

ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need

Wednesday 12th November 2025



Together we can ...

... and by competing in this Simultaneous Pairs you have once again certainly shown that **together we can indeed do something to help make a difference** to children who really need our help. Over the past years we (well you) have helped raise an amazing **£1,414,707.44** ... hopefully can add a good bit more to that this year, we are so close to one and half million -WOW!

Thank you so so much for coming along and joining in, playing and donating – please don't forget the donating bit though, will you – just go to :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp>

and you will see how you can do it – if you haven't already done so of course!

Our thanks, as always, go to our commentators: Mark Horton for his words of wisdom on Tuesday and Thursday, Brian Senior did the analysis for the Monday session and Julian Pottage completes the crew, writing up the Wednesday and Friday events. It's always interesting to see if they got it right but you will have discovered that by now of course !

With very best wishes

Anna & Mark – the ECatsBridge Team

Board 1	♠ 106	Dealer N	
	♥ KQ643	Vul: None	
	♦ 2		
	♣ AQ1053		
♠ J42		♠ AQ3	
♥ A5		♥ 87	
♦ AJ108		♦ Q6543	
♣ J962		♣ 874	
	♠ K9875		
	♥ J1092		
	♦ K97		
	♣ K		
West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

After South makes a limit raise, North goes on to game holding considerable extra playing strength despite being minimum in terms of high cards. Those using the losing trick count would value the North hand as five or five and a half losers, significantly better than a minimum opening bid, which typically has seven losers.

Although the North-South hands do not fit particularly well, with the ♦K facing a singleton for example, the fact that the ♠A is onside means that 4♥ makes. If the defenders do not make their diamond trick at trick one, they have a further chances to do so when in with their major suit aces, so normally no overtrick results.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

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Board 2 ♠ J854 Dealer E
 ♥ 95 Vul: N-S
 ♦ AKQJ1065
 ♣

♠ A72 ♠ K10
 ♥ A102 ♥ 764
 ♦ 4 ♦ 9873
 ♣ AK10975 ♣ Q632

♠ Q963
 ♥ KQJ83
 ♦ 2
 ♣ J84

West	North	East	South
1 ♣	3 ♦	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass
		4 ♣	All Pass

If a 3♣ overcall (jump cue bid) says 'please bid 3NT if you have a club stopper' then an aggressive North might do that. Seeing only seven tricks and with hearts wide open, such an action would be too much for me.

Once North overcalls 3♦, West, holding a singleton diamond and with good controls and tolerance for both majors, is delighted to reopen with a double. Indeed, given the vulnerability, it would be reasonable to hope to that East has the right hand for leaving in the double – but not with a trump suit of 9-x-x-x.

4♣ should make exactly with two hearts and a diamond to lose. South just needs (i) to resist the temptation to make a flamboyant discard like the ♥K if there is more than one round of diamonds played and (ii) to remember to split honours if the first heart lead comes from dummy.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3 ♠ Q8764 Dealer S
 ♥ AQJ104 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 97
 ♣ 4

♠ 5 ♠ J10
 ♥ 75 ♥ 98
 ♦ KJ642 ♦ Q5
 ♣ AKQ96 ♣ J1087532

♠ AK932
 ♥ K632
 ♦ A1083
 ♣

West	North	East	South
			1 ♠
2NT	4 ♣	5 ♣	5 ♦
Pass	5 ♥	Pass	6 ♠
All Pass			

After West's not so unusual 2NT overcall to show both minors, North may be able to choose between a 4♥ fit-showing jump and a 4♣ splinter. From South's viewpoint after the latter, the club shortage opposite is good news and bad news: the good is the lack of wasted club values while the bad is the duplication of distribution. Passing over 5♣ (forcing since 4♣ created a game force) is one option but the 5♦ cue bid more clearly conveys slam ambitions.

Whether spades or hearts are trumps, there is an unavoidable diamond loser.

At any other vulnerability East-West would have a profitable sacrifice in 7♣ doubled. As it is, 1100 is more expensive than 980.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4 ♠ AQ864 Dealer W
 ♥ A972 Vul: Both
 ♦ 973
 ♣ 10

♠ K10 ♠ 72
 ♥ J1065 ♥ KQ843
 ♦ AK6 ♦ 4
 ♣ 9654 ♣ AJ732

♠ J953
 ♥
 ♦ QJ10852
 ♣ KQ8

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	2♦
3♦	Dble	3♥	All Pass

Although South has only 9 point in high cards, the good shape and decent suit act in favour of making an overcall. After West shows a sound heart raise (with the 3♦ cue bid), North needs to take some action. 3♠ would push the bidding to the four level if South does not like spades. It should probably be a fit non-jump as how could a hand not worth a 2♠ or 3♠ opening otherwise justify such a bid?

