



Commentary
for the
IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs
Thursday 7th November 2024

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the IBU Simultaneous Pairs 2024, 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. Within the past twelve months there have been two such competitions, and the IBU sent four teams to the European Championships in Denmark, and three to the World Bridge Games in Argentina. 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 test yourself 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 difficult decisions. Many thanks to our expert commentators Randal Milne (Monday), Thomas MacCormac (Tuesday), Paul Delaney (Wednesday), Brian Senior (Thursday), and Enda Murphy (Friday) for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. For Tuesday night, Thomas has done his commentary in a series of videos rather than as a written commentary, which is a new departure for us; we hope you'll like it, and would welcome your feedback.

Don't forget to check your standing in the national results at www.ecatsbridge.com/sims. You'll find the daily commentaries there too.

Heather Hill

President, Irish Bridge Union

Board 1	♠ J8	Dealer N
	♥ Q943	Vul: None
	♦ K1092	
	♣ 1032	
♠ KQ9643	♠ A52	
♥ K87	♥ AJ52	
♦ A84	♦ QJ753	
♣ Q	♣ J	
	♠ 107	
	♥ 106	
	♦ 6	
	♣ AK987654	

After a pass from North, East has an easy 1♦ opening and South then has to decide how many clubs to bid.

Take a club away and the answer would be 3♣ for almost everyone (assuming weak jump overcalls to be in use), but that eighth club is worth a bit more than a whole trick on offense, so I would recommend a 4♣ pre-empt – I'm not worried about bypassing 3NT when I have only 7 HCP and partner has already passed. Change the deal so that E/W are vulnerable, and I might consider 5♣, but at Love All it is too easy for us to be doubled for more than the value of an opposing game.

On this occasion the pre-empt does not unduly inconvenience West, who has a clear 4♠ bid, but imagine his being 5-4-3-1 instead of 6-3-3-1, and now 4♣ could make things much more awkward.

At favourable vulnerability, North might save in 5♣ now, but we have already looked at the danger of conceding a penalty greater than the value of the opposing game, and that is exactly what can happen here, with 5♣ costing –500. Not to worry, if North does bid 5♣ East will surely take the push to 5♠, so no harm is done. Five Spades makes exactly for the par score of +450.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 2 ♠ Q8 Dealer E
 ♥ A10942 Vul: N-S
 ♦ AQ2
 ♣ 983

♠ KJ942
 ♥
 ♦ J63
 ♣ QJ765

♠ 765
 ♥ KQJ53
 ♦ K94
 ♣ AK

♠ A103
 ♥ 876
 ♦ 10875
 ♣ 1042

East may open a strong NT and become declarer in 4♠ after a transfer sequence, or may open 1♥. In the latter case, those playing weak NT will rebid INT, 15-17, over West's 1♠ response and west can use some form of Checkback to confirm the five-three spade fit and is then likely to drive to game.

The double dummy analysis tells us that 4♠ can be made, but it looks as though that requires either some inspiration or a little help from our friends (the defence). Say that the lead is a club. If declarer leads a spade to the nine or jack, this loses to the queen and the defence can play two more rounds of spades then just sit back and wait to collect two diamond tricks. If, however, declarer starts spades by leading low to the king, the suit is blocked and the defence can never get the third round played. In the fullness of time, declarer can arrange a diamond ruff in the East hand for a tenth trick.

It looks to me as though only a minority will make 4♠ and that those who stop in partscore for +140 should score well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3 ♠ 102 Dealer S
 ♥ 6542 Vul: E-W
 ♦ J6
 ♣ AKQ93

♠ KQJ6
 ♥ K
 ♦ A1042
 ♣ J764

♠ A73
 ♥ QJ10987
 ♦ K75
 ♣ 8

♠ 9854
 ♥ A3
 ♦ Q983
 ♣ 1052

West's choice of opening bid may create two different auctions.

Say that West opens 1♦; some Norths will overcall 2♣ – a bit thin, but a good suit so good as a lead-director, and also with a useful pre-emptive effect, taking a level of bidding away from the opposition. East will bid 2♥, and some Souths raise to 3♣.

If 3♣ runs round to East, who makes a take-out double, West may leave it in and collect +500. How good a result that is will depend on how many E/Ws bid to the cold heart or spade game.

East may prefer to rebid 3/4♥ rather than double. West may pass 3♥ and the excellent game is missed. If East jumps to 4♥, that gets the job done and there are 11 tricks for +650 and a handy score.

If North does not overcall, E/W may bid 1♦ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 3♥ (invitational). Will West like the bare king of hearts enough to raise to game?

If West opens a natural 1♣, that removes the possibility of North overcalling so E/W will have the auction to themselves: 1♣ – 1♥ – 1♠ – 3♥, and we are back to West having a big decision to make.

