

Aid 4 Ukraine Simultaneous Pairs

Tuesday 12 April 2022

Thank you for joining us – we felt so helpless and wanted to do something to help so hence this Simultaneous Pairs which we hope you have enjoyed.

It's been a simple affair – there are no overall master points, no prizes – just the hands to play and score to give you an overall result.

But more important it is to try and raise some money to send to UNICEF. If you haven't already donated, please please do so – if you go to :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp> there are various ways to send in your donation.

Again – thank you so much for your support. We really appreciate it !

All the best

Anna & Mark - the ECatsBridge Team

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

<p>♠ A J 9 3 2 ♥ J 10 6 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ 6 5</p>	<p>♠ Q 6 5 4 ♥ Q 7 ♦ J 7 ♣ A J 8 4 2</p>
<p>♠ K 10 8 7 ♥ 8 5 4 2 ♦ Q 9 5 ♣ K 9</p>	<p>♠ --- ♥ A K 9 3 ♦ K 8 6 4 2 ♣ Q 10 7 3</p>

N/S figure to have the auction to themselves at most tables. After P-1♦; 1♠-2♣, North has three sensible choices, all of which are likely to end the auction.

With both a high-card minimum and a dubious heart holding, 2NT should be the least popular alternative at Matchpoint scoring, which rewards solid plus scores.

Although simple preference to 2♦ might seem like an underbid with two tens and a nine to supplement North's 10 HCP, there is much to be said for this conservative action. South will usually need a good 15 points of his own to make game a worthwhile proposition and with many suitable hands he will make a forward-going move over 2♦.

Those who don't buy into this reasoning might jump to 3♦ to invite game opposite modest extra values. Although spokesmen for this group will tell you that 3♦ is the straightforward value bid, it carries some

subtle risks. Among them is the fact that South might not hold a fifth diamond (with 1444 shape some would open 1♦ and rebid 2♣, others would open in one minor or the other and rebid INT over 1♠).

If South can build a club trick or take a club ruff and avoid running into a heart ruff he can take ten tricks in diamonds, and, though the entry position is not really fluid on the normal heart lead, plus 130 should be fairly normal.

Although N/S have only 22 points between them, they will usually take nine tricks in notrump as the ♥Q, the ♠10 and the ♣J are all onside and diamonds are three-two. The best lead for East against 2NT (let's not think about three) is a low club to the ten and king. If the defenders clear clubs (they have the spots to do so), declarer can go to the ♦A and pass the ♥J, lead a second heart to the queen and ace, and play ♦K, diamond. A heart exit deprives declarer of the ♠A but that's nine tricks just the same for an excellent plus 150. If North plays a low club from dummy at trick one West can win the nine, cash the king and switch to a spade (the king might work better than any lower card, which declarer will simply cover). There are several variations now but declarer be held to eight tricks (plus 120 might score well) and might take only seven (which will score very badly).

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

There was a time when virtually no one would raise his partner's hearts with the wretched West hand after a 1♠ overcall, even at the prevailing vulnerability. Today most experienced players would raise hearts. North has enough high cards to consider something more than a simple raise but his ♥K doesn't seem to be pulling its weight on the auction and he might well settle for 2♠. A pre-emptive jump raise to 3♥ (a popular treatment), however, will really put it to North, who is unlikely to pass despite some inevitable misgivings.

Strict adherents to the Law of Total Tricks will note that it is E/W's "duty" to compete to 3♥ over 2♠ on the strength of their nine-card fit. The easiest way to do this is at once, of course, but not everyone plays pre-emptive jump raises or uses them with such a weak hand lacking a singleton. If West bids only 2♥ or (shudder) passes, it's not certain that either East or West will dislodge N/S from the comfort of 2♠. Although East has extra values, particularly after catching a raise, his ♠Q is a dubious card and he can only count on West for three trumps for his single raise. Still, East's distribution provides extra playing strength and the vulnerability makes it attractive to compete to 3♥.

The defenders can defeat 2♠ by leading a minor and taking four minor-suit winners and a ruff in each of those suits. West will more often lead a heart, however. Now declarer can draw trumps and play on diamonds. As long as East keeps his hearts and ducks one round of diamonds the defenders can deprive declarer of a second diamond trick, but when East wins the second diamond and returns a heart to dummy's king declarer switches his attention to clubs, a low club off the table allowing him to establish his ninth trick for an excellent plus 140. If declarer draws only two rounds of

trumps before broaching diamonds, the defenders can arrange West's diamond ruff instead. Plus 110 should still be a decent result for N/S.

It's more likely that N/S will reach 3♠, probably under duress. Now careful defence will secure a plus but some defenders (perhaps more than some) will lose their way and allow 140 for an awful score.

On the surface minus 100 shouldn't be bad for N/S because E/W can make 3♥ or collect 200 on defence by setting 3♠ two tricks or by doubling it and beating it one. In practice it may turn out that there are enough 110s and 140s for N/S that minus 100 is below average.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

If you look at only the E/W cards you wouldn't mind terribly being in 4♥, which needs three-two hearts and some luck in spades or diamonds. E/W don't have the high cards to reach 4♥ but some will get there after a second-seat opening bid of 1♥ by West, silencing North. East might raise all the way to 4♥ or settle for 2♥ or a limit raise to 3♥. If E/W do reach 4♥ and South does not get in his partner's way, North will wipe the saliva from the corner of his mouth and double for penalty. It's not so bad for declarer, really, with spades three-three. Unless North leads and continues trumps, which is fairly unlikely, declarer will have time to ruff his club losers and figures to come to eight tricks - and even on repeated trump leads there is no problem in coming to eight tricks. Any South who feels the time is ripe for an Unusual Notrump overcall at a high level will buy nicely in clubs but may not be able to avoid his partner's wrath. Clubs should produce nine tricks for a result that may be adequate only if the contract is 2♣ or 3♣, neither of which may be attainable in the auction.

But 1♥ will be West's opening bid of choice only in certain parts of the world. More popular choices will be a pug-ugly 1♣ or INT, either 12-14, 13-15, or 14-16. After 1♣ and a 1♥ overcall from North, East will choose from among INT, pass, and perhaps (where it denies four spades) a negative double. When INT comes around to North he might try 2♣ if he believes his partner will treat it as natural, rather than long hearts with secondary spades (as some experts would). That will finish off E/W and net N/S 110. If North sells out to INT he won't be able to beat it, declarer taking four spades, two diamonds and a heart. Plus 90 should be a decent result for E/W. If East passes over North's 1♥ overcall West should also pass. East will surely lead his singleton club and declarer will win to play ace-jack of trumps. East does best to win the king and put West in twice for club ruffs with his small trumps. E/W come to eight tricks in this variation for plus 100, beating the 90s in INT. E/W might finish in a spade partscore, which could fare well, or perhaps in 2♦, which would please South immensely.

Where West opens INT, North will either double to show strength, show his heart suit, or compete with some two-suited method. There are many variations possible in this scenario, including E/W finishing in 2♥ doubled for plus 670 and a top, North declaring 2♥, perhaps doubled, East playing in 2♦ doubled, and South at the helm in a quiet 2♣ or 3♣. The only thing that is certain about this interesting deal is that both system and judgment will play significant roles.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

At nearly every table E/W will find their way to 3♠ or 4♠. They really don't belong in game but with the cards lying quite well for them might come to ten tricks in spades.

