

ACBL-wide Junior Fund Game

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2025 (morning or afternoon)

Analysis by Mike Roberts



Mike Roberts' best claim to fame as a player is as a Junior on the Canadian team for four World Championships, the first time as the partner of Bronia Jenkins. He has a few scattered regional wins to his credit, although he is proudest of finishing average on the second day of the Reisinger. After finishing his Junior career, he switched to directing, and was a familiar face at NABCs over the last two decades. He now lives in Victoria, British Columbia, and still directs locally, both at tournaments and at clubs.



Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ 3
♥ Q 10 6 4 3
♦ 8 5 3 2
♣ K 9 7

		N	
		W	E
		S	

♠ 8 6 5 4
♥ A J 7 5
♦ K 10
♣ A 6 3

North will open 1♣, and East will probably double – a little light, but good shape. If they don't, N/S will reach 4♠ quickly – 1♣-1♥-1♠-4♠.

After a double, South might choose an old-fashioned redouble, but will probably choose 1♥. If West passes or doubles, they should have the same auction as above, but if they choose a natural 2♥, that might freeze out the spade suit. North-South will probably wander into 3NT, but that goes down on a heart lead.

4♠ is makeable double dummy (the ♦QJ dropping helps), but as a practical matter it will probably go down on a heart lead, with too many handling charges. If East did double 1♣, that might help, but most declarers will go down in 4♠.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 10 7
♥ 4 2
♦ A Q 10 6 4
♣ Q 6 4

		N	
		W	E
		S	

♠ J 9 2
♥ J 8 3
♦ 9 8
♣ A K 10 3 2

East will probably open 1♦ with their shapely 10-count and easy rebid. South should pass, and West will either bid 3♦ (limit) or 2♦ (inverted). Either way, North will pop in with hearts. Now it becomes competitive – it looks like N/S will eventually bid 4♥, but at this vulnerability, E/W might very well bid 5♦. This should be doubled, but it's tough.

4♥ requires a little guesswork, but as long as E/W doesn't get a trump trick – either through a finesse or a club ruff – it should make, and might make five if E/W breaks the spade suit. In 5♦, down two will be the most common result – down one if South plunks down the ♣AK before cashing hearts, down three if they don't, but East misguesses spades.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 10 8 3
♥ A 5
♦ Q J 9 6 4
♣ J 9 3

		N	
		W	E
		S	

♠ A K J 9 7 4
♥ 10 8
♦ 7
♣ K Q 4 2

South will open 1♠, and North will respond 2♥ – a little bit of a stretch if it's game forcing, but the heart suit and working ♠Q should tilt the balance. N/S should end up in 4♥, or maybe 4♠. Splits are very gentle, and with the ♣A onside, both contracts should take 11 tricks with a little care.

The biggest danger is if South is playing 4♠, with the ♦A knocked out at trick 1. They have to anticipate the defense ducking the first round of hearts, and make sure they use their entries carefully to lead twice towards the ♣KQ.

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

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

A partscore battle, and as usual, the spade suit should win out. After West's pass, North might open 1♣ – East will overcall 1♠ or 2♠ (the latter taking advantage of partner's passed-hand status). Over 1♠, South might stretch to make an off-shape negative double, or a stopperless 1NT, but the textbook bid is pass. North will reopen, but E/W will probably buy the contract in 2♠. There is a chance that N/S will play 3♣, which should make three or four. In spades, it's easy to make nine tricks if declarer can ruff a club in dummy. An early trump shift prevents that, and if so, declarer can make it either by running the ♥J, then pitching on the third round, or (better), squeezing North in hearts and clubs. The auction will help with that.

Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

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

This one should be fairly flat. North will open 1♥, and East will overcall 1♠. South could bid 3♥, weak, if that's in their system. West will undoubtedly get to game somehow – cuebidding their suit, making a fit-showing jump, or some other way of getting to game. At different vulnerability, N/S might very well bid 5♥ as a sacrifice – that works out poorly here if E/W works out to double; down two is too much. Spades will take 11 tricks – the only way to hold it to 10 is for a club lead at trick 1, followed by a heart underlead when North wins their ♠A, to get a club ruff. Strictly double-dummy. The only way that E/W might not be playing 4♠ is if North opens 3♥, East passes, and South bids 4♥. If West doubles, E/W are ok, but if they choose 5♦, E/W are due to get a bad board.

