

## §18. The Opening Bid of 2NT.

**By the end of this chapter you should understand the following:**

**Opening 2NT:** Opening 2NT shows a balanced hand of 20-22 points.

**A Forcing response:** A three-level response to an opening bid of 2NT (3♥ or 3♠, but not a *conventional* 3♣ or 3♦ – see later lessons) forces opener to bid again.

The opening bid of 2NT is the easiest of all the opening two-bids to understand. The idea is straightforward enough: an opening bid of 2NT shows **20-22 points and a balanced hand**. We can be a little more flexible about “balanced” in this context because there are occasions where 2NT is not ideal but there is *no sensible alternative*.

Examples 1-4 show “classic” 2NT openers, with 20-22 points and 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 or 5-3-3-2 shapes:

| Ex 1.   | Ex 2.  | Ex 3.   | Ex 4.   |
|---|--|---|---|
| ♠ A Q 8<br>♥ K J 6<br>♦ K J 10 3<br>♣ A Q 7<br>20 points<br>4-3-3-3 shape | ♠ K J 10<br>♥ A Q 10<br>♦ A Q<br>♣ K J 9 8 3<br>20 points<br>5-3-3-2 shape | ♠ K Q J 3<br>♥ A 10 2<br>♦ K Q 5<br>♣ A Q J<br>22 points<br>4-3-3-3 shape | ♠ A Q 9 7<br>♥ K 8<br>♦ K 10 4<br>♣ A K Q 6<br>21 points<br>4-4-3-2 shape |

By opening 2NT in each case you describe your hand accurately to partner. You are showing a specific point-count (in this case 20-22) and a balanced hand. That means that you make a *limit bid* and can leave the decision of the final contract to your partner.

Note that if you open these hands with a one-bid, partner (holding, say, 5 points) might Pass and now you might miss a making game contract in either No-trumps or in a suit.

Examples 5-8 show off-centre 2NT openers.

| Ex 5.   | Ex 6.  | Ex 7.   | Ex 8.  |
|---|--|---|--|
| ♠ K 10 8 3<br>♥ A Q<br>♦ K Q<br>♣ A K 9 4 2<br>21 points<br>5-4-2-2 shape | ♠ A Q<br>♥ A Q 9 5 3<br>♦ K 9 7 6<br>♣ A K<br>22 points<br>5-4-2-2 shape | ♠ A 10<br>♥ K J 3<br>♦ K 9<br>♣ A K Q J 4 2<br>21 points<br>6-3-2-2 shape | ♠ K 8<br>♥ K 9 7<br>♦ A K Q 5 4 2<br>♣ A J<br>20 points<br>6-3-2-2 shape |

Notice that a 2NT opener should not contain a singleton, even though the hand may not be classically balanced.

The reason why opening 2NT is recommended on Examples 5-8 is that there is no other bid that fits the bill. If you were to open such examples with a one-bid you would risk partner passing and thereby missing a game contract. Imagine opening 1♥ on Example 6 or 1♣ on Example 7 and watching the bidding proceed Pass – Pass – Pass. Now how would you feel? Partner does not need much for game to be making, but he still might not have enough to keep the bidding alive over an opening one-bid.

### Responding to a 2NT opening bid.

Responding to a 2NT opening bid is not too difficult. As a responder to a *limit bid* you simply add up what you can see in front of your face to what you partner has announced and come to a total. If you know of 25 or more points then you can take a pot at game; if the total must be less than 25 then you should settle for a part-score (by Passing 2NT). With 5 (sometimes only 4) points and a balanced hand you can raise simply to 3NT.

The flies in this particular ointment are that there is no buck-passing bid and there is no means of effecting a *sign-off* in a suit. If you contrast this with a 1NT opening bid, you should be able to see that there is less room in the bidding. Over 1NT you could pass the buck with 2NT on, say, a balanced hand with 11 points. Over 2NT, though, you haven't got a bid in No-trumps between 2NT and 3NT. You either have to Pass 2NT or you have to play the hand in a game.

So, as a corollary, any suit bid (3♦, 3♥ 3♠) shows at least a five-card suit and is a *forcing* bid (in other words the 2NT opener cannot – or should not – pass your bid). 3♣ is in a different category, though.