The East hand is a worth a three-card limit raise in spades and there will be many different opinions on how to send that message: (1) 1♠-3x (2) 1♠-INT; 2♥-3♠ (3) 1♠-2♣; 2♥-2♠ or 3♠ (4) 1♠-2♠ (constructive, in the fashion of original Roth-Stone) (5) 1♠-2NT; 3♥-3♠ (6) 1♠-3♣/3♦ (artificial limit raise); 3♥-3♠. The beauty in each of these variations will be a matter of perception.

Pan now to West. Terrible trumps, minimum point count. And yet . . . The legendary Terence Reese may have been the first to point out that 5431 hands should be bid aggressively when a fit has been found. Some Wests will surely take the push to 4♠, especially where East might have a fourth trump for his invitational sequence; the West hand improves significantly if there are nine combined trumps.

Even where West has bid hearts, North might lead the suit from his safe sequence. If so, declarer can take ten tricks with the aid of the diamond finesse and by leading a club towards the king to build a diamond discard, using one of dummy's spade entries to lead a second heart down if necessary.

The best lead for the defence is a diamond. Say that declarer wins and leads the ♣10. North takes the ace and continues diamonds. Declarer has to cross to the ♠K to discard his diamond on the ♣K but still has to do something with the hearts. If he cashes the ♠A before leading a heart South plays low and the defence comes to two heart tricks, so declarer can't afford to play this way. Instead he leads a heart immediately. If South plays low, which is the instinctive play, declarer wins the ♥K and goes back to the ♠A, removing North's remaining trump. Now a second heart. If South goes in with the ace, declarer claims ten tricks, but if South ducks, declarer wins the ♥Q and exits with the ♥4, catching the ace. The winning defence is for South to win the ♥A while North still has his second spade. Now a third round of diamonds promotes a second trump trick.

If this were one of those "would you rather play or defend 4♠?" problems, then, you'd be right to vote to "defend."

As virtually all the results on this deal will be 140, 170 or 620 for E/W and 100 for N/S, everyone's score will depend on the E/W's attitude in the bidding and N/S's defence.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

If N/S find a way to 3NT from the North side they will almost certainly make it when East leads a diamond. Possible routes include: 1♠-2♣; 2NT-3♠; 3NT and 1♠-2♣; 2♠-3♠; 3NT. And, perhaps, 1NT-2♣; 2♠-3NT.

If South starts with a natural 2NT response to get his balanced hand across, North will raise to 3NT, but South won't pass. Indeed, it is much more likely that N/S will reach 4♠, a tenuous contract.

A case could be made for leading any suit against 4♠ but the popular choice will be a heart. If declarer plays "straight up" by winning in hand, taking the club finesse, and when in dummy with the ♣A leading a diamond to the king and ace, East can play a third club. Now declarer is badly placed. If he draws two rounds of trumps before conceding a diamond, East can win and play a third trump: declarer loses three diamonds and a heart. If declarer plays only one round of trumps before playing the second diamond, East wins and plays his remaining club, West ruffing. If declarer overruffs East gets a trump trick and if declarer discards a red-suit loser West gives his partner a heart ruff. How annoying for declarer!

The contract can be made after any of the neutral (non-diamond) leads but it may not be so obvious at the table to take the winning line. Win (say) the heart lead in hand and start clubs, ruffing the third round in hand in the course of drawing trumps. Then a second heart. When East shows out, win the ♥K and play dummy's remaining club, discarding a red-suit loser. East wins and is down to nothing but diamonds, so declarer scores the ♦K. Perhaps a more likely winning line is to win the heart lead and play the ♣Q. If East covers, win and play a diamond. The timing is such that declarer can achieve the diamond ruff without running into the trump

promotion as the fourth round of clubs is not played until after the diamond ruff and two rounds of trumps have been drawn. If East does not cover the club careful defence will prevail, but many defenders would cover the queen for fear that declarer did not have the jack to back it up. Easts who lead the ♦A will allow an unlikely overtrick and a N/S joint top but that won't happen very often. Making 4♠ for plus 620 will be good enough. Those who try 3NT and make it will be at the mercy of the declarer play and defence in 4♠.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

After two passes West will have to decide whether to risk opening the bidding at unfavourable vulnerability. It is certainly tempting to open 1♥, but there is a real danger that East would respond 1♠. West would have to bid again, with all choices seriously flawed (2♦, 1NT, a hopeful 2♣, or a "short" 2♥), and that should convince him that 1♥ is simply too dangerous. If West feels the need to open, however, he might find a weak two-bid in hearts more palatable.

North will double a 2♥ opening for takeout and East will raise to 3♥. South isn't really worth 3♠, but his weak heart length suggests that the N/S hands will fit well and many will take the plunge in this situation. 3♠ will convince some Norths to bid four and now East might double. The play in spades figures to be interesting. On the surface declarer has to lose two clubs, a heart, and a slow spade trick, but there are handling charges whether the defence works on hearts, diamonds or trumps. Declarer must ruff a club to set up the suit and is likely to be forced to ruff hearts in dummy, so East will have a long trump early in the play. This won't matter if declarer gets two heart ruffs and can discard his last heart as East ruffs a club winner, but this position will not always materialise. Taking nine tricks in spades will be a good

score for N/S if they are not in game, and if enough E/W pairs are permitted to go plus in hearts, minus 50 or even minus 100 won't be dreadful.

If South does not volunteer 3♠ North doesn't have enough for a second double so 3♥ should end the auction. Best defence is to lead the ♠A and continue the suit, but it's more likely that North will stay off spades to play on the minors. If he gets too busy by cashing three diamonds and switching to a club, declarer will actually make 3♥ by losing no club trick and scoring the long diamond. If North stays off clubs declarer will take no more than eight tricks and might finish with only seven. Minus 100 might be a decent result but minus 200 would be an unmitigated disaster. There will be a few minus 500s too, but not in your club.

Where West opens 1♥, North will double and East will usually redouble, although some will prefer 1♠ or 2NT, an artificial limit raise in hearts). South should compete to 2♠ either directly (much better in my opinion) or in two steps, after letting West show his weakness and East his support. A jump to 2♠ might attract a penalty double from East or push E/W to 3♥, but it's also possible that South will play quietly right there for plus 110 or 140.

If West passes in third seat, North will open 1♣ and South will respond 1♥, silencing all but the most ambitious Wests who have a natural 2♥ overcall available to them. After North rebids 1♠ and is raised to 2♠ there will be no further action.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

West will usually be permitted to open 1♥ in second position and North will have to decide whether to risk a vulnerable takeout double facing a passed partner with a balanced minimum that includes only three spades. If he does South should jump to two spades, which

he can make without much difficulty, even if he ruffs the third round of hearts (he should discard a club instead), as the cards lie.

Consider West's problem in this scenario. He suspects that his opponents will make 2♠ and he's got a suit worth repeating. His hand is both balanced and minimum, however, and he doesn't really expect to make 3♥. Indeed, if 3♥ can be made East will usually bid four. Furthermore, as he is vulnerable, the opponents, if they are enterprising, will not hesitate to double for a one-trick set, with the prospect of plus 200 to compensate them for their probable plus in 2♠. Here N/S won't have to double 3♥ to get a better result than they would have achieved in 2♠, as declarer can be held to seven tricks on ordinary defence and six if the defenders are more inspired.

As an aside, Matchpoints is very much a game of psychology and a player in this situation will have to judge whether he's likely to get away with an overbid like 3♥, keeping in mind that partner may prove to be a third opponent.

Here no one will take the push to 3♠ and South is very likely to double 3♥, so West will virtually never get away with his gamble. If North leads a practical trump declarer will take six trumps and one club, for minus 200 or 500. If North leads a club and South switches first to the ♠J, then to a low diamond, the defenders can take their six top tricks ending in South, after which the thirteenth spade promotes North's ♥J for a third undertrick, down 300 or 800.