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

Unless playing something odd (mini-roman 2♦, or Precision), East will open 1♣. South might bid 1♠ or 2♠, but with such a poor suit, might take the conservative action of pass. E/W will probably end up in 3NT, on an auction of 1♣-1♦; 1♥-1♠; 1NT-3NT or thereabouts. If South did bid spades, the auction will be quicker, but should also end in 3NT. No trump will take 10 tricks – 4♠, 4♥, 1♣ and 1♦ – without too much trouble. It might make five if N/S never get after diamonds, and the clubs set up. E/W might end up in spades if West responds 1♠ instead of 1♦, and East raises. Even with the 6-0 split and a trump shift by South, West can make 5♠ with the good break in hearts – they can ruff two diamonds, and score all four trumps in West (note the ♠6), beating those in notrump.

Board 7

South Deals

Both Vul

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

With 18 HCP, South is too strong to open 1NT. After 1♦, North will respond 1♥, and South can rebid 2NT. North might look for a 4-4 spade fit, but will end up just playing 4♥. There doesn't seem to be a realistic auction leading to slam – the hands just fit perfectly. In hearts, declarer can ruff one spade (but not two, as that sets up a trump trick for the defense). The defense has a Hobson's choice – if they don't lead a club, declarer can ruff out the diamond suit while drawing trumps and ruffing the spade, and get to South with the ♣A to cash the long diamond. If they do lead a club, that sets up a second club for the 12th trick.

Board 8

West Deals

None Vul

♠ J 10 9

♥ 8 5

♦ K J 9 4 3

♣ Q 9 4

♠ A 8 3

♥ K Q 6 4

♦ Q 10 6

♣ K 10 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	Q 7 6 2
♥	A 2
♦	A 8 7 2
♣	J 3 2

♠ K 5 4

♥ J 10 9 7 3

♦ 5

♣ A 8 6 5

West will start with 1♣, and East will respond with 1♠. South should pass – if they do bid 2♥, and get doubled there, it will work out very badly. After South passes, West rebids 1NT. East has 11 HCP and a nice ♣J, but at pairs, probably shouldn't invite. If they do, West will be happy to bid 3NT.

North will probably start with a fourth-best diamond if the suit hasn't been bid. This works out poorly – it gives declarer a quick second diamond trick. If West goes after spades by leading towards the queen, and South finds the club shift (and ducks the return), that should be eight tricks for declarer, but there's a good chance of taking nine if they don't, as North might eventually be endplayed if declarer can read the situation. 3NT will either be a near top or a bottom.

Board 9

North Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 8 3

♥ A J 9

♦ K 10 5 4 3

♣ K 10 2

♠ Q J 6

♥ 7 5

♦ 8 7

♣ A 9 8 7 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	A 10
♥	K Q 6 3 2
♦	Q J 9
♣	Q J 5

♠ K 9 7 5 4 2

♥ 10 8 4

♦ A 6 2

♣ 4

Standards change, but it seems like North is still a point shy to open. If they pass, East will open 1♥ or maybe 1NT. South will surely bid 1♠ or 2♠ over 1♥, and might even introduce them over 1NT. West could bid 1NT over 1♠, but can't act over 2♠. East should reopen with a double, and West can choose between 3♣ or 2NT, either of which should end the auction. If E/W do sell out to 2♠, it will probably make (four spades, a heart, two diamonds, one club). In 3♣, it will go down unless East plays it (say, on a Lebensohl auction) and South leads a spade. No trump also doesn't take as many tricks as the E/W point count should indicate – the defense should be able to set up spades (or diamonds) before declarer can set up both their clubs and their heart tricks. Seven tricks for declarer is probably a common result.

Board 10

East Deals

Both Vul

♠ K Q 9 8

♥ 9 7 6

♦ K 9

♣ A K J 6

♠ J 10 3 2

♥ 5 4 3 2

♦ Q 4 3

♣ 10 9

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	A 7 6 5
♥	8
♦	A 8 6 5 2
♣	7 5 2

♠ 4

♥ A K Q J 10

♦ J 10 7

♣ Q 8 4 3

South will open 1♥ in second seat, and North will probably respond 1♠. South rebids 2♣, and North will make investigative moves, looking for slam – probably 2♦ (Fourth suit forcing), followed by raising hearts. South will try to shut everything down, and North will eventually comply, maybe at the five level.