## Examples of responses to 2NT.

In each case your partner (North) opens 2NT (showing a balanced 20-22) and it's your bid:

|  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|--|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|-----|------|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|-----|------|---|
| <p><b>Ex 9.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ 8 7 5<br/>♥ 10 9<br/>♦ 10 8 5 3<br/>♣ J 6 4 2</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>Pass.</b> Not difficult – what else could you do? Your combined point-count is 21-23 and it is likely that 2NT will struggle to make. That's not your problem, though, you don't have to play the wretched thing.</p>   | N     |      |       |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? | <p><b>Ex 10.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ A 7 5<br/>♥ 10 9<br/>♦ 10 8 5 3<br/>♣ J 6 4 2</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>3NT.</b> Add up what you can see in front of your face to what partner has announced and come to a total. In this case that's 25-27, enough for a shot at game. Put down dummy and let partner get to work.</p>   | N |  |  |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| <p><b>Ex 11.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ Q 7 5<br/>♥ 7 5 2<br/>♦ A J 9 6 4<br/>♣ 8 3</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>3NT.</b> A waste of time to mention those Diamonds; just bid the most likely making game contract. You know you have game values between you (there is a combined 27 points minimum), so just try 3NT.</p>   | N     |      |       |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? | <p><b>Ex 12.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ A J 9 6 4<br/>♥ 8 3<br/>♦ 7 5 2<br/>♣ Q 7 5</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>3♠.</b> Now, with a five-card major, the situation differs from Ex. 11 as 4♠ may be better than 3NT. 3♠ shows precisely a five-card suit and asks North to choose. Partner cannot Pass 3♠ as it's <b>forcing</b>.</p>   | N |  |  |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| <p><b>Ex 13.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ 2<br/>♥ K J 10 9 6 4<br/>♦ 10 8 3<br/>♣ J 10 6</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>4♥.</b> You are <b>boss of the auction</b> (2NT is a <i>limit bid</i>, remember) and you know that your partnership has at least eight Hearts and 25+ points between you. You therefore know enough to have a shot at 4♥. Don't ask partner to do what you should be doing.</p> | N     |      |       |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? | <p><b>Ex 14.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ K Q 7<br/>♥ 10 9 7 6 4<br/>♦ J 7 4 3<br/>♣ 9</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>3♥.</b> As in Example 12 (above) this bid shows precisely five Hearts and asks partner to choose between 4♥ and 3NT. With three or four (or even five!) Hearts North should bid 4♥; with just two of them he should retreat to the relative haven of 3NT.</p>        | N |  |  |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| <p><b>Ex 15.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ J 9 8 6 4 3<br/>♥ A Q 5<br/>♦ 10<br/>♣ 10 8 5</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>4♠.</b> A six-card major (and 7 good points) facing a balanced 20-22 should be played in game. There's no point in bidding 3♠, asking partner for three-card trump support. You don't want to play in 3NT, so just go directly to 4♠, expecting it to be a cakewalk.</p>         | N     |      |       |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? | <p><b>Ex 16.</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">♠ 5 2<br/>♥ 8 2<br/>♦ A Q 8 6 5 2<br/>♣ 7 6 3</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 100px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">West</td><td style="text-align: center;">North</td><td style="text-align: center;">East</td><td style="text-align: center;">South</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2NT</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> <p><b>3NT.</b> Yes, it's yet another of those forget-the-minors-and-have-a-bash-at-No-trumps hand. Sure, 3♦ wouldn't be awful bid here, but it is something of a waste of time. 5♦ is a long way off; nine tricks in 3NT is usually much easier than eleven in a minor.</p> | N |  |  |  | W |  | E |  | S |  |  |  | West | North | East | South |  | 2NT | Pass | ? |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| N  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| W  |       | E    |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| S  |       |      |       |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
| West   | North | East | South |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |
|  | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |   |   |  |  |  |   |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |      |       |      |       |  |     |      |   |

