

## §54. The Contested Auction. The Law of Total Tricks.

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

**The Law of Total Tricks:** *The Law of Total Tricks* (TNT for short, as in Total Number of Tricks) is a guideline used to help determine how high to bid in a competitive auction. It is not really a law (because counterexamples are easy to find) but a method of hand evaluation which describes a relationship that seems to exist somewhat regularly. Written by Jean-René Vernes for French players in the 1950s as a rule of thumb, it was first described in English in a 1969 magazine article. Later, in the USA, Marty Bergen and Larry Cohen popularised the approach, using their preferred abbreviation: "The LAW" Wikipedia.

This chapter is concerned with competitive bidding and how high to compete the auction. By way of an introduction, consider Hand 1. It turned up in a County match (Gloucestershire v Leicestershire, 1999).

### Hand 1

North-South can make 3♠.

East-West can make 3♦.

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

It may not seem a very interesting hand, but it is typical of many part-score deals. East-West, with a combined 22 points, can make 3♦ (losing two Spades and two Hearts) whilst North-South, with a minority of the points, can make 3♠ (losing one Diamond and three Clubs). To make 3♠, North has to divine the Heart position, but the bidding may make this clear to him.

Therefore, the hand actually belongs to North-South, who should clearly compete to 3♠, and the best result possible would be for East-West to bid 4♦ and go one down.

Now, how can everybody judge this? It may appear difficult. Instead of the point-count being our guide we let the *Law of Total Tricks* guide us. This "Law" states:

The **Total Number of Tricks** available on any deal is equal to the **Total Number of Trumps**.

In the deal above, North-South have nine Spades, East-West have nine Diamonds, so the total number of trumps is eighteen.

North-South can make nine tricks in Spades, East-West can make nine tricks in Diamonds, so the total number of tricks is eighteen.

Note that the Law does **not** say that you can make a three-level contract with nine trumps. By altering the high cards around it would be possible for the fits to remain the same (North-South having nine Spades, East-West having nine Diamonds) but the total tricks might be allocated in a different way. For instance, North-South may be able to make only eight tricks, but East-West would be able to make ten.

The ramifications of this are important and say that, in competitive auctions, you should:

**Be prepared to compete to the level of the combined trump length.**

Thus, if you know of a nine-card fit you should be prepared, if necessary and if pushed, to compete to the three-level (the nine-trick level). You have already met this principle when considering weak twos; a raise of an opening 2♠ (for example) to 3♠ is an obstructive bid based on a three-card Spade holding. It obeys the *Law of Total Tricks* in that you are bidding to the three-level with nine trumps.

Note that if the South and West hands are transposed in Hand 1 no one can make anything much as there is no great *fit*. Trump fits are everything in competitive auctions; the point-count is less important.

Appreciation of the *Law of Total Tricks* changes much of the way that we approach competitive bidding. Knowing that we are likely to be outbid if the auction goes slowly, the modern style is to bid quickly in contested auctions, taking pre-emptive action and trying to *steal the deal*. Winning the auction, you may note, and failing by one trick is frequently a successful outcome in these competitive part-score deals.

It's time for some Examples. In the following three cases the bidding has started 1♦ on your left, a 1♠ overcall from partner and a negative Double on your right. What would you bid with these three hands?

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Ex 1.</b><br>♠ K 8 7<br>♥ 10 8<br>♦ J 6<br>♣ Q J 10 8 7 3 | <b>Ex 2.</b><br>♠ J 10 6 4<br>♥ A 6 3<br>♦ Q 9 7 5 2<br>♣ 4 | <b>Ex 3.</b><br>♠ A 9 5 3 2<br>♥ 9<br>♦ K 8 4 3<br>♣ 9 6 2 |
|--|---|--|

With Example 1, you would raise to 2♠. No point in bidding 2♣ (there's no pre-emptive value in that). You have an eight-card Spade fit, so raise to the eight-trick level.

With Example 2, you would raise to 3♠. This is *obstructive*, not *constructive*, so you are not inviting partner to advance to 4♠. If you steal the deal and fail to make the contract, you'd be laughing all the way to the bank. The less you make, the more the opponents could have made.