West will probably lead either a spade or a diamond – a diamond lead makes the guess a lot easier, since West is unlikely to have underled the ace. On a spade lead, after drawing four rounds of trumps, declarer has to guess diamonds correctly to make five.

Board 11

South Deals

None Vul

♠ K

♥ K 3

♦ J 10 9 8 7 5 3

♣ Q 10 3

♠ J 8 5 4

♥ Q 8 5

♦ A K 2

♣ J 7 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	A Q 10 9 6 2
♥	9 6 4
♦	4
♣	A K 2

♠ 7 3

♥ A J 10 7 2

♦ Q 6

♣ 9 8 6 4

North-South will be preempting in the auction at some point – either 3♦ by North in third seat, or maybe a very aggressive 2♥ opener in first – but nothing will stop East from introducing their spades, and West has enough to drive to game. An opening heart lead (except the ace) will hold it to four, but that's strictly double-dummy. On a non-heart lead, declarer can make five by winning, playing a spade to the king and ace, then returning to the ♠J. Then pitch a club on the ♦K, and, using dummy's other trump entry, eliminate both minors, then play a heart – the suit is hopelessly entangled. The auction might very well help declarer take that line.

Board 12

West Deals

N-S Vul

♠ Q 6
♥ K 8 6 3
♦ J 10 9 6
♣ J 8 5

♠ A 9 8

♥ A Q 10 5 4 2

♦ K 8

♣ Q 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 4 2
♥ J 9
♦ 5 4 3 2
♣ A 9 7 3

♠ K J 7 5 3
♥ 7
♦ A Q 7
♣ K 10 6 4

Board 13

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ 7 6 3
♥ Q 7 3 2
♦ K J 9 6
♣ J 8

♠ 9 5

♥ 9 8 6 5

♦ Q 4 3

♣ Q 10 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 10 8 2
♥ 10 4
♦ A 10 2
♣ A K 3

♠ A J 4
♥ A K J
♦ 8 7 5
♣ 9 7 5 2

What looks like a simple hand might get tricky in the auction. After North opens 1♥, and South responds 1♠, North has to decide whether or not to jump in hearts on their 15-count. The short honors in the minors should discourage this. If North does bid 3♥, South can do little but shrug and bid 3NT, and the spade fit is lost. However, over 2♥, South can bid 3♦, and then raise 3♠ to 4♠. Whatever the auction or contract, West will lead the ♦ J. Spades will play better than notrump by a trick, since a club can be ruffed in North. There doesn't seem to be a reason to guess trumps, so North-South will probably take 11 tricks in spades, 10 in no trump (or nine if declarer guesses poorly).

Board 14

East Deals

None Vul

♠ K 5
♥ K
♦ A 7 5 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 4 2

♠ J 2

♥ 9 7 3 2

♦ Q 10 4

♣ A J 6 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 10 7 4
♥ A J 8 6 5
♦ 8
♣ Q 7

♠ 9 8 6 3
♥ Q 10 4
♦ K J 9 6
♣ K 3

Some thoughtful hand evaluation is needed to stop E/W getting to a poor 3NT contract. East will open 1♠, and West will probably respond with 1NT. East rebids 2♥, and West has the first choice – overbid (a little) with 2NT, or just return to 2♠. The major-suit kings should prove valuable on the auction, so maybe pushing to 2NT is warranted. East can rebid 3♥, and West should definitely prefer back to spades instead of bidding 3NT, even with all suits stopped. But it's easy to project an auction that ends in 2NT or 3NT. Notrump will work out OK when spades come in for five winners – declarer has at least eight tricks, and might make nine or 10 if the defense leads and continues clubs. If spades didn't cash, and they led diamonds, notrump could have been very poor. Spades has awkward communication problems – declarer would like to ruff a heart, but risks losing control as they have to ruff to get back to their hand. Declarer is best to give up on the heart ruff, just unblock the ♥K and cash top tricks, hoping something good happens in the majors. Spades don't break, but the ♥Q drops, and declarer can take 10 tricks. +170 should be good – even +140 should be OK, despite a smattering of +420 or +400 results.