## Summary of responses to 2NT.

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Pass     | All bad hands (0-4 points, say) Pass 2NT. There is no <i>weakness take-out</i> nor <i>sign-off</i> .   |
| 3♣       | An oddity, and a bid you will meet later in the course (in Year 2). For now, ignore it.  |
| 3♦       | Another oddity, and another bid you will meet later in the course. For now, ignore it.   |
| 3♥<br>3♠ | { These show five-card suits and are <i>forcing</i> in that opener will not Pass them. Opener is being asked to choose between 4♥ (or 4♠) or reverting to 3NT, depending on his trump support. |
| 3NT      | Bid on balanced hands (and many minor-oriented hands) of 5+ points (sometimes 4 points).   |
| 4♥<br>4♠ | { These show six-card (or longer) suits and tell opener to Pass and put the dummy down. Unlike 3♥ and 3♠, these bids are not consultative. Responder is <b>boss of the auction</b> .           |

### §18. Quiz on The Opening Bid of 2NT

In each case you are **South**

What is the best bid after the given auction to date?

1.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

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

2.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

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

3.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

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

4.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

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

5.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

♠ 9 8 7 6 4 2  
♥ 6 5 3  
♦ 7 4 2  
♣ 3

6.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

♠ 8 7 3  
♥ 10 4  
♦ A 10 9 7 6  
♣ 10 8 6

7\*.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 2NT  | Pass  | ?    |       |

♠ A Q 5  
♥ K J 10 3  
♦ A Q 8  
♣ K 10 9

8.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| Pass | 3♥    | Pass | ?     |
|      |       |      | 2NT   |

♠ A 9 6  
♥ K J 9  
♦ A Q  
♣ A Q 10 7 5

9.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| Pass | 3♠    | Pass | ?     |
|      |       |      | 2NT   |

♠ A K  
♥ Q J 7 4  
♦ A K 10 3  
♣ K J 6

10.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|   | N |   |
| W |   | E |
|   | S |   |

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| Pass | 4♠    | Pass | ?     |
|      |       |      | 2NT   |

♠ A Q  
♥ A Q  
♦ K 9 7 6  
♣ A K 9 5 3

## §18. Quiz on The Opening Bid of 2NT Answers

1.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

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

**3NT.** Minor suits are, in general, for the birds! 5♦ is a long way off so bid the most likely game contract. The long Diamonds should provide a useful *source of tricks* in No-trumps, but make a poor trump suit at 20 points a trick. Nine tricks are usually easier than eleven...

2.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

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

**4♥.** You are the one who knows of at least eight Hearts and game values between you (there are 25+ points in the North-South hands), so just bid game. 3♥ would show just a five-card suit and be asking partner if he has three-card Heart support. Here, you don't care.

3.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

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

**3♥.** This gives North the chance of supporting Hearts if he has at least three, of bidding 3♣ if he has that suit or of rebidding 3NT if he has neither. This time you need some help (three-card support) to see if partner can bolster your Hearts, or bid a Spade suit if he has one.

4.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

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

**4♣.** You know of at least eight Spades between you and at least 25 points. Never mind the quality of your Spades, just consider the length. North will either have Spades with you or he will have useful high cards in the other three suits, making ten tricks achievable.

5.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

♠ 9 8 7 6 4 2  
 ♥ 6 5 3  
 ♦ 7 4 2  
 ♣ 3

**Pass.** Although 3♣ figures to be a far better spot than 2NT there is no way to arrange to play there. If you bid 3♣ partner would convert to 3NT or 4♣, contracts that are unlikely to prove successful. 2NT is very likely to go down, but that's life. There's not much you can do.

6.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

♠ 8 7 3  
 ♥ 10 4  
 ♦ A 10 9 7 6  
 ♣ 10 8 6

**3NT.** An Ace and a decent five-card suit is usually enough to try for game opposite 20-22 points. Much as you'd like to ask partner's opinion you can't – it's a straight choice between Passing and bidding 3NT. So, it's really a question of, "Are you a man or a mouse?"

7\*.

|   |  |      |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W     |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |       |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |      | 2NT   | Pass | ?     |  |   |  |  |  |  |

♠ A Q 5  
 ♥ K J 10 3  
 ♦ A Q 8  
 ♣ K 10 9

**7NT.** 19 points and partner opens 2NT!? Is it your birthday? Anyway, just add up what you can see in front of your face to what partner has shown. That's 39-40 points. The opponents can have at most a Jack, and that's not sufficient to take a trick. Go for it!