If South leads the ♦Q against 3♥, declarer can get a spade away on a top diamond but the defenders should (because of the 4-0 trump break) still defeat the contract via a forcing game. Only an initial club lead allows 3♥ to make.

3♠ makes for North-South, the losers being three cards in the minors and, if the defenders play diamonds before losing the lead, a diamond ruff.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 5 ♠ A943 Dealer N
 ♥ AJ65 Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ QJ2

♠ KQ85 ♠ J762
 ♥ K74 ♥ 10832
 ♦ K76 ♦ 543
 ♣ K85 ♣ A10

♠ 10
 ♥ Q9
 ♦ A10982
 ♣ 97643

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	INT	
All Pass			

Playing four-card majors and a weak no-trump, South gets to declare INT after a suit opening from North.

If a strong no-trump is in use, North probably plays in INT, though some pairs will have a means of escape from INT on the South hand. If you play four-suit transfers, you could respond 2NT with the intention to pass either 3♣ (denying diamond support) or 3♦ (showing diamond support).

After a spade lead, the defenders can easily score three spades, a diamond and two clubs against INT, thus stopping any overtricks. If East leads a heart at trick one, they must be on their toes to score all those tricks.

North-South fare better in a suit contract, with just two top clubs and a diamond to lose if clubs are trumps, a club ruff in addition if diamonds are trumps.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 6 ♠ K84 Dealer E
 ♥ A8 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AKQ754
 ♣ K7

♠ Q65 ♠ Aj
 ♥ KQ1042 ♥ J6
 ♦ ♦ J983
 ♣ A10654 ♣ J9832

♠ 109732
 ♥ 9753
 ♦ 1062
 ♣ Q

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♥	2♦	Pass	Pass
Dble	Rdbl	3♣	3♦
4♣	All Pass		

North is rather heavy for a 2♦ overcall and may well start with a double – if you do double, you are committed to bidding 3NT or 4♦ if East jump raises to 3♥. As the cards lie, the bidding would not get very high after a double. East would bid 1NT and West would rebid 2♣.

A club contract plays very well. Declarer can ruff the initial diamond, lay down the ♣A and knock out the ♥A. After this start it is not even necessary to rely on the location of the ♠K.

In a diamond contract the defenders get five tricks (two in spades and one in each other suit). They might score a third spade trick if declarer gets to dummy by ruffing the winning ♣K and leads a spade to the king.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7 ♠ KQ Dealer S
 ♥ Q1098 Vul: Both
 ♦ J10
 ♣ KQ1074

♠ 974 ♠ A10632
 ♥ AKJ742 ♥ 5
 ♦ A ♦ K8643
 ♣ 852 ♣ J3

♠ J85
 ♥ 63
 ♦ Q9752
 ♣ A96

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♥	2♣	Dble	3♣
3♥	All Pass		

While North does not have the greatest hand, it rarely pays to sit there quietly passing throughout. If North did not overcall, East would respond 1♠ and West would play in 2♥ (holding six good hearts and three small spades, raising 1♠ to 2♠ would be somewhat extreme).

3♥ could fail by as many as three tricks if the defenders manage both to knockout the ♠A before declarer has unblocked the diamonds and prevent a club ruff. Often they will drop one trick, allowing declarer to make seven in all.

2♠ makes so long as declarer does not run into too much of a defensive cross-ruff, North ruffing diamonds and South ruffing hearts.

3♣ fails by a trick with five top losers.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8 ♠ 107 Dealer W
 ♥ AQ9762 Vul: None
 ♦ AKQ5
 ♣ 5

♠ Q96 ♠ K853
 ♥ J1085 ♥ 43
 ♦ 10 ♦ J8642
 ♣ KQJ32 ♣ A6

♠ AJ42
 ♥ K
 ♦ 973
 ♣ 109874

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♣	3♥	All Pass	

West takes advantage of being a passed hand to make a lead-directing 2♣ overcall. North might show the diamonds but it is tempting, especially at matchpoints, to stress the heart suit.