With Example 4, you'd pre-empt all the way to 4♠. It is quite likely that the enemy could make 4♥ and you are prepared to *sacrifice* in 4♠. The opposition may misjudge the hand now, either by letting you play it undoubled or by bidding 5♥ and failing.

Now, this does rather raise the issue of what you do if you want to make a constructive bid rather than an obstructive bid? The answer is that you make an *unassuming cue-bid* or, in plain English, you bid the opponents' suit. By doing so, you are making a *constructive raise*.

Here, imagine 1♥ is opened to your left, partner overcalls 1♠ and your right-hand opponent Passes. What would you do with these three Examples?

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Ex 4.</b><br>♠ K 10 8<br>♥ J 10<br>♦ A 9 6 4 3<br>♣ Q 8 5 | <b>Ex 5.</b><br>♠ A Q 7 4<br>♥ 6<br>♦ K J 7 2<br>♣ J 10 9 3 | <b>Ex 6.</b><br>♠ J 9 6 2<br>♥ A K 8<br>♦ 10<br>♣ K 7 6 4 2 |
|--|---|---|

In each case, you have hands that are useful in support of a 1♠ overcall, hands which might offer a play for game. To indicate this, you should start off by bidding not some number of Spades, but by bidding Hearts, the suit opened on your left.

With Example 1, you'd bid 2♥ and Pass if partner rebid 2♠ (which would show a minimum overcall). With Examples 5 and 6 you would start off with 2♥ and then raise a 2♠ rebid to 3♠, showing game interest. Of course, partner might not rebid 2♠, he might do something else, in which case you would jump at the chance of bidding 4♠ yourself.

Examples 7 and 8 show how a simple overcall would react to a pre-emptive and a constructive raise:

|  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
|--|---|---------|-------|--|------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|----|--|--|--|---|--|---|---------|---|--|------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|----|--|--|--|---|
| <b>Ex 7.</b><br><table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W     E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table><br>♠ A Q 10 7 3<br>♥ 9 6<br>♦ A 9 7 4<br>♣ K 3   | N   | W     E | S     | <table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <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 style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">3♠</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">1♠</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> | West | North | East | South | Pass | 3♠ | Pass | 1♠ |  |  |  | ? | <b>Ex 8.</b><br><table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W     E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table><br>♠ A Q 10 7 3<br>♥ 9 6<br>♦ A 9 7 4<br>♣ K 3 | N | W     E | S | <table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <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 style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">2♦</td><td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td><td style="text-align: center;">1♠</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">?</td></tr> </table> | West | North | East | South | Pass | 2♦ | Pass | 1♠ |  |  |  | ? |
| N  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| W     E  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| S  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| West   | North   | East    | South |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| Pass   | 3♠  | Pass    | 1♠    |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
|  |   |         | ?     |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| N  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| W     E  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| S  |   |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| West   | North   | East    | South |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| Pass   | 2♦  | Pass    | 1♠    |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
|  |   |         | ?     |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |
| <p><b>Pass.</b> Partner's action is pre-emptive with four-card Spade support and limited values. It is not constructive in any way, and you are not being invited to the party. Yes, you are stronger than you might be for a simple overcall, but that just means you may make 3♠ rather than fail by a trick or two.</p> | <p>4♠ (or 3♦ if you want to be all scientific). You have a good hand for a 1♠ overcall and should be happy to play in game. Partner's bid shows constructive values rather than an obstructive hand, so you are entitled to bid on game. 3♦ might just lead to a superior 3NT contract, but 4♠ is the practical shot.</p> |         |       |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |  |   |         |   |  |      |       |      |       |      |    |      |    |  |  |  |   |

§54. Quiz A on The Contested Auction. The Law of Total Tricks

In each case you are **South**

What is your best bid after these contested auctions?