8.

|   |  |      |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|----------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W        |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South    |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | Pass | 3♥    | Pass | 2NT<br>? |  |   |  |  |  |  |

♠ A 9 6  
 ♥ K J 9  
 ♦ A Q  
 ♣ A Q 10 7 5

**4♥.** Partner has 5 or more points and exactly five Hearts. Since you have three Hearts the partnership has eight, and that's enough to make them trumps. You are being asked if you can support Hearts – and that you can do. Support your partner when you can.

9.

|   |  |      |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|----------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W        |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South    |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | Pass | 3♣    | Pass | 2NT<br>? |  |   |  |  |  |  |

♠ A K  
 ♥ Q J 7 4  
 ♦ A K 10 3  
 ♣ K J 6

**3NT.** Partner has 5 or more points and exactly five Spades. Since you have only two Spades the partnership has seven, and that's not enough to make them trumps. You are being asked if you can support Spades – and you can't. Go back to No-trumps.

10.

|   |  |      |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|------|-------|------|----------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 40px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N    |       | E    | W        |  | S |  |  |  |  |
| N |  | E    |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| W |  | S    |       |      |          |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | West | North | East | South    |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|   |  | Pass | 4♣    | Pass | 2NT<br>? |  |   |  |  |  |  |

♠ A Q  
 ♥ A Q  
 ♦ K 9 7 6  
 ♣ A K 9 5 3

**Pass.** 4♣ is not a consultation, it is terminal. North has six (or more) Spades and wants to play the hand in 4♣. You have no earthly reason to overrule partner here; North knows a lot more about your hand than you do about his hand. This has nowt to do with you...

## §18. Example hands 1 to 4.

**Hand 1 Dealer North**

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♠ 4<br>♥ A Q 8 6 4<br>♦ 9 8 6 3<br>♣ J 9 4 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | E | W | S | ♠ A 9 6<br>♥ K J 9<br>♦ A K<br>♣ K Q 10 7 5 | ♠ K 8 7 5 2<br>♥ 5<br>♦ J 10 5 4 2<br>♣ A 3 |
| N  | E   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| W  | S   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

| West             | North | East | South    |
|------------------|-------|------|----------|
| 3♥               | Pass  | 2NT  | Pass     |
| 4♥ by West       | Pass  | 4♥   | All Pass |
| Opening lead: ♠Q |       |      |          |

East has a balanced (5-3-3-2) hand of 20 points and thus has a classic 2NT opening bid. West, holding 6 points, has enough to raise to game, but has a problem in that it is not clear just which game is best. 4♥ might be best, 3NT might be better. To show his uncertainty the response is 3♥, which shows exactly five cards in the suit and asks East to bid either 3NT or raise Hearts. With a three-card holding in Hearts East should support his partner and raise Hearts to game. 4♥ should prove to be straightforward on a Spade lead, provided West remembers the principle of **not** ruffing in the long hand. The simple line is to win the ♠A, draw trumps and knock out the ♣A. Ruffing a Spade in hand would be fatally wrong play.

**Hand 2 Dealer East**

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ♠ 6 4 2<br>♥ 9 7<br>♦ A J 10 4 2<br>♣ 10 8 5 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | E | W | S | ♠ K 10 5 3<br>♥ J 8<br>♦ 7 3<br>♣ K Q J 9 3 | ♠ Q 9<br>♥ Q 10 6 5 3<br>♦ 9 8 6 5<br>♣ 7 6 |
| N  | E   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| W  | S   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

| West         | North | East             | South |
|--------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Pass         | 3NT   | Pass             | 2NT   |
| 3NT by South |       | Opening lead: ♠K |       |

South has a balanced (4-4-3-2) shape with 21 points and describes that with an opening bid of 2NT. North has 5 points, easily enough to raise to game opposite 20-22 points. If that Diamond suit were in Hearts or Spades, then it would be worth bidding. As it's a worthless minor, it isn't worth mentioning – best is a raise to 3NT on the principle that nine tricks are easier than eleven. West leads the ♠K and South sees that he has to make five tricks in Diamonds for his contract as he has only four top tricks outside the suit. To do that he has to *overtake* the second round of Diamonds as dummy has no outside entry. South must win the ♣A, cash the ♦K, overtake the ♦Q and run the Diamonds. When they split 4-2, 3NT is easy.