In a heart contract the defenders should collect one trick in each suit. They might lose their slow diamond winner if East fails to cover the ♠10 with the ♠K as then a finesse of the ♠J on the second round of spades would allow declarer to discard a diamond on the ♠A. They might also lose a trick if West ruffs a losing diamond after East's ♣A entry has gone.

Making nine tricks with diamonds as trumps is trickier, though possible because South can overruff any diamond other than the jack that East might use for ruffing a heart.

A no-trump contract yields eight tricks, with seven top winners and one in the wash.

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

Board 9 ♠ 1073 Dealer N
 ♥ QJ1074 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 9
 ♣ AQ84

♠ AJ9 ♠ KQ852
 ♥ A95 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q85 ♦ A10643
 ♣ 10932 ♣ J6

♠ 64
 ♥ K632
 ♦ KJ72
 ♣ K75

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	2♥	Pass	3♥
3♠	All Pass		

As a passed hand, North is well worth making a 2♥ overcall. If East-West play some sort of Bergen raises that mean North would have to bid at the three level if wishing to enter the auction, it is less clear. One way or another East-West are likely to finish in 3♠.

So long as South does not lead a diamond, 3♠ should make exactly. The defenders take two tricks in each minor (or if declarer tries to ruff a diamond in dummy, they get two clubs, a diamond and a ruff).

North-South can make 3♥ with just four top tricks to lose.

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

Board 10 ♠ 3 Dealer E
 ♥ A983 Vul: Both
 ♦ AKQ2
 ♣ AJ102

♠ AK62 ♠ J954
 ♥ J74 ♥ K
 ♦ 864 ♦ J10975
 ♣ 973 ♣ KQ4

♠ Q1087
 ♥ Q10652
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 865

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	Pass	Pass
2♠	Dble	Dble	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	3♥
		All Pass	

North might open one of any suit except spades! South will surely raise if North opens 1♥ and will probably respond 1♥ in an attempt to improve the contract if North opens 1♦. Once South shows any sign of life, North will want to play in game. The only concern is that South might have raised hearts with three trumps, in which case it could be better to play in a minor, hence the double of 2♠ to give South the chance for further description.

With careful play declarer can make an overtrick in 4♥, just losing one trick in each major. There is no club loser because two of South's clubs can go on the diamonds; a cross-ruff then does the rest. It should not even matter if West gets to overruff on the fourth round of diamonds because North can eventually make a long club.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11 ♠ 10863 Dealer S
 ♥ 87 Vul: None
 ♦ A652
 ♣ 853

♠ Q7 ♠ J42
 ♥ A102 ♥ KQ54
 ♦ KQJ974 ♦ 3
 ♣ 74 ♣ AQJ109

♠ AK95
 ♥ J963
 ♦ 108
 ♣ K62

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Reaching 3NT is a delicate matter because neither East nor West has a full spade stopper. They need to figure out that each of them has a half stopper, which the fourth suit forcing auction illustrated probably does.

How should the play go in 3NT after a spade lead? Unless declarer is mistakenly convinced that spades are 5-3, playing on diamonds is more attractive than playing on clubs for two reasons. The first is that if the club finesse fails then you would go an extra one down. The second is that unless the ♠Q scores (or you risk finessing the ♥10) there will be only one entry to dummy for taking a club finesse. As the cards lie, with the diamonds friendly (♦10 doubleton, or a 3-3 break would be just as good) and spades 4-4, 3NT scrapes home.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12 ♠ 7 Dealer W
 ♥ AK642 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 10753
 ♣ A107

♠ Q943 ♠ AK2
 ♥ J5 ♥ Q873
 ♦ AKQJ64 ♦ 98
 ♣ 9 ♣ KJ83

♠ J10865
 ♥ 109
 ♦ 2
 ♣ Q6542

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	3NT	All Pass

The straightforward auction shown should be a common one. At some tables East will bid 2♣ on the first round and then rebid 3NT over West's 2♦.

With North having bid hearts, South should lead the ♥10 against 3NT. North does best to win the first heart and switch to a low club. If declarer guesses wrongly, inserting the ♣J playing North for the ♣Q rather than the ♣A, the defenders can take four tricks to stop the overtrick.