1.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♦   | 1♥    | Pass | ?     |

♠ K 7 4 2  
♥ K 10 8  
♦ J 8 4 2  
♣ J 10

2.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♣   | 1♠    | 2♦   | ?     |

♠ K 7 4 2  
♥ K 10 8  
♦ J 8 4 2  
♣ J 10

3.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Dble | ?     |

♠ J 10 9 6  
♥ 10  
♦ Q J 8 3  
♣ Q 9 7 6

4.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♠   | 2♦    | Pass | ?     |

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

5.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

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

6.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

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

7.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♥   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

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

8.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

♠ Q 7 6  
♥ 10 9 6  
♦ Q J 10 7 6 3  
♣ 9

9.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♠   | 2♥    | Pass | ?     |

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

10.\*

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| Pass | 2♠    | 1♦   | 1♠    |
|      |       | Dble | ?     |

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

## §54. Quiz A on The Contested Auction. The Law of Total Tricks

## Answers

1.

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

♠ K 7 4 2  
♥ K 10 8  
♦ J 8 4 2  
♣ J 10

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♦   | 1♥    | Pass | ?     |

2♥. With an eight-card Heart fit you must compete the auction, and you must do so to the eight-trick level, which is 2♥. Quite wrong to bid 1♠, which would deny Heart support and would show better Spades, and wrong to Pass, which would make it too easy for West.

2.

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

♠ K 7 4 2  
♥ K 10 8  
♦ J 8 4 2  
♣ J 10

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♠   | 1♠    | 2♦   | ?     |

3♣. Now, by contrast with Q1, you know of a nine-card Spade fit, so should be prepared to bid to the nine-trick level. East-West have shown decent hands, so you must do your utmost to get in their way and stop them from having an easy ride in the auction.

3.

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

♠ J 10 9 6  
♥ 10  
♦ Q J 8 3  
♣ Q 9 7 6

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Dble | ?     |

3♠. In similar vein to Q2, you should pre-empt as high as you dare as quickly as you can. Sure, 3♠ may fail, but the **Law of Total Tricks** will cushion your fall if you *steal the deal* and you go down. The more you go down, the more East-West could make (in Hearts).

4.

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

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

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♠   | 2♦    | Pass | ?     |

3♦. In reputable circles, a two-level overcall should be made on a six-card suit, or on a very good hand. Thus, you should raise the ante to 3♦, more as a defensive manoeuvre than any attempt to reach a good contract. 3♦ may irritate West, which is good for your side.

5.

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

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

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

4♠. The same principle applies as in Qs 1, 2 and 3. With a ten-card fit you should be prepared to bid 4♠ and there's no time like the present. Of course, 4♠ may fail, but that isn't the point. East-West have a fit in one suit or another; let them try to find it at the five-level.

6.

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

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

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

2♣. This hand is too good to risk bidding a defensive 2♣, a bid that partner is almost certain to Pass. For sure, game is far from certain but you're not in a position to write it off, either. If North bids 2♠ over this *cue-bid* you will respect that as a *sign-off* and Pass.

7.

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

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

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♥   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

2♥. This hand is far too good to bid a pre-emptive 3♠, a bid that would probably end the auction. Game is quite likely opposite this hand. Best is to make an *unassuming cue-bid* and then raise 2♠ to 3♠. If North bids anything other than 2♠, you'd bid 4♠ like a shot.

8.

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

♠ Q 7 6  
♥ 10 9 6  
♦ Q J 10 7 6 3  
♣ 9

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♣   | 1♠    | Pass | ?     |

2♠. You mustn't forget to bid here in support of partner. Yes, you only have 5 points, but you do have three trumps and a ruffing value (the singleton Club). What you can make is less important than what East-West can make; you must aim to make their lives difficult.

9.

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

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

|      |       |      |       |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♠   | 2♥    | Pass | ?     |

2♠. A two-level overcall should command respect (as distinct from a one-level overcall). With that in mind, this hand is worth a game try via an *unassuming cue-bid* of 2♠. If partner signs-off in 3♥ you will let it go; if he tries anything else you will be in game.

10.

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

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

|      |       |            |         |
|------|-------|------------|---------|
| West | North | East       | South   |
| Pass | 2♠    | 1♦<br>Dble | 1♠<br>? |

3♠. East has made a take-out Double, attempting to bring West into the game. To prevent West making a cheap bid, you should bid 3♠, protected by the **Law of Total Tricks**, as you know of a nine-card fit. West now either has to bid at the four-level or hold his peace.

§54. Quiz B on The Contested Auction. The Law of Total Tricks

In each case you are **South**

What is your best bid after these contested auctions?