If North does not double 1♥ and East passes, South will protect with a double. West will certainly risk 2♥ and leave North with a very difficult bidding problem, especially if a double of 2♥ would be for penalty (as it would be for most). It seems pusillanimous to pass (although if you defend well that could net plus 200) but everything else seems awkward. An honest 3♣ will lead to a rare N/S minus but an imaginative 2♠ on the chunky three-card suit will fare better. On this innocent-looking partscore deal, choosing the right moment to be conservative should prove rewarding.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

Most players will open the marginal West hand with 1♠, which should silence North. The East hand is a traditional pass but these days many will prefer to respond INT as a two-way gamble, hoping for a steal or a make.

What action should South take over INT? Some will overcall 2♥, others will risk 2♠ to show hearts and another suit, at least five-five. Still others will deem a takeout double more flexible. 2♥ might end the auction and produce some interesting play, culminating in seven or eight winners for declarer. After a two-suited 2♠, North's methods and style will determine whether he should drive to 3NT or allow the partnership to rest in 3♣, with both contracts appearing to be underdogs. However, 3♣, which looks worse than 3NT with the foul trump break, can be made if declarer plays the ♣A on the first round and leads the ♦6 through West, who will have to go in with the ace to avoid losing it. Even so, as long as declarer leads a heart to the nine East will find himself under pressure in hearts and trumps (of all things), allowing declarer to scramble home with his contract. 3NT faces too many communication problems, even though the defenders may have some trouble getting off play.

If South doubles East's INT response and West passes, so might North. This might well lead to East declaring 2♣ doubled, which will fare poorly. If West tries 2♦, North will double that and West will finish in 2♠ doubled, which will also be bloody. Could it be, then, that the atypical takeout double is the percentage action with the South cards? Alternatively, North might simply jump to 3♦ and South might let him play there. This awkward contract will be touch-and-go and might limp home for a potentially reasonable result; declarer can hold his natural trump losers to

two by playing his honours on the first two rounds of the suit.

If East passes West's opening bid, South will face a similar initial-action decision, with the added possibility of an eccentric reopening INT (okay, very eccentric).

There are many ways for both sides to go minus on this layout and when this is the case any plus score might produce an acceptable score.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

Although there will be some tables where this deal is passed out it's far more likely that North, East or South will open the bidding. Depending on system, North might open 1♣, 1♥, INT or a Precision 1♦. East will come in over 1♥ with a takeout double but is unlikely to act over any of the other possible openings. After 1♥-Dble, South will redouble or employ an artificial limit raise treatment. Redouble will get his side to 2♥, which is where they'd like to play, but some of the other raise actions will lead them to 3♥, which can be beaten with careful defence. If West discourages in clubs East will have to decide whether that means he can stand a switch to dummy's weaker side suit. If he comes to this conclusion a spade switch will net the defenders three spades and two clubs for one down. It's easy to imagine the defence losing its way, however, and with no spade switch and imperfect handling of the club suit, declarer might take as many as ten tricks by finessing the ten of diamonds and building a club trick with one ruff in dummy. Between perfect defence and inspired declarer play there will be a pile of 140s.

It will be theoretically easier for the defence to come to five tricks at the tables where North opens in a minor and raises a 1♥ response to 2♥, and the payoff will be higher too because at many of these tables South will try for game

and finish in 3♥. But in practice, West is unlikely to lead a low spade and unless North has opened 1♦, West is unlikely to lead a club. On a trump lead declarer will have time to discard a spade on a diamond but will still have his work cut out for him, with no immediate prospects for a club trick. A diamond lead from West would be most helpful but even then, declarer needs a ninth trick and might not find one.

If North starts with a weak or mini-notrump he is likely to play there. East is likely to lead a spade and the defence will be in a strong position to take the first seven tricks in the black suits. If West were to switch to the nine or queen of clubs after winning the ♠J the defence could manage a fourth club trick too but that won't happen very often. Alternatively, East might decide to lead a low club on the go. This could produce eight defensive tricks with correct timing in the black suits, but it is much more likely that East will lead a low spade.

If North passes as dealer, more Easts will open than pass, with support for both 1♣ and 1♦ (the textbook choice). South might double 1♣ for takeout and West will choose from among 1♥, INT and Pass. North will double 1♥ and INT and will jump to 2♥ over pass. In each of these scenarios they are more likely to finish in 2♥ than 3♥.

If East opens 1♦, N/S will stay out of the auction for a while, perhaps throughout. West will respond 1♥ and East will rebid 1♠. West could pass, rebid INT or give preference to 2♦, all with some justification. It is at these tables where there will be the greatest scope for big scores. In INT, West might take as many as eight tricks (on a low club lead) or as few as four, declarer misguessing spades at a point where the defenders can take eight red-suit winners. There is no doubt that the overall results will include the full spectrum of E/W results from plus 120 to minus 300, and it would not be surprising to see a handful of Wests in INT doubled, plus 180 or 380, minus 200, 500 or 800.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ 8 4 2 ♥ 9 8 2 ♦ A K Q J ♣ 6 4 2</p>	<p>♠ J 7 3 ♥ J 5 4 ♦ 10 7 3 ♣ A K J 9</p> <p>♠ 10 9 6 5 ♥ A K Q 10 7 ♦ 8 2 ♣ Q 7</p> <p>♠ A K Q ♥ 6 3 ♦ 9 6 5 4 ♣ 10 8 5 3</p>
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Might the bidding proceed: 1♥-Pass-2♥-All Pass? Sure it might, resulting in E/W plus 110.

Why wouldn't it go this way? Not everyone will open 1♥. Some will pass. Others will prefer a somewhat eccentric weak two-bid. Flannery fans might try 2♦.

If East passes, the deal could be passed out. Or West could try 1♦ in third seat. If ever there were a hand with "lead-director" written on it, this West hand would be the prototype. West would pass East's 1♥ response and not every North would protect with a double (East would redouble) or with INT (East would double). If everyone sits for a double of INT the price will be a cool 800 points. Or North might scramble out to 2♣, which can be beaten legitimately on four rounds of diamonds before trumps are drawn to promote the ♣Q. More likely, however, East or West will bid 2♥ over 2♣. Or West might pull East's double of INT directly to 2♥ to achieve a degree of normalcy.

Over a Flannery 2♦ opening (four spades, five hearts, 11-16 points), West should settle for 2♥, playing with the odds. Which leads us back to where we came in, more or less.

Should West do more than raise 1♥ to 2♥? With dull pattern and all the high cards in one suit West should take a conservative approach. Some will treat their hand as a three-card limit raise and will have to get to 3♥ eventually to show it. They will have reason to regret their optimism because the defence against 3♥ is straightforward once dummy appears. Old-fashioned Acol would survive, via: 1♥-2♦; 2♥-Pass. Does anyone bid that way any more?

If West responds INT to 1♥ and East is not obliged by system to find a rebid (the "standard" forcing-notrump approach is for

East to rebid 2♣, which is why so many pairs have adopted “INT semiforcing” instead), N/S will find themselves in a strong position to achieve a good result by cashing seven tricks in the black suits to set INT.

Another live possibility is that South will reopen 2♥ with a takeout double, creating an opportunity for E/W to finish plus 200 or better.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

E/W can make 6♠, 6♥ and 6♣, with 6♥ perhaps the best of the slams once South is known to have length in diamonds. Reaching one of these contracts will be more difficult.