It is easy to see that the E/W hands fit together well and that game is an easy make, but just imagine if East's side-suits were swapped around a little and game might be a much poorer proposition, so those who miss game should not feel that anyone has done anything criminally bad. Yes, I think that West should probably raise to 4♥, but that doesn't have to be the winning action, and we should always bear in mind that there is no premium on bidding thin games at matchpoints.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4	♠ Q92	Dealer W
	♥ K	Vul: Both
	♦ A9632	
	♣ 9862	
♠ AJ10864		♠ K7
♥ 98742		♥ QJ3
♦ 4		♦ Q10875
♣ 4		♣ J53
	♠ 53	
	♥ A1065	
	♦ KJ	
	♣ AKQ107	

I would open the West hand with a weak 2♠ bid. Yes, I know, it used to be considered almost a crime against humanity to open a weak two with four cards in the other major, and here am I, a supposed expert, advocating opening 2♠ with five hearts on the side. It's just a matter of frequencies – for every time that we miss a good heart contract, there will be many deals on which the weak two bid makes life more difficult for the opposition, and I am willing to get the odd silly result as the price to pay for a series of good and average-plus results.

If West does open 2♠, there is still a route to the top spot of 3NT for N/S. After two passes, South doubles, North responds 3♦, showing values if playing Lebensohl, and South has enough to spare to cuebid 3♠, asking for a

stopper. North bids 3NT and that is quite cold, usually with an overtrick.

And if West takes the more traditional view and passes as dealer? Then there are likely to be two more passes to South, who will sometimes open a strong NT, though really he is a little too good for this bid, or more commonly open 1♣. West can make a weak jump overcall now – far from this being frowned upon when holding four cards in the other major, he can argue that it SHOWS four cards in the other major, else why did he not open 2♠ at his previous turn?

If the 1♣ opening was natural, North can compete with 3♣, and South rebid 3♥, over which 3NT is North's natural conclusion.

If 1♣ did not promise genuine clubs, life is more difficult for North, who may make a negative double, arguing, quite correctly, that it is only over 1♠ that this shows four hearts, and that at a level higher it is necessary sometimes to double merely to show points. It is necessary that North and South be on the same wavelength on this matter, as otherwise South will jump to 4♥ and North will have to convert to 5♣ which, fortunately, makes.

Short club openings are all the rage in recent years, and I am not suggesting that they are a bad idea, but they do create problems for the users which are not shared by those playing natural 1♣ openers. This deal is an example, where the inability to simply raise clubs obliges North to cram more hands into the negative double than is really ideal.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5	♠ A106	Dealer N
	♥ KJ652	Vul: N-S
	♦ QJ7	
	♣ 93	
♠ Q8743		♠ 95
♥ Q10		♥ 43
♦ 92		♦ K1086
♣ A742		♣ Q10865
	♠ KJ2	
	♥ A987	
	♦ A543	
	♣ KJ	

North has a borderline opening bid, with the adverse vulnerability perhaps tipping the scales in favour of a pass. East also passes but South has a strong NT and will often make that opening.

Facing a strong NT, North will transfer to hearts then jump to 3NT to offer a choice of games, with South making the obvious decision to go back to 4♥. That is assuming that South does not break the transfer and jump to 3♥ rather than simply complete the transfer. I think that those partnerships who allow transfer breaks would agree that the South hand is good enough to justify the jump to 3♥. It makes no difference to the outcome on this deal, with North simply raising 3♥ to 4♥.

It is really hard to see any significant number of tables reaching other than 4♥ if South has to open one of a suit in his methods, the only difference being that North may become the declarer at some tables. Does that make a difference? Well, perhaps. If East is on lead and chooses a club, that takes a guess away from declarer, who will put in the jack and have only one club loser. Or perhaps West will overcall 1♠, thereby taking that guess away and also hinting at the club position as there are not all that many HCP missing from declarer's point of view.

Successful black-suit decisions give declarer 11 tricks, but a combination of poor guesswork and poor play could see as few as nine tricks made at some tables.

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

Board 6	♠ J10	Dealer E
	♥ AQ102	Vul: E-W
	♦ K862	
	♣ 1084	
♠ 763		♠ AK
♥ K7654		♥ J98
♦ 10		♦ AQ7543
♣ KQJ6		♣ A3
	♠ Q98542	
	♥ 3	
	♦ J9	
	♣ 9752	

Though South's main suit is quite weak, if East opens 1♦ the prevailing vulnerability should give South the confidence to make a weak jump overcall of 2♠. This is just playing the odds, as we saw with an earlier weak two opening. Yes, 2♠ could go for a penalty, but the odds are pretty heavily in favour of the deal belonging to the opposition, so let's be annoying.

If South passes, E/W can bid freely to the game of their choice, perhaps 1♦ – 1♥ – 3♦ – 3♥ – 4♥, or 1♦ – 1♥ – 2NT – 3♥ – 4♥. This is the top spot and, even if declarer loses three trump tricks, which will be the case more often than not, the contract still makes.

If South bids 2♠, West has enough for a negative double but not for a 3♥ bid. So West doubles and East will jump to 3NT. West can hardly commit to 4♥ over that, so 3NT will end the auction, and sound defence holds that to nine tricks. At IMPs, –600 and –620 are almost the same result, but at MPs the difference is a half a board.

