

**Board 1**

North Deals

None Vul

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

EW 6♠; EW 5N; E 3♥; EW 4♦; W 2♥; EW 3♣; Par -980: EW 6♠=

*Thank you for playing in the SCCBA Charity Pairs! Three charities will benefit from your generosity: Guildcare, Demelza Hospice and Crawley Open House. Thank you as well to Neil Watts, who has provided this engaging and thorough commentary. I hope you enjoyed playing!*

Peter Clinch, Organiser.

East opens 1♦ and South is likely to bid 2♥ if playing weak jump overcalls. West has the values for a negative double (9+ points and four spades) and East will probably settle for the conservative bid of 4♠. If South overcalls 1♥, a similar sequence will follow.

If, instead, South passes West should respond 1♠ as their hand is not quite strong enough to bid 2♣ and then reverse into spades. East has enough to raise to game directly. Splintering with a singleton Ace is not ideal, but some might choose to do so anyway with such fantastic support. West will be nervous about co-operating with such miserable trumps, but if they do cue-bid hearts they will probably find themselves playing a slam.

Twelve tricks can be made, but after a heart lead declarer will run into a ruff if they start with a trump to the ♠9. Ironically, this is the optimum play to avoid a trump loser but it results in two trump losers. It is an accident waiting to happen! On this occasion the winning line is to finesse the ♠Q, cash the ♠A and then take the ruffing finesse in diamonds. Declarer loses one trump trick to the ♠J, but nothing else.

At matchpoints, E/W should be more than happy with 4♠+2 on this board.

**Board 2**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ A K J 10 8 6 4 3	♠ 7	♠ Q 2			
♥ 8 7	♥ J 9 6	♥ 4 2			
♦ 6	♦ A 7	♦ K Q 10 9 8 4 2			
♣ Q J	♣ A K 10 9 8 7 5	♣ 4 2			
<table style="border: 2px solid green; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>			N	W E	S
N					
W E					
S					
♠ 9 5					
♥ A K Q 10 5 3					
♦ J 5 3					
♣ 6 3					

NS 6♥; NS 6♣; EW 2♠; Par +800: EW 6♠×-4

Most Easts will open 3♦ despite their unappealing shape. The ♠ Q2, however, is a good feature as opponents will take a two-way finesse the wrong way should they buy the contract. To overcall 3♥ on the South cards at this vulnerability might result in a huge penalty with the opponents unable to make much. In principle, it is wrong to bid over a pre-empt with a hand that you might have opened with a pre-empt yourself. Just as bad though is to think for ages and then pass! That could compromise partner if they have a borderline decision.

West is likely to blast 4♠ regardless. Now it is clear for North to raise if partner did bid 3♥, not so clear what to do otherwise. So today the gods reward aggression, next time it might be a different story.

**Board 3**South Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ A Q 9 7	♠ 10 8 5 3	♠ K 4 2
♥ 6 5 2	♥ K Q 4	♥ 9 3
♦ 7 2	♦ 8 4 3	♦ A J 10 9 6
♣ Q 9 5 4	♣ 8 6 2	♣ A J 7
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>N</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>W</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; width: 100%;"> <span>S</span> </div> </div>	
	♠ J 6	
	♥ A J 10 8 7	
	♦ K Q 5	
	♣ K 10 3	

EW 2♠; EW 2♦; EW 2♣; NS 1♥; Par -110; EW 2♠=

A part-score deal to follow the excitement of the first two boards. At pairs, though, all boards are worth the same so just as much is at stake. The bidding methods of both pairs at the table could have a say in how the matchpoints are divided.

If the auction starts 1♥-pass-2♥ or 1♥-pass-pass, East can double and that gets E/W to their optimum contract in spades. There is no way to defeat 2♠ as the defence cannot take all the trumps off the table without giving up their natural trump trick, but note that declarer must concede a trick to the ♣ K whilst dummy has a trump.

After 1♥-pass-1S, E/W will probably end up defending 1NT or 2♥

After 1NT-pass-pass, some Easts might chance 2♦ if it is a natural bid, otherwise it's a pass.

Both 1NT and 2♥ by South can be defeated. To beat 2♥, West must lead anything but a club, after which the key play is for East to play low on the first round of diamonds (whether the suit is first led by West or by North) Now declarer cannot set up a second diamond winner as well as leading a club towards hand. Even after an initial diamond lead the threat of a diamond ruff is decisive. Against 1NT, E/W must establish their club winners before declarer sets up a second diamond trick.

Any plus score for N/S should score very well indeed. E/W should go positive, but there may be a huge difference between +110 and +50.

**Board 4**

West Deals  
Both Vul

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

NS 2♠; EW 2♥; EW 3♣; NS 2♦; Par -110; EW 3♣=

East opens 1♥ and South overcalls 1♠. West passes and North has a decision. On weak distributional hands the long term winning action is to bid immediately to the level of the fit. That said, when your side's suit is spades it can work out better to make a single raise and hope to play there, planning to bid on to the three level if the opponents balance. This deal is a good example of that wait and see tactic. Bid 2♠, and if they find their club fit bid again. Maybe they won't! It feels like bad bridge to bid 2♠ with the North cards, but at pairs bad bridge can work out well. The downside of pussyfooting around is that you are more likely to get doubled in 3♠, or find that they bid and make 4♣.

Note that 3♠ is sure to go down on best defence. Three rounds of hearts, West ruffing the third. Then a diamond to the ace and a fourth round of hearts. The ♠K is promoted. On any other defence the contract might make, for declarer can escape with one trump loser and is unlikely to go wrong in diamonds.