If South leads the ♠J, declarer makes ten tricks without having to guess the clubs because there will be a marked finesse on the third round of spades.

If South leads a club, North winning and returning the suit, declarer might make 11 tricks because South has a lot of discards to find on the run of the diamonds.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13 ♠ 4 Dealer N
 ♥ AK10982 Vul: Both
 ♦ AQJ3
 ♣ A3

♠ 10875 ♠ AQJ92
 ♥ 53 ♥ 76
 ♦ 8752 ♦ 106
 ♣ Q82 ♣ K975

♠ K63
 ♥ QJ4
 ♦ K94
 ♣ J1064

West	North	East	South
	1♥	1♠	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

North has a really good hand, which for some might be a Benjamin 2♣ opening. After the more popular 1♥ opening and two-level response, a simple change of rebid should be forcing. Once South shows some heart support, North is worth a cue bid of 3♠ but respects South's sign off.

A club lead, not so easy to find if South has bid the suit, is the only one to stop twelve tricks in a heart contract, or indeed in a no-trump (or diamond!) contract.

A sacrifice in 4♠ doubled would prove too expensive even if declarer sniffs out North's doubleton ace of clubs, thus losing one trick in each black suit and two in each red suit.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14 ♠ Q8 Dealer E
 ♥ AJ107 Vul: None
 ♦ KQ92
 ♣ A65

♠ A1074 ♠ 962
 ♥ Q86 ♥ 32
 ♦ 876 ♦ AJ543
 ♣ KQ9 ♣ J43

♠ KJ53
 ♥ K954
 ♦ 10
 ♣ 10872

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Playing four-card majors and a weak no-trump, North-South easily locate their heart fit. If a strong no-trump is in use, 1NT might well be the final contract because typical strong no-trump players do not have many weak Stayman options.

An initial club lead holds a heart contract to nine tricks even if declarer takes the winning view in trumps because the defenders get to score two tricks in clubs to go with their two aces. J-x-x is not my favourite lead and probably is not top choice for other players, so quite often declarer will have a shot at ten tricks.

A normal fourth highest diamond lead would allow declarer potentially to make nine tricks in a no-trump contract by means of two tricks in each pointed suit, four hearts and a club.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15 ♠ 1086432 Dealer S
 ♥ AQ Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ8
 ♣ QJ

♠ 9 ♠ K
 ♥ 108543 ♥ J76
 ♦ 1095 ♦ K643
 ♣ K843 ♣ 107652

♠ AQJ75
 ♥ K92
 ♦ A72
 ♣ A9

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

North's 2NT response shows a game-forcing spade raise. With a nice 18 points – good spades and good controls, it will be difficult to keep South out of a slam, the lack of a minor suit cue bid from North notwithstanding.

With South as declarer, 6♠ is a pretty good spot – better than needing two out of three finesses because West will often make a helpful lead. For example, on a club lead, declarer could enjoy the free finesse, cash the ♠A and eliminate the rounded suits for a possible throw in. The slam would only fail if East had ♠K-x and West the ♦K.

On the actual layout, a club lead allows an overtrick. A diamond lead, if East covers, would also allow 13 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	3	1	6	6
S	2	4	2	6	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 16 ♠ K92 Dealer W
 ♥ 86 Vul: E-W
 ♦ KJ964
 ♣ A53

♠ Q653 ♠ AJ1074
 ♥ Q753 ♥ J92
 ♦ A832 ♦ 10
 ♣ 7 ♣ K1064

♠ 8
 ♥ AK104
 ♦ Q75
 ♣ QJ982

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
All Pass			

At favourable vulnerability and upgrading the hand for the five-card suit, North might well open a weak 1NT. South will do well, after failing to locate a four-card major in the North hand, merely to invite game. The singleton spade is a worry when North has denied a four-card major, though the club suit looks like it is worth more than 3 points.

If North-South does not open then there is no danger of reaching game – but the deal may be a pass-out, South taking a dim view of the singleton spade in fourth suit.

If East does not lead a spade and West switches to the ♣Q when in with the ♦A, the defenders can hold a no-trump contract to seven tricks – but those are two big ‘ifs’!