If South passes, West might open 3♣ or 1♣, but strictly speaking, the technical action is a pass. Left to open in fourth seat, East should settle for 1♠ but there will be players, some of them highly successful, who consider 2NT a more descriptive choice. West might drive to 6♣ over a 2NT opening, so perhaps the off-centre opening has more going for it than we might expect. Over 1♠, pairs who play some version of Drury (2♣ to show a fit and at least 10 support points) will have to cope by jumping to 3♣ if that’s available as a natural invitational action, or by responding INT. Some possible auctions after a fourth-seat 1♠:

- (1) Pass-1♠; 3♣-3♥; 3♠-4♣; 4♦-4♥; 5♣-6♣; Pass
- (2) Pass-1♠; INT-3♥; 3♠-3NT; 4♣-4♠; 5♣-Pass/6♣(Pass)
- (3) Pass-1♠; INT-3♥; 4♣-5♣; 6♣-Pass
- (4) Pass-1♠; 2♣ (NAT)-2♥; 2♠-3♣; 4♦ (splinter)-5NT(pick slam); 6♣-Pass

Where West opens 3♣, East won’t have the slightest idea whether to shoot out 3NT, try for a spade contract or commit to clubs. At some of these tables East will go minus 100 in

3NT or achieve plus 490 when South cashes a high diamond and switches. N/S pairs will do well to have firm agreements about whether South should lead the ace or king from that diamond combination and whether North should give a count or attitude signal, and in the latter case whether he should encourage or discourage with 10864 and no outside high card.

Optimistic Wests who start with 1♣ figure to reach 6♣ and the trick may be to convince East that it would be a mistake to try 6NT.

All of that will frequently be academic because South will surely open 2♦ if he plays weak two-bids, and many will venture 3♦ if 2♦ is not a possibility. West might risk an unsound 3♣ over 2♦ and East will drive to slam if he can extract a diamond cue-bid from West. Just how he can accomplish this when West will be trying to put on the brakes at every turn is far from obvious, however. If North gets busy and bounces to (say) 4♦ he may make life easier for East, who will place his partner with diamond shortage.

Where South opens 3♦, West will have to pass and North will either pass or bid some number of diamonds. Indeed, virtually any number could be the winner. It looks obvious for East to double at his earliest opportunity but a case can be made for shooting out 3NT if North does not raise, and for bidding 4♠ if North raises to only 4♦.

Beyond these projections it would be foolish to attempt a meaningful overall prediction on this one.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

<p>♠ 10 3 ♥ K 7 5 4 ♦ 9 7 3 2 ♣ 9 7 3</p> <p>♠ A K 8 7 2 ♥ 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ A Q 10 6 4</p>	<p>♠ 9 6 5 ♥ A Q 10 2 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ K J 5</p> <p>♠ Q J 4 ♥ J 9 8 6 ♦ K J 8 4 ♣ 8 2</p>
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E/W have a decent fit in the black suits, no fast losers and the values to consider slam, but if they could see each others’ cards it’s still not

clear that they could determine their optimum resting place with any confidence.

With spades three-two and no diamond lead 6♠ is where you'd like to be. And even on a diamond lead, you might be able to guess correctly at trick one. And even if you don't or can't do the right thing in diamonds, the heart finesse might work, allowing you to discard your diamond in time. And if you knew early in the play that you had no diamond loser you could afford to play trumps with an extra degree of safety, catering to two honors-fourth in South by cashing the ace and leading low from hand. On a heart lead you have choices. You can win the ace and play ace-king of trumps. If they break you can discard two diamonds from dummy on your long clubs and eventually ruff a diamond. Or you can stake the fate of the hand on the heart finesse, giving you extra chances against four-one spade breaks. There are enough uncertainties, of course, to leave you in doubt, but all in all 6♠ isn't too bad at all.

6♣ isn't quite the same because you can't set up the spades for diamond discards: dummy will be out of trumps at the crucial moment. Essentially you need the heart finesse, but you may have the luxury of playing spades to best advantage when trumps are three-two: two high trumps, ♠A, trump to dummy, pass a spade if South follows low.

This deal will highlight the ongoing theoretical discussion about the best way to treat the West hand, with both the 1♠ openers and 1♣ opener stating their cases eloquently. For a thorough discussion on the care and feeding of black five-fives, you may wish to refer to an article by Danny Kleinman on e-bridge (www.e-bridgemastr.com) and to the archives of The Bridge World, which will lead you to a debate between the late Edgar Kaplan and Sidney Lazard.

Some possible auctions:

(1) 1♠-2NT (natural); 3♣-3♠; 4♣-4♥; 4NT-5♦; 5♥-5♠; 6♠-Pass

5♥ asks for the ♠Q; 5♠ denies it.

(2) 1♠-2♣; 3♥(splinter)-3NT; 4♣-4♠; 4NT-5♥; 5NT-6♣; Pass

2♣ may be foisted on East because a 2♥ response would show at least five and 2NT might be a strong, forcing raise. If West splinters (3♥, or 4♥ where 3♥ would be

natural, five-five), East will do better to show spade support even though his wasted heart strength and slow hand screams for notrump. Why? Because in the auction above, for example, West will place East with only two spades and will think he can establish spades with a ruff or two playing in clubs: he might well bid 7♣. Indeed I would be surprised if there weren't quite a few pairs in 7♣ when the results are posted. Systems that force East to respond 2♣ with this shape sometimes pay a price for it. If East supports spades directly over a splinter raise, West can probably check for the ♠Q and stay out of seven when it is missing.

(3) 1♣-1♥; 2♠-3♣; 3♠-4♥ (agreeing spades); 4NT-5♥; 6♠-Pass

Where both black suits have been bid and raised some partnerships agree that both black kings count as key cards, with various agreements about showing the black queens. In sequence (3) East's 5♥ shows two key cards but neither black queen. I've always believed that even without an explicit agreement about treating both kings as key cards it's intuitive to do so as the Blackwood bidder will always want to know about the "other" king.

(4) 1♣-2NT; 3♠-3NT; 5♠-6♣; Pass

Joint E/W tops will go to those who reach 6NT from the East side, which can't be defeated.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

A convention that's become quite popular, especially in the Scandinavian countries, is a 2♦ opening to show a weak hand with both majors. As the slogan for Alexander Keith's India Pale Ale goes, "Those who like it like it a lot," using the creature at appropriate vulnerabilities with four-four and virtually no high cards. The North hand would be a suitable textbook example with both sides vulnerable

and might well permit its users to stop in 2♥ or 2♠ if South takes a conservative view. You really have to play this gadget for a while before you get a feel for the right way to proceed with a hand as strong as South's. It's easy to envision getting too high.

There are other treatments in vogue to handle hands like North's, including a 2♥ opening to show hearts and another suit, usually at least five-five. In these partnerships, South will certainly move towards game and may get there, to his chagrin.

If North passes, as most will do, South will open 1♦, INT, or a strong club. After INT, North may well upgrade his hand and drive to game. The same is likely to be true where South starts with a strong club; North will probably treat his hand as a positive just to get both his suits into the game without difficulty. Over 1♦, however, North can foresee some awkward moments, although his passed-hand status might help him. Here, where South will usually rebid 2♣ over 1♠, North will be able to continue with a natural, nonforcing 2♥ unless his partnership has the arrangement that fourth-suit by a passed hand is still artificial and forcing. Should North risk 2♥ just the same? That's arguable, and a case could be made for a gentle 2♦ or perhaps an eccentric 2♠, neither of which promises the strength that 2♥ does. Not that South would pass either 2♦ or 2♠ so readily. The former is likely to attract 2NT from South, the latter 3♠. The bottom line is that this is a very difficult combination for N/S and anyone achieving a plus score with those cards is likely to fare well.