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

Board 7			Dealer S
♠	965		Vul: Both
♥	K976		
♦	KQ1092		
♣	A		
♠	K2	♠	A103
♥	1084	♥	AJ52
♦	85	♦	A764
♣	KQ10864	♣	J9
	♠	QJ874	
	♥	Q3	
	♦	J3	
	♣	7532	

The vulnerability should preclude any flights of fancy from South or West, so North will usually get to open 1♦. That is not great for East, who is shy of what is required for a 1NT overcall, has no long suit to bid, and has less than ideal distribution for a take-out double.

I'm betting that the majority choice will be the take-out double, which will see South bid 1♠ and West jump to 3♣, at which East will cringe as this was not part of the plan.

But East need not have worried. If 3♣ ends the auction, it turns out to be the perfect spot for E/W, thanks to West's chunky six-card trump suit. It takes a heart opening lead and heart continuation to save the overtrick, though on a different lead declarer does have to read the heart position correctly to come to 10 tricks. Still, the overtrick is the icing on the cake; East will just be happy to see 3♣ make.

Having a minimum opening, North should really pass over 3♣ despite the club shortage. Bidding 3♠ or doubling and seeing South respond 3♠ gets N/S beyond their comfort zone and, even if no-one doubles, as East well might, down two for -200 will be the kiss of death on a partscore deal.

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

Board 8			Dealer W
♠	5		Vul: None
♥	A743		
♦	732		
♣	K5432		
♠	1087	♠	KQ43
♥	KQ1098	♥	62
♦		♦	QJ10954
♣	Q10986	♣	A
	♠	AJ962	
	♥	J5	
	♦	AK86	
	♣	J7	

Unless playing weak two-suited openings, West will normally pass, as will North. East has a 1♦ opener and South a 1♠ overcall. I guess that the majority of Wests will be aware that they are a bit light of what is required for a free 2♥ bid so will settle for a double. When North passes, East will have to repeat the diamonds and, though South has extra values, his distribution is not suitable for a double, which would encourage partner to bid a suit that South might not like very much. So South passes and West, who cannot know that he is facing such a chunky six-card suit, will correct 2♦ to 2♥.

The auction has worked out perfectly for West at this point. As a passed hand, he is unlikely to hold a six-card heart suit, nor will he have 10 or 11 HCP with five decent hearts as he could then have bid 2♥ at his second turn. So he has strongly indicated a reasonable five-card suit in the 6-9 HCP range and probably no great liking for diamonds.

North and East will pass 2♥ and what can South do? He still has extra values but also still has the wrong shape to invite partner to bid so, perhaps reluctantly, he too must pass.

The heart position is very friendly for declarer, and there is no suit the defence can play on without making his task easier. A spade ruff, for example, is meaningless, as

North is ruffing his partner's natural spade trick. With the double ruffing diamond finesse working, and the jack of clubs pinnable, nine tricks cannot be prevented, though of course some declarers will fall short of that total.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9

♠ Q10942	Dealer N
♥ J9	Vul: E-W
♦ KJ	
♣ A765	
♠ KJ	♠ 76
♥ Q632	♥ AK87
♦ A654	♦ 10873
♣ QJ9	♣ 1042
♠ A853	
♥ 1054	
♦ Q92	
♣ K83	

North has just enough for a 1♠ opening and South raises to 2♠. If that ends the auction, the contract should make exactly, losing two hearts and one trick in each of the other suits.

Should 2♠ end the auction? Well, it's a tough call. West would no doubt double if non-vulnerable but, at the actual vulnerability, and with the spade holding looking to be of dubious value, there is a good case for passing. As for East, he has a much purer hand, in that there is no spade wastage, but he has only an ace and king and knows that partner could not act himself over 2♠.

E/W do have a fit in the other major, but will need to get the spades right to get out for down one and -100. That should not be a problem, as almost all Norths will lead a spade, while if East becomes declarer and South fails to lead a spade that is usually an indication that he holds the ace, as it would be normal to lead the partnership suit if holding only the queen.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10	♠ AKQJ54	Dealer E
	♥ 1074	Vul: Both
	♦ Q7	
	♣ 62	
♠ 9763		♠ 8
♥ K3		♥ QJ9
♦ KJ52		♦ A1086
♣ KJ8		♣ AQ1094
	♠ 102	
	♥ A8652	
	♦ 943	
	♣ 753	

East opens 1♣ and West responds 1♦ or 1♠ according to system and personal style.

A 1♦ response will see North overcall, probably only a simple 1♠, as the hand is a bit good for a weak jump overcall. East will raise to 2♦ (or 3♦ over a 2♠ bid), and West may cuebid 2♠ to ask for a spade stopper. East's next call is the key to playing in game or in partscore. He obviously cannot bid NT, but partner has shown interest in game, so perhaps he should do more than just go back to 3♦, which West would probably pass on his actual invitational-range hand. Instead, East could perhaps bid out his shape with a 3♥ bid and, since this appears to pinpoint a spade shortage, a trusting West might see that his 11 HCP are all perfectly positioned and so jump to the diamond game.

Much as I love that E/W sequence, I have to admit that 5♦ does depend on declarer finding the missing trump queen, so it is not that great a triumph to reach the diamond game. But those who manage to both bid and make 5♦ will deservedly score very well indeed. I'm betting that the majority will stop in partscore and the matchpoints will be decided by the battle for the eleventh trick.