If a minor suit is trumps, declarer can make nine tricks losing two aces, the ♣K and one other trick.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 17 ♠ A754 Dealer N
 ♥ AQ Vul: None
 ♦ KJ2
 ♣ Q1092

♠ Q86 ♠ K10932
 ♥ KJ953 ♥ 6
 ♦ 1083 ♦ AQ95
 ♣ 65 ♣ AJ7

♠ J
 ♥ 108742
 ♦ 764
 ♣ K843

West	North	East	South
	1♠	All Pass	

Playing four-card majors and a weak no-trump does not work very well on this deal because North probably opens 1♠ and South is too weak to respond. Neither East nor West has a good reason to disturb this, West being too weak to act and East holding too many spades to do so.

Those playing a strong no-trump might or might not fare a bit better because then East would enter the auction, playing in 2♠.

With spades as trumps, East-West can make four tricks in each pointed suit as well as the ♣A. It may be easier to achieve this when they can see their combined assets (declaring) than when they cannot (defending). North-South will need to play on spades to stop West from ruffing a club.

North can make eight tricks with clubs as trumps, shutting West off lead and eventually obliging East to open up the diamonds.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 18 ♠ 108432 Dealer E
 ♥ QJ5 Vul: N-S
 ♦ KQJ108
 ♣

♠ AKQ9 ♠ J75
 ♥ K102 ♥ A864
 ♦ 97 ♦ A53
 ♣ A642 ♣ QJ8

♠ 6
 ♥ 973
 ♦ 642
 ♣ K109753

West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
2♣	2♦	2♥	Pass
3♦	Pass	3NT	All Pass

North's diamonds are so good that it is going to be worth risking a 2♦ overcall despite the unfavourable vulnerability. West will worry slightly about the diamonds for a no-trump contract, though East has a fair stopper. Although A-x-x is only a single stopper, the ability to hold up the ace makes it better cover than a slower holding.

The East-Wests who worry most about the diamonds can play in one of their 'Moysian' 4-3 fits in the majors. While the spade holding is more solid, the facts that the spades break badly and that any diamond ruffs will be in the short hand if hearts are trumps but in the long hand with spades as trumps mean that a heart contract plays better.

Scoring ten tricks is easiest with hearts as trumps. Doing so in no-trumps requires a rather inspired line of winning the first diamond, then catching North in a strip squeeze and South in a simple squeeze. Most in 3NT will not score an overtrick.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 19 ♠ 9 Dealer S
 ♥ A832 Vul: E-W
 ♦ K2
 ♣ QJ10962

♠ K75 ♠ AQ42
 ♥ KQJ54 ♥ 96
 ♦ J10843 ♦ AQ95
 ♣ ♣ A54

♠ J10863
 ♥ 107
 ♦ 76
 ♣ K873

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♥	2♣	Dble	3♣
3♦	Pass	6♦	All Pass

After the natural opening and overcall, East doubles to bring a possible 4-4 spade into the equation. When in fact West introduces the diamonds, doing so despite having to bid at the three level to do so, East senses a slam. There are slower ways to get there – but it would be very difficult to bid a grand slam with confidence so East simply bids the small slam. As it happens, those who take the auction more slowly, thereby finding that West holds zero key cards, may well stop at the five level.

In the play, with the ♦K as expected with the overcaller, 6♦ makes.

Because 6♦ bid and made scores 1370, losing 1400 in 7♣ doubled would not be a good idea for North-South. Possibly North (thinking that the ♦K over the opening bidder is probably a trick) will double 6♦ to ensure that South does not bid 7♣ – oops!

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	6	5	4	3
W	-	6	5	4	3

=====

Board 20 ♠ AQ108 Dealer W
 ♥ KQJ3 Vul: Both
 ♦ J1073
 ♣ 6

♠ KJ5	♠ 974
♥ 9	♥ 10874
♦ A85	♦ K94
♣ KQ9742	♣ J83

♠ 632
 ♥ A652
 ♦ Q62
 ♣ A105

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dble	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

North has a textbook takeout double after West opens 1♣. South, holding 10 points in high cards, is too strong for a simple 1♥, hence the jump to 2♥.

Although the hearts break 4-1, the rest of the distribution is highly favourable, with the ♠K and ♠J onside. The defenders do best to try to force the North hand to ruff clubs; declarer needs to set up a diamond trick before North still has trumps.

