Commentary
for the
IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs

Wednesday 5 November 2025

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the IBU Simultaneous Pairs 2025, and for supporting the Irish Bridge Union (IBU).

As you probably know, the IBU is the confederation of the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Bridge Union, and has responsibility, on an all-Ireland basis, for sending teams to represent Ireland at World and European competitions. Summer 2026 sees the European Championships in Riga, Latvia, to which the IBU intends to send four teams. The costs of such competitions, like most costs these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this Simultaneous Pairs, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the IBU, is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the chance to test yourself against your fellow players across Ireland (and for those still playing online, maybe overseas as well). As always, the hands (which are randomly generated by computer with no manual intervention) provided plenty of difficult decisions. Many thanks to our expert commentators Brian Senior (Monday), James Heneghan (Tuesday), Fearghal O'Boyle (Wednesday), Paul Delaney (Thursday), and Enda Murphy (Friday) for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice.

Don't forget to check your standing in the national results at www.ecatsbridge.com/sims. You'll find the daily commentaries there too.

Gordon Lessells

President, Irish Bridge Union

Introduction from Fearghal O'Boyle

For the purposes of our discussion, let us assume that we are playing simple ACOL '4-card majors, weak No-Trump, Stayman, Transfers, Weak 2's in 3 suits, RKCB and natural signals (High Encouraging)'. We will mention other variations where relevant but as is often the case, the bidding system used will make little or no difference.

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	♠A97 ♥J104 ♦K752 ♣J76	
♠3 ♥K7 ♦AJ64 ♣AQ9854		♠Q1086 ♥83 ♦Q983 ♣K103
	♠KJ542 ♥AQ9652 ♦10 ♣2	

HCP	
9	
14	7
10	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	4	3	-
S	-	-	4	3	-
E	4	4	-	-	2
W	4	4	-	-	2

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

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

A great board to start with – I imagine there will be at least 5 different auctions and a multitude of final results e.g. 4♥ (S), 4♥+1 (S), 4♠-1 (S), 4♠-2 (S), 5♣x-1.

The Bidding:

To begin with: should South open the bidding third in hand and if so what should he open? 1♥? 1♠? 2♥?

Then if South opens, what does West bid? 2♣? 2NT? Dbl?

'Six-Five Come Alive' is a useful adage so South should open the bidding. Opening 1♠ is not as crazy as it looks – it makes a lot of sense to hide one of our Hearts and treat this hand as a simple 5-5 major two suiter planning to open 1♠ and rebid 2♥. If we open 1♥ or 2♥ then we are not strong enough to rebid our 5 card Spade suit – although most will manage to do so regardless.

The Play:

4♥ is a difficult contract to get to and it's not a walk in the park to make 10 tricks either – declarer needs to organise a spade ruff in dummy which means, if he is offered a ruff and discard by West, he needs to reject the Greek gift in order to retain a trump in dummy for the spade ruff. However if West does not lead a club, declarer could easily wind up with 11 tricks.

4♠ is a reasonable contract - having great chances if the trumps break 3-2. Alas, they do not break tonight so most will go down 2. To make 9 tricks it seems you have to play double dummy and play for the 4-1 trump break and abandon trumps after 1 round and play on hearts after that. So 8 tricks will be a common result for those who play in spades - most declarers will play for a 3-2 break in tonight's matchpointed pairs game where the goal is to make the maximum number of tricks.

5♣ and 5♦ by E/W seem to have 3 losers i.e. 2 aces and the ♦K.

As ever, in these matchpoint games, any plus score will score well.

♠876
♥Q104
♦Q2
♣Q8643

♠AK102
♥3
♦AJ1053
♣J52

♠QJ954
♥K952
♦K9
♣A9

♠3
♥AJ876
♦8764
♣K107

HCP		
	6	
13		13
	8	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	-	5	-	6	5
W	-	5	-	6	4

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

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

The Bidding:

There are 12 tricks available to E/W in a spade contract if they can solve the ♦Q puzzle and those who don't over-think things will probably bid the slam – but then you have to find a way to make it.

For sure, holding 3 Key Cards and a singleton, West is worth more than just a simple raise to game but the waters may become muddied if West gets too fancy.

West has a choice between showing his singleton heart via a 4♥ response or showing his good 5-card diamond suit via a 2♦ response or showing a good hand with 4 card support via a Jacoby 2NT response. I believe Jacoby should only be used for 'balanced' raises and also a good 5-card suit is a more important asset than a singleton so my preference would be for a 2♦ response followed by 4♠ to show the good diamonds and trump support.