**Hand 3 Dealer South**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| ♠ K 9 8 2<br>♥ K J 10 5<br>♦ 9 5 2<br>♣ 9 6 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | E | W | S | ♠ J 10 7 6 4<br>♥ 8 2<br>♦ 10 8<br>♣ A 7 4 3 | ♠ A Q 5<br>♥ A 7<br>♦ K Q 7 6 4<br>♣ K Q J |
| N   | E   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| W   | S   |   |   |   |   |  |  |

| West         | North | East             | South |
|--------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| Pass         | 2NT   | Pass             | Pass  |
| Pass         | 3NT   | All Pass         | 3♥    |
| 3NT by North |       | Opening lead: ♠6 |       |

Another (5-3-3-2), 21-point hand, this time for North, accurately described by 2NT. South has a small problem now. He has the values to bid game but which game? 4♥ might be best, 3NT might be best. The solution is to bid 3♥, showing precisely a five-card suit and asking North for support if he has it. Here, by contrast with Hand 1, North has little interest in Hearts. To show this, North rebids 3NT. South might not like 3NT much with his singleton Spade but *there ain't no better hole to lie in*, so he Passes. As it is, 3NT is an easy contract to make with lots of tricks (after a Spade lead) when the ♣A has been knocked out. 4♥ would be a horrible spot.

**Hand 4 Dealer West**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| ♠ A K Q J<br>♥ K 3<br>♦ K J 9 7<br>♣ A 10 9 | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | E | W | S | ♠ 7 6 4 3 2<br>♥ 5<br>♦ A 6<br>♣ K Q J 8 5 | ♠ 8 5<br>♥ Q J 10 9 8 4<br>♦ Q 10 4 2<br>♣ 3 |
| N   | E   |   |   |   |   |  |  |
| W   | S   |   |   |   |   |  |  |

| West       | North | East              | South |
|------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| 2NT        | Pass  | 4♥                | Pass  |
| 4♥ by East |       | Opening lead: ♠10 |       |

West has a balanced (4-4-3-2) hand of 21 points and shows that by opening 2NT. East has enough for game opposite an announced 20-22 points but 3NT looks grotesque with a 6-4-2-1 shape. He *might* bid 3♥, but that shows precisely five cards and asks for help in the suit – with a six-card suit there is no need for assistance there (West is known to have at least two Hearts). So, the right bid is to take the bull by the horns and go straight to 4♥. After a short-suit Spade lead the right line of play is to draw the opponents' trumps at once (noting the 4-1 break) and then to knock out the ♦A. This way declarer loses only two red Aces and makes an overtrick. 3NT is a horrible contract and would fail after the obvious ♠K lead.

## §18. Example hands 5 to 8.

**Hand 5 Dealer North**

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

|           |   |             |
|-----------|---|-------------|
| ♠ Q J 6   | N | ♠ 10 4      |
| ♥ J 10 2  | W | ♥ Q 9 7 6 4 |
| ♦ A 9 5 3 | E | ♦ 2         |
| ♣ K J 10  | S | ♣ 9 8 6 5 2 |

♠ A 8 3  
♥ A 5  
♦ K Q J 8  
♣ A Q 7 3

|             |       |                  |       |
|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| West        | North | East             | South |
| Pass        | Pass  | Pass             | 2NT   |
| Pass        | 3♠    | Pass             | 4♠    |
| 4♠ by North |       | Opening lead: ♦2 |       |

South has a balanced hand of 20 points, so opens 2NT to show that. North has a small problem now in that he has enough points to raise to game but can't be sure what that game should be. With a five-card Spade suit the best bid is 3♠, asking South if he can support Spades. With three-card support the answer from the opener should be 4♠ rather than the selfish 3NT. (*Support your partner when you can*). East may well lead his singleton Diamond against 4♠ and West should play his ♦A and return the suit, giving his partner a ruff. If East plays a Club now declarer must be a little careful – he has to take the ♣A, play two rounds of trumps and then three rounds of Hearts, ruffing the last one in the dummy.