1.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 2♣    | Pass | ?     |

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ Q J 7 2

2.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 3♣    | Pass | ?     |

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ Q J 7 2

3.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 2♦    | Pass | ?     |

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ Q J 7 2

4.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 2♦    | Pass | ?     |

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ 10 9 7 2

5.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♥    |
| Pass | 2♣    | Pass | ?     |

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

6.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♦    |
| Pass | 3♦    | Pass | ?     |

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

7.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♦    |
| Pass | 2♣    | Pass | ?     |

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

8.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♥    |
| Pass | 2♣    | Pass | ?     |

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

9.

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Dble | 3♣    | 4♥   | ?     |

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

10.\*

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Dble | 3♣    | 4♥   | ?     |

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

## §54. Quiz B on The Contested Auction. The Law of Total Tricks

## Answers

1.

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

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ Q J 7 2

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 2♣    | Pass | ?     |

**Pass.** Partner doesn't have very much – just three trumps – and is just trying to make the opponents' lives difficult. You have no reason to bid again and should be happy if you can *steal the deal* in 2♣. Even if East-West bid again, you do not intend to compete further.

2.

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

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ Q J 7 2

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 3♣    | Pass | ?     |

**Pass.** Partner is just pre-empting the auction with four-card Spade support and not much else. Don't make the mistake of bidding 4♣ on the grounds that you are much better than you might be for a one-level overcall. All that means is that, with luck, you may make 3♣.

3.

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

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ Q J 7 2

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 2♦    | Pass | ?     |

**4♣ (or 3♣).** Partner's *unassuming cue-bid* shows a decent raise in Spades and you have a decent hand for an overcall. You can either take the high road and bid game immediately or the low road and wring out a few more bids before arriving at the same destination.

4.

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

♠ A Q 10 5 3  
♥ A 6  
♦ 5 3  
♣ 10 9 7 2

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Pass | 2♦    | Pass | ?     |

**2♣.** Here, you have a minimum hand for a one-level overcall. It is a perfectly respectable 1♠ overcall, to be fair, but the prospects of game with this hand are somewhere between poor and terrible. With that in mind, you should sign off in 2♣ over partner's *cue-bid*.

5.

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

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♥    |
| Pass | 2♠    | Pass | ?     |

**3♥.** You have a fair hand for a two-level overcall, but no more than that; indeed there are some good players who would cavil at bidding on a 6-3-2-2 hand. With nothing more than you have already said, you should sign off in 3♥ and let nature take its course.

6.

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

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♦    |
| Pass | 3♦    | Pass | ?     |

**Pass.** 3♦ is not particularly encouraging; North is just showing some trump support and is probably trying to make East-West's lives more difficult. You have little to spare for a two-level overcall, so should rest content, delighted to *steal the deal* if 3♦ wins the auction.

7.

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

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♦    |
| Pass | 2♠    | Pass | ?     |

**3NT.** North has shown some muscle with his 2♠ *cue-bid* and you have the prospect of making a lot of tricks in No-trumps with your Spade stoppers and long Diamonds. Sure, you might get embarrassed if North is also short in Hearts – these things happen sometimes.

8.

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

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♠   | 2♥    |
| Pass | 2♠    | Pass | ?     |

**4♥.** You are not minimum for your two-level overcall (cf Q5) now that partner has suggested he can fill in your ropery suit. Also, it's a lot better to be 6-3-3-1 than 6-3-2-2 as the latter often has too many losers. You should bid game here, fully expecting to make it.

9.

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

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Dble | 3♠    | 4♥   | ?     |

**Pass.** You have insufficient trumps (only nine) to bid 4♠, a contract that you should not expect to make. 4♥ has been bid under pressure, so may well not make, and it is an error to "sacrifice" in a contract when you are not sure that the enemy can make their contract.

10.

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

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

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
|      |       | 1♦   | 1♠    |
| Dble | 3♠    | 4♥   | ?     |

**4♠.** Now, by contrast with Q9, you know of a ten-card Spade fit. On that basis, you should "take the save" in 4♠. You are unlikely to make it, but are protected by the **Law of Total Tricks**, which suggests that the more you fail, the more tricks East-West could make in 4♥.