West's singleton heart will not come as good news for East or West so stopping short of slam is a reasonable action - indeed swap the ♣A with the ♥A and slam goes quickly down.

The Play:

Although 12 tricks can be made, it is still possible for declarer to emerge with only 10 tricks - losing a heart, a club and a trick to the DQ.

To make 12 tricks declarer needs to cash ♦AK or else play North for the ♦Q and finesse the ♦9 in the East hand. This means that declarer makes 5 spades, 5 diamonds, 1 club and 1 heart ruff.

There really aren't any clues as to the location of the ♦Q so an initial diamond lead would be very welcome. A non club lead might give you some breathing space but you will still be left with that diamond decision – maybe hoping for 2 heart ruffs and hoping to ruff out the diamonds in 2 or 3 rounds and that plan also leads to 12 tricks.

	♠ 10743 ♥ 9 ♦ J7 ♣ KQ10962	
♠ 5 ♥ AQ53 ♦ 9543 ♣ AJ54		♠ AJ962 ♥ KJ874 ♦ K108 ♣ -
	♠ KQ8 ♥ 1062 ♦ AQ62 ♣ 873	

HCP		
	6	
11		12
	11	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	-	-	-
S	2	-	-	-	-
E	-	2	5	1	2
W	-	2	4	1	1

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
Pass	3♣	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♥	All Pass

The Bidding:

North's third-in-hand 3♣ opening bid with only a 6-card club suit is pretty standard these days.

East's plan, whether he is opening or overcalling, is to show both majors – either with one bid if he has such a bid or else one at a time – some Easts might bid 4♣ over the 3♣ opening in an attempt to show both major suits.

A double by East, instead of a 3♠ overcall, might result 3♣x becoming the final contract or 4♥ being played by West – neither outcome being too pretty for E/W.

The Play:

If West plays 4♥ then a diamond lead will give N/S the first 3 tricks – but the ♣K looks like a more normal lead by North. If East plays the hand then it looks like declarer should come home with 11 tricks – losing 2 diamond tricks to South.

♠ J 10 8 7 6 5
♥ K 5 3 2
♦ K Q
♣ 9

♠ 4 2
♥ Q 10 8 7 6
♦ 9 6
♣ K 10 6 3

♠ A K Q
♥ J 9 4
♦ 7 3 2
♣ A Q J 4

♠ 9 3
♥ A
♦ A J 10 8 5 4
♣ 8 7 5 2

HCP		
	9	
5		17
	9	

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

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♦
1♥	1♠	Dbl	Pass
2♥	2♠	All Pass	

The Bidding :

The bidding can go many different ways – they say ‘matchpoints is a bidder’s game and those who bid here will score well.

North will feel like bidding on the first round but his 4 card heart suit and poor spades will lead him to reluctantly pass. However North will bid spades at least once on this auction later on and a vulnerable overcall by South will give North all the encouragement he needs to get back into the auction.

South is worth a 1♦ overcall – how else can N/S get diamonds into the picture. Some Souths might even try a weak jump overcall 2♦.

The Play:

North has no problem making 9 tricks in a spade contract - losing 3 trump tricks and a club.

If E/W end up in 3♥ they can be defeated if North can organise a club ruff for himself or he might even be able to endplay dummy into giving him a club ruff!

♠AQ972
♥J107
♦AQ105
♣J

♠KJ53
♥Q98643
♦3
♣72

♠8
♥K
♦KJ942
♣K109863

♠1064
♥A52
♦876
♣AQ54

HCP		
	14	
6		10
	10	

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

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

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

The Bidding :

It looks like all roads lead to 4♠ played by North. East will make some noises with his 6-5 minor two-suiter – either by overcalling 2♣ or by overcalling with an 'Unusual' 2NT showing both minors. In any event, West is more interested in North's spades than his partner's minors – so much so that some West's might even double 4♠. Maybe a simple 2♣ overcall is a better idea by East?

The Play

The play in 4♠ is not easy at all and I expect quite a few to go down. However if East makes an 'Unusual 2NT' overcall showing 10 cards in the minors then this should paint a useful roadmap for a discerning declarer in the North seat.

Declarer needs to run the ♠10 from dummy on the first round of trumps and then run the ♠6 from dummy on the second round of trumps thereby denying West any trump tricks.

♠K73
♥-
♦K1054
♣1098532

♠4
♥942
♦AQ87
♣KJ764

♠AQ985
♥AKJ7653
♦9
♣-

♠J1062
♥Q108
♦J632
♣AQ

HCP		
	6	
10		14
	10	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	1	6	2	3
W	1	1	6	3	3

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

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

The Bidding:

There are some incredible hand shapes tonight – and all randomly dealt.