**Board 5**  
 North Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ 2	♠ A Q 7	♠ K 9 8 6 5 3
♥ K 6 3	♥ J 9 4	♥ A 8
♦ K Q 6 4 3 2	♦ 5	♦ A 9
♣ 10 5 3	♣ A Q J 9 8 4	♣ 7 6 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	
	♠ J 10 4	
	♥ Q 10 7 5 2	
	♦ J 10 8 7	
	♣ K	

NS 3♥; NS 1N; EW 2♦; NS 2♣; Par +140: NS 3♥=

The auction will probably start 1♣-1♠-Dbl. If West passes, North might prefer to rebid the robust six card suit rather than bid hearts with only three cards. 2♥ is quite an attractive option, especially at pairs, as diamond ruffs will be in the short trump hand. After 2♣, if East keeps quiet, South can bid 2♥ to show a weakish hand with five hearts and four diamonds. They should really have a little more playing strength to do this, but the singleton ♣K is a good card. (If partner bids clubs a third time, put it down on the table first and then they might not notice how bad the rest of dummy is!)

If, instead, West bids 2♦, it is more attractive for North to try 2♥ for they would have to go to the three-level to rebid clubs. If East rebids spades, South will raise to 3♥.

It has to be said that 3♥ is a rather luck make, with the 3-3 club break allowing two quick discards if necessary. By contrast, 3♣ goes down if the defenders find their heart ruff.

**Board 6**

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 4N; EW 5♣; EW 3♥; EW 2♠; EW 1♦; Par -630; EW 3N+1

This has to be a candidate for the flattest board of the event. East will play in 3 NT with the ♠ K led (famous last words!) Ten tricks made, no more and no less.

5 ♣ is also cold, for a spade goes away on the third round of diamonds and a spade loser ruffed in dummy later in the play....but, for E/W, +600 won't look pretty on the scorecard.

**Board 7**  
 South Deals  
 Both Vul

♠ 10 6 4	♠ J 7 3	♠ A K 9 5									
♥ Q 10 6 5	♥ A J 8	♥ 7 4									
♦ K Q 10 8 7	♦ 3	♦ J 6									
♣ 9	♣ A Q 8 7 6 3	♣ K J 5 4 2									
<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; text-align: center; line-height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>				N		W		E		S	
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ Q 8 2											
♥ K 9 3 2											
♦ A 9 5 4 2											
♣ 10											

NS 3♣; NS 1N; N 1♠; NS 1♥; Par +110; NS 1♣+2

N/S will probably bid 1♣-1♦-2♣ without any interference and be allowed to play there. East will be disappointed to score just two trump tricks. North has good impletion in clubs and this is made even better when the ♣ 9 falls under the ten.

If West balances with an ultra thin double they will regret it.

**Board 8**

West Deals  
None Vul

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

EW 6N; EW 5♠; EW 4♥; EW 5♦; EW 5♣; Par -990: EW 6N=

West has a 14-count with a couple of useful looking tens so (after showing 12-14) will certainly accept a quantitative invite. However, most Easts will just settle for 3 NT as their hand isn't quite worth a slam try.

It would be normal to play South for Q♦ as you can score four diamond tricks with any split if that is the case. Playing North to hold that card means you need the suit to break 3-3 in order to score four tricks, for North gets to play their queen on a high card. However, it costs nothing to test the clubs before committing, and that reveals that North has eleven cards outside clubs to South's eight. That might persuade you to take the winning view in diamonds.

If you guess the diamonds there are eleven tricks, and twelve if the suit breaks evenly. If it doesn't, you can still get home if North has four (or more) hearts as well as four (or more) diamonds. North will be squeezed if declarer plays out six tricks in the black suits. To achieve this end, declarer should duck a round of spades before continuing with the diamonds. (If the defence lead a spade at trick one this should be ducked in both hands). This is a good example of rectifying the count for a squeeze ending.

As on Board 1, E/W should not feel ashamed to play this hand in game, making as many tricks as possible, rather than in the precarious slam.



**Board 9**North Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ 8 5	♠ K 9 7 6	♠ A Q 4 2
♥ 8 6 5 4 2	♥ Q 10 9 7	♥ 3
♦ 10 3	♦ A 9 6 2	♦ Q 8 7 5 4
♣ K 8 5 3	♣ 4	♣ A J 6
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>N</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>W</span> <span>E</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; width: 100%;"> <span>S</span> </div> </div>	
	♠ J 10 3	
	♥ A K J	
	♦ K J	
	♣ Q 10 9 7 2	

NS 3N; NS 2♠; NS 2♥; N 1♦; N 1♣; Par +400; NS 3N=

East opens 1♦ and South will choose between 1NT and Dbl. Both do pretty much what it says on the tin.


After 1NT, North can bid 2♣ (Stayman) followed by 2NT (invitational) South may or may not go on to game. It will depend on whether they are seduced by the five-card club suit and the two tens.

After a take-out double, North's best choice is 2♦, a cue-bid of the opponent's suit. In the modern style this is *either* both majors (4-4) and the values for a jump response *or* the traditional strong hand with no obvious choice. This is so much better than guessing which major to bid. With extra values, but no four-card major, South will probably jump to 3NT.

In the play, nine tricks are easy to make on a diamond lead: 2 spades, 4 hearts and 3 diamonds, although if East switches to a low club (or ace then low) declarer does have to guess the position.