Board 15

South Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 10 9 3
♥ J 8
♦ A Q 4 3
♣ K 10 8 3

♠ 4 2

♥ K Q 10 7 3

♦ K 6 2

♣ A 5 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 5
♥ 9 5 4
♦ 9 8 5
♣ J 9 7 6

♠ A J 8 7 6
♥ A 6 2
♦ J 10 7
♣ Q 2

Another unopposed auction. It's 12 opposite 12, but both South and North will stretch a little, and most pairs will be in game. 1♠-2♥; 3♥-4♥ seems fairly normal – South might bid 4♥ on round 2 if 2♥ is game forcing and they use the principle of fast arrival. 4♥ is not a pleasant contract looking at the N/S hands. If East leads a club, the queen is beheaded early, and declarer has to work out a way to hold the diamond losers to one. Spades works, with the layout being as friendly as can be, and most declarers will find a way to take 10 tricks, as the defense can't attack diamonds successfully. The defense might help as well by setting up two diamond tricks for declarer. Notrump contracts by North will do very poorly on a club lead – by South it will do better, but not as good as hearts.

Board 16

West Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 9 7

♥ 10

♦ K Q 5 4

♣ A 7 5 4 3 2

♠ A K Q 8 6

♥ A Q 6

♦ J 10 2

♣ 10 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 4 3

♥ K 5 4

♦ A 9 8 7

♣ K Q J 9

♠ J 10 5 2

♥ J 9 8 7 3 2

♦ 6 3

♣ 6

After West passes, North has the same choice between 1NT and 1♠ that East had on board 13. As on board 13, the 1NT bid will slow the auction down: East will pass, and South will probably just transfer with 2♦, although a "Garbage Stayman" 2♣ call is possible. West might pipe in with 3♣, and almost certainly will balance after 2♦-2♥-Pass. This should get E/W to their optimal contract of 4♣ after someone bids 3♥, and clubs takes 10 tricks.

If North opened 1♠, South will be raising spades - to 3♠ if it's weak (say, if East doubles), or even 4♠ with their great distribution. If East, reasonably, passed over 1♠, it might be tough for E/W to enter the auction. Even if they do, North might very well bid 4♠ - this is a paying sacrifice against 4♣, unless declarer is doubled and takes an early heart finesse and E/W gets ruffs. Spades (or hearts) should take nine tricks. Either side that plays a making contract will be doing well on the board.

Board 17

North Deals

None Vul

♠ A 2

♥ J 7 4

♦ 6

♣ A K J 7 5 4 3

♠ 10 9 8 7 5

♥ K 8

♦ 10 7 5 3

♣ 8 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q J 6

♥ 5 2

♦ K Q J 8

♣ Q 10 6

♠ 4 3

♥ A Q 10 9 6 3

♦ A 9 4 2

♣ 9

This will probably be mostly E/W going down. After North passes, East will open 1♦, and after 1♥ by South, West will bid 2♣. East will bid either 2♠ or 3♣, and it's tough for West to stop below game - which would be cold if East held a heart honor (or singleton) or the ♦A instead of the ♦K Q J (in 5♣). Maybe 1♦-(1♥)-2♣-(Pass); 2♠-3♣; Pass or 1♦-(1♥)-2♣-(Pass); 3♣-3♥; 4♣-Pass might save East-West, but it seems like most will go on to 5♣. Kaplan-Kay might have stopped in a partscore, but mere mortals probably won't.

Clubs should take 10 tricks, as long as South makes sure to cash their ♦A before it runs away. Notrump will play much worse - sometimes J-x-x can grow up to be a stopper, but not today.

Board 18

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 9 7 2

♥ K 9 8 3

♦ 10 8

♣ A 9 4 3

♠ A Q J

♥ A 10 6

♦ A 4 2

♣ 8 7 6 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 6 5

♥ 7

♦ K J 9 7 5 3

♣ Q 10 5

♠ 10 8 4 3

♥ Q J 5 4 2

♦ Q 6

♣ K J

This hand will all be about system. If East has a weak 2♦ call available, they will choose that, and after two passes, North will probably balance with a natural 2NT. South will probably push to game, even with the poor ♦Q. If they can show 4-5, they'll do that, and N/S will end up in 4♥. But South might just use Stayman, then reside in 3NT. Without a 2♦ opener, North will open 1NT in fourth seat. If East passes, South, again has their choice dictated by system. If they can show 4-5 invitational (1NT-2♣; 2♦-2♥), that's ideal, but they might not be able to if they play Garbage Stayman. In that case, they will either choose Stayman, then 2NT over 2♦ (which will end the auction), or transfer to hearts, then bid 2NT (North should bid 3♥ over that, also ending the auction. If East bids, it again depends on system, but the N/S auction should end up in one of the same spots - 2NT or 3♥).