When East picks up this rare 7-5 shape, his only interest should be in finding out if partner has a heart or spade fit, the ♦A and the ♠K.

This is a really tough board for E/W. I feel those who bid slam will have shovelled themselves into it - maybe some Easts opened a strong 2♣ with their 3-loser hand. Once you get the possibility of slam into your head on this board it is very hard to get 'off the bus'.

While I don't think this 14 point hand is worth a strong 2♣ opening bid, I do think its 7-5 shape makes it worth a reverse into 2♠. The 4 and 5 level bids in the given auction are control bids - agreeing hearts as trumps and showing first or second round controls in the suit bid.

Admittedly, 6♥ a bit of a gamble so not bidding slam is perfectly reasonable.

The Play:

Declarer can make 12 tricks if he decides to ruff 2 spades in dummy. He probably wins the spade lead, cashes a top trump to get the bad news and then proceeds to ruff 2 spades in dummy, setting up his 5th spade in the process. Declarer makes 6 heart tricks, 3 spade tricks, 2 spade ruffs and 1 diamond trick.

♠AQ7
♥KQJ108762
♦A7
♣-

♠42
♥4
♦109532
♣J8752

♠10965
♥95
♦KJ84
♣A104

♠KJ83
♥A3
♦Q6
♣KQ963

HCP		
	16	
1		8
	15	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	7	7	6
S	1	-	7	7	6
E	-	1	-	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♠
Pass	7♥	All Pass	

The Bidding:
North's 2♥ response is the good old fashioned strong 'jump-shift'. South's raise to 3♥ shows a top honour in hearts. The other bids are control bids showing ace or king in the bid suits.

Fans of 'Dirty Harry' might remember Clint Eastwood asking 'Are you feeling lucky?'.

There are 13 top tricks in a heart contract. This hand is all about whether we bid 7♥ or not and in the end it will come down to one player or the other (most likely North) 'feeling lucky' enough to bid 7♥.

When North learns that his partner has the ♥A and ♠K, he can count 12 tricks and since South opened the bidding, North might further reason that South must surely have one more trick to offer.

And even if South has nothing more to offer, North should consider that his opponents will be under fierce pressure to discard correctly on the run of an 8 card trump suit.

All-in-all, if you don't 'feel lucky' about making 7♥ with this North hand, you will never 'feel lucky'. On the other hand, we don't want you to feel so 'lucky' that you bid 7NT – although that contract makes if you can avoid a club lead.

♠KQ984
♥KQ5
♦8
♣A1082

♠53
♥986
♦632
♣KQ943

♠J106
♥10432
♦KQ4
♣J65

♠A72
♥AJ7
♦AJ10975
♣7

HCP		
	14	
5		7
	14	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	6	4	7	4
S	3	6	4	7	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	5NT
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

The Bidding:

South is interested in slam as soon as North shows extra values with his 3♣ rebid. 3 aces, a promising 6-card side suit and a side suit singleton should encourage South to make a move towards slam.

Bidding 6♠ will score well – and if we knew North had a singleton diamond we might have given the grand slam more thought.

The Play:

With diamonds breaking 3-3, two ruffs will establish the suit and we have plenty of entries to be able to get to the South hand to enjoy them and thereby make all 13 tricks.

♠AK43
♥Q103
♦104
♣J864

♠1062
♥K954
♦Q8
♣AQ75

♠Q97
♥AJ87
♦A9732
♣K

♠J85
♥62
♦KJ65
♣10932

HCP
10
11 14
5

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	3	4	2	3
W	2	3	4	2	3

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

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

The Bidding:

This is a borderline game as can be seen by the struggle to get into it. Of course if East rebids 3♥ it is no longer a struggle to get into it..

The East hand is a nice hand – nice shape, two aces, 4 card heart support but still the ♣K might be useless, the diamonds are not great so the hand is still only a 7-loser hand.

The Play:

Declarer loses 2 spades and a diamond making 1 spade trick, 4 heart tricks, 2 diamond tricks (leading a diamond to the queen) and 3 club tricks.

♠AJ7
♥AK7
♦AQJ62
♣K6

♠654
♥8543
♦K3
♣Q954

♠Q103
♥Q109
♦10984
♣1082

♠K982
♥J62
♦75
♣AJ73

HCP		
	22	
5		4
	9	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	5	4	6	5
S	4	5	4	6	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	4NT
All Pass			

The Bidding:
The North hand with 22 HCP and a good 5-card suit is worth an upgrade to 23 and therefore worth a 2♣ opening bid.
South uses Stayman followed by a Quantitative 4NT asking North to bid 6NT with 24 HCP.