Spades will be more popular than hearts but hearts is the better strain this time. A black suit lead holds declarer to eight tricks in spades but a red suit gives declarer time to try to ruff a heart in dummy and declarer will lose only four tricks whether or not East ruffs in. In hearts declarer can arrange to ruff two clubs in hand while cashing South's two high trumps. That will allow him to cash the ♦Q safely. There are several winning variations possible but declarer has a counter to any lead as long as he takes a reasonable line of play. He can come to nine tricks even if he plays to ruff a spade with a high trump, perhaps the prettiest ending materialising when declarer allows East to ruff the third diamond and West ruffs the fourth club with the eight or nine of hearts from nine-eight-six while declarer has queen-seven of

trumps and a losing spade. Declarer discards his spade loser and finesses the seven of hearts at trick twelve.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ Q J 6 ♥ A 6 3 2 ♦ K Q 6 ♣ K 9 3</p>	<p>♠ 10 4 3 2 ♥ K J 9 8 7 ♦ A ♣ A Q 4</p> <p>♠ K 9 ♥ Q 10 5 ♦ 10 8 5 4 ♣ J 7 5 2</p> <p>♠ A 8 7 5 ♥ 4 ♦ J 9 7 3 2 ♣ 10 8 6</p>
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West will open INT in third seat unless his range (11-14) and/or judgment preclude it. Most Norths will have some way to show the majors and will look no further. That proves to be a far better move than any one-suited action in hearts and if N/S exercise restraint they can stop in 2♠, which they have a good chance to make, even on the best lead of a low spade from West. Declarer wins the first or second spade and leads his heart. If West goes up with the ace to draw the third round of trumps, the hearts come in with one ruff and declarer will make an overtrick. If West ducks the heart, declarer crossruffs his way to nine tricks. It's not at all likely but if the defence allows declarer to get the diamonds going too he might take as many as ten tricks.

Getting to spades and not getting too high will be the dual objectives for N/S. The best that E/W can do is to stay out of trouble – for example, East might try to wriggle into a minor at the three-level if the opponents come to rest at 2♠ and E/W might go for 150 or perhaps 300 for an awful result.

Weak notrumpers will open the West hand with 1♣ or 1♥, according to the dictates of their system. 1♥ will get West to 2♥ or East to INT and it's not easy for N/S to enter the bidding unless North is willing to double INT for penalty, suggesting a trap in hearts. 2♥ has the potential to go three down but INT should go no worse than two down and might even make on occasion.

Over 1♣ from West, North will more often overcall 1♥ than double for takeout, but there are clubs where everyone would double. 1♥ is likely to get passed out and will probably fail,

although it's a close call. This time the off-shape takeout double works very well and N/S should be able to stop comfortably in 2♠ (East is unlikely to sell out to 1♠. Another possibility is a Michaels-style cue-bid, a good solution as long as North does not guarantee five-five in the majors. The main danger in this scenario is that South gets the partnership too high.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

Although this would appear to be a routine 3NT for N/S, yielding precisely nine tricks, there is scope for some variations. If South believes that his hand is not too strong for a 15-17 INT, he is likely to silence all but the most hyper-aggressive Wests, who will feel the prevailing vulnerability gives them license to describe their balanced junk as a major two-suiter. Where West is silent North will use Stayman and rebid 2NT or 3NT over 2♦, reaching 3NT one way or the other.

Where South opens a natural 1♣, many Wests will double for takeout on the strength of their support for both majors. If North introduces spades, a straight quantitative sequence will lead to 3NT. If, instead, North offers a club raise East might show his diamonds to direct a favourable lead and N/S might reach 5♣ (also cold) or miss game altogether. If South opens a strong club, West is likely to compete in some fashion but North will insist on game.

5♣ will virtually never produce more than plus 600 but 3NT is another story, and that's why it might matter which game N/S reach. Unless East bids diamonds West will lead a high heart against 3NT. Assuming the defenders can determine the heart position and that declarer takes the second or third heart to run the clubs, East should show interest in diamonds at his earliest opportunity. Then West can discard two diamonds and a spade, or a heart if declarer took the first or second heart (being

sure to keep communication with East, who would have to keep enough hearts). Should declarer lead the ♠J, intending to pass it, West would have to cover to save the overtrick. At tables where the defenders both release a heart and West a spade, declarer will be able to duck a spade and score dummy's long card in the suit for an overtrick.

One of the most fertile areas for defensive error is discarding on the run of a long suit. Even on a deal that seems as straightforward as this one there will be enough E/W mishaps that plus 600 will be slightly below average overall. Indeed, if West discards two spades and East one there will be a few plus 660s.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

If North does not come in over West's INT opening, E/W will usually sail into 4♥ on a Stayman auction. If North leads a spade the defence can arrange a spade ruff to hold declarer to ten tricks. Even if the spade ruff does not materialise, declarer will face an uphill struggle to find an eleventh trick as he won't be able to ruff both his third diamond and fourth club in dummy if South leads a third round of trumps after winning the ace on the second round.

If North competes with 2♠ over INT, East may prefer to try for a big penalty or to play in notrump rather than look for a four-four heart fit. He is likely to be disappointed if he decides to defend 2♠ doubled (not so easy to achieve, incidentally, in these days of rampant Lebensohl and negative doubles) for North might take as many as seven tricks and no less than five, in all cases going down less than E/W would score for their vulnerable game. 3NT has excellent prospects for at least one overtrick if North leads a normal low spade. The inspired lead of a low diamond (the deuce or eight) should hold declarer to nine tricks for

an excellent N/S score but this won't happen very often.

West's 15 points will suffice for most strong notrumpers to look no further, but with no aces, two jacks and an unstopped suit, it makes sense to downgrade the hand to a weak notrump, particularly at unfavourable vulnerability. If West opens 1♣ East will have some options over a weak jump overcall of 2♣ from North. A natural, nonforcing 2NT is perhaps as attractive as a negative double, which would virtually commit the partnership to game (3NT) if a heart fit does not come to light. 2NT would leave South on lead against the ensuing 3NT, and whether he leads a low diamond or the ♠9, declarer will be hard pressed to do as well as those in 4♥.

Where West opens 1♥ East will usually commit to 4♥ despite North's best efforts and the struggle will centre on declarer's search for an eleventh winner.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

System and style will determine whether South opens in third seat with 1♥, 1♣, INT or perhaps a Precision 1♦.

Easiest for West would be 1♦, which he can double for takeout without guilt. But 1♦ is likely to attract 3♦ (or something to show length in both minors) from North, and East will have to decide whether to risk a responsive double with minimum point count, a "bad" king and a balanced hand. Here it will be best to defend because 3♦ is likely to go down unless declarer runs a middle diamond to the ten and later leads the queen to pin West's jack and three-of-a-major is due to fail by at least two tricks.

Over a 1♣ opening many Wests will double anyway, ignoring their diamond flaw, and North will raise clubs to the two or three level

or introduce diamonds. East will compete at the one level but will have a more difficult decision in different circumstances. Again the fate of the deal will often turn on South's declarer play or the number of undertricks incurred by E/W, probably not doubled.

Where South starts with 1♥, many Wests will be comfortable with a 1♠ overcall and over a negative double from North, East will raise to 2♠ or even 3♠, where the partnership uses pre-emptive jump raises. If North bids INT over 1♠, East should probably exercise a bit more caution, avoiding the three-level.