## §54. Example hands 1 to 4.

**Hand 1** Love all, dealer North

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

|            |              |                  |                |
|------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|
| West       | North        | East             | South          |
| 1♥         | Pass<br>Dble | Pass<br>3♥       | 1♣<br>All Pass |
| 3♥ by West |              | Opening lead: ♠K |                |

South opens 1♣ in third seat and West has a normal 1♥ overcall. North makes a negative Double and now it's up to East. With a known nine-card Heart fit, he should be prepared to compete to the nine-trick level. Rather than allow North-South to get together and discuss what they have, East puts on the pressure with a pre-emptive jump to 3♥. This puts South in a spot. He might bid 3♠ now (he knows of a 4-4 Spade fit, after all) but that might be exchanging a plus score for a minus score. Also, it might give North the idea that the South hand is stronger than it is, with the result that North raises to a hopeless 4♠. South probably Passes, then, allowing East-West to *steal the deal* in 3♥. Careful play nets nine tricks.

**Hand 2** North-South game, dealer East

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

|             |       |                  |          |
|-------------|-------|------------------|----------|
| West        | North | East             | South    |
| 1♠          | 2♥    | Pass<br>2♣       | 1♥<br>3♥ |
| 3♥ by South |       | Opening lead: ♠A |          |

This deal shows a typically competitive auction with North-South pushed overboard. West has nowhere near an opening bid but the overcall of 1♠ is a routine effort. North has a natural raise to 2♥ and East must not forget to turn the screw by supporting his partner's Spades. On this type of deal, it's a heads-you-win-tails-they-lose position. If 2♣ *steals the deal* and goes down then 2♥ must surely have been making, so the loss would be minimal – in fact it's an effective gain. Here, South is unlikely to sit for 2♣, he is almost sure to take the push to 3♥. Right in principle, but 3♥ cannot make if East-West sit tight and defend accurately. Eventually, South should lose two Spades, two Diamonds and a Club.

**Hand 3** East-West game, dealer South

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

|             |            |                  |            |
|-------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| West        | North      | East             | South      |
| 1♥<br>Pass? | 1♠<br>Pass | 2♥<br>Pass       | Pass<br>3♠ |
| 3♠ by North |            | Opening lead: ♣Q |            |

Hands 3 and 4 provide an interesting contrast. West opens 1♥, North overcalls 1♠ and East raises to 2♥. South now puts the cat amongst the pigeons with a pre-emptive jump to 3♠ and West is stuck. He may feel frustrated that the hand clearly belongs to his side but there isn't much he can do about it; going on to 4♥ would turn a plus score into a minus score. All he can do is to bite his lip and Pass. After East decides to lead the ♣Q rather than a Heart, East-West should take three Clubs, a Diamond, a Heart and maybe a trump trick. Two off would be 100 points to East-West and honour satisfied for both sides. 4♥, though, would fail for sure on this layout.

**Hand 4** Game all, dealer West

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

|            |             |                  |            |
|------------|-------------|------------------|------------|
| West       | North       | East             | South      |
| Pass<br>3♠ | 1♥<br>Pass? | 1♠<br>Pass       | 2♥<br>Pass |
| 3♠ by East |             | Opening lead: ♥2 |            |

You may note the similarity between the North cards here and the West cards of Hand 3. The bidding starts the same way, too: North opens 1♥, East overcalls 1♠, South raises to 2♥ and West, knowing of a nine-card Spade fit, raises to the nine-trick level by bidding 3♠. North is now on the spot, forced to guess whether to take a punt at 4♥ or to Pass. Here, it is right to bid as North-South can make 4♥ with ease – on Hand 3 it was right to Pass. Over a gentle 2♠ raise, North might have tried 3♦, but 3♠ removes his breathing space. If East-West *steal the deal* in 3♠ they go one down for a loss of 100 points – a mere fleabite. All pre-emptive bids make your opponents guess – and they don't always make the right choice.