Those who decide to open a simple 2NT will land safely in 3NT and have a nice easy board and keep their blood pressure low.

Although 6NT has chances, sadly none of them work tonight i.e. both black queens are wrongly placed and the diamonds don't break 3-3.

The Play:
Declarer can only muster up 11 tricks – as long as E/W do not away from their black Queens at any stage.

♠93
♥842
♦J9843
♣J106

♠Q104
♥AJ7
♦AK62
♣AQ8

♠A865
♥K1095
♦Q7
♣932

♠KJ72
♥Q63
♦105
♣K754

HCP	
2	
20	9
9	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	4	6	5	5
W	4	4	6	5	5

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all

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

The Bidding:
Most will open 2NT but this should really show 21-22 or a good 20. Flat 4-3-3-3 shapes do not count as 'good'. As it happens it doesn't matter what you open because all roads lead to 3NT.

East could also use some sort of 3♣ checkback to see if West might have 4 spades but it often pays to play your game contracts in 3NT when you have 28+ points.

The Play:
If declarer can guess who has the ♥Q he will make 11 tricks - otherwise he makes 10 tricks.

There are no clues available from the bidding as to who might have the ♥Q so declarer may as well try and seek some help from the defenders in the play by leading the ♥J from hand – if West fumbles let the ♥J run and if West plays low smoothly, rise with the ♥K from dummy and run the ♥10 on the way back.

♠J87
♥J964
♦AJ4
♣Q54

♠A94
♥3
♦62
♣KJ108763

♠Q106
♥AKQ1072
♦53
♣A9

♠K532
♥85
♦KQ10987
♣2

HCP	
9	
8	15
8	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	5	-	4	2	1
W	5	-	4	2	1

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	All Pass

The Bidding:

West has a normal 3♣ opening. Some East's will simply respond 4♥ and maybe that is what you should do but 4♥ is a bit pushy facing a pre-empt – can partner really cover 2 of your 5 losers?

I suppose partner could have a singleton spade and a top honour in each of the minors or maybe her actual unlikely hand (top honours in clubs and spades).

Passing 3♣ or bidding 3♥ and passing 4♣ are both well reasoned alternatives – we don't usually expect to find pre-emptors holding a side suit ace.

The Play:

West's brilliant club suit means that declarer can make 4♥ without having to guess the heart layout. Declarer loses 2 diamonds and the ♥J – using the club suit to discard spade losers from hand.

Indeed if South leads a club, declarer will make 4♥+1.

How should we play the heart suit? Finesse or play for the drop? With 7+ cards between the two hands, we play for the drop – doesn't work tonight but c'est la vie.

♠ J 10
♥ K J 10 8 6
♦ K 10 5 3
♣ 5 2

♠ -
♥ Q 9 7 4 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ K Q J 4 3

♠ A K 9 5 4 2
♥ A 5
♦ A J 8
♣ 10 6

♠ Q 8 7 6 3
♥ 3
♦ Q 9 2
♣ A 9 8 7

HCP		
	8	
8		16
	8	

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

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Dbl	All Pass	

The Bidding:

This won't be a pleasant hand for E/W – any E/W who can get out for the loss of 200 or less will have done very well.

West's 1NT response is an extreme use of ACOL'S 'Dustbin' 1NT response – The West hand being just a tad short of a 2♣ or 2♥ response. The advantage of the 1NT response is that we might be able to get to play in 1NT, 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥ on what looks like a misfit hand.

Maybe West should just pass 3NT – at least that contract won't be doubled and it should escape for only 2 down.

The Play:

The bad spade break means that there are only 6 tricks available for E/W in a spade contract. The bad heart break means there are only 7 tricks available for E/W in a heart contract.

It seems E/W can make 7 tricks in No-Trump i.e. 4 spade tricks, 1 heart, 1 diamond and 1 club trick.

♠AQ105 ♥AQJ1072 ♦Q3 ♣8 ♠98742 ♠J6 ♥3 ♥9654 ♦K1094 ♦AJ852 ♣964 ♣J10 ♠K3 ♥K8 ♦76 ♣AKQ7532	Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♥	All Pass	

HCP
15 3 7 15

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	-	5	2	2
S	5	-	5	2	2
E	-	1	-	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

The Bidding:

South opens 1♣ - this is not a 3NT opening because South has too much strength outside of his club suit. North has a great hand and may even consider a jump-shift response of 2♥. However the general advice is 'not to jump shift when you have 2 suits to bid'.

Neither player can bid 3NT because they do not have a stopper in the unbid suit i.e. diamonds. South does well to support his partner's heart suit by bidding 4♥.