In a no-trump contract, there is no time to set up any diamond tricks but the fortuitous spade position makes it possible to score four tricks in the suit for nine in all.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 21 ♠ K87 Dealer N
 ♥ QJ1032 Vul: N-S
 ♦ AJ8
 ♣ Q7

♠ 96543	♠ J102
♥ 65	♥ 984
♦ 32	♦ Q10764
♣ A852	♣ K6

♠ AQ
 ♥ AK7
 ♦ K95
 ♣ J10943

West	North	East	South
	INT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

With values in all four suits and the no-trump orientated soft club holding, North probably opens a weak INT if that option is available. South has a comfortable raise to game but not really enough to look for a slam. Perfect cards in the North hand, for example ♠J-x-x-x, the ♦A and ♣A-K-Q-x would make a slam excellent – but it rarely pays to go looking for just the right hand.

Having North has the closed hand means that the defenders cannot set up diamond tricks before declarer has time to knock out the ace-king of clubs successfully. Eleven tricks thus result.

In any of the plausible suit contracts, the option to discard a diamond on the ♠K means that eleven tricks are available whether North or South declares.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22 ♠ QJ53 Dealer E
 ♥ 42 Vul: E-W
 ♦ QJ7
 ♣ AK52

♠ A9 ♠ K76
 ♥ QJ53 ♥ A76
 ♦ A542 ♦ 986
 ♣ 1063 ♣ QJ87

♠ 10842
 ♥ K1098
 ♦ K103
 ♣ 94

West	North	East	South
Pass	INT	Pass	Pass
Pass	INT	All Pass	

If North-South play a weak INT opening then a INT opening by North is quite likely to be the only positive action on the deal. It is also possible that South will use Stayman if a 2♥ rebid after a 2♦ denial would show a weak hand with both majors and give North the option to correct to 2♠.

Those North-South pairs playing a strong no-trump may still miss their spade fit if North opens 1♣ and then rebids INT after a 1♥ response. One way they might find their spade fit is if they play transfer responses to a 1♣ opening, allowing South to respond 1♦ and then rebid 1♠ after North completes the transfer with 1♥.

In a spade contract declarer can make two natural trump tricks, two tricks in each minor, one heart and a ruff somewhere.

A no-trump contract fares far less well because the defenders have the head-start with the opening lead, giving them time to make two clubs, three hearts and their top winners in the pointed suits to defeat INT by two tricks.

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

=====

Board 23 ♠ 985 Dealer S
 ♥ J1085 Vul: Both
 ♦ 10762
 ♣ A2

♠ K10 ♠ J743
 ♥ 432 ♥ AK76
 ♦ QJ43 ♦ K8
 ♣ QJ54 ♣ 863

♠ AQ62
 ♥ Q9
 ♦ A95
 ♣ K1097

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♠	All Pass	1♠

Even playing four-card majors, it is usual to raise a major suit opening with three-card support and a ruffing value (if you respond at all). Perhaps with the 10-loser hand North should pass 1♠.

If North-South play a strong no-trump, South opens INT and plays there.

2♠ stands a chance of making. Indeed in theory West needs to lead a low diamond to beat it. In practice, even if declarer manages to dispose of a diamond loser on the hearts, the defenders may emerge with six tricks.

West might start with a low club against INT, which enables declarer to score a cheap extra third club trick. If the lead is less helpful and the ♠Q captures the ♠K, INT is quite likely to fail.

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

=====

Board 24 ♠ AQ84 Dealer W
 ♥ AQ972 Vul: None
 ♦ 32
 ♣ K8

♠ KJ65 ♠ 1072
 ♥ J4 ♥ K6
 ♦ AKQ98 ♦ J6
 ♣ Q4 ♣ J109632

♠ 93
 ♥ 10853
 ♦ 10754
 ♣ A75

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

These days it is usual when holding a five-card and a four-major to start with a simple overcall rather than a takeout double – partner often does not find out about the fifth card in your long suit if you start with a double. South might raise hearts immediately – some people never pass when holding four-card support for partner's overcall.

The North-South hands fit well and the trumps break 2-2, so even with the trump finesse losing ten tricks are available in a heart contract. The fact that East can overruff on the third round of diamonds makes no difference because the ♥K would score in any event.

Despite their 21 high card points East-West can make very little. With clubs as trumps, they would have two tricks in each black suit, the ♥A and a spade ruff to lose.