If South starts with INT, he might play there and is a favourite to go plus with three clubs, a spade, a diamond, and at least two hearts. East comes under some pressure in the endgame and it would not be surprising to see some plus 120s for N/S on the scoreboard. Will everyone pass a INT opening? Not at all! West might double to show some high cards or describe a major two-suiter, with the latter plan likely to work better than the former. There will be a few 180s and 280s in INT doubled, a few 90s in 2♣ or 2♦, perhaps a handful of 180s in 2♦ doubled.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

North will nearly always be permitted to open in fourth seat with his system's strong, artificial forcing bid or a natural strong two-bid in spades. On the lie of the cards N/S can take twelve tricks in hearts but only ten in spades and slam should not be attempted, so their main mission is to find their heart fit. Once they accomplish that declarer will have to ruff out spades and take the club finesse to achieve a maximum result, but that is more convenient than taking the ruffing finesse in spades and those in hearts figure to do the right thing most of the time. Although two rounds of diamonds threaten to develop a trump winner for the

defence that won't happen unless declarer misguesses the spades.

Some possible auctions:

(1) Pass-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 2NT-3♥; 4♥-Pass

Some pairs employ 3♣ as a second negative over 2♠ and they will surely stop in 4♥. Where 2NT could conceal some values North may be tempted to bid again, even though South is forced to keep bidding with a yarborough.

(2) Pass-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 2NT-4♠; Pass

If North fears a three-card heart raise he might decide to conceal his second suit. In some systems 3♣ would not be forcing. This approach is unduly pessimistic and won't be adopted very often.

(3) Pass-1♣; 1♦-2♠; 2NT-3♥; 4♥-Pass

Essentially, this is the same as (1).

(4) Pass-2♦; 2♥-2♠; 2NT-3♥; 4♥-Pass

As is this sequence, where 2♦ is strong, artificial and 2♥ an artificial waiting bid.

In spades declarer can't reach the South hand to take the club finesse and will lose a diamond and the two black kings. Playing in hearts, if he takes the ruffing finesse in spades a third diamond will build a trump trick for East but declarer won't need the club finesse and will take eleven tricks.

Bidding and making 6♥ will produce a top for N/S but simply finding hearts and getting the play right will net a good score. Those who take only ten tricks in a major will do badly whether they go plus or minus. The fate of those who finish with plus 650 will depend on their counterparts' bidding and declarer play in heart contracts.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

E/W can make 4♥ and N/S no more than 2♠ but neither of those strains figure to come into play if West starts with a somewhat repulsive weak 2♦, which has a good chance of silencing everyone. 2♦ will go one down for what should be a poor E/W score if there is any justice.

However, weak 2♦ openings are not particularly popular these days and many who favour them won't consider this West hand appropriate. Indeed, who could blame anyone for preferring to pass?

If North is left to open 1♣ in third seat East will overcall 1♥, double for takeout, or use a Michaels-style cue-bid to show at least nine cards in the majors. Style, personality and system will determine East's choice. If South can show his spades at the one level by bidding them or via a negative double North will compete to 2♠ and might risk 3♠ if West bounces to 3♥ as an obstructive move. It's not at all obvious how high West should go on his own but the winning action – a jump to 4♥ – doesn't rate to be a popular choice. 4♥ can be made with the aid of the club finesse and the ruffing finesse in spades but there won't be any real choice in the play so anyone in hearts should come to ten tricks.

On a few occasions an early 4♥ will push North into 4♠, which East will double. Declarer needs to get the clubs going before he loses control but if he does he might piece together eight tricks by ducking a trump to West and eventually leading a second trump towards his queen. Not that minus 300 will be a triumph. It won't be good at all unless more than half the E/W pairs bid and make 4♥ (plus 620), which seems very unlikely. Perhaps the satisfaction of taking a profitable sacrifice will be sufficient reward.

Plus 170 for E/W will be the most frequent result.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

The North hand presents a classic rebid problem after South responds 1♠ to 1♥. The textbook action is 2♦, intending to support spades voluntarily, depicting extra values with this distribution or 3640 shape. That's fine in theory as long as South bids again, but when he can't, on certain minimum hands with five spades, it will work better for North to raise to 2♠ or 3♠, the latter an unnecessary stretch in my view. And this is a deal that highlights the central issue rather graphically. 2♦ gets N/S to an awkward poor-scoring (when it makes) 2♦ while 2♠ hits the target – a better fit and a higher scoring strain. South might well make 3♠ too but if North jumps to 3♠ South will usually bid four, which is higher than you'd like to be. The heavy 2♠ is the middle-of-the-road action at Matchpoints, and therefore it's probably the right thing to do.

If West leads the ♦6, as many will, against a spade contract, declarer will be in excellent shape if he plays low from dummy and fairly well placed if he puts in the jack, even if East ducks and declarer does not take a discard on the ♥A. On this lie of the club suit, East has no good answer when declarer leads the ♣8 from dummy. If he goes up with the king, declarer has the timing and entries to take a ruffing finesse against the ♣A and set up the clubs after taking a diamond discard on the ♥A and conceding a club. And if East follows low to the first club, declarer can ruff a low club and later lead low to catch the king. In either case he loses only a diamond and two clubs and makes ten tricks.

The play on a trump lead has many of the same elements. Declarer wins in dummy and leads a club to the jack and ace and gets a trump continuation. He wins in hand to ruff a club and has to force himself to return to his hand to draw the last trump and concede a club to

establish the long card. East continues hearts but declarer ruffs, leaving the ♥A in dummy. He cashes two winning clubs and leads a diamond to the jack. Declarer gets five spades in hand and a club ruff in dummy, two club tricks, a diamond and the ♥A for ten tricks. Nor does it help East to win the first club trick.

There will certainly be declarers who misguess diamonds after a non-diamond lead, or mistime the play, so taking ten tricks in spades will be good in any case. Those who bid and make game will do best, of course.

As for 2♦, declarer might manage quite a few tricks but it's not likely he'll do better than plus 110. If he does go plus he will do better than the pairs in spades who go minus, but that won't bring him much cheer.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

West can make 4♥ because the defenders can't take three club tricks before declarer gets the diamonds going. That's academic, however, because N/S will bid 4♣, which they can't make legitimately. It is at that point that the fate of the deal will be determined. E/W can double to achieve absolute par of plus 200, or pass it out for plus 100, which would be more than reasonable. Bidding on to 5♥, or perhaps 5♦, would be less reasonable at Matchpoints than at IMPs but although it's the wrong decision in theory it might turn out well in practice if someone (probably South) takes the push to 5♠. It's truth or dare situations like this one that make bridge such an interesting game.

A popular auction will be: 1♣-1♦-1♠-2♥; 2♠-3♥-4♠-?

West has fair defence but more promising offense despite his suspect ♣K. The main problem he faces is the fact that he has no idea about his partner's spade holding. His own void could be facing KQ108 or something less

awesome but equally defensive in nature. To bid 5♥ in front of East could easily turn a plus against 4♠ into a minus and both contracts might go more than one down. Still, if West passes 4♠ East is not obliged to bid again and rarely will, and there are many ordinary East hands that would mesh with West's to make 5♥ the winning action. It's difficult to point a finger at West for any decision he makes because each has an upside.

E/W joint tops will go to those who push N/S to 5♠ and double for a 500-point set, but even if they don't double E/W should score well for plus 200. If N/S divine to double 5♥ they may be surprised to discover that plus 100 is an excellent score. Indeed, plus 50 may be good too.

If E/W land in diamonds they will lose an extra trick when the defenders play three rounds of clubs. That won't happen often but will account for some of those 300s on the N/S side of the scoresheet.

