keep the minors intact, and a second diamond finesse brings home eight tricks for down one.

The friendly heart position means that 6♦ can also be made, not that anyone is likely to get

there. They might, however, get to 5♦ if N/S have been bidding spades, and +420 could score well with others going down in 3NT.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	5	6	3	-	3
W	5	6	3	-	3

Board 13

♠ AJ86	Dealer N
♥ 103	Vul: Both
♦ KJ65	
♣ 962	
♠ KQ7	♠ 1094
♥ AQJ965	♥ K87
♦ A9	♦ Q87
♣ 105	♣ KQJ4
	♠ 532
	♥ 42
	♦ 10432
	♣ A873

If East passes in second seat, West will open 1♥ and East respond 2♣. If that is Drury, promising hearts, West will just jump to 4♥. If 2♣ is natural, West will rebid a forcing 3♥ and east go on to game.

East will probably not upgrade to a weak NT at this vulnerability, but if he does West can transfer and bid the heart game, or play 4♥ himself. East is more likely to open if the system says that his opening is 1♣, much safer than 1NT. West will respond 1♥, unless playing strong jump shifts, and will soon be at the helm in 4♥.

If East becomes declarer in 4♥, either a spade or a diamond lead allows the defence to come to three tricks and a good result. If West is declarer, there is no way to get at the third trick. Declarer gains the lead and knocks out the ace of clubs, and has discards for the diamond loser and the third spade, making 11.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	1	4	2	3
W	4	1	5	2	4

Board 14	♠ 53	Dealer E
	♥ 853	Vul: None
	♦ J954	
	♣ K862	
♠ J109842	♠ A7	
♥ 74	♥ A96	
♦ K103	♦ AQ72	
♣ Q7	♣ AJ105	
	♠ KQ6	
	♥ KQJ102	
	♦ 86	
	♣ 943	

This one doesn't look very exciting. Some Easts may upgrade to open 2NT, which will shut South out of the auction. West will transfer to spades and East declare the spade game.

If East opens 1♣/♦, South will overcall, West bid 1♠, and East rebid 2NT, over which West will again bid the spade game.

After a heart lead, there will almost certainly be one heart and two spades to be lost, so 4♠ just made.

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

Board 15	♠ Q873	Dealer S
	♥ A4	Vul: N-S
	♦ A5	
	♣ KQJ92	
♠ AK10	♠ 94	
♥ 8532	♥ Q96	
♦ KQ9642	♦ J873	
♣	♣ A753	
	♠ J652	
	♥ KJ107	
	♦ 10	
	♣ 10864	

When West opens 1♦, North will usually think a 1NT overcall the least of evils, though the diamond holding is not ideal for the bid, and the shape is not one which partner will expect. East will compete with 2♦, and South has the perfect shape for a takeout double. If West now tries to pre-empt his opponents out of their fit by reraising to 3♦, North may bid 3♠, by now liking his non-standard distribution.

3♠ played by North makes exactly – at double dummy – while if South could be declarer a tenth trick is available. The difference is not really relevant, firstly because it is hard to make South declarer but, more to the point, because the difference is a club ruff, and East will never find a club lead.

N/S could also make 3♣ should they by some mysterious means alight there, while E/W make 3♦ in some comfort.

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

Board 18 ♠ A1064 Dealer E
 ♥ K Vul: N-S
 ♦ AJ10
 ♣ QJ762

♠ 875 ♠ J32
 ♥ J1076 ♥ AQ53
 ♦ Q83 ♦ 762
 ♣ K84 ♣ 1053

 ♠ KQ9
 ♥ 9842
 ♦ K954
 ♣ A9

The top score on this deal may go to any N/S pair that manages to reach a spade game rather than the more likely 3NT. The combination of three-three spades and well-distributed clubs means that 11 tricks can be made, even on repeated heart leads.

If South opens a weak NT, North will use Stayman but then bid 3NT on finding South with the wrong major. If the N/S system dictates a 1♣ or 1♦ opening with the South cards, South's next bid will be in NT and again North will surely bid 3NT.

So all roads appear to lead to 3NT, played by South.

A low heart lead, tough to find if South has bid hearts, would permit the defenders to cash the first four tricks. If East wins the fourth heart and switches to a club, declarer can still make nine tricks, but only if he has thrown three clubs on the hearts, rises with the ace of clubs, and leads a diamond to the ten. Though unnecessary on the actual layout, he can come back to hand with a spade to lead a diamond to the jack, and must play for spades to be three-three at the end. Not everyone is going to make 3NT on a low heart lead.

If West leads the jack of hearts, there are only three defensive heart tricks, and declarer can always succeed.