If West's methods demand a 1♠ initial response to 1♣, some Norths will be able to overcall a natural 2♠, after which East raises to 3♦ and it is up to West whether he bids on or not. But some Norths will not have a

natural spade overcall available to them, and some will pass anyway, hoping to see E/W land up in 3NT, against which North can cash all his spades.

If West responds 1♠ and North passes, East can rebid 2♣, over which West is likely to bid 2NT, and now North's dream of defending 3NT may come to fruition, or perhaps East will prefer an off-shape INT rebid if that would be weak. West may pass that or may raise invitationaly to 2NT, an invitation which East would be likely to accept. If North wants a spade lead he will have to double, and now it will be up to West to recognise the danger and run to 4♣.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11

♠ KQJ98432	Dealer S
♥ 54	Vul: None
♦ Q62	
♣	

♠ A7	♠ 1065
♥ Q763	♥ A2
♦ J54	♦ AK10
♣ 8653	♣ KQ974

♠
♥ KJ1098
♦ 9873
♣ AJ102

South is just short of having an opening bid so passes, as does West. With a good eight-card suit but little defence, North should open 4♠, which will not exactly thrill South.

While the 4♠ opening is 100% normal on this hand, it proves to be the wrong time to make the normal bid as 4♠ is hopeless and the opposition cannot make a game. Those Easts who are playing take-out doubles may feel that they have to pass, as they hold only two cards in the unbid major. However, when 4♠ is doubled for take-out the best agreement is that the double is only taken out on shapely hands where partner thinks he has a fair chance of making his contract. Hence, the

actual West hand has an easy pass and that should collect +300.

Those Easts playing penalty doubles can make one, the lack of defensive trumps tricks not being an issue when holding sufficient side-suit strength.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12

♠ AKQ9842	Dealer W
♥ J6	Vul: N-S
♦ A1032	
♣	

♠ KJ1043	♠ Q72
♥ J7	♥ 653
♦ AK8	♦ Q975
♣ J86	♣ Q54

♠ A9865
♥ 10
♦ 10432
♣ K97

West will open either 1♠ or, possibly, a weak NT. The latter is a stylistic thing – some people swear by opening INT when holding a five-card major, some are strongly opposed to the idea. I stand on the middle ground, opening INT when the texture of the main suit and hand in general look no trumpy, one of the suit when the hand looks more suit orientated. This one looks borderline, with the spades being rebiddable and the concentration of strength in two suits suggesting 1♠, but the loose jacks suggesting INT.

While the North hand looks a bit good for a 4♥ opening, once an opponent opens the bidding I am happy to give up on any slam possibilities and simply blast 4♥, whichever opening West opted for. That should end the auction.

With hearts breaking three-two and clubs three-three, 10 tricks are easy. Quite a few matchpoints will be swung by the opening lead, however.

If West opens 1NT, East may lead a diamond – no, it isn't an automatic choice, but it will probably be a popular one – and that should hold the contract to 10 tricks.

If West has opened 1♠, the likely lead is a spade, and away goes a diamond loser so that declarer makes 11 tricks.

And if anyone leads a club, even 12 tricks are possible, as that blows the club trick and a diamond also goes away on the ace of spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13	♠ Q3	Dealer N
	♥ A10987	Vul: Both
	♦ 763	
	♣ K72	
♠ 9		♠ K108652
♥ 63		♥ K54
♦ KQ10982		♦ 4
♣ AQ104		♣ 986
	♠ AJ74	
	♥ QJ2	
	♦ AJ5	
	♣ J53	

Most will open a weak two bid with the East hand and that will often end the auction. South has the wrong shape for a take-out double, no long suit in which to overcall and, though he has a balanced hand with a good spade stopper, is a little shy of having a 2NT overcall.

If 2♠ does end the auction, it will not be fun to play. Lead the nine of spades to the three, king and ace, and declarer might even lose four trump tricks. Conversely, if he runs the nine and plays for Hx outside he can hold those losers to two – of course the number becomes three if North covers the nine with the queen. Two Spades should be a couple down, but it's hard to say how the play will go and the outcome will vary significantly from one table to the next.

Where N/S can get into the auction is when East opens a multi 2♦. Now South has an easy entry into the auction via a double, typically played as showing around a good 12 to 15 HCP in a balanced hand or, occasionally, a big hand. Wing in diamonds – it is wasteful to not have this agreement, merely passing with no message about diamonds. It is very likely that North will bid 2♥ now and that should end the auction. Two hearts makes, but +110 may score quite poorly if the bulk of the field is going down two or more in 2♠ on the E/W cards.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14	♠ 1054	Dealer E
	♥ K732	Vul: None
	♦ Q6	
	♣ K984	
♠ AKQ6		♠ 972
♥ 1098		♥ AJ654
♦ J82		♦ K4
♣ AQ2		♣ 1075
	♠ J83	
	♥ Q	
	♦ A109753	
	♣ J63	

Those Souths who play a weak 2♦ will open one, and West will have to double as he has no diamond stopper with which to bid NT. An enterprising North might raise to 3♦ – it will be very hard to double and penalise this – and East bid 3♥. There is no premium on bidding thin games at matchpoint scoring and, though West has a spade high card, he has only three hearts and a lot of potential losers, so I would recommend that he not go on to game.