## §54. Example hands 5 to 8.

**Hand 5** North-South game, dealer North

| <p>♠ 2<br/>♥ K J 10 6 5 3<br/>♦ K Q 7<br/>♣ K J 9</p>   | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>S</td></tr> </table> | N  |          | E    | W     |      | S     | <p>♠ A K 9 8 6<br/>♥ A Q 8 4<br/>♦ J 5 2<br/>♣ 3</p> |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
|---|---|--|----------|------|-------|------|-------|--|----|----|------|----|------|----|----------|------------|--|------------------|--|
| N   |   | E  |          |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
| W   |   | S  |          |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
| <p>♠ Q 10 7 5<br/>♥ 7 2<br/>♦ A 9 8 6<br/>♣ A 8 5</p>   |   | <p>♠ J 4 3<br/>♥ 9<br/>♦ 10 4 3<br/>♣ Q 10 7 6 4 2</p> |          |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>1♥</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♠</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">4♠ by East</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Opening lead: ♥9</td> </tr> </table> |   |  |          | West | North | East | South |  | 1♥ | 1♠ | Pass | 2♥ | Pass | 4♠ | All Pass | 4♠ by East |  | Opening lead: ♥9 |  |
| West  | North   | East   | South    |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
|   | 1♥  | 1♠   | Pass     |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
| 2♥  | Pass  | 4♠   | All Pass |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |
| 4♠ by East  |   | Opening lead: ♥9                                       |          |      |       |      |       |  |    |    |      |    |      |    |          |            |  |                  |  |

This deal is presented to illustrate *constructive* (or game-try) raises as distinct from *pre-emptive* (or obstructive) raises. In Hands 1, 3 and 4 a jump to the three level in support of an overcall was used to attempt to *steal the deal*. The overcaller was not being invited to bid again – quite the reverse. Here, though, the responder to an overcaller has a decent hand and does not want to put his partner off – what can he do? The answer is to make an *unassuming cue-bid*, which means bid the opponents' suit. North opens 1♥, East overcalls 1♠ and West wants to make a genuine raise in Spades. To do this he bids 2♥, not 3♠. Getting the message, East is happy to bid game as he has a good hand for a one-level overcall.

**Hand 6** East-West game, dealer East

| <p>♠ Q J 8 3<br/>♥ 9<br/>♦ J 4 2<br/>♣ Q 9 7 6 4</p>   | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>S</td></tr> </table> | N  |          | E    | W     |      | S     | <p>♠ 7 2<br/>♥ A 10 8 6<br/>♦ A Q 8 7 5<br/>♣ A K</p> |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
|--|---|--|----------|------|-------|------|-------|---|--|----|----|------|----|-------|----------|-------------|--|-------------------|--|
| N  |   | E  |          |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
| W  |   | S  |          |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
| <p>♠ 10<br/>♥ K J 7 4 2<br/>♦ 10 9 3<br/>♣ 10 5 3 2</p>  |   | <p>♠ A K 9 6 5 4<br/>♥ Q 5 3<br/>♦ K 6<br/>♣ J 8</p> |          |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> <td>1♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠</td> <td>Pass?</td> <td>All Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">3♠ by South</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Opening lead: ♦10</td> </tr> </table> |   |  |          | West | North | East | South |   |  | 1♦ | 1♠ | Pass | 3♠ | Pass? | All Pass | 3♠ by South |  | Opening lead: ♦10 |  |
| West   | North   | East   | South    |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
|  |   | 1♦   | 1♠       |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
| Pass   | 3♠  | Pass?  | All Pass |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |
| 3♠ by South  |   | Opening lead: ♦10                                    |          |      |       |      |       |   |  |    |    |      |    |       |          |             |  |                   |  |

This is the fourth hand where a player manages to *steal the deal* for his side with a pre-emptive jump. East opens 1♦, South has plenty for a 1♠ overcall and West has nothing to say. Now, North should attempt to make East's life a misery by jumping to 3♠. What can East do, effectively at the four-level? Bidding is a huge gamble, but one that would pay off as East-West could make 4♥. If East Passes, South should Pass and rest content. Yes, he knows of a ten-card Spade fit, but he should only bid 4♠ if forced to do so as North is not bidding 3♠ constructively. If East-West did bid 4♥ then South would certainly "take the save" in 4♠, especially at this vulnerability, expecting it to be cheaper than conceding 4♥.