North makes a slam try by cue-bidding his spade control, South shows his club control and then North gives up the slam effort because he knows his side are going to lose the first two diamond tricks.

The Play:

Sometimes you can bid a hand too well – like here, where you and partner bid well and discover that you are going to lose the first two diamond tricks – only to lose out to the 'bow and arrow' bidders who simply bid the slam (giving no information away in the auction) and they make slam because they don't get a diamond lead.

Hopefully, E/W were paying attention to their opponents bidding and have also gleaned the valuable piece of information that N/S have a diamond hole.

If E/W do not lead a diamond at trick 1, then declarer will make 12 tricks in a club or heart contract. Even if N/S don't advertise their 2 immediate diamond losers, the fact that they avoided a 3NT contract should be a further clue to the defenders that declarer might be wide open in diamonds.

If N/S somehow end up in No-Trump then E/W need to be careful not to block their diamonds i.e. East needs to win the 4th round of diamonds to be able to cash the fifth diamond trick.

♠AQJ1087
♥K63
♦Q97
♣4

♠6532
♥AQ9
♦A42
♣J92

♠K9
♥8
♦J10865
♣Q10863

♠4
♥J107542
♦K3
♣AK75

HCP	
12	
11	6
11	

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

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

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

The Bidding:

N/S have an 9-card Heart fit, 23 HCP and two singletons so it should be very straightforward to reach a 4♥ contract. North should decide to play in hearts rather than in spades once the 8+ card heart fit comes to light.

East might toy with the idea of overcalling a 'Sandwich' 1NT or an 'Unusual' 2NT to show both minor suits – and if the ♠K was one of the minor suit kings, then that would be a perfect bid. On this actual hand there is no profitable sacrifice for E/W - 5♣x or 5♦x will cost 800.

The Play:

Declarer in 4♥ will lose ♦A and 2 heart tricks and he will lose a fourth trick to East's ♠K if he takes a regular spade finesse.

But the spade suit is a mirage – declarer has 10 tricks without the need to establish the spade suit via 4 heart tricks, 1 diamond trick, 2 club tricks, 2 club ruffs and the ace of spades.

♠ 10 9 8 6 3
♥ 8
♦ A J 6
♣ 10 9 4 3

♠ K Q 5 4
♥ A K Q 9 7 5 3
♦ 9
♣ J

♠ A J 7
♥ 4
♦ Q 10 7 4 2
♣ A K 8 5

♠ 2
♥ J 10 6 2
♦ K 8 5 3
♣ Q 7 6 2

HCP		
	5	
15		14
	6	

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

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♥	All Pass

The Bidding:
We will see quite a few E/W pairs try for slam here – most likely 6♥. We've all been in worse slams – E/W are unlucky here - it's only the 4-1 trump break that beats it.

Then again, the diamond lead might not be obvious to the defenders and if they don't lead a diamond, they won't get their diamond trick and 6♥ will make.

Those who avoid slam will most likely score well.

The Play:
N/S need to find the diamond lead to beat 6♥ and sadly for N/S the ♠1098 looks mighty enticing.

♠5
♥Q
♦A842
♣J1076432

♠1032
♥AK98
♦96
♣AKQ9

♠AKJ974
♥6432
♦75
♣5

♠Q86
♥J1075
♦KQJ103
♣8

HCP		
	7	
16		8
	9	

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

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	3♣	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

The Bidding:

3♣ might not be the purist's choice but when it's Nil All you should look for every opportunity to make a bid.

East's 3♠ is a stretch for sure but we are ready to apologise to partner if it is wrong. The big problem with 3♠ will become apparent when West goes into his office and quite reasonably starts considering slam options.

However, West's small doubleton diamond and his lack of a top spade and the expected bad breaks after North's pre-empt should eventually dissuade him from bidding more than 4♠.

The Play:

Declarer loses 2 diamonds and the ♠Q. However some might even go down in 4♠ on a singleton club lead from South if they are not careful – losing a diamond a trump and 2 hearts.

Declarer needs to discard a diamond as his first club discard and a heart as his second (if North manages to lead a third round of clubs).

On the other hand, those declarers who get the ♥J opening lead should be able to divine the heart position and emerge with 11 tricks.

♠Q753
♥AK6
♦J5
♣KQ54

♠J94
♥Q2
♦K984
♣A983

♠1086
♥75
♦Q1032
♣10762

♠AK2
♥J109843
♦A76
♣J

HCP		
	15	
10		2
	13	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	2	6	6	5
S	3	2	6	6	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

The Bidding:

Wow- another slam hand - this is a great set of boards - and once again a reminder that the deals are 100% random - no human tampering at all.