If North does not raise to 3♦, East has enough to invite game, perhaps via a natural jump to 3♥, or via Lebensohl – 2NT followed by 3♥ – but do we play Lebensohl after a 2♦ opening? Again, I would be tempted to pass with the

West hand, but I can see how West could be tempted to bid on to game.

If South does not open, West may open a strong NT, over which East may transfer then invite game. A 1♣ opening and INT rebid, showing 15-17, might see East use some form of Checkback to invite game. All these auctions see West with a close decision to make but, if West accepts the invitation, his 4-3-3-3 shape should suggest that 3NT may be better than 4♥.

Finally, if West has to open 1♠, playing Acol, he may pass East's INT response.

Four Hearts can always be defeated, but that isn't the same as saying that it always will be. 3NT can always be made, but that is not the same as saying that it always will be. The play and defence can get quite tricky, but note that one important play is that after declarer has lost the first heart to the bare queen, it is important that North covers the next heart play, as that will block the suit, while playing low sees declarer able to finesse then finesse again and cash four heart tricks without a problem.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 15

♠ 72	Dealer S
♥ AJ108	Vul: N-S
♦ AJ52	
♣ A94	
♠ AKQ1065	♠ 98
♥ Q74	♥ K5
♦ 93	♦ 8764
♣ 86	♣ KJ1075
♠ J43	
♥ 9632	
♦ KQ10	
♣ Q32	

West opens 1♠, North doubles, and East perhaps bids INT. South will want to do something with 8 HCP and could, I suppose, bid 2♥. However, with 3-4-3-3 shape and no

high card in hearts, I would be more inclined to double to show general values and let partner pick where to play.

In practice, whether South bids 2♥, passes, or doubles INT, West is going to bid 2♠. A 2♥ bid from South will work out best now as North can compete to 3♥, and that rates to end the auction. Three Hearts might make after three rounds of spades, a club lead or trick two switch being more effective and beating the contract as West gets a club ruff.

If West is left to play in 2♠, this will make in comfort. Indeed, it will take a trump lead to prevent a heart ruff in the dummy, or an overtrick will be possible. The good news for the defence is that North has no other particularly attractive lead so a trump will be the popular choice. The bad news for the defence is that the auction will mean that the vast majority of declarers will get the club guess right.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 16

♠ AK1084	Dealer W
♥ Q6	Vul: E-W
♦ KQ82	
♣ 96	
♠ QJ2	♠ 976
♥ A82	♥ K73
♦ AJ53	♦ 76
♣ QJ10	♣ A8743
♠ 53	
♥ J10954	
♦ 1094	
♣ K52	

If West opens a strong NT, North should overcall 2♠, either just showing spades or showing spades and a minor. If East passes, 2♠ will end the auction and, while the play may be quite tricky, this contract cannot actually be beaten – other than by declarer misreading the position.

If East judges to compete over 2♠, he may use Lebensohl, a 2NT puppet to 3♣ which he will pass. However, this should be down two for – 200, the kiss of death on a partscore deal.

If playing weak NT, most Wests will open 1♦, North overcall 1♠, and East want to bid but not have anything he can bid – I am assuming here that most pairs play that a negative double would promise four hearts. Without that limitation, of course East can double and West rebid INT and possibly play there for +90. If East does have to pass over 1♠, the auction will end here at some tables. Most Wests, however, will bid something, either a take-out double or a slightly pushy INT. Will the latter end the auction, or will North bid again? North does have substantial extra values, but his second suit has been opened on his right, so he would have to commit to the five-card spade suit, knowing that partner would have already raised to 2♠ if holding three-card support and a couple of high cards.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 17	♠ KQ109	Dealer N
	♥ A3	Vul: None
	♦ Q4	
	♣ K9643	
♠ 752		♠ J643
♥ Q654		♥ K1072
♦ AJ10863		♦ K5
♣		♣ AJ8
	♠ A8	
	♥ J98	
	♦ 972	
	♣ Q10752	

North opens 1♣. Whether East will double depends on style; some passing because they have a minimum double and lack diamond support, others doubling because they have both majors. I'm not going to say that one style is better than the other; both will have their good and their bad moments.

Say that East passes and South is playing Acol – this hand is a simple raise to 2♣. For those playing strong NT, better minor, and inverted minor-suit raises, this will be a 3♣ raise, which should also be the call for most Souths if East doubles.

Clearly, West's distribution is sufficient that he must bid over 3♣. Again, those obsessed with the majors will bid 3♥. Personally, I prefer 3♦, as there could be more tricks available in a diamond contract even if partner has four-card heart support.

The chances are that, whether declaring a heart or a diamond contract, West will avoid the third spade loser because, either North leads a club, allowing an immediate discard, or North leads a top spades and blocks the suit – South could overtake then ruff the third round, I suppose, but only at the cost of making the trump suit easier for declarer to pick up.

If declarer gets a club lead so has only two spade losers, getting both red suits right results in 10 tricks. Getting both wrong...