Some Souths will jump to 4♠ directly over the 1♦ overcall. It's not the sort of action I would recommend with that suit and random side-suit holdings but those who favour such an approach have had good results with it, I'm sure. Here a jump to 4♠ might well end the auction, though a scientifically minded West, not fancying defending when holding no spades, may try a 4NT take-out bid to suggest two places to play - usually long hearts plus three-card diamond support in this auction, although clubs is not impossible on a different deal as the 1♣ opening may be short for many pairs. The defence to a spade contract should be straightforward: diamond to the ace, ♥K (catering to a singleton diamond in West; West would discourage hearts in that case), encouraging heart, heart to the ace, ♠K to come. If the defence does not cash the hearts declarer can come to ten tricks by taking the straight club finesse. That won't happen often.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ J 8 6 ♥ J 9 ♦ A Q 3 ♣ A K 7 6 2</p>	<p>♠ 9 5 3 ♥ A Q 5 3 ♦ 10 7 2 ♣ 10 8 5</p> <p>♠ K 10 4 ♥ K 10 8 4 2 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ 4 3</p> <p>♠ A Q 7 2 ♥ 7 6 ♦ J 6 5 4 ♣ Q J 9</p>
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E/W will most often finish in 3NT after a third-seat strong notrump, transfer to hearts, and choice-of-games jump to 3NT. Some will bid only 2NT and West should not treat his hand as a maximum at Matchpoints, even with his good five-card suit and fair heart holding. If the E/W notrump range is 13-15 or 14-16, East might pass 1NT or transfer to 2♥ and pass. If 1NT is 16-18, East might well pass West's 1NT rebid. Such are the vagaries of ranges and those who prefer a range that is not mainstream will quite often find themselves in a different contract than the bulk of the field.

Hearts handles easily for nine tricks and declarer may manage a tenth on a trump coup if he plays North for four trumps. With everything breaking the hand more or less plays itself after the defenders take their spade tricks.

The final result in notrump is less predictable, in part because North will not know what to lead. A spade is best, with South ducking completely or winning the queen and returning a low card. If declarer concedes a club the defenders can take three spades, a heart and a club. If declarer plays on hearts for extra tricks the defence gets two hearts and three spades.

If North starts a diamond and declarer plays on hearts the defenders can get the long diamond going. However, if declarer first plays on hearts then, without establishing the ♥Q as a defensive winner, ducks a club, he will come to nine tricks on repeated diamond leads. To be sure of beating the contract the defence must switch to spades upon winning the ♥A. If North leads a club and declarer ducks South's jack there is some potential for the defence to allow a ninth trick. The easiest way to prevent this is for South to switch to a low spade, but in this

variation North will have to go in with the ♥A on the first round to get the job done.

With the likelihood that several different contracts will be reached and plenty of scope for different lines of play and defence it is futile to make many confident predictions on this layout. If E/W can bid and make a game, however, you can be sure that they will score very well.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

<p>♠ K Q 9 6 ♥ 10 8 6 4 ♦ 9 5 4 ♣ K 3</p> <p>♠ J 5 4 2 ♥ --- ♦ K Q J 10 8 6 2 ♣ 8 6</p>	<p>♠ A 10 8 ♥ A J 7 ♦ 7 ♣ Q 10 9 5 4 2</p> <p>♠ 7 3 ♥ K Q 9 5 3 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ A J 7</p>
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N/S can make 4♥ (but not five) for plus 620 and E/W can take nine tricks in diamonds (if North leads the ♠K to threaten a spade ruff declarer can win and discard a club loser on the ♥A and later lead a spade to the eight if the defence does not take the spade ruff; if the defenders cash two clubs and play a spade declarer can duck) for minus 500 in 5♦ doubled. That's the bottom line.

After South's 1♥ West will overcall 2♦, 3♦ or 4♦; five is a bit rich. North will support hearts at the two or three level but might not be willing to commit to 4♥ over 4♦. If North passes 4♦ so might South. N/S plus 100 or 200 probably won't be good enough for them to score well but in practice I think North is quite likely to risk 4♥.

After a 2♦ overcall and raise to 2♥ East will try 2NT or 3♣. South will compete to 3♥ but probably won't try for game. Although 3♥ should probably end the auction, West might volunteer 4♦ or East might reopen with a penalty double, which West will pull. North might not see this as a strict "captaincy" situation and take a shot at 4♥ once South competes to 3♥.

A weak jump overcall of 3♦ will probably work worst of all because North will bid 3♥ and South will raise himself to game.

If South tries for game in one of the scenarios following a raise to 2♥ and action by East North has a clear-cut acceptance.

Although West has no entry to cash his diamond trick against a heart contract declarer can't quite eliminate his diamond loser. Hearts should produce exactly ten tricks.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ 10 8 4 2 ♥ 8 4 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ A K 10 4</p> <p>♠ Q 7 6 ♥ K Q J 9 3 2 ♦ 10 8 6 ♣ 9</p>	<p>♠ A K 9 3 ♥ 7 5 ♦ J 9 7 5 3 ♣ 3 2</p> <p>♠ J 5 ♥ A 10 6 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q J 8 7 6 5</p>
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If E/W play the spade suit to best advantage they can take four tricks in the suit to hold a notrump contract to nine tricks. It's more likely, however, that West will lead a high heart rather than a low spade and as West will usually be on lead, ten tricks will be by far the most common result for N/S.

Not every North will volunteer a takeout double of a weak 2♥ by West but in general if you would double 1♥ comfortably (as you would here) you should also double 2♥. If East passes South has some options and might not jump directly to 3NT as it doesn't take much to make 6♣ while 3NT would fail. Picture North with: AKxx x Kxxx Kxxx, for example. But how should South proceed? If 4♣ is forcing in the partnership's Lebensohl structure that's a possibility, but 4♣ goes past 3NT and thus loses some appeal. A 3♥ cue-bid leaves a hedge position if North could be expected to oblige by bidding 3♠: then South could continue with 3NT, sending the message that he had other contracts in mind with 3♥. That message will be closer to "I have something warm and fuzzy, partner" rather than anything specific, but really, that's the best South can do without bypassing the highest-scoring strain for game.

East could do his side some good by bidding 2♠ after North doubles 2♥, hoping to direct the best lead and willing to take his chances in 3♥ if push comes to shove. If N/S find 3NT now the defence has a better chance to take those four spade tricks, but it still won't be easy. If

West leads a low spade East will have to play him for queen-third rather than jack-third, underleading on the second round. But if N/S reach 3NT after 2♥-Dble-2♠ they may do so after South cue-bids 3♥ and North bids 3NT. To get their tricks East must lead a high spade, then a low one. I'm not saying this won't happen; it will. But it won't happen often.

At first glance it seems that 5♣ has to fail but to defeat the contract the defence has to follow the same course as it would have to in order to take four tricks against a notrump contract, West winning the second early spade with the queen. If East cashes two high spades declarer can ruff out the tripleton queen to set up the ten for a second heart discard. And if the defence starts hearts declarer has time to discard a spade on the third diamond. A trap for declarer if East wins the first two spade tricks in 5♣ is to play East for AKQ3, West for 976, leading the ♠10 through East on the third round to try to pin the nine. Ouch!

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

It is not written that "thou must open the East hand," but most will do so, as if the vulnerability were not a factor. West has a promising hand, but one that loses some of its lustre when South doubles 1♥ for takeout, suggesting length in the other three suits. Unless he is playing a deep game he will bid 1♠ rather than pass or redouble. East might pass a nonforcing 1♠ if he expects West to have a long suit, but at most tables East will rebid 2♦. A 3♣ rebid by West would usually commit his side to game unless 1♠ limited his hand so many will try 2♠ (showing some values in partnerships where a jump to 2♠ would have been weak) or a highly invitational 3♠. East will pass 2♠, of course, but might be tempted to go on over 3♠ on the strength of his three cover cards. Where West has concealed his clubs

East won't be in a position to appreciate the value of the ♣J (and nine).