On a passive spade lead, declarer can succeed by playing as suggested above after losing four hearts tricks, but if he chooses to play on clubs the defence will now have a chance to beat him by switching to a low heart, a play much more obvious now dummy's lone king is exposed.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 19 ♠ K9 Dealer S
 ♥ AQJ76 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 1093
 ♣ AK2

♠ Q1062 ♠ J875
 ♥ 1085 ♥ 932
 ♦ 62 ♦ AJ75
 ♣ J653 ♣ 104

 ♠ A43
 ♥ K4
 ♦ KQ84
 ♣ Q987

N/S probably don't quite have the values to get to 6♥, but it is a good contract as declarer can combine chances in both minors. Say that the lead is a spade. Declarer wins the ace, draws trumps, and lead a diamond to the ace. When that scores, he tries four rounds of clubs and, if they are three-three, has 12 tricks. When they do not split evenly, he ruffs the fourth round and leads a second diamond up. A winning guess – in real life there are no losing guesses – and that is again 12 tricks.

If someone does stretch a little, North upgrading and treating the hand as 18-19 because of the good five-card suit and control cards, it is more likely that they will reach 6NT. That also makes courtesy of the friendly diamond layout, but is less good as there is not the same safe combination play in the minors.

Most, however, will be in 3NT and coming to only 11 tricks could score very poorly.

Makeable Contracts

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

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

Board 22	♠ A8	Dealer E
	♥ AJ52	Vul: E-W
	♦ A	
	♣ KJ10874	
♠ 97532		♠ 10
♥ 1094		♥ KQ86
♦ J104		♦ Q9765
♣ 53		♣ AQ9
	♠ KQJ64	
	♥ 73	
	♦ K832	
	♣ 62	

East opens 1♦ and South overcalls 1♠. North has 17 HCP including a useful-looking six-card suit, so will drive to game. Exactly what that might entail will be dependent on system, of course. Most will play that a new suit at the two level is a one-round force, meaning that he can start with 2♣ and, when South rebids 2♠, can introduce the hearts. If South now bids 3NT, that will be that.

Alas for N/S, if West makes the normal lead of the jack of diamonds, the combination of spades five-one and both club honours over the long suit means that no game is making. The limit on the N/S cards 2NT, 3♠, or 4♣, and someone needs to take a pretty good view of their hand to stop in any of those contracts.

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

Board 23	♠ A1052	Dealer S
	♥ Q84	Vul: Both
	♦ A854	
	♣ 83	
♠ KQ863		♠ J974
♥ A10		♥ KJ6
♦ K		♦ Q102
♣ K7654		♣ A92
	♠	
	♥ 97532	
	♦ J9763	
	♣ QJ10	

The bidding should be very straightforward, with West opening 1♠ and East making an invitational raise to the three level, with West, of course, accepting the invitation.

The defence has three tricks to come, but it is not guaranteed that they will take them all. The spade and the club can go nowhere, but what about the diamond? Say that North leads a heart; that gives declarer a third heart trick and the diamond can go away. Or if North leads a club, West can choose to gamble, playing for 11 or nine tricks by winning the club and playing ♥A followed by ♥10 to the jack, and again the diamond goes away. I don't expect many to gamble, but it is the difference between teams and pairs, and thus is a realistic option for someone in need of a big result.

Declarer should establish clubs early in the play, as this helps him to overcome the four-zero trump split and, of course, his first trump play must be a top card from hand to cater to four-zero either way around.

It would be very poor to go down, but there will be a handful of players scoring an overtrick.

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

Board 24 ♠ K843 Dealer W
 ♥ J1062 Vul: None
 ♦ 10984
 ♣ 9

♠ Q752 ♠ J96
 ♥ 8 ♥ Q93
 ♦ AKQ652 ♦ J73
 ♣ A6 ♣ KJ87

♠ A10
 ♥ AK754
 ♦
 ♣ Q105432

Board 25 ♠ K52 Dealer N
 ♥ 976 Vul: E-W
 ♦ K84
 ♣ 7432

♠ AJ9 ♠ Q8643
 ♥ J852 ♥ K3
 ♦ 103 ♦ A5
 ♣ AK98 ♣ J1065

♠ 107
 ♥ AQ104
 ♦ QJ9762
 ♣ Q

West opens 1♦ and East responds INT. Now South could just overcall in one of his suits, but the whole hand can be got across by making a two-suited overcall of 2NT, showing the lowest two unbid suits. West will no doubt compete with 3♦, but North in turn should bid 3♥ – after all, partner committed to the three level and North has four-card support for a known five-card or longer suit. Whether or not East competes to 4♦, South has extra shape and can go on to the heart game.

4♥ cannot be beaten. If West leads a top diamond, as is likely, declarer ruffs and concedes a club, after which he can crossruff his way to a total of eight heart tricks to go with the top spades.

The best that E/W can do then is to save in 5♦, which North should double. Played by West, as it will be, there are nine tricks after the jack of hearts lead, for down two and – 300. How will that score? It depends how many N/S pairs bid their game, but once they have done so E/W can only deal with the position they find themselves in.

Makeable Contracts

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

There are two passes to South, who will open some number of diamonds. Obviously, 1♦ is the down the middle choice but, with the likelihood being that the hand belongs to the opposition, there is a definite case for opening a weak 2♦ or even 3♦ to put some pressure on West.