The standard approach to this heart combination is to lead low to the queen then low to the ten. However, the bidding, plus North's failure to lead a spade, suggests that South has one of the top spade honours but will then not have room to also hold the ♥A as he must also have a club honour when North leads a low club. If we assume North to hold the ♥A, correct play of the suit is to start by leading low to the king then duck the next round and hope for a doubleton ace (or doubleton jack with South, when we will, of course, cover with the queen).

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18 ♠ QJ95 Dealer E
 ♥ 10652 Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ Q53

♠ 87 ♠ 4
 ♥ K4 ♥ J983
 ♦ AK109532 ♦ 8
 ♣ K7 ♣ AJ98642

♠ AK10632
 ♥ AQ7
 ♦ 764
 ♣ 10

Time was that everyone would have passed the East hand because they couldn't pre-empt when holding a four-card major on the side. Modern pre-emption follows a much looser, more free-flowing, style, and I would expect a majority to open 3♣. South has a clear 3♠ overcall and West an interesting decision. I would favour 4♣, though this could work badly facing some modern pre-empts based on mediocre six-card suits. Four Diamonds could work out better, as could 5♣ or even pass.

Should North raise to 4♠? Well, he has four-card support and some values, the trouble being that those minor-suit values are of very dubious help on offense.

The cards lie well for E/W and less so for N/S, though declarer will need some inspiration. Five Clubs or Five Diamonds can be made, but both require that declarer take the finesse to pick up the clubs, and the friendly diamond layout doesn't do declarer's prospects any harm.

As for South, he needs to play for king-doubleton heart offside just to get out for down one in 4♠, having three minor-suit losers.

There will be +400s and even +550s E/W, and there will also be a good number of declarers going down in their minor-suit games. I would think that those Souths who concede -200 in a spade contract may find that they score below average, but it is really quite hard to judge what will happen around the room, let alone across the country.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19 ♠ A86 Dealer S
 ♥ 92 Vul: E-W
 ♦ K4
 ♣ AJ9763

♠ J7 ♠ KQ1054
 ♥ QJ8753 ♥ A10
 ♦ Q92 ♦ A76
 ♣ 84 ♣ Q102

♠ 932
 ♥ K64
 ♦ J10853
 ♣ K5

I would open a weak two bid with the West cards but I understand that some will be put off by the adverse vulnerability.

If West does open 2♥, North is likely to overcall 3♣, and East has a tough call. Game could easily be on or, as on the actual deal, have virtually no play, yet there is no obvious invitational call available to East. Probably the best East can do is to compete with 3♥ and hope that, once in a while, partner will go on to game, even though 3♥ is not, in principle, invitational.

It turns out that East would have done better to pass or make a penalty double, and 3♣ only just scrapes one off. Three Hearts, meanwhile, should be beaten by a trick.

Suppose that West does not open the bidding. North will open 1♣, East will overcall 1♠, and South faces the familiar problem of having some values but lacking a fourth heart to make a negative double. If he therefore passes, North will reopen with 2♣ and East will perhaps double to show extras. West will bid 2♥ if sufficient and, when that comes round to South, he may compete with 3♣. The winning decision is again for E/W to defend, but some Wests may go on to 3♥ and turn a plus score into a minus.

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

=====

Board 20	♠ J83	Dealer W
	♥ 7	Vul: Both
	♦ KJ1082	
	♣ A986	
♠ Q1042		♠ A9
♥ 9		♥ AKQ1084
♦ 54		♦ AQ73
♣ KQ10532		♣ 4
	♠ K765	
	♥ J6532	
	♦ 96	
	♣ J7	

Assuming two passes from West and North, East will open 1♥ and West respond 1♠, being too weak to bid the clubs. I would imagine that many Easts will now jump to 3♦ to force to game, and West will bid 3NT.

Say that 3NT ends the auction and North leads a low club. Declarer can win that, take the diamond finesse, then bash out hearts from the top, and come to five hearts, two diamonds, and two black tricks. On a diamond lead, declarer can be prevented from making any tricks in hand, so held to eight in all – five hearts, two diamonds and the ace of spades.

Meanwhile, some Easts will insist on playing in hearts. Four Hearts should be beaten, but it can be made on a diamond or spade lead, or on the ♣J lead where North misguesses who has the singleton and plays a second club at trick two.

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

=====

Board 21	♠ 5	Dealer N
	♥ 2	Vul: N-S
	♦ K10852	
	♣ QJ10762	
♠ AKJ2		♠ Q108764
♥ 108654		♥ AQ7
♦ 63		♦ A97
♣ 54		♣ 8
	♠ 93	
	♥ KJ93	
	♦ QJ4	
	♣ AK93	

If North passes, East will open 1♠ and South double. West has something between a pre-emptive raise and a full invitational raise, but I would opt for the invitational-plus raise shown by a 2NT response over the double.

Who knows what North will do over 2NT? I think that, though it is a losing action on this particular deal, it is reasonable to assume that E/W are about to bid and make a game, so jump to either 5♣ or, perhaps, 4NT to offer a choice of minors. Either sees N/S play 5♣ and lose three aces.

If North does not commit to the five level, East will bid 4♠ and the bidding will come back to North. Even at adverse vulnerability, it will be hard for North not to compete with either 5♣ or 4NT.