On a different lead (a heart, say) the entry position is a bit fiddly but as the cards lie East will have to throw in the towel. They can duck the first spade (♠ J) but declarer plays ♠ 10, overtaking in dummy when the ♠ 8 appears. East wins, but cannot do better than cash the ♠ A and exit with a low club. The ten loses to the king and West exits with a heart. Declarer now cashes the remaining major suit winners in dummy. In the four-card ending East will have to bare the ♣ A in order to keep three diamonds. Declarer finesses the ♦ J, concedes a club to the ace and wins the last two tricks in hand with the ♦ K and a master club.

**Board 10**  
 East Deals  
 Both Vul

♠ 8 6	♠ Q J 10 3 2	♠ A K 9 5
♥ A 10	♥ J 9 8 4 2	♥ Q 7 5
♦ A K J 10 7 6	♦ 8	♦ 5 4
♣ J 10 6	♣ A 9	♣ K 5 4 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">  </div>	
	♠ 7 4	
	♥ K 6 3	
	♦ Q 9 3 2	
	♣ Q 8 7 2	

EW 5N; EW 5♦; EW 4♣; EW 2♠; EW 1♥; Par -660; EW 3N+2

If East opens a weak 1 NT, West will blast 3 NT. If the bidding starts 1♣-pass-1♦, North might stretch to bid 1♠ 'for the lead' (they are certainly not worth a double or a two-suited overcall). The contract will still be 3 NT by East.

On a non-spade lead, declarer has plenty of time to set up two club winners and make a total of eleven tricks. Note that the correct play in diamonds is a first round finesse, prepared to pay out to a singleton♦ Q (or QX). A small singleton in the North hand is four times more likely than a bare queen.

To make eleven tricks on a spade lead is not so easy. Declarer wins the first trick and takes a winning diamond finesse. Running the♣ J fails as South will win and lead their last spade. Declarer must lead a club to the♣ K (North can do no better than duck) Six rounds of diamonds now puts South under pressure. Their last five cards must be three hearts (otherwise declarer plays ace and another to establish the queen) plus two clubs (otherwise declarer plays a club and the ace and queen crash)

Declarer now exits with a club to North's bare ace. The heart suit is frozen so North gets off lead with spade. South is now down to♥ K6 and♣ Q, so declarer exits with a club and forces South to lead a heart.

**Board 11**  
 South Deals  
 None Vul

♠ 9 5	♠ 8 7 6 2	♠ A 10 4
♥ 9 6	♥ J 5	♥ 7 2
♦ 9 8 7 5 3	♦ A 10	♦ K Q J 6 2
♣ Q 9 6 2	♣ K J 10 7 5	♣ A 8 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	
	♠ K Q J 3	
	♥ A K Q 10 8 4 3	
	♦ 4	
	♣ 4	

NS 5♠; NS 5♥; NS 2N; NS 2♣; EW 1♦;  
 Par +450: NS 4♥+1; NS 4♠+1

Thankfully, the EBU has changed its rules about opening 2♣ and calling it 'big'. With fewer than 16 points its now ok to do so with ten cards in two suits with 13 points between them. So you can open the South hand 2♣ with impunity if you want to!

The final contact will probably be a game in spades regardless of South's opening bid. Some might end up in hearts instead, and some might get to the five level, for South will be tempted to ask about aces if their partner's bidding is consistent with them holding two or more. Declarer will be slightly anxious in either 5♠ or 5♥, but all is well as nothing breaks badly.

Spades is the better denomination if South is declarer as there is a real chance of twelve tricks on a non-club lead. Let's say a diamond is led. Declarer wins and knocks out the ♠ A. It will be far from obvious to East that they have to cash the ♣ A straight away, they probably won't expect that dummy's entire club suit will disappear on the run of the hearts!

**Board 12**

West Deals

N-S Vul

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

NS 3♥; NS 4♣; NS 2N; EW 2♠; EW 2♦; Par +130: NS 4♣=

If the bidding goes 1♥-2♣-3♣ (with E/W silent) is 3♥ by South forcing? There is not universal agreement on that one! Perhaps a sensible compromise is to play it as forcing at teams but non-forcing at pairs. If East comes in with a very light take-out double they might regret it, for declarer is then unlikely to misguess the clubs.

Strangely, the only lead to be sure of defeating 4♥ is a club, an unlikely choice for East. On a club lead declarer has to lose two trump tricks. On any other lead the combination finesse in hearts is successful.

**Board 13**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

♠ K	♠ J 7 6	♠ 10 8 5 4 3 2									
♥ J 10	♥ K 9 7 4 2	♥ Q 8									
♦ Q 8 2	♦ 7 6	♦ J 5 3									
♣ K Q J 10 9 8 3	♣ 7 6 4	♣ A 5									
<table style="border: 2px solid green; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>				N		W		E		S	
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q 9										
	♥ A 6 5 3										
	♦ A K 10 9 4										
	♣ 2										

NS 6♥; NS 5♦; NS 3♠; EW 1♣; Par +1430: NS 6♥=

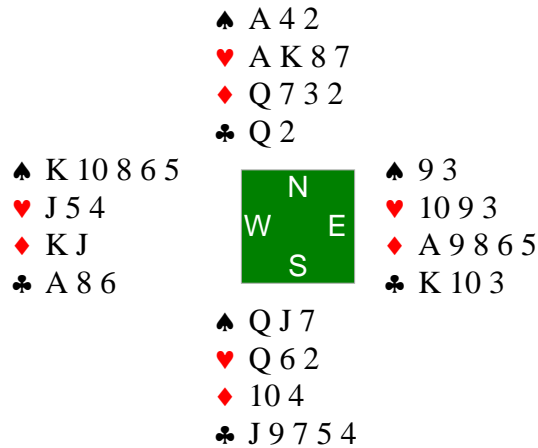
After two passes South opens 1♦ and West will bid clubs as high as they dare, probably only to the three level as 4♣, vulnerable, is rather O.T.T. If 3♣ means something else they might just bid at the two level. In any case, South will re-open with a double and raise to game when partner bids hearts, hoping for a little something opposite.