As it happens, whatever number of diamonds is opened in front of him, West is likely to make a takeout double, and the higher the number of diamonds opened, the greater the likelihood that E/W will get too high in a spade contract.

If partner doubles a 3♦ opening, East has a routine 4♠ response, and that contract is completely hopeless as the cards lie. If partner doubles a weak 2♦ opening, East is perhaps borderline between a jump to 3♠ and a jump to 4♠. If partner doubles a simple 1♦ opening, there is more room to make invitational bids. The fifth spade makes the East hand a little too good for a 2♠ response, I think. We would have been well above minimum for 2♠ had the fifth spade been a red card, and the fifth trump is worth a whole extra trick. So I would respond 3♠, which shows long spades, at least five, and begs partner to find an excuse to go on to game. Facing a passed hand, and looking at only three-card spade support, I would not expect West to go on to game, but switch his major suits around and he probably should.

Say that South leads a diamond. Declarer can win and take the spade finesse. Though this loses, he has nine tricks. But what if South leads the singleton club? Now taking the spade finesse results in the loss of a club ruff, and there are only eight tricks. To come to nine, declarer needs to play ace and another

spade – but switch the ♥A and ♠K around, and that means going down in a 'cold' game.

Plus 140 should score pretty well for E/W.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26

♠ KQ104	Dealer E
♥ AQJ943	Vul: Both
♦ K9	
♣ 3	
♠ J865	♠ A72
♥ 72	♥ 105
♦ A105	♦ 87632
♣ Q854	♣ AK7
♠ 93	
♥ K86	
♦ QJ4	
♣ J10962	

There will often be three passes round to North, who will open 1♥. Whether or not East doubles, and whether or not N/S are playing five-card majors, South does best to raise to 2♥, and North can just bid 4♥ and hope for one well-placed card in dummy to have a chance of success. That hope is fulfilled twice over, as dummy puts down excellent red-suit holdings, and ten tricks are a matter of routine.

Some will open as dealer. I don't like a weak NT with three top tricks and nothing else. I can live with either 1♦ or 1♣, according to agreed methods as this is far less dangerous than 1NT. Either 1♣ or 1♦ would collect a 1♠ response from West, a 2♥ overcall from North, and perhaps a support double from East to show three spades. With or without such a double, South can raise to 3♥, and North go on to game.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 27

♠ K762	Dealer S
♥ QJ105	Vul: None
♦ 6	
♣ A1052	
♠ AJ83	♠ Q10
♥ A863	♥ 9
♦ AQ	♦ K10832
♣ KQ6	♣ 98743
♠ 954	
♥ K742	
♦ J9754	
♣ J	

After a pass from South, West has a flat 20-count so opens 2NT. North passes and, while a few Easts will bid something, probably 3♠, to show both minors, the majority will just raise to 3NT.

North will lead the queen of hearts and declarer will duck a couple of rounds then win the third heart. The most likely line of play is to cash the ace and queen of diamonds, hoping for a favourable split. However, when North pitches a spade on the second diamond, declarer knows he is doomed to defeat. He will lead a spade to the ten or queen and cash the king of diamonds then lead a club to the king and ace.

Now the fourth defensive heart trick will be cashed. If South wins this trick, he can cash the jack of diamonds and, with the king of spades still to come, that will be down two. If the defence has left North to win the fourth heart, he will now be endplayed, and declarer will get out for down only one and a fair number of matchpoints. It doesn't help the defence if North wins the first spade; if he also has to win the fourth heart, declarer can come to eight tricks.

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

Board 28	♠ A72	Dealer W
	♥ QJ1062	Vul: N-S
	♦ K6	
	♣ A72	
♠ 1093		♠ Q864
♥ 954		♥ A7
♦ 732		♦ AQ98
♣ 9863		♣ KQ5
	♠ KJ5	
	♥ K83	
	♦ J1054	
	♣ J104	

When North opens 1♥, East has a classical decision – overcall 1NT, which shows the all-round strength and shape of the hand, or double? My preference is for the double, which is more flexible, but plenty of people would disagree with me. I would be more tempted to double if the black suits were switched around so that I didn't have four cards in the other major.

If East doubles, South can redouble to show 9+ and that probably runs round to East, West letting his partner, who had got them into this mess, get them out of it. East would probably run to 1♠ and now South might bid 2♥, showing around 9-10 HCP with three-card support. Of course, those playing five-card majors might have shown the heart support immediately.

If East overcalls 1NT, South can double. If that ends the auction, declarer will not enjoy the play after a heart lead, as his single stopper will be knocked out and he will soon be looking for three discards. The best he will be able to do is to come to four tricks, so down three for -500. Though N/S can make a vulnerable 3NT for +600, they have only a combined 23 HCP, so few are likely to bid it, and -500 will be pretty bad for E/W.

It will be a little better if West runs to his four low clubs. There may be six tricks in 2♣ doubled, which would save a few matchpoints.

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