**Hand 7** Game All, dealer South

| <p>♠ 5 4<br/>♥ J 8 7 5 4<br/>♦ A 10<br/>♣ 9 5 4 2</p>   | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>S</td></tr> </table> | N   |       | E    | W     |      | S     | <p>♠ Q 7 6<br/>♥ Q 3<br/>♦ 9 4<br/>♣ Q 10 8 7 6 3</p> |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
|---|---|---|-------|------|-------|------|-------|---|--|--|----|----|------|----|-------|------|------|--|--|------------|--|------------------|--|
| N   |   | E   |       |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
| W   |   | S   |       |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
| <p>♠ K J 10 9 3<br/>♥ K 9<br/>♦ J 6 5 2<br/>♣ K J</p>   |   | <p>♠ A 8 2<br/>♥ A 10 6 2<br/>♦ K Q 8 7 3<br/>♣ A</p> |       |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♠</td> <td>Pass?</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">2♠ by West</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Opening lead: ♦A</td> </tr> </table> |   |   |       | West | North | East | South |   |  |  | 1♦ | 1♠ | Pass | 2♠ | Pass? | Pass | Pass |  |  | 2♠ by West |  | Opening lead: ♦A |  |
| West  | North   | East  | South |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
|   |   |   | 1♦    |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
| 1♠  | Pass  | 2♠  | Pass? |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
| Pass  | Pass  |   |       |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |
| 2♠ by West  |   | Opening lead: ♦A                                      |       |      |       |      |       |   |  |  |    |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |  |            |  |                  |  |

Hands 7 and 8 provide an interesting contrast. South opens 1♥ and West overcalls 1♠. North has nothing to say and East mustn't waste the chance to raise the ante to 2♠. What now, South? This is a horrible problem, with no obvious solution. If you Pass, East-West will *steal the deal* at the two-level, either making or failing by a trick. Whatever, it will hardly compensate North-South for the fact that they can make 4♥. South might try 3♥ over 2♠, but that is a wild gamble – what if North should hate Hearts? The partnership would be up a creek without a paddle, poised for a possibly disastrous result. Even such a mild 2♠ raise can cause considerable problems.

**Hand 8** Love all, dealer West

| <p>♠ K J 10 9 3<br/>♥ K 9<br/>♦ J 6 5 2<br/>♣ K 4</p>   | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>S</td></tr> </table> | N   |       | E    | W     |      | S     | <p>♠ 5 4<br/>♥ 7 4 3<br/>♦ A 4<br/>♣ Q 10 8 7 6 3</p> |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
|---|---|---|-------|------|-------|------|-------|---|----|------|----|-------|------|------|--|-------------|--|------------------|--|
| N   |   | E   |       |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
| W   |   | S   |       |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
| <p>♠ A 8 2<br/>♥ A 10 6 2<br/>♦ K Q 8 7 3<br/>♣ A</p>   |   | <p>♠ Q 7 6<br/>♥ Q J 8 5<br/>♦ 10 9<br/>♣ J 9 5 2</p> |       |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td>1♦</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass?</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">2♠ by North</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">Opening lead: ♦A</td> </tr> </table> |   |   |       | West | North | East | South | 1♦  | 1♠ | Pass | 2♠ | Pass? | Pass | Pass |  | 2♠ by North |  | Opening lead: ♦A |  |
| West  | North   | East  | South |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
| 1♦  | 1♠  | Pass  | 2♠    |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
| Pass?   | Pass  | Pass  |       |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |
| 2♠ by North   |   | Opening lead: ♦A                                      |       |      |       |      |       |   |    |      |    |       |      |      |  |             |  |                  |  |

You may note the similarity between the West cards here and the South cards of Hand 7. The bidding starts the same way, too: West opens 1♦, North overcalls 1♠, East Passes and South makes a gentle raise to 2♠. Whither now, West? On this layout (by contrast to Hand 7) East-West can make little and probably do best to defend 2♠. Certainly, a foray into 3♥ would spell disaster, the more so if North-South could Double. These competitive deals can be difficult to judge, and the message should be clear. By supporting partner immediately to the appropriate level, you can create problems for the opposition. The aim is to make the opponents guess – the more they are forced to guess, the less they will get right.