No doubt a few intrepid Easts will open a weak 2♠, a ghastly bid, but it does give South a really difficult decision as all their feasible options have a serious flaw! 3♦ says nothing about the hearts or the double spade stop, 2NT with nothing at all in clubs could be embarrassing and 4♦ (Michaels, diamonds and a major) should be 5-5, not 4-5 in the red suits). That leaves a take-out double, and that certainly isn't ideal. Over a 3♣ response you can bid 3♦ to ask partner to choose between the reds, but won't know if 3♥ is strained preference or a genuine suit. The least bad options would seem to be 2NT or Dbl, and then West is likely to complicate matters further by bidding 3♣! N/S should definitely give themselves a pat on the back if they get to 4♥!

If North plays in 4♥, they might well lose three tricks on a spade lead : ♠ K, ♣ A and a spade ruff. It doesn't look right to give up on the finesse as you will then need diamonds 3-3, or find QJ bare, in order to avoid a spade loser (unless West holds ♠ K bare!)

Do please let the Rabbi know if you dropped the ♠ K and made twelve tricks!

**Board 14**  
 East Deals  
 None Vul



S 2♣; EW 1♠; EW 1♦; N 1♣; Par +90: S 2♣=

A lot will depend on whether West opens 1♠ or 1NT. After 1♠, North might play in 1NT, whereas over 1NT North will either pass or make a very marginal double. After a marginal double East might stand it or run into diamonds. If East stands it, South might also stand it, or run into clubs.

There are too many permutations in the play to run through, but here are two predictions:

Stress levels will be highest in N/S pairs defending 1NT X

Any plus score for either side should score reasonably well.

**Board 15**  
 South Deals  
 N-S Vul

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

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



EW 6♣; EW 5N; EW 5♠; EW 2♥; EW 1♦; Par -920; EW 6♣=

The auction will start 1 ♣-1 ♥-1 ♠ with N/S silent. Some Wests will sign off in 3 NT at this point.

This is not a great bid as partner could still have a very good hand. It is better to proceed with 2 ♦, fourth suit forcing. Now East can shape out with 3 ♣, a better choice than 3 NT (showing the diamond stopper can wait)

After 3 ♣, West has to decide whether to take the plunge, but at least if they bid 3 NT at this stage they have shown a hand too good to do so on the previous round. 4 ♣ sets the suit and gives partner a chance to bid a slam if their it suitable. With three aces it is highly suitable! After a minor suit is raised to the four level, some pairs play the next suit up as RKCB and they will have space to investigate a grand slam after partner shows two keycards plus the queen of trumps. The rest will just settle for 6 ♣ straight away! There is no problem in the play and declarer will be pleased when the spade finesse loses for that means 6 NT can be defeated.

Any West that plays in 3 NT on a heart lead should risk the spade finesse on the grounds that not many players will lead a suit bid on their right. If it loses, they were booked for a bad result regardless. Unlucky!

**Board 16**

West Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 5♠; EW 4N; EW 5♦; EW 4♣; EW 2♥; Par -650: EW 4♠+1

The hand with three trumps is usually better placed to choose between 4 of a major and 3 NT. West has no doubleton and no long side suit that might be established by ruffing, both suggesting the NT game. Conflicting with this is the fact that all their high cards are controls (aces and kings) and this argues in favour of the suit contract.

East can help out by describing their hand as fully as possible. For instance, after 1 NT(strong)-2♥(transfer)-2♠, it is better to bid 3♦ than 3NT. 3♦ tells partner where nine of your cards are, 3NT only five. This information should sway West to favour 4♠. The same principle applies after West opens 1♥ and rebids 1NT.

Note that declarer must play diamonds correctly to lose just one trick in the suit. The best play with this combination is low to the queen and, if it loses, finesse the ten. However, if North plays the king on the first round, it is right to cash the ace next.



**Board 17**  
 North Deals  
 None Vul

♠ A K 4 3	♠ 10 9 7	♠ 6 2
♥ Q J 7 3	♥ A 9	♥ K 10 6 5 4
♦ J 8	♦ K 6 4 2	♦ Q 7 3
♣ Q 10 8	♣ A 9 7 4	♣ K 6 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ Q J 8 5	
	♥ 8 2	
	♦ A 10 9 5	
	♣ J 5 3	

EW 3♥; EW 1N; EW 1♠; NS 1♦; Par -140: EW 2♥+1

2♥ should be the popular contract. (If West opens 1NT in fourth seat there is not much point in super-accepting the transfer as both opponents will have already passed twice by then!)

If the defence open up the diamonds a club goes away on the ♦ Q. If not, declarer will finesse the ♣ 10. Either way, that's nine tricks for +140.

**Board 18**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ J 4	♠ K Q 8 3	♠ A 9 5
♥ 10 9 3 2	♥ A 4	♥ Q J
♦ 9 7 6 5 4	♦ A	♦ Q J 8
♣ 5 2	♣ A Q J 10 9 7	♣ K 8 6 4 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ 10 7 6 2	
	♥ K 8 7 6 5	
	♦ K 10 3 2	
	♣ —	

NS 6♠; NS 4N; NS 4♥; NS 5♣; NS 2♦; Par +1430: NS 6♠=

This is an awkward hand for N/S to bid after East opens the bidding with either 1 NT or 1 ♣. North can start with a double, but may subsequently punt 3 NT, not wanting to make a lower bid that might be passed or misconstrued. 3 NT is not bad, it will make eleven tricks unless East leads a highly implausible ♦ 8. But spades is better! With trumps playing for one loser, and the (marked) ruffing finesse in clubs, twelve tricks are an easy make. Will anyone bid the slam?