Of course, it's a 'squeaky botty' slam but if you are in it - you will make it thanks to the 3-3 spade break.

I don't really see a way to bid it – even if North uses some sort of Jacoby 2NT response, South's singleton club won't come as good news for North. Maybe if South rebids 2♠ or 3♥ it might excite North. All in all 4♥ seems a reasonable place to be.

The Play:
Declarer seems to have a club trick to lose and a diamond trick. However West has 'Hobson's Choice' at trick 1 - lead a diamond and wait for his ♣A but sadly there is nothing to wait for – either he leads his ♣A and declarer's diamond losers go away on dummy's good clubs or he leads a diamond and sets up a diamond trick for his side but then declarer's club loser goes away on the dummy's 13th spade.

On the ace of clubs lead, declarer makes 6 heart tricks, 3 spade tricks, ace of diamonds and 2 club tricks.

On a diamond lead, declarer makes 6 heart tricks, 4 spade tricks, ace of diamonds and a diamond ruff.

	♠KJ6 ♥AJ73 ♦KJ97 ♣54	
♠9874 ♥92 ♦A532 ♣983		♠Q1052 ♥1065 ♦1086 ♣AQ10
	♠A3 ♥KQ84 ♦Q4 ♣KJ762	

HCP		
	13	
4		8
	15	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	5	5	2	5
S	5	4	5	2	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

The Bidding:
Most tables will get to 4♥ - with some trying for slam but stopping in 5♥. Others will try 3NT and indeed 3NT is where we want to land with 28 HCP in a matchpointed event.

It is becoming quite popular to open a strong no-trump with the South hand but opening 1♣ planning to rebid 1♥ to show your 4-5 shape is the more common approach.

Some Norths will respond 1♥ rather than 1♦ - and that's just a matter of style. You might be tempted to respond 1♥ if you thought partner would rebid 1NT on hands were we had a 4-card major (and locating the 4-4 heart fit later might be problematic). But if you are playing some sort of 'Checkback' over your 1NT rebids then no harm can come from responding up the line and responding 1♦.

The Play:
Because the Ace and Queen of clubs are in the East hand, declarer can win 4 club tricks by leading two rounds of clubs from the North hand towards the South hand – putting in the Jack on the first round and the King on the second round. Once declarer plays like this, he makes 11 tricks – no matter what lead he gets.

	♠832 ♥3 ♦542 ♣AKQJ32	
♠A7 ♥AJ1072 ♦A973 ♣94		♠KQ64 ♥KQ5 ♦KQJ ♣1085
	♠J1095 ♥9864 ♦1086 ♣76	

HCP	
10	
13	16
1	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	5	5	4	1
W	1	5	5	4	1

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

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

The Bidding:
Another hand that will catch a few out. West will open 1♥ and North will overcall 2♣. Then paths will start to diverge. Some might wheel out 'Gerber' or 'Blackwood' straight away and when they hear that they are missing only one ace they might try 6♥.

Others will go slowly and try to learn more about partner's hand i.e. if West has the ace or king of clubs or even a singleton or void in clubs then slam will have some chance of success. East's flat 4333 shape should be East's first warning that he should proceed with caution.

Some East's might double (showing 4 spades), some might bid 4♥, some might bid 3♣ hoping to learn a bit more – some might even take a punt on 3NT (hoping partner has a club stopper).

West will rebid 2♦ and East might make one try for slam - 3♣ seems to be the only route forward. From West's second rebid East might learn about a club stopper in the West hand, or 3 card spade support (and therefore a singleton club) in the West hand or even a fifth diamond in the West hand.

As it happens, the 3♥ rebid suggests that West has non of these nice things and strongly implies a 2=5=4=2 shape putting further dampners on any slam possibilities.

The Play:
In a suit contract, declarer will lose the first two club tricks and make the rest.

Hopefully, if East bids 3NT, South will lead his partner's club suit – sometimes when East bids a confident 3NT, some Souths decide not to lead their partner's suit – but the advice is to lead your partner's suit and knock out their stopper – they might only have one stopper and some cunning declarers have been known to have no stopper at all at all!

♠Q106 ♥- ♦K9854 ♣QJ632 ♠75 ♠KJ93 ♥AKJ652 ♥10983 ♦Q7 ♦A102 ♣A105 ♣K8 ♠A842 ♥Q74 ♦J63 ♣974	**Board 21** : Dealer North : NS vulnerable ***West*** ***North*** ***East*** ***South*** Pass Pass Pass 1♥ 1NT* 4♥ All Pass **The Bidding**: Incredibly, we have another slam hand in this set although this one won't be bid too often - if at all – and even when it is bid, it won't be easy to make it. Which all means that making 12 tricks in 4♥+2 will be a huge score. I mention North's 'Unusual 1NT' overcall for information purposes only – and not as a recommendation – we would need a tad more for such tactics when vulnerable – e.g. the ♦Q instead of the ♠Q would be ideal.