Four Spades is fated to fail by a trick thanks to the unfortunate heart position, so where North goes to the five level he turns a plus into a minus, but turn the ♥KJ into the ♥Ax, same points, same distribution, and 5♣ is cold.

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

=====

Board 22 ♠ 753 Dealer E
 ♥ 62 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 543
 ♣ 98543

♠ 92 ♠ Q1064
 ♥ QJ98 ♥ 1074
 ♦ AQJ762 ♦ 98
 ♣ 6 ♣ KJ72

♠ AKJ8
 ♥ AK53
 ♦ K10
 ♣ AQ10

South opens 2♣ and rebids 2NT, 23-24 HCP, and is left to play there. It is unlikely that West will overcall at adverse vulnerability but, if he does, he may regret it, because this is the only way for E/W to go minus on a deal that should belong to South but on which South will not enjoy his experience of being declarer.

Firstly, N/S can go plus by defending a diamond contract, but they can also declare 3♣, which can be made despite the four-one trump split as the North hand can actually contribute something to the play.

Say that West leads a diamond, perhaps the queen; declarer wins the king and may just get off play with the ♦10 in hope of getting a friendly return. Unfortunately, by the time he has had to find four discards – two hearts, a spade and a club – his hand is becoming a bit of a mess. West will get out with a heart and South will have to open up a black suit. Six tricks is all that can be guaranteed, though East will also have been put under pressure so may have to concede a seventh.

If West leads the ♥Q, declarer may duck, win the continuation, then play two more rounds of hearts, putting West back on lead. Though a diamond play now costs a trick, it also sets up several winners, while a black-suit play picks up an extra trick for declarer without the benefit of setting up any more defensive tricks. So after winning the fourth heart West plays the ♦Q, and declarer is held to six tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 23 ♠ J8 Dealer S
 ♥ J5 Vul: Both
 ♦ 87643
 ♣ A1042

♠ 97 ♠ K6432
 ♥ K862 ♥ Q73
 ♦ 10 ♦ AKQ2
 ♣ Q98765 ♣ 3

♠ AQ105
 ♥ A1094
 ♦ J95
 ♣ KJ

If South opens a strong NT, West will pass, and so will North unless he has a way to show a weak hand with both minors. East, however, will overcall 2♠, whether to show just spades but also spades and a minor.

If he is left to play there, East will not enjoy the play and will probably be a couple down; double dummy analysis tells us that it is N/S who can make 1♠. However, North will often compete in the minors by bidding 2NT and that will turn the N/S plus into a N/S minus as 2♦ is the N/S limit. Of course, a take-out double from North would work just fine, as South would leave it in, but that is a very dangerous action when holding only a doubleton heart.

If South opens 1♥, North will respond 1NT and East will either overcall 2♠ or double for take-out of hearts and hoping not to see partner jumping in clubs. Most likely East will end up in 2♠, hopefully, from his perspective, not doubled.

A 1♣ or 1♦ opening by South will see North raise or respond 1NT. Either will see East overcall 2♠, the most popular spot overcall, though not very successful.

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

Board 24	♠ J8752	Dealer W
	♥ 843	Vul: None
	♦ A	
	♣ 7652	
♠ K6		♠ 43
♥ QJ652		♥ 109
♦ Q107632		♦ KJ854
♣		♣ AK103
	♠ AQ109	
	♥ AK7	
	♦ 9	
	♣ QJ984	

More often than not, there will be two passes to East, who will open 1♦. South has an easy double and now it will be just a matter of how many diamonds West will bid. The E/W limit is nine tricks, but bidding as little as 3♦ looks somewhat timid, and is unlikely to buy the contract anyway as, even if 3♦ shuts North out temporarily, South should double again, and now North can jump to 4♠.

Four Spades will make sometimes, but be defeated sometimes. If West gets a club ruff at the start, declarer will then have to drop the ♠K to be successful. My guess would be that only a minority will manage to do that so +420 will score very well.

More aggressive Wests will raise to 4♦ or 5♦. The former should see South double for a second time and North take out into 4♠, while if South doubles again after a raise to 5♦ North will probably leave it in and collect +300.

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

Board 25	♠ A8643	Dealer N
	♥ K3	Vul: E-W
	♦ 104	
	♣ KQ104	
♠ K9		♠ 72
♥ 104		♥ QJ65
♦ AKQJ65		♦ 932
♣ A53		♣ J982
	♠ QJ105	
	♥ A9872	
	♦ 87	
	♣ 76	

While they may not always bid game, the cards lie well for N/S so that 4♠ is quite cold. North will open 1♠ and South show spade support. If playing Acoll, a raise to 2♠ is enough and now West has an interesting call to make. Double looks wrong with a weak doubleton in the other major, while a 3♦ overcall just looks inadequate with seven and a half tricks. The alternative is a natural 2NT overcall – if we are confident that partner will understand it that way.

If West plays in 2NT, North will have two chances to find a heart lead so that South can push a spade honour through to trap the king and hold West to six or seven tricks. He is far more likely to lead a black suit and now declarer comes to at least seven tricks, and eight if the lead is a spade.