If East gets doubled in 1 NT and South decides to stand it, West must remove to 2 ♦, the only doubled contract that goes for less than the value of an enemy game. The ♥ 109 prove to be invaluable!

**Board 19**  
 South Deals  
 E-W Vul

♠ A 10 6 5 3	♠ Q 9 8	♠ K 4 2
♥ Q J 9 7	♥ 5 4 3	♥ A 8
♦ 8 7	♦ Q 10 3	♦ A 9 6 5
♣ 10 5	♣ J 7 6 3	♣ K Q 9 4
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin: 5px;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	
	♠ J 7	
	♥ K 10 6 2	
	♦ K J 4 2	
	♣ A 8 2	

EW 3♠; EW 2N; EW 2♥; EW 2♣; EW 1♦; Par -140; EW 1♠+2

If South opens a weak 1 NT, E/W do best to penalise as they cannot quite make a game contract their way. Having said that, they might get home in either 3 NT or 4 ♠ will if the defence fail to attack diamonds in time.

If South opens something else, a light spade overcall by West may persuade East to go for game in spades, even after an unassuming cue-bid, and a 2 ♠ response!

**Board 20**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ A 10 6	♠ Q J 9 8	♠ 7 5 4 2
♥ K 10 4 2	♥ 8 3	♥ Q J 7
♦ K Q 10 7	♦ 9 8 5 3	♦ A
♣ K 5	♣ Q 4 2	♣ 10 9 8 6 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N W     E S           </div>	
	♠ K 3	
	♥ A 9 6 5	
	♦ J 6 4 2	
	♣ A J 7	

EW 2N; EW 2♥; EW 2♣; EW 1♠; EW 1♦; Par -120; EW 1N+1

1 NT by West should be the room contract and a spade the most likely lead. Declarer will win the second spade and play on hearts. If South takes the ace straight away and switches to a low club, it is best to play the king, not wanting to be conned out of trick that is rightfully yours. If they win and get off lead passively with a red card, you have seven tricks and the possibility of eight if the ♦ J falls in three rounds. Should you settle for that or go for the maximum by leading a club towards the king yourself? On the grounds that South could have killed you with a club switch if they didn't hold the ace, it seems right to play one yourself.

South gives declarer a worse headache by ducking the heart, a stronger defence. Now you declarer doesn't know where the ♥ A is there are potential communication problems. A number of continuations could work out best. As the cards lie the winning line is leave the ♦ A on the table and continue hearts. The ♦ A provides the entry to lead a club later, and the ♣ K provides the entry to the red suit winners. Importantly, you have prevented yourself being locked in hand and having to play away from the ♣ K. Note that you can only ever lose three club tricks if the ace is offside, so -100 is the worst that can happen.

Moral: Parting with high cards early in the play (when there is no obvious defensive plan) tends to help declarer.

**Board 21**  
 North Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ 6 2	♠ A K Q 8 5 3	♠ 9
♥ 10 7 6	♥ J 4 3	♥ A K 9 8 2
♦ 10 3 2	♦ J 6	♦ K Q 7
♣ K Q 9 8 7	♣ 5 4	♣ 10 6 3 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 0 5px;">       N W     E S     </div>	
	♠ J 10 7 4	
	♥ Q 5	
	♦ A 9 8 5 4	
	♣ A J	

NS 3♠; EW 3♥; NS 2N; NS 2♦; EW 2♣; Par +100; EW 4♥×-1

The North hand is a tad too good for a weak two bid so most will open it 1♠. Some Easts will bid 2♥ (suit should be better), some will double (not ideal as a 5-3 heart fit might be missed) and some may pass (a bit feeble!) Whatever happens, South is worth no more than a limit raise. The five-card diamond suit is nice, but that is offset by the doubleton ♥Q5.

Where East has bid hearts, West does best to bid 4♥, hardly obvious with such a flat hand. It could easily go for -300 on a part-score deal, or goad the opponents into a making game they weren't going to bid.

Where East has made a take-out double, West might consider bidding 4♣. This does go for -300 on a part-score deal! The defence can set up a diamond ruff to supplement their four natural winners. So for E/W, the eight-card heart fit is better than the nine-card club fit. Very unlucky for anyone in 4♣X!

**Board 22**  
 East Deals  
 E-W Vul

♠ K 7	♠ A 5 4	♠ Q J 10 8 6 3
♥ K 10 7 3	♥ A Q J 8	♥ 9 6 2
♦ A Q 5 4 3	♦ 10 9 2	♦ K J 8
♣ J 8	♣ A 7 4	♣ 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	
	♠ 9 2	
	♥ 5 4	
	♦ 7 6	
	♣ K Q 10 9 6 5 2	

NS 5♣; NS 2N; W 2♠; W 2♦; E 1♠; W 1♥; E 1♦; Par +400: NS 5♣=

East may open 2♠ and after two passes North can bid 2NT to show a strong balanced (or semi-balanced) hand. South will probably just raise to 3NT rather than blast 5♣. If East is inspired enough to lead a diamond against 3NT (unlikely!) the defence need to avoid blocking the suit. On the lead of ♦8, West can make life easier for partner by playing the ♦Q at trick one and returning a low one. On any other lead there are nine top tricks and declarer's only problem is whether or not to risk the heart finesse. It will depend on their relationship with gift horses! After running all the clubs and seeing the discards, they might. It would be nice to beat the pairs in 5♣ if that contract is making, which it will if the ♥K is onside. Only the super greedy would plan to use the club entries to finesse twice.