HCP		
	8	
14		11
	7	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	1	6	2	5
W	1	1	6	3	5

The Play:

Declarer's path to success will be illuminated if North ventures into the auction – especially if North ventures in with an 'Unusual No-Trump' overall showing both minors.

To make 12 tricks, West has to draw trumps, ruff a club, run a few trumps and then guess the spade position correctly i.e. play a spade towards dummy and play the ♠J.

And then he needs to read the table vibes in the endgame to make his 12th trick with either the ♠9 or ♦Q.

If you make 12 tricks, the Irish Selectors will be knocking on your door shortly.

♠104
♥AQ1053
♦932
♣1064

♠- ♠97532
♥KJ62 ♥94
♦74 ♦QJ1085
♣KQ98732 ♣J

♠AKQJ86
♥87
♦AK6
♣A5

HCP		
	6	
9		4
	21	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	3	4	7	7
S	1	4	4	7	7
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	5♠	All Pass	

The Bidding:

Yet another slam – although unlikely to be bid – at least with any degree of confidence. What a set of boards - and 'Yes, hand on heart', all completely random!

What should South open? 1♠ seems too timid – it is a perfect candidate for an old fashion 'Strong Acol Two' but nowadays players play 'Weak Twos'. It is a tad short of a strong Acol 2♣ opening but I guess 2♣ will still be the popular choice.

Some brave Wests might venture a 3♣ overcall – I suppose we can't be passing with 7-4 'Swan' shapes even if vulnerable?

North is not quite worth a positive 2♥ response – so 2♦ it his. South's jump to 3♠ shows a solid spade suit, saying 'Spades are Trumps - Please cue bid any aces you have'.

4♥ shows the ace of hearts, 5♣ shows the ace of clubs and 5♠ says I do not have ♥K.

The Play:

Because the ♥KJ are favourably placed. Declarer can make 3 heart tricks by playing small to the 10 on the first round and then small to the queen. Then ruffing a heart will set up a 4th heart trick to go with the 9 top tricks to give 13 tricks in all.

Hopefully, declarer will remember to 'cash the high card from the short hand' first when he comes to cashing his spade tricks i.e. ♠10 from dummy first.

So maybe 4♠+3 will score ok?

♠J653
♥A973
♦94
♣A83

♠Q97
♥Q102
♦10532
♣J96

♠82
♥KJ84
♦AQJ876
♣4

♠AK104
♥65
♦K
♣KQ10752

HCP		
	9	
5		11
	15	

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

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

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

The Bidding:
Well done to anyone getting to 4♠ here – especially if E/W enter the auction. Another well done to any E/W pair who manage to find the sacrifice in 5♦x-2 (although they might have to let virtue be its own reward).

If East does not overcall 2♦ then N/S have an easy road to 4♠ (1♣-1♥, 1♠-3♠, 4♠) but if East bids then the waters become muddied for N/S e.g. a double by South over 2♦ might be a support double showing 3 card heart support. South might feel that he is not strong enough to rebid 2♠ over 2♦.
Then if South passes 2♦, will it be obvious that a double from North is take-out and not penalty?

So the moral of the story is that we should get stuck in when we are opponents by making annoying overcalls whenever we can – we are all good at bidding when the opponents are silent but when they come in then we are not so sure of our ground.

The Play:
There's not much to the play - in 4♠, N/S lose 1 spade, 1 heart and 1 diamond to make 10 tricks. In 3♦, E/W lose 2 spades, 1 heart, 1 club and no diamonds (if they can divine that South has the ♦K), making 9 tricks.

However to prevent 4♠+1, E/W need to get their heart winner setup early, otherwise declarer can draw two rounds of trumps and then discard his heart losers on the good club suit. So E/W need to either lead a heart or switch to a heart after the ♦A to hold declarer to 10 tricks.

♠ -
♥ Q97653
♦ AKQ1084
♣ Q

♠ KQJ542
♥ 104
♦ J6
♣ 652

♠ 10876
♥ A8
♦ 97532
♣ 87

♠ A93
♥ KJ2
♦ -
♣ AKJ10943

HCP		
	13	
7		4
	16	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	5	6	-	2
S	6	5	6	-	2
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
2♠	4♦*	4♠	6♥
All Pass			

* Leaping Michaels showing Hearts and Diamonds.