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

Board 25 ♠ J854 Dealer N
 ♥ QJ Vul: E-W
 ♦ 10954
 ♣ Q62

♠ K10932 ♠ 76
 ♥ A1074 ♥ 865
 ♦ Q3 ♦ AJ872
 ♣ K5 ♣ AJ3

♠ AQ
 ♥ K932
 ♦ K6
 ♣ 109874

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	INT
2♣	Pass	2♥	All Pass

Holding most of the values in the short suits, South is likely to open a weak INT if that option is available. West's Landy overcall shows both majors. East, with more hearts than spades, chooses to play in hearts.

As is often the case in a 4-3 fit, the play is a bit scrappy in 2♥. The traditional lead when one opponent has shown a moderate two suited hand is a trump – and that works best here. If instead South starts with a club, declarer can arrange to avoid a diamond loser and set up the spades via a ruffing finesse on the third round of the suit, just losing one spade and three trumps.

If spades are trumps, making nine tricks is less likely, though 140 is possible on some lines of defence.

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

Board 26 ♠ K Dealer E
 ♥ 865 Vul: Both
 ♦ A9875432
 ♣ 2

♠ A83 ♠ Q942
 ♥ AQJ92 ♥ K73
 ♦ K10 ♦ QJ
 ♣ Q53 ♣ KJ64

♠ J10765
 ♥ 104
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A10987

West	North	East	South
		INT	Pass
2♦	3♦	Pass	Pass
Dble	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

Vulnerable and with the queen-jack doubleton not pulling full weight, some East players will pass as dealer. I say some rather than most because bridge players tend to be like airline passengers – love to upgrade but hate to downgrade.

West's 2♦ response is a transfer to hearts and North's overcall is natural. There is a case for North to jump to 4♦. If North bids only 3♦ as shown, West could perhaps settle for 3NT, believing that 28 points will suffice even if a heart fit is present. K-10 doubleton, with the lead going through it, is of course a worry in 3NT.

As the cards lie, with diamonds 8-1 and the ♣A in the South hand, a no-trump contract plays well. By contrast, the fact that each defender has an ace facing the other one's singleton means a heart contract does not play well. The defenders can in theory take two club ruffs and two diamond ruffs as well as their aces in 4♥ – but the initial lead would need to be a club for that to happen.

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

=====

Board 27 ♠ QJ5 Dealer S
 ♥ K32 Vul: None
 ♦ QJ5
 ♣ AQ109

♠ K9632 ♠ A1087
 ♥ J95 ♥ 1086
 ♦ 43 ♦ AK102
 ♣ K84 ♣ 62

♠ 4
 ♥ AQ74
 ♦ 9876
 ♣ J753

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♣	Dble	1♥
1♠	INT	2♠	3♣
All Pass			

Playing a weak no-trump opening, North is too strong for that and starts with 1♣. Holding only 11 points in high cards but with good controls and three tens, East should definitely make a takeout double of 1♣. With neither side vulnerable (so whoever goes down goes down at 50 a time) West might compete to 3♠ – the warning against that is the ♣K, a card more likely to be useful defensively.

3♣ makes exactly, with three diamonds (or two diamonds and a ruff) as well as a spade to lose. With the ♣K onside, a finesse avoids a natural trump loser.

3♠ goes two down if North leads a heart – a reasonable thing to do if South has bid the suit. This enables the defenders to take three tricks in hearts, two in clubs and eventually a trump.

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

=====

Board 28		♠ KJ84	Dealer W
		♥ Q52	Vul: N-S
		♦ 103	
		♣ 9862	
♠ A9		♠ Q1062	
♥ A97		♥ J83	
♦ A8652		♦ KJ94	
♣ QJ10		♣ K7	
		♠ 753	
		♥ K1064	
		♦ Q7	
		♣ A543	

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
INT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Playing a weak no-trump opening, West opens 1♦ and rebids INT. If a strong no-trump is in use, West opens INT and East uses Stayman.

Those playing a weak no-trump might make only nine tricks after a heart lead, or a club lead and a heart switch. Those East-West pairs playing a strong no-trump (when East does not get to bid spades) are likely to receive a favourable spade lead.

Any declarer trying to recover from a heart lead or shooting for a top (by finessing North for the ♦Q) will do less well than those who take the normal 'eight ever nine never' play of trying to drop the ♦Q.