**Hand 6 Dealer East**

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

|            |   |               |
|------------|---|---------------|
| ♠ A J 8    | N | ♠ 6 4         |
| ♥ A 10 9 2 | W | ♥ 7 5         |
| ♦ A J 4 2  | E | ♦ 10 8 3      |
| ♣ A Q      | S | ♣ K J 7 6 5 3 |

♠ Q 9 2  
♥ Q 8 6 3  
♦ K 9 7  
♣ 10 8 2

|             |       |                  |          |
|-------------|-------|------------------|----------|
| West        | North | East             | South    |
| 2NT         | Pass  | Pass             | Pass     |
| 3NT by West | Pass  | 3NT              | All Pass |
| 3NT by West |       | Opening lead: ♠5 |          |

West opens 2NT after two Passes and East has a problem. Well, on one hand he only has 4 points, on the other he has a nice six-card suit. The problem is: East can't arrange to play in Clubs (unless he wants to play in 5♣) as West won't Pass 3♠. So, the choices are to Pass 2NT or to raise to 3NT. The way to look at it is to reflect that either the Clubs are useful and the suit can be run off, making at least nine tricks in No-trumps, or they are useless and you may go off in 2NT. May as well be hanged for lamb as for mutton... So, the man's bid (sorry, ladies) is to try 3NT and hope the sun shines. Here, West wins the Spade lead and plays off the ♣A and the ♣Q to dummy's ♣K. With Clubs 3-2, 3NT is home and dry.

**Hand 7 Dealer South**

♠ A K 8 6  
♥ J 9 4 2  
♦ 9  
♣ 10 9 6 4

|              |   |             |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| ♠ 10 7 5 4 2 | N | ♠ J 9       |
| ♥ 6          | W | ♥ A Q 7     |
| ♦ K 7 4 3    | E | ♦ A Q 8     |
| ♣ Q 8 2      | S | ♣ A K 7 5 3 |

♠ Q 3  
♥ K 10 8 5 3  
♦ J 10 6 5 2  
♣ J

|             |       |                  |          |
|-------------|-------|------------------|----------|
| West        | North | East             | South    |
| Pass        | Pass  | 2NT              | Pass     |
| Pass        | Pass  | 3NT              | Pass     |
| 3♠          | Pass  | 3NT              | All Pass |
| 3NT by East |       | Opening lead: ♥5 |          |

East opens 2NT after three Passes and catches West with 5 points. Holding exactly five Spades West should bid 3♠ to ask for help in the suit. East has only two Spades, as it happens, so has to retreat to 3NT and, although West doesn't like No-trumps much, there is nowhere else to go. An unfortunate low Heart lead to the ♥J and ♥Q has East counting his tricks. Two Hearts and three Diamonds make five, so four Clubs will do – in fact, five Clubs would be available on a 3-2 break. After two rounds of Clubs reveal the bad split declarer should concede a Club; the enemy can only cash three Spades, after all. After a likely Heart return declarer has nine tricks.

**Hand 8 Dealer West**

♠ A 7 5  
♥ Q 9 5  
♦ K Q J  
♣ A K Q 8

|            |   |             |
|------------|---|-------------|
| ♠ Q 10 9 2 | N | ♠ K J 8 6 4 |
| ♥ A        | W | ♥ K 8 3     |
| ♦ 8 5 4 2  | E | ♦ 10 9      |
| ♣ J 10 9 7 | S | ♣ 6 5 3     |

♠ 3  
♥ J 10 7 6 4 2  
♦ A 7 6 3  
♣ 4 2

|             |       |                  |       |
|-------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| West        | North | East             | South |
| Pass        | 2NT   | Pass             | 4♥    |
| Pass        | Pass  | Pass             |       |
| 4♥ by South |       | Opening lead: ♣J |       |

North has a balanced 21 points, which he shows by opening 2NT. South must decide on the best spot for the two hands now. With 5 points opposite an announced 20-22 he simply has to play in game in *something*. 3NT looks completely wrong when holding a 6-4-2-1 shape, so the best call is undoubtedly 4♥. Never mind the quality, contemplate the length... 4♥ should make easily enough after the ♣J lead; declarer wins that in the dummy and just plays on trumps to knock both the ♥A and subsequently the ♥K. This way he makes eleven tricks. 3NT, you will note, hasn't a prayer after the obvious low Spade lead from East as North would become wide open in Spades after the first trick.