On the lie of the cards E/W can take eleven tricks in spades. Declarer wins a red suit lead and calls for the ♠Q, which South will not cover. Now the ♣9 to declarer's king, the ♠A, felling the jack, and the ♠10 to knock out the king. There is no club ruff so declarer will draw the last trump when he ruffs himself in and will lose only to the ♣A for plus 200 or plus 650.

Curiously, if East does not open the bidding, it might be easier for his side to reach game. West might show a black two-suiter over a 1NT opening by South, or overcall 1♠ over 1♣. When East learns that West has at least six spades and didn't make a weak jump overcall he might well raise to 3♠ no matter what he bid over 1♠ (1NT, 2♥, or an awkward 2♣ cue bid); West will raise himself to game on the basis of his playing strength. Even on a club lead, ducked, declarer can take at least ten tricks in spades even if he plays ace-ten of spades. 1♠ will not be a popular opening bid for South after a pass on his right but those whose methods advocate this choice are likely to keep E/W out of 4♠. Their main assignment will be to escape from 1♠ doubled after: Pass-1♠-Pass-Pass; Dble-Pass-Pass-? Apart from the occasional minus 800, the best E/W scores will be plus 650 on this deceptively difficult layout for the travelling pairs.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

E/W belong in 4♠ and will do best to declare from the East seat because a club lead won't hurt them this time. If South does lead a club the queen will win and declarer will simply back his judgment in trumps, taking eleven or twelve tricks. On a diamond lead declarer might play ace-king of spades. If the queen drops he draws the last trump and takes twelve tricks. If the queen does not appear he turns to hearts. If

the ace is with South there is no guess on a club return: declarer plays dummy's queen. If the ♥A is with North and a club comes back declarer can decide whether to run it to the queen or rise with the ace and continue hearts. The second alternative sees him home with eleven tricks if the defender with the ♠Q has three (or four) hearts because there will be time to discard the ♣Q before the fourth heart gets ruffed. Otherwise there won't be any clues from the auction to help declarer with his guess for the ♠Q and declarer will back his judgment or turn to superstition. A minor psychological aspect enters the equation: declarer might finesse into the opponent he believes might be reluctant to switch to a club with the queen in dummy.

Those who play 4♠ from the West side are quite likely to get a club lead and will have to find the trump queen to come to eleven tricks; a club loser is inevitable.

Some E/W pairs will finish in hearts without mentioning spades and will need to get a club lead from South to have a chance for eleven tricks because there are no discards available. This deal could make the highlight film for four-four fits being superior to five-threes.

Some sample auctions:

- (1) 1♥-1♠; 2♠-3♦; 4♠-Pass
- (2) 1♥-2NT(natural); 3♠-4♠; Pass
- (3) 1♥-2♦ (2/I GF); 2♠-3♠; 3NT-4♠; Pass
- (4) 1♥-2♦ (2/I GF); 2♥-3♥; 3NT-4♥; Pass
- (5) 2♦ (Flannery)-2NT (Inquiry); 3♠ (4-5-2-2 non-minimum)-4♠; Pass

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

♠ A 10 ♥ K Q J 8 ♦ K J 9 5 4 ♣ J 8 ♠ K Q 9 5 ♥ --- ♦ 8 7 2 ♣ A K 9 6 4 3	♠ 8 4 ♥ A 10 7 6 5 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ Q 10 5 ♠ J 7 6 3 2 ♥ 9 4 3 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ 7 2
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Over West's 1♣ opening a 1♦ overcall is the straightforward action but some will prefer an imaginative 1♥ or perhaps a spade-flawed

takeout double to bring hearts into the picture immediately. In the mainstream scenario East will introduce hearts and South will have to decide whether to compete with his three-count. Those who believe that it's wrong to pass with support will be pleased to raise to 2♦ and a few optimists will risk 1♠. 2♦ will give West some trouble. With good distribution but a void in East's suit West will be torn between passing and bidding, knowing that East will have a right to expect more from him for a voluntary bid in this position. Partnerships that use 2NT artificially, to show a competitive 3♣ (a direct 3♣ would show extra values) would use this treatment here. Others will risk 3♣ or 2♠ (a different overbid) just the same. East has a good hand opposite long clubs and a non-minimum and will surely drive to game but choosing a strain won't be easy. He might try 3♦ to see if he can attract secondary heart support or he might rebid 3♥ himself, intending it as forcing opposite a theoretically sound hand. Alternatively, he might bid 3NT or commit to 5♣.

On the surface a trump lead and continuation threaten 5♣, but if declarer puts in dummy's ten he can ruff a heart, cross to the ♣Q, ruff another heart, and lead the ♠K. North can win and switch to diamonds but declarer wins, ruffs another heart and plays ♠Q, spade ruff. His remaining losers go on the ♥A and two long hearts. Making six! On a diamond lead the timing is different but declarer can take eleven tricks either by finessing the ♣10 to set up the hearts or simply by ruffing two cards in dummy with the five and ten of clubs.

3NT, on the other hand, is hopeless on a diamond lead. This would not be so if West held a heart, for in that case six rounds of clubs would do terrible things to North, whose final discard would be fatal, allowing declarer to take a trick with the ♥10 or to knock out the ♠A (after a diamond discard). Here North can discard his hearts safely, waiting to get in with the ♠A for the rest of the diamonds.

If West passes over 2♦ North might try 3♦ or 2♥. It's not at all clear how East should react over the former (he can double 2♥, then support clubs). 3♥ might not work very well as West could make a case for passing. Best would be a competitive double, converting 3♠ to 4♣, but E/W will have to judge well to reach 5♣ after this start.

If South does not compete in diamonds (or spades), West will rebid 1♠, leaving East with a tricky second call. A non-committal “fourth-suit” 2♦ would be ideal, but today most pairs would treat Reese’s “pitiful crutch” as a game force. In such partnerships East would have to choose from among 2♥, 3♥, 2NT, 2♣, 3♣ and the overbid of 2♦, hoping to know more on the next round of bidding. As many would open the East hand perhaps the fourth-suit 2♦ isn’t much of an overbid after all.

This combination is sufficiently difficult for E/W that anyone reaching 5♣ will score very well, with the top going to those who take twelve tricks on a non-diamond lead.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Even if N/S find their diamond fit (North will double 1♥ for takeout or overcall 2♦) the vulnerability will dissuade them from doing too much. West will declare 4♥ and make five because North can’t lead a diamond with profit and declarer will have time to build a club trick to discard the ♦Q. We’ll see lots of plus 450s on the scoresheet.

If West starts with a Flannery 2♦ (a popular treatment in certain parts of the world) East might become declarer in 4♥, giving South a chance to find the killing diamond lead. The wretched souls who take only ten tricks in hearts will consider crossing this convention off their card. That’s an overly dramatic reaction to an isolated random result but there are real holes in Flannery and giving it up strictly on the merits would not be a terrible idea. There are so many different 2♦ openings on the market that a serious shopper couldn’t help but find a (more) useful one.

Sample auctions:

- (1) 1♥-(Dble)-2NT (limit raise or better); 4♥; Pass ♠ or 3♥ by West-4♥; Pass
- (2) 1♥-(Dble)-Rdbl-(2♣); Pass-(Pass)-3♥; 4♥-All Pass ♠3♥ forcing♥
- (3) 1♥-(2♦)-3♦-(Pass); continuations as in (1)
- (4) As in (1) and (3) but with West rebidding 3♠ in case East has a good hand.