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

=====

Board 29		♠ 109	Dealer N
		♥ J65	Vul: Both
		♦ Q1065	
		♣ J985	
♠ AKQJ8654		♠ 732	
♥ A2		♥ Q1098	
♦ A		♦ K74	
♣ K6		♣ AQ10	
		♠	
		♥ K743	
		♦ J9832	
		♣ 7432	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♦	Pass
7NT	All Pass		

On the example auction West shows a game force with 2♣, a solid spade suit with the jump to 3♠ and then checks on key cards. When East indicates possession of a key card (5♣ showing 1 or 4) West bids 5NT to confirm that all the key cards are present and ask about kings. East's 6♦ reply shows the ♦K. West can then count 13 tricks (unless East is void in spades and spades are 5-0 I suppose – but if your luck is that bad you do not want to be playing bridge!)

At rubber bridge West might prefer 7♠ as the final contract to be able to claim 100 for honours – but honours do not count at duplicate.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	1	6	7	7
W	3	1	5	7	7

Board 30	♠ AJ52	Dealer E	
	♥ AK4	Vul: None	
	♦ A95		
	♣ AJ6		
♠ 103		♠ K76	
♥ Q87		♥ J93	
♦ KJ1087		♦ Q62	
♣ KQ7		♣ 8432	
	♠ Q984		
	♥ 10652		
	♦ 43		
	♣ 1095		
West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Dble	Pass	1♥
Pass	2NT		All Pass

In third seat West is likely to make a lead-directing 1♦ opening even if a weak 1NT is available. There is also a case, given the doubleton spade, to pass in the hope that North does so too.

On the actual layout, North is never passing (except by a wrong click). The North hand would probably be in range for a 2NT if West does not open. When West does open, most pairs play a 2NT overcall as showing a two-suited hand, so North starts with a double. If planning two bids South would bid 1♠ rather than 1♥ – but with such a weak hand it is usual to make the more economical bid of 1♥.

If spades are trumps, declarer has just one trick in each suit to lose. When there are no trumps, the defenders score four diamonds, a spade and one other trick.

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

Board 31	♠ 8654	Dealer S	
	♥ A72	Vul: N-S	
	♦ 108		
	♣ KJ73		
♠ AQ		♠ KJ103	
♥ Q9		♥ 54	
♦ KQJ964		♦ 532	
♣ AQ2		♣ 10964	
	♠ 972		
	♥ KJ10863		
	♦ A7		
	♣ 85		
West	North	East	South
3♥	Pass	4♣	2♥
4♦	All Pass		Pass

After South opens a weak 2♥, West has a strong hand but lacks a full heart stopper. A 3♦ overcall does not do the hand justice. If Leaping Michaels is in use (4♣ to show clubs and spades, 4♦ to show diamonds and spades) then the 3♥ cue bid is available to ask for a heart stopper. Unable to oblige with a stopper, East bids a 'pass or correct' 4♣. If the 3♥ cue bid is not available in the partnership methods then North could be the one bidding 3♥.

4♦ fails by a trick after a heart lead because South can get in with the ♥K and switch to a club. Declarer cannot run four rounds of spades without drawing trumps – and it is not possible to draw trumps without knocking out the ♦A.

3♥ fails by a trick if the defenders manage to cash their three spade tricks to go with a diamond and the ♣A.

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

=====

Board 32		♠ J97 ♥ AQ93 ♦ K52 ♣ Q92	Dealer W Vul: E-W
♠ 642 ♥ J6 ♦ 103 ♣ AKJ764		♠ AK1085 ♥ K54 ♦ J64 ♣ 83	
		♠ Q3 ♥ 10872 ♦ AQ987 ♣ 105	
West Pass	North INT	East All Pass	South

If North-South play a weak INT opening, INT from North may well be the only positive action taken on the deal. For most pairs a 2♣ overcall by West would be conventional while the adverse vulnerability will deter a 3♣ overcall.

INT is makable via five diamond tricks, a heart and a trick in whichever black suit the opponents lead (most likely a spade). If, however, declarer does not wish to settle for seven tricks and takes the heart finesse then the contract may fail. The defenders could (after an initial spade lead) score four spades, a heart and two clubs.

2♥ makes with four top cards and the ♥K to lose.

If North makes a suit opening, East overcalls 1♠ and the contract could be 2♠ by East-West. An overtrick results if declarer gets to ruff both a heart and a diamond in dummy – but the defenders should either be able to prevent this or score an overruff on the third round of clubs.

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

=====