

Thursday 27 January 2022

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They need so much help now, not just because of war, famine, the need for medicines, clean water but now there is the added threat from the coronavirus. Please help us raise as much money as we can – send your donations to us and we will gather them together and pass them on to UNICEF from bridge players all over the world.

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**Help us to help these children who are in such need. Please. And please read the bit at the end of the commentary about future events.**

### Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Many Wests would favour a direct response of 3NT to 1♦. With both opponents passing, the no-trump game rates to be best – so why give away the show? West should cover North's heart lead in dummy, and win in hand to run the ♦Q. South does best to duck, then win the second diamond to shift to clubs. If West finesses, the ♣J is the right card to play. North might now cash the ♥K and play a second club. That would be correct if West had the ♠Q and not the ♣A, but it lets through an expensive overtrick here.

### Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

Most Easts will yield to temptation and open 1♦ or 1♥ depending on partnership style. It is easy to see E/W now ending in 4♥, despite their limited high-cards, and N/S have a choice of lines of defence to the game. They can lead trumps to try to stop the cross-ruff, or they can play diamonds to cut West off from his clubs. Still, if declarer can diagnose the spade position ten tricks are manageable; but today +420 rates to score E/W very well.

**Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

When South opens 1♣ most Wests will pass, and let N/S bid to 4♠, warned off 3NT by East's diamond overcall. With trumps 3-2, almost every table would collect 420; so let's consider maverick results! How about a 15-17 INT by South, raised enterprisingly to 3NT by North? Maybe there could even be a double from East (lead your short suit, partner)...but might not West lead a SPADE now? Remember, if you see a score of 650 here, it won't be a vulnerability error!

**Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

A 2NT opening by West, raised to 3NT by East, is the norm. What about North's lead? The favourites would be the fourth (or second) highest club, but many would prefer the ♠10 to try and find partner (the exotic ♥J will be the exception, surely?). No-one will hit on a diamond, the only legitimate way to hold West to ten tricks! On a black suit lead, declarer should duck a spade and then drive out the ♥A. When spades split, West may (unluckily) be able to afford to take the heart finesse for his eleventh.

**Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.**

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

If you play a weak no-trump you will get to 3NT in two calls. If not, the auction to 3NT may be slower and more informative for the defenders. 11 tricks will be a huge struggle in 3NT on a diamond lead. But on a heart lead, North has a choice of plays in spades. Running the queen may be best, but low to the seven looks preferable, since it gives the defenders more of a chance to err. Regardless, all normal lines in the spade suit except ace, then misguess, produce 12 tricks and a fine score.

**Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.**

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

South's skinny weak 2♠ opening will drive West into bidding 3♥ (4♥ seems way too much here) and North will of course bid 4♠. East should probably double now – cards not penalties – and what does West do now? He can pass and collect what he hopes will be a moderate penalty, but he would be wrong ....it needs careful defence to beat 4♠ at all! If instead West bids on with 4NT to suggest a heart/minor two-suiter he will reach a 5♥ contract that he may well be able to bring home.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

The N/S cards are difficult to bid precisely but a reasonable sequence would be: 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3NT. The 2NT bid is a slight overstatement of the hand but reasonable enough. On a heart lead declarer can win and lead the ♦10 to the ♦Q then run the diamond suit via the finesse against East. However, there seems no legitimate play for the overtrick. +600 rates to score well above average for N/S. Some will miss game, some will play diamonds, where 10 tricks appear to be the limit.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

When West opens 1♥ North has a straightforward overcall of 1NT. East might simply raise to 2♥, or if feeling expansive he might produce a pre-emptive jump to 3♥ (or even an optimistic fit-jump to 3♣). It would be a good moment to put South under pressure; as you can see, N/S can make no fewer than 11 tricks in spades if they guess the hand well. I'm not sure the field will reach 4♠ here, and if they do, some may misguess the diamonds and struggle in that contract.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

There is no good reason for N/S to go beyond the (relatively) safe confines of part-score here. Either South may open with that call, or North will respond 1NT to 1♦, and be raised to 2NT, where he will play. In fact, with the hearts and diamonds splitting so favourably, the sky is almost the limit for N/S here. 2NT is easily manageable (via the red-suit finesses), while per our friendly double-dummy analyst, we can take no fewer than 10 tricks in diamonds and 11 (count them!) tricks in hearts.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

East might choose any of the five plausible options at the one-level depending on partnership style, but E/W really ought to be able to find a way to play 4♠. A heart lead from either defender sets that game. But on a passive lead – say a trump from South – declarer might just find a way home by winning and playing a club at once. Now if he reads the heart position he can cash the ♥A early and hold his heart losers to one. Any E/W pair who find a way to stop in a spade partscore will probably score well for their discretion.

**Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.**

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

South will open 1♥, and let West jump to 3♠. North definitely ought to pass now, but whether he bids or not, East has a straightforward call. He can use Blackwood and bid the slam – letting West wrap up 12 tricks in no time at all after the heart lead. In fact, slightly curiously, 7♥ is a cheap sacrifice here; with the ♦A onside, 7♥ escapes for -800, and should earn N/S a much better score than -980 – though of course, some E/W pairs will miss slam.

**Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

Unless N/S play Lucas Twos, East will get to open in third seat. My choice would be to bid 3♦ but I understand an opening 1♦ call. Whichever East does, South will double and North should find a way to drive to 4♠, a contract where 11 tricks will turn out to be very straightforward. Of course that is not the full story: do E/W have a potentially paying sacrifice? Yes indeed! The defenders need to take their heart ruff even to hold East to nine tricks in diamonds.

**Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.**

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

Most Easts will respect the vulnerability, and pass after North opens 1♣. Now after 1♣-1♦-1NT-2♥-3♣-3♠ what should North do? The winning action is to bid 4♥ – the only legitimate game for N/S! But quite a few pairs will play 3NT here – and if they declare it from the South seat they will make it on a low spade lead from West, as the suit becomes blocked. Even after East leads a low spade West has to be thoughtful enough to unblock his ♠J8 early, or there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth!

**Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.**

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

East may well not fancy opening either 2♠ or 3♠ here, and one can understand why – but there is no denying that after 2♠ – 4♠ North might be checking the backs of the cards carefully. If left to their own devices N/S should reach 7NT or 7♥ easily enough. For example, a 2♣ opening followed by heart bids and Blackwood will do the trick. As it is, they will have their work cut out after active intervention even to play the small slam. Mind you, 4♠ down 1400 may not be so terrible for N/S.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

It is ironic after the previous deal that N/S (even at unfavourable vulnerability) may get a chance to get payback by making life hard for E/W. 6♥ is far from easy to play here on a spade lead, since that takes out the entry to the diamonds. Declarer can survive by ruffing two spades in dummy and pitching two on the top diamonds, leaving the ♥A in dummy as an entry for the club finesse if diamonds do not cooperate. This line would actually lead to 13 tricks; but my guess is that few will play any slam at all here.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Facing a weak no-trump the East hand is clearly worth a slam-try. Best is to transfer to hearts and then jump to 4♦ to show a self-agreeing splinter with long, strong hearts. Now the West hand has too much in diamonds to cooperate in a slam venture... and rightly so, since even 5♥ is in serious jeopardy on passive diamond leads. Most E/W pairs will make only ten tricks, since both spade honours are misplaced. This means that those who play no-trump and collect 630 will score undeservedly well.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Die-hard four-card majorites will open the North hand 1♥, others will prefer 1♦ (as do I even in an Acol framework). After a 1♥ opening East will double, West will obediently respond 2♣, and who knows what will happen thereafter? It is no clearer if North opens 1♦ and East stretches to overcall 2♣. So let's look at par on the deal: E/W can't take fewer than nine tricks in clubs...can they? While N/S do best in spades, but may never bid the suit. They can certainly take eight tricks there and might do better.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

South will probably pass over a weak no-trump from East, and if he is sensible North will balance, treating his hand as a single-suiter in spades. Even so, it may be truly hard for N/S to get to what is a very decent game – one in which they can take 11 tricks. If E/W get together in clubs it may actually help N/S reach game. My guess is that the field will be split between those reaching 4♠ and those playing part-score in spades.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Many Souths will exploit the vulnerability to open their hand with a weak one- or two-suited call. Once North hears that, he must decide whether to attempt 7♥ or settle for the small slam, in either spades or hearts. 7♥ on a club lead would be awkward even if trumps split – in fact as the cards lie you cannot even make the small slam in hearts...By contrast, 6♠ is trivial, though 7♠ is not a good contract. There will surely be some unlucky pairs going down in hearts here, so +980 will bring home a fine result for N/S.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Even if you play weak-jump overcalls the North hand hardly qualifies when vulnerable. But whatever North does, this is not an easy hand for E/W. You would not be amazed to make 12 or 13 tricks in spades, would you, till the bad break comes to light. As the cards lie, the best line in 4♠ on eg a heart lead is to ruff, draw one trump, then ruff two more hearts in East. If you time it just right you can cash the diamonds and clubs, then lead a third club to force South to ruff and be endplayed in trumps at trick 12.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

If North passes (not a given!) East will open 1♣, West will respond INT, and North can double. Now N/S should find hearts, but will they find a way to 4♥? I doubt it. At double-dummy South can give up a spade, then draw one or two rounds of trumps, ruff out the diamonds, and pitch a spade on the ♦10. Then he can ruff a spade, and draw the last trump for a miraculous 680! Note that 5♣ is a cheap save – but it probably won't help the E/W score much.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

South has a text-book 4♠ opening bid, and regardless of the results here, the percentage action with the West hand does seem to be to pass. If he passes instead he collects a quiet +50. But West may stretch more than a little to double, if his partnership plays it as optional or take-out. The double should persuade East to look for a making contract at the five-level via a two-suited 4NT bid. That gets his side to 5♣ (unluckily down on a heart ruff) or 5♥, a contract that cannot be defeated.

**Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.**

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

After West's weak no-trump, quite a few Norths will brave the vulnerability and come in to show a two-suiter with hearts, or the majors. That will work seriously to his disadvantage, since now E/W will identify their lack of a heart-stop for no-trumps. I'm not sure whether E/W will find a way to 5♣ (where intellectual declarers might find a way to lose a trump trick to the ♣10) or simply play a part-score in clubs. I'm guessing any plus score for E/W will not be terrible here.

**Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.**

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

Another day, another weak no-trump for West. East will transfer into hearts letting South double for take-out on the second round, or start with a double to show cards. E/W can make only seven tricks in hearts. However, with the ♠K and ♣A rather where you expect them to be, N/S have a comfortable spade part-score, and the question is whether any South will be allowed to make ten tricks in spades by stealing a trick with the ♥Q... I'm sure the answer to that will be yes!

**Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

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

The field will be split between those who pass the North hand and those who open it at the one- or two-level. If North passes, then E/W can get together in hearts; the ♥J will almost certainly score a trick on defence one way or another, holding them to nine tricks. Conversely, N/S have four top minor-suit losers in spades and rate to lose a trump trick as well. On that basis anyone making a contract here will therefore score well enough, I'm sure.

**Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.**

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

In fourth seat North will open either 2♣ or 2NT. Either way, South rates to raise to 3NT (although if South invites slam facing a 22-24 action North will reject the try firmly). Result-merchants will note that 7NT is makeable and ask what they did wrong. The answer is: nothing. On a spade lead even the small slam is terrible. Only the fact that the ♣K-10 are onside gives you any hope for 12 tricks. Moreover, making 12 tricks won't be such a terrible matchpoint score for N/S.

**Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.**

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

It may be easiest to open the South hand INT than to distort the rebid after 1♦-1♠. Whatever South does, contracts in all four suits will be attempted. N/S have a double-fit of sorts, but less than half the deck. The defenders have four top winners against diamonds, and considerably more than that against spades. E/W have only three top losers in hearts or clubs, but some annoying minor honours to cope with in their potential trump suits. With only half the deck, few will attempt game, and even fewer will succeed!

**Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

West will open 1♣, giving North the option to overcall in his rather feeble suit. Most will take their chance to bid hearts, rather than double, and now South should just drive to 4♥. The defenders have three easily establishable winners in the side-suits, but declarer should come to ten tricks via five trumps, two aces, two spades and a ruff in the short hand. 3NT by South will also come home easily enough – but for a less rewarding matchpoint score.

**Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.**

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

This 22-point East hand does feel like it is worth 2♣ rather than 2NT (because of the good five-card suit). South can overcall 2♠ or 3♠ according to taste, and now it may be hard for West to let his partner play game rather than trying for slam. Whatever the defenders do, 11 tricks appear to be the limit in no-trumps, but many E/W pairs will achieve considerably worse results than this – either by playing too high, or by settling in clubs or hearts.

**Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.**

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

West has to pick a suit to open here (hearts, spades, clubs, or an inflated 2NT call?) E/W will probably hear North overcall in spades, and then want to play no-trumps. Best defence is to lead and continue diamonds against no-trumps. North can get in with the ♣K to set up his suit, after which declarer will have to decide between a heart finesse or some sort of endplay for his ninth trick. Experts always reject finesses, but today the simple line is the best!



**Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.**

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

Don't tell anyone, but that 15-count is really a weak no-trump (the ♥KQ are not pulling their full weight). If you do opt for the weak no-trump you probably play there and on a diamond lead you make 120 for a fine score. If you open a black-suit you probably play 4♣, where even nine tricks might be a struggle. Does this deal prove anything? Not at all, except that if you live by Milton Work's HCP, you sometimes die by it as well.

**Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.**

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

E/W will start their auction: Pass-1♦-1♠-INT, after which West might stretch to invite to 2NT. However, at matchpoints, with such a flat shape, West might somewhat pessimistically pass. Today taking the low road would be in order. Although 3NT has play, particularly if South leads a top club – as I must admit I would -- eight tricks are the limit. Meanwhile 3♦ collects +110 on careful play. This suggests +120 will score E/W very nicely.

Remember that we are planning to run other Charity events during the year – the **Charity Challenge** for 2022 will be raising money for two Cancer Charities, which have been so badly affected by COVID ... Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie with the funds split between them. That will be held from 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March with different hands each day and we are sure it will be a “hybrid” event with some clubs playing online and others face to face, but we are getting used to that aren't we ☺

In July there will be the **Summer Charity Pairs** – that will be another full week of pairs, starting on 4<sup>th</sup> July and with different hands each day through to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> July ... this will raise funds for Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

Then comes November and our **Children in Need event** – As ever, different hands each night and I am looking at the dates being from Monday 7<sup>th</sup> to Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November rather than starting on the Friday. We don't yet know when the BBC will be doing their CiN “night” but I am guessing it will either on 18<sup>th</sup> so our dates should be just fine.

Do keep an eye on the website – obviously we will publish the amounts raised for the various events, and of course it's quite different with individuals donating but hopefully we can raise some goodly amounts for charity – the charities are all having such a tough time of it at the moment, so hopefully by doing these events we can all help a bit.

Thank you for joining us, thank you for your support – really truly we appreciate it so much.

Best wishes

Anna & Mark

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