But North is likely to compete in spades, knowing that the natural 2NT overcall rates to be based on a long suit, and also that he now has useful information for the play as to the position of the missing spade strength.

If playing five-card majors, South may have more options for raising spades and be able to show a four-card raise a little light of being a full-blooded invitation. Different schemes use different bids to show the various strengths of raise, but all will take away West's ability to bid 2NT. He will overcall 3♦ where that is an option, or possibly double if the artificial raise is 3♦. However, beyond making sure that he gets a diamond lead, West is best out of the auction as he can come to at best eight tricks on competent defence, and -200 in 4♦ will not score well unless a good number of N/S pairs bid the spade game.

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

Board 26			Dealer E		
♠ Q1098			Vul: Both		
♥ 1072					
♦ 108					
♣ AKQ6					
♠ AJ	♠ 762				
♥ K964	♥ J83				
♦ AQJ4	♦ 975				
♣ 972	♣ J1085				
	♠ K543				
	♥ AQ5				
	♦ K632				
	♣ 43				

If South opens a weak NT, West may double and regret it, as East is very weak and North had been about to use Stayman and invite game had West stayed silent.

N/S can make the majority of the tricks in all five denominations, so wriggling out of INT doubled/redoubled at the two level will be no fun for E/W – N/S don't even need to double to score well with no game on their way and with E/W vulnerable. It is not automatic to double on the West hand, and those who go quietly will be richly rewarded.

If South opens 1♦, West will have another borderline decision, whether to overcall INT on a pretty ordinary 15 HCP or, again, go quietly. The majority will like their diamond holding so much that they will overcall, and North's double will start a penalty hunt, from which there is no escape for E/W.

And a 1♣ opening from South? West should not overcall INT now, and double is far from ideal with a doubleton spade. Some will overcall 1♦, which is probably E/W's best spot, and very unlikely to be doubled, or will just pass, accepting that they have no good bid. Such discipline deserves to be rewarded and it is, as N/S bid up to 2NT and probably just make it.

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

Board 27			Dealer S		
♠ 873			Vul: None		
♥ KJ1086					
♦ 104					
♣ KQ2					
♠ AK10965	♠ QJ42				
♥ A53	♥ 72				
♦ K3	♦ AJ7				
♣ A6	♣ 9543				
	♠				
	♥ Q94				
	♦ Q98652				
	♣ J1087				

A weak 2♦ opening is a possibility for some with the South cards and now West is too good for a simple 2♠ overcall so jumps to 3♠. Weak jump overcalls do not apply over an opposing pre-empt, so this shows a strong jump overcall, and East has an easy raise to game.

In truth, it is hard to see any other final contract than 4♠. If South passes, West opens 1♠, East raises, and West drives to game, possibly even making one slam try on the way if in very optimistic mood.

With North on lead there can be no trick given by the opening lead, so there should be an almost universal 11 tricks for +450.

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

Board 28 ♠ Q Dealer W
 ♡ KQJ753 Vul: N-S
 ♢ AJ108
 ♣ J4

<p>♠ 108654 ♡ A10 ♢ Q96 ♣ Q87</p>	<p>♠ 32 ♡ 964 ♢ 752 ♣ 109632</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------

♠ AKJ97
 ♡ 82
 ♢ K43
 ♣ AK5

N/S finish the session with an excellent slam, which is makeable in three different denominations, though it's unlikely that anyone will choose to play in 6♦.

Six No Trump is the top spot, as it will sometimes make with hearts four-one, and should make whenever hearts are three-two.

North will open 1♥ and rebid 2♦ over the 1♠ response. Three Clubs from South, 3♥ from North, and now we reach the first decision point. South is too good for 3NT and would probably like to be able to bid a natural 4NT. Most of my partners would have no doubt that 4NT was Key-card so, unless your partner would understand, best only to bid 4NT if that is what you want it to mean.

Well, honestly, is there anything so bad about asking for key-cards now? How would partner bid with six-four in the red suits? Does H, D, H show a better hand than H, H, D? That would mean that the actual auction showed a non-minimum (if we could be sure he wasn't only five-four, of course).

Let's say that South uses Key-card and sees 5♠, two plus the queen of trumps from partner. South can now take his pick between 6♥ and 6NT, with the majority probably opting for 6♥.

Alternatively, South could bid 4♣ over 3♥. That should be read as a cuebid with hearts agreed. It gets a return cuebid of 4♦ from North, but that doesn't mean all that much as North would cuebid the ♦A automatically unless holding a very poor hand. Probably all South has done has delayed the use of Key-card by one round. The 4♣ cuebid only really helps if South is willing to accept a 4♥ sign-off from partner, which would deny the ♦A unless having that card in a really poor hand.

Could you bear to settle for 4♥ when holding that South hand facing an opening bid? Not many could. It's irrelevant on this deal, as North will cuebid 4♦ and South will go on to slam, but I have some respect for those who would cuebid 4♣ then accept a sign-off – slam will often be pretty poor when partner does not cuebid diamonds, eg: ♥KQxxxx and no ♦A, or ♠xx ♥AKQxx ♦Qxxx, ♣Jx

Makeable Contracts

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

=====