At some tables, West might raise partner to 3♠, a non-invitational bid. This is not kosher as it should include three-card trump support, but it certainly gives North a tougher decision! The raise of 2♠ to 3♠ was once described by Benito Garozzo as the best pre-empt in bridge.

**Board 23**  
 South Deals  
 Both Vul


♠ 8 6 2	♠ Q 10 7	♠ 9 5 4 3
♥ K Q J 6 2	♥ 10 9 5 4	♥ 8 7 3
♦ —	♦ Q 10 9 6 4	♦ J
♣ K Q 9 6 3	♣ 8	♣ A 10 7 5 4
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">       N        W     E        S     </div>	
	♠ A K J	
	♥ A	
	♦ A K 8 7 5 3 2	
	♣ J 2	

NS 6♦; NS 2N; EW 2♥; EW 2♣; Par +1100; EW 6♥×-4

A lot will depend on South's choice of opening bid and whether West makes a simple overcall or a two-suited bid. (Yes, some pairs do play two-suited overcalls over a strong 2♣ opening as well as over 1♦)

If North gets a chance to cue-bid their singleton club once diamonds are agreed they should do so. Five card trump support plus a shortage makes their hand strong in offence. In practice, though, they may not be allowed any space for fancy tactics! Whatever happens, N/S should get as far as 5♦. Those that reach 6♦ are likely to have blasted it, or been pushed. At game all, E/W will take their chances in defence rather than sacrifice in 6♥ or 7♣, but with no luck today.

**Board 24**  
 West Deals  
 None Vul

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

NS 3♦; NS 1N; NS 2♣; EW 1♠; EW 1♥; Par +110; NS 3♦=

If N/S keep quiet, East will play in 2♥ (playing weak NT and 4 card majors) or in 1NT (playing a strong 1NT). Both these contracts will drift one down unless South leads a diamond.

A diamond overcall by South is sound at the one-level but risky at the two-level, though at love all in a pairs game bidding is always tempting. At tables where South does intervene, North will compete to 3♦. This is the par contract on paper, but declarer will need to make it in order to beat all the N/S pairs that collect +50 by defending. The correct way to play diamonds for one loser depends on whether you can lead the suit twice from dummy. If the suit is breaking 2-2 it is a straight guess whether to play East for ♦AX or ♦QX. If the suit is 3-1, and you can only lead once from dummy, it is right to play the ♦K if East plays low. This picks up ♦Q singleton with West (if they have ♦A singleton there are two losers even if you run the ♦10). However, if you can lead twice from dummy, running the ♦10 picks up both ♦QXX and ♦AQX with East and is therefore the better play.

So it all depends on the early play. A heart lead would make it easy to cross to dummy twice, a spade lead much less so for declarer cannot afford to waste the ♠Q and needs an entry to lead toward the ♥K. +110 for N/S should net most of the matchpoints whereas -50 will score very poorly. Any plus score for either side should score reasonably well.



**Board 25**  
 North Deals  
 E-W Vul

♠ A J 9 8	♠ 6 4 2	♠ K Q
♥ K 7	♥ A Q J 10	♥ 9 8 5 3
♦ K Q J 7 2	♦ 8 6 4	♦ A 9 3
♣ J 9	♣ Q 10 4	♣ K 7 6 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ 10 7 5 3	
	♥ 6 4 2	
	♦ 10 5	
	♣ A 8 5 2	

W 3♠; W 2N; E 2♠; EW 3♦; E 1N; EW 1♥; EW 1♣;  
 Par -140: W 1♠+2

N/S are unlikely to find the only defence to beat 3 NT, especially if East has shown 4+ hearts in the auction. For example, it may start 1 NT (weak)-2♣ (Stayman)-2♥. On a spade or diamond lead declarer has nine top tricks and on a low club lead they have ten.

An inspired South might just lead the ♣ A to take a look at dummy. Partner discourages and a heart switch does the business!

It is a very safe bet that not a single West will play in the par contract of 3♠.

**Board 26**  
 East Deals  
 Both Vul

♠ A J 7 3 2	♠ 10 9	♠ K 6 4
♥ J 8 4	♥ 10 9 2	♥ K 5 3
♦ J 8	♦ A Q 9	♦ K 10 7 5 2
♣ A 9 7	♣ K Q 8 3 2	♣ J 10
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ Q 8 5	
	♥ A Q 7 6	
	♦ 6 4 3	
	♣ 6 5 4	

EW 3♠; EW 3♦; W 1N; EW 1♥; NS 1♣; Par -140; EW 1♠+2

The cards lie extremely well for E/W and West can make nine tricks in a spade contract. The defence cannot prevent a club ruff in dummy. The heart suit is not frozen, so if necessary declarer can open it up and come to a trick. Furthermore, both the ♦ A and ♦ Q are well placed.

Double-dummy defence holds West to seven tricks in 1 NT (heart to the queen, club switch, heart to the ace, club switch). In practice North might well lead a club. This gives declarer the tempo to establish the diamonds and make ten tricks (on a low club lead) or nine tricks (if a top club is led)

So it all hinges on West's course of action in third seat. 1♠ will be bid more often than 1 NT simply because some of the field play a strong NT. Some may pass: with nine losers and three unsupported jacks that is not silly. If West does pass, North should do likewise and not give them a second chance.

