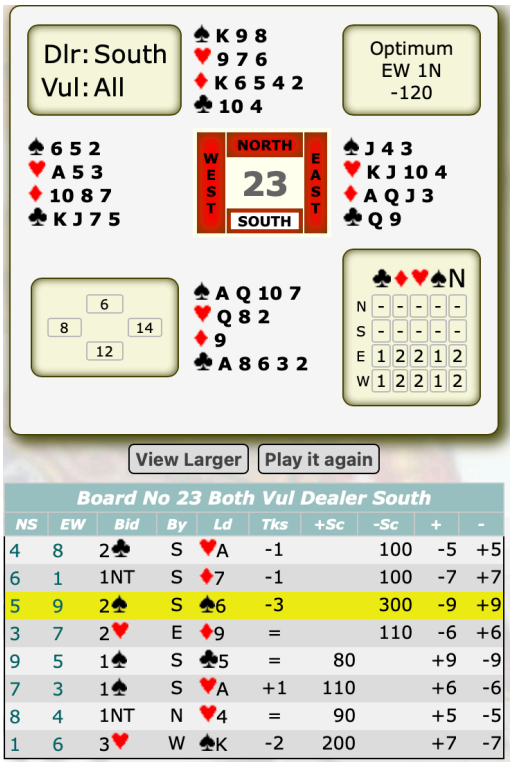
A typical part score battle should occur on this board but surprisingly N/S were often left in a spade contract uncontested. In fairness East has a difficult choice whether to bid or not. No matter what system you play the bidding should start with 1C by South, north should respond 1D (although one North elected to bid 1NT).



Board No 23 Both Vul Dealer South

NS	EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
4	8	2♣	S	♥A	-1		100	-5	+5
6	1	1NT	S	♦7	-1		100	-7	+7
5	9	2♠	S	♠6	-3		300	-9	+9
3	7	2♥	E	♦9	=		110	-6	+6
9	5	1♠	S	♣5	=	80		+9	-9
7	3	1♠	S	♥A	+1	110		+6	-6
8	4	1NT	N	♥4	=	90		+5	-5
1	6	3♥	W	♠K	-2	200		+7	-7

With *14 points, 2C's under the Club bidder and only 3S's.* **What are East's options?**

- 1NT which the Heart suit might justify.
- Double would show 4H's and 4S's.
- Overcall 1H which partner will assume is five.
- PASS - which does not reflect your strong hand.

Of the 4 choices, I would say that double is the least 'lie'. Finding a heart fit or 4/3 Spade fit would increase the possibility of pushing the opponents to the 3 level. As it happens South bids 1S which west can pass or bid 2H's encouraging N/S to bid on. Looking at the spade contract, 2 pairs are left in 1S, and one pair in 2S's.

Interesting to note that the 2 pairs in 1S managed to make the contract with 1 making an overtrick while the one in 2S's went 3 down. The main reason for these results rests on the **opening lead.**

The Defence:

West must consider the bidding before making a choice — South has bid clubs and will hold a minimum of 4 if playing Acol. Either way it could easily cost a trick. A Diamond through North's suit is a possibility especially against 2S. A heart lead is unadvisable even if partner bid the suit. Aces are for beating Kings, especially in low level contracts. **Is there an advantage to playing a trump?** It's unlikely to cost a trick but could reduce ruffing opportunities in dummy.

North covers the trump lead with the 8, East should not cover with the Jack as it might be needed to over ruff dummy if South plans to ruff clubs. North wins the 8S's in dummy and plays a Club. If declarer ducks the first club to west, it's safe to return a trump OR the D10 at this point. If partner holds the DA, they can't safely return a diamond if they win a trick. *If E/W are forced to open up the heart suit, this is safer from East's hand starting either with the HK or the HJ. If West opens with the HA at any stage, N/S will make their contract by scoring a heart trick.*

Declarer should only score 4S's in hand, the CA and one club ruff in dummy. (The SJ with East will prevent a 2nd Club ruff) total = **Six tricks.**

Considering the analysis show that E/W can make IS, 2D's, 2H's or 2NT, you can see why East should compete.