The Bidding:

WOW! - Another amazing hand – we don't see 6-6 shapes too often - a perfect hand for another useful convention when the opponents open a weak two in a major' called 'Leaping Michaels' showing a two suiter (the other major and the minor being bid).

If you don't have 'Leaping Michaels' in your arsenal then you may as well just overcall 4♥.

South may as well bid slam directly having heart support, first round control in each of the side suits and a wonderful source of tricks in the club suit.

If West does not open then N/S should have no trouble bidding 6♥ or 6♣.

The Play:

Nothing to the play - N/S make 12 tricks in a club or heart contract. They make 11 in a diamond contract because the 5-2 diamond break means that East must win a diamond trick.

E/W can sacrifice in 6♠x-5 for -1100 but I suspect those that do will once again, have another case of 'Virtue being its own Reward'.

♠K
♥K83
♦QJ987
♣A743

♠875
♥AQJ95
♦642
♣86

♠A1032
♥6
♦AK1053
♣KQ10

♠QJ964
♥10742
♦-
♣J952

HCP	
13	
7	16
4	

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

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

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

The Bidding:

Not a pretty board for any declarer - so any side getting a plus score will score very well.

North will open 1♦ intending to rebid 2♣. East, who was about to open 1♦ himself, will be stumped momentarily. His options seem to be Pass, 1NT or Double. Pass feels wrong holding 16 HCP, 1NT seems wrong with a singleton heart so most will double to show their 16+ (any shape). With less HCP, double would be wrong because we have too many diamonds but with 16+ double is ok.

Regardless of East's initial call, E/W will probably land in 2♥ anyway. Maybe some Souths will persevere with 2♠ and that should get doubled. The signs aren't good for a 2♠ bid, being short in partner's diamonds and long in the opponent's hearts.

The Play :

The play will be a messy scramble by declarer in whatever contract they reach to make as many tricks as possible by whatever means possible. Any declarer managing to make 7 tricks for their side will have done well.

♠5
♥AKQ86
♦Q10643
♣A7

♠J76
♥97543
♦98
♣632

♠AQ10842
♥2
♦AJ5
♣QJ4

♠K93
♥J10
♦K72
♣K10985

HCP		
	15	
1		14
	10	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	5	4	-	3
S	4	5	4	-	3
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

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

The Bidding:
Not an easy hand to bid or play. North has a nice hand but when 1♠ comes around to him, he has some choices: double, 2♥ or 2♠ (hearts and a minor).

Maybe East will bid too much, 3♠ or 4♠, and find himself doubled going down 2 or more.
Maybe South will be left in 3NT?

The Play:
Left to his own devices, declarer is likely to go down in 4♥, 3NT or 5♦ because to make it he needs to play the diamond suit 'double dummy' – small to the Q and then lead the ♦10 on the second round to pin West's doubleton ♦98.

♠3
♥K762
♦Q97642
♣K3

♠AJ8652
♥5
♦A5
♣J1098

♠1094
♥AQJ93
♦J10
♣A62

♠KQ7
♥1084
♦K83
♣Q754

HCP		
	8	
10		12
	10	

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

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

The Bidding:
Most E/W pairs will get to this 22 point game – the East hand is worth a full blooded raise to 4♠ on the second round of the auction, 2 aces, a good 5 card heart suit and a doubleton.

The Play:
While some declarers will only make 10 tricks, the fortunate lie of the heart suit means that declarer can make 11 tricks – either by taking a straightforward heart finesse and disposing of the diamond loser early on or by taking the better line of the ruffing heart finesse (cash the ace and run the queen) which allows you dispose of your diamond and club losers.

♠3
♥987532
♦AQ93
♣94

♠2
♥A1064
♦107
♣AQ10875

♠Q976
♥KQJ
♦K8652
♣6

♠AKJ10854
♥-
♦J4
♣KJ32

HCP		
	6	
10		11
	13	

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

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

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

The Bidding:
West is worth an opening bid – nice shape and his points are in his two long suits, he has 2 aces and the hand meets the Rule of 20 (HCP + length of 2 longest suits equals 20 or more).

Some Norths might try a 1♥ overcall – not to be recommended with such a poor suit and certainly partner will expect more than 6 points from you for your vulnerable overcall.

South likes his 7 card spade suit and his 7420 'Swan' shape so he will keep bidding until he wins the auction – hopefully at 3♠ or lower.

East will probably double 3♠ but it looks like it only goes one down.

The Play:
South makes 6 spade tricks and 2 diamond tricks for an 8 trick total.