**Board 27**  
 South Deals  
 None Vul

♠ Q 6 5 3	♠ K 10 8 7	♠ 2
♥ K 8 2	♥ Q J 9 6 5	♥ A 10 3
♦ Q 3 2	♦ 10 5 4	♦ A J 9 8
♣ J 10 3	♣ 5	♣ K Q 8 7 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ A J 9 4	
	♥ 7 4	
	♦ K 7 6	
	♣ A 9 6 4	

NS 2♠; EW 3♣; EW 1N; EW 2♦; NS 1♥; Par -100: NS 3♠×-1

It will be easy enough for N/S to find their spade fit, but may not be so easy for E/W to find their club fit.

After 1 NT (weak)-2♣ (Stayman), East can double to show clubs, but does that mean 5+clubs or might you do the same with four good ones? Partner won't bid 3♣ unless sure they are facing at least five. Something for regular partnerships to discuss, perhaps.


After 1♠-2♠, East's hand looks more suitable for a take-out double than a club overcall. Now partner might guess to bid hearts (oops!) or diamonds. Facing a pre-balancing double, it's a good idea to play 2NT as a scramble to avoid any danger of playing in a 3-3 fit (partner bids their lowest four-card suit). Even so, if they bid 3♣, they could still hold 4 hearts and this is pairs!

After 1♣(2+)-1♥, East might chance a club overcall even though their suit is sub-standard. That should get the job done.

Finally, if South opens a natural 1♣, East is unlikely to compete at all.

In a spade contract, declarer can score one trick in each of the side suits and five trumps one way or another. The defence score one trump, two hearts and two diamonds. In a club contract, East or West will have no problem coming to nine tricks.

**Board 28**  
 West Deals  
 N-S Vul

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

NS 3♠; NS 3♥; EW 3♣; NS 1N; EW 1♦; Par +100; EW 4♣×-1

At most tables West and North will pass. The favourable vulnerability might induce one or two Wests to open 3♣.

After two passes, If East opens a weak 1 NT, the only sound action with the South hand is to pass. 1♠ is ok over 1♣, but not 2♠ over 1 NT. Partner knows that you might have to pass with opening values and will protect if they possibly can. North should certainly bid hearts after two passes.

After a 1 NT-pass, West might bid 2♠ (transfer into clubs) if playing four-suit transfers. This makes life more awkward for the opponents as they cannot bid a suit at the two-level.

After a 1♣ -1♠, West will probably pre-empt, but might be afraid of goading the opponents into a making game they wouldn't otherwise bid.

Well judged to any E/W pairs that bid to 4♣ but no further.

**Board 29**  
 North Deals  
 Both Vul


♠ K 4 2	♠ J 10 7 6 5	♠ 9 3
♥ 8 2	♥ A J 7 6 4	♥ 5 3
♦ 4 3	♦ K	♦ A Q 10 7 2
♣ J 7 6 5 4 2	♣ 9 8	♣ A K Q 10
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 5px;">           N W     E S         </div>	
	♠ A Q 8	
	♥ K Q 10 9	
	♦ J 9 8 6 5	
	♣ 3	

NS 4♥; NS 3♠; EW 4♣; EW 1N; EW 1♦; Par +200; EW 5♣×-1

East opens 1♦, passed round to North who will balance with 1♠, or 1♥, or possibly 2♦ (Michaels, 5-5 in the majors). East does well to mention clubs at this point. South will love the singleton club and knows that partner can't hold many diamonds. It is likely that they will drive to game even though partner was only protecting. 4♥ is cold and 4♠ only goes down on a trump lead.

West might bid 5♣, hoping it's a good sacrifice, but it not clear to do so despite the six-card trump support . The rest of the hand is very unsuitable and it's game all.

**Board 30**  
 East Deals  
 None Vul

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

EW 3♣; EW 1N; EW 2♦; NS 1♠; NS 1♥; Par -110: EW 3♣=

East is likely to play in 1 NT regardless of whether they are playing a weak or strong NT. It doesn't look right to open 1 ♣ and rebid 2 ♣. But it is today! Nine tricks roll home in clubs (five clubs, one diamond, two hearts and a heart ruff). In NT, a heart lead holds declarer to just seven tricks.

If South errs and leads a top diamond in order to take a look at dummy, declarer will score a very valuable overtrick.

**Board 31**  
 South Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ 4	♠ Q J	♠ 8 3 2
♥ 7 3 2	♥ Q 6 4	♥ A J 10 8 5
♦ Q 10 9 7	♦ A K 6 4 3 2	♦ 8 5
♣ Q 10 9 6 4	♣ 8 3	♣ K J 7
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin: 5px;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ A K 10 9 7 6 5	
	♥ K 9	
	♦ J	
	♣ A 5 2	

NS 5♠; NS 4N; NS 3♦; NS 1♥; EW 1♣; Par +650: NS 4♠+1

If the bidding starts 1♠-2♦-3♠, North will bid 4♠, rather worried that there could be a slam on. If 4♦ at this point is a cue-bid agreeing spades, that would be an excellent choice but partner is likely to read it as lots of diamonds. So, unless you have clear agreement that it's a cue, 4♠ is the practical bid.

Eleven tricks is the limit on a club lead, the slam requires trumps 2-2 to have any chance.

On a heart lead, the slam makes. If East plays the ♥ A there are twelve tricks. If they don't, declarer wins and throws the ♥ 9 on the second round of diamonds. Declarer now concedes a club and ruffs a club in dummy for their twelfth trick. East is caught on Morton's fork, but not due to a shrewd play by declarer!

On a diamond lead, declarer can put East under pressure by leading a low heart from dummy. East must duck. Now declarer has to use a spade entry to dummy in order to take the discard and East can play another spade when declarer gives up a club. The defence takes no heart trick but two club tricks. For a similar reason, an opening trump lead also defeats the slam.

+680 should score really well for N/S so it is better not to bid a slam and risk a near bottom.

**Board 32**  
 West Deals  
 E-W Vul

♠ A	♠ K Q 10 8 6 3		
♥ Q J 8 3 2	♥ K		
♦ 9 8 7	♦ Q 6 5 3		
♣ K Q 9 2	♣ 8 3		
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">             N              W     E              S           </div>		
	♠ 9 7 5 4	♠ J 2	
	♥ A 7	♥ 10 9 6 5 4	
	♦ A 10	♦ K J 4 2	
	♣ A J 10 5 4	♣ 7 6	

NS 5♠; NS 3N; EW 2♥; NS 2♣; S 1♦; Par +450: NS 4♠+1

N/S should sail into 4 ♠. E/W will, of course, identify their heart fit but shouldn't be tempted to go to the five-level at adverse vulnerability.

Against 4 ♠, the defence can't prevent the club loser in the North hand going away on the ♥ A, so declarer just loses a spade and a diamond.



**Board 33**  
 North Deals  
 None Vul

♠ A J 2	♠ Q 9	♠ 10 8 6 5 4 3						
♥ 3	♥ K Q 9 8 7 4	♥ A 6 2						
♦ Q J 9 8 4 3 2	♦ A K 5	♦ 6						
♣ Q 10	♣ A 3	♣ K 7 6						
<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px 10px;"></td></tr> </table>			W	N	E		S	
W	N	E						
	S							
♠ K 7								
♥ J 10 5								
♦ 10 7								
♣ J 9 8 5 4 2								

EW 3♠; NS 3♥; EW 3♦; NS 3♣; NS 1N;  
 Par -100: NS 4♣×-1; NS 4♥×-1

Bidding bad suits seems to be paying off in this session! East does well to overcall in spades and E/W to bid to 3 ♠ in competition. It's love all again, the vulnerability that favours bidding on.

N/S, with their combined 23-count, are the ones that have to sacrifice at the four-level, no doubt bemoaning the diamond ruff that scuppers their heart contract. But for them, -50 or -100 (if doubled) is a whole lot better than -140

Aficionados of 'The Law' will note that there are 18 total trumps and 18 total tricks.

**Board 34**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ 9 3 2	♠ K J 10 6 4	♠ Q 5
♥ K 8 7 5	♥ A 9 2	♥ 10 4 3
♦ 7 6 3	♦ Q J 2	♦ A K 9 8 4
♣ J 9 4	♣ K 10	♣ Q 8 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">             N              W     E              S           </div>	
	♠ A 8 7	
	♥ Q J 6	
	♦ 10 5	
	♣ A 7 6 5 2	

NS 5♠; NS 4N; NS 3♥; NS 4♣; NS 2♦; Par +650: NS 4♠+1

It would be reasonable (just about!) for East to open light at favourable vulnerability. In a pairs' game, telling partner what to lead can be worth a lot of matchpoints. On this hand, however, the tactic is likely to backfire.

North should end up playing in 4♠ regardless of East's decision.

Declarer will reason that they are unlikely to benefit from a 3-3 club break as it probably won't be possible to draw trumps ending in the South hand. Their practical line is to pitch the ♥ 6 on the third round of diamonds and cross to dummy in order to run the ♥ Q. The third round of hearts can be ruffed. Once West has shown up with ♥ K, the ♠ Q must surely be with East, so declarer will play for the drop and make eleven tricks.

At tables where East kept quiet, the normal play in spades is to finesse through West. The queen wins a trick so declarer makes just ten tricks.

**Board 35**  
 South Deals  
 E-W Vul

♠ Q 10 8	♠ 9 6 4	♠ A K J 7 2
♥ K J 8	♥ 9 7 6 3 2	♥ 10 5
♦ A Q 7 5	♦ —	♦ J 10 9
♣ A 10 6	♣ K Q 9 8 3	♣ J 4 2

♠ 5 3
♥ A Q 4
♦ K 8 6 4 3 2
♣ 7 5

EW 5N; W 5♠; E 4♠; EW 3♦; S 1♥; EW 1♣; Par -660; EW 4N+1

Here is another hand where E/W have to choose between 4 of a major and 3 NT. West has no doubleton and no long side suit that might be established by ruffing. In addition, all four of their suits contain two honours. This suggests going for the nine-trick game, and that is indeed the correct decision.

**Board 36**

West Deals  
Both Vul

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

EW 5N; EW 5♥; EW 5♣; EW 4♦; EW 2♠; Par -660; EW 3N+2

After 1 ♣-1 ♠-Dbl, East will most likely become declarer in 3 NT. On a spade lead they might not come to nine tricks. (Deep Finesse makes eleven because it knows that the ♣ A is a singleton!)

Declarer can steal a tempo by leading a diamond towards dummy. South has to duck or there are nine tricks without touching clubs: two spades, four hearts, and three diamonds (finessing the ten). Now a first or second round finesse of the ♣ 10 secures two club tricks.

However, there's a rub. The optimum play to establish the club suit for one loser is low to the king on the first round and then low to the queen on the second round *regardless of whether the king holds or loses*. On this occasion the king loses to the ace. So you reason: If South was dealt A9 they might have ducked, but with AJ they would always win with the ace. Consequently, it is better to play them for AJ. Today, however, that is the worse thing to do and results in defeat.

It's true that finessing the ♣ 10 is the best chance for two *quick* club tricks as it caters for both three to the jack and four to the jack with North, but at pairs it is tempting to go for the maximum.