Notrump plays OK - dummy's entries are limited, and the major suits are blocked, but it should all work out OK unless East's diamonds get set up while they still have the ♠K as an entry.

Hearts should lose a trick in each suit, barring a misguess in clubs.

Board 19

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 9 7 4 2

♥ 9

♦ A K J

♣ J 10 7 6 4

♠ K

♥ J 10 4 2

♦ 9 8 7 5 4 3 2

♣ 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 10 6

♥ A K Q 7 6

♦ Q 6

♣ K 5 2

♠ Q J 8 5 3

♥ 8 5 3

♦ 10

♣ A Q 9 3

Not everyone will pass the South hand, but if they do, North in third seat at favorable might very well open 3♦. East will bid 3♥, and West has enough to convert to 3NT, ending the auction. There might be other auctions, but almost all of them will end in 3NT by E/W.

It looks like this will take nine tricks most of the time (the ♣7 will play a big role when North's 8 drops), although on a (low) spade lead, East has to go after clubs, not hearts, otherwise the defense might take one heart, two spades and two clubs. The ♠Q lead works out badly, giving up an overtrick that will be crucial at matchpoints.

Board 20

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ 9 8

♥ A 10

♦ A Q 8 7 5 4 2

♣ K 10

♠ J 7 6 5 3

♥ Q 8 7 3

♦ 10 3

♣ A J

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K Q 4 2

♥ K 6

♦ K J

♣ 8 7 5 4

♠ 10

♥ J 9 5 4 2

♦ 9 6

♣ Q 9 6 3 2

This hand hovers around the slam range, but it's not clear if East-West can get there. After West opens 1♦, East will respond 1♠, West will bid 2♦, East will probably bid 3♣, and West, with a heart stopper, will probably just bid 3NT. East has to make a judgement call here - the diamond honors are golden, but there's a good chance they're off two aces. A quantitative 4NT might do it - West can bid on with pure honors and a seventh diamond.

Contracts played by West can make seven with no club lead, with North squeezed in the black suits, but in diamonds it's a better line to play the ♠ A K Q, which would make seven if spade were 4-2 or better - on this hand, that will hold declarer to 12 tricks. Contracts by East can be held to 11 tricks on a club lead, otherwise it will play the same. If North decided to overcall 1♠, a club lead is unlikely.

Board 21

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ J 9 5 4 2

♥ —

♦ A J 9

♣ J 10 8 7 5

♠ —

♥ Q 8 6 4 2

♦ K 6 5 4

♣ K 9 4 2

N

W

E

S

♠ Q 8

♥ A K 10 9 3

♦ Q 8 2

♣ A Q 6

♠ A K 10 7 6 3

♥ J 7 5

♦ 10 7 3

♣ 3

After North's initial pass, East has a choice. With 17 HCP and a good five-card suit, many will consider it too good for 1NT, and open 1♥. South might very well bid 2♠ - if West passes, and East reopens with a double, South has to play it well to take six tricks, but that's still minus 500.

If South just overcalls 1♠, West might let them off the hook by bidding 1NT - this should lead to 3NT. Transportation is awful, but there's enough scope for misdefense that +400 will happen a fair amount of the time.

If East chose to open 1NT, South might choose to show their spade suit. If they do that naturally, and West can double for penalties, it could lead to the same -500, but if they do it artificially - say with a Cappelletti 2♣ - West will probably just transfer, and E/W might even end up playing spades!

Board 22

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ J 9 7

♥ 9 4

♦ A 5 3 2

♣ Q 10 9 7

♠ A 8

♥ K 8

♦ Q 9 7 4

♣ J 6 5 4 3

N

W

E

S

♠ K Q

♥ A 10 5 3

♦ 10 8 6

♣ A K 8 2

♠ 10 6 5 4 3 2

♥ Q J 7 6 2

♦ K J

♣ —

East will open 1NT, and now what happens depends on the North-South system. Despite not many points, South will probably try to show majors if they can. Old-fashioned systems such as Landy work well on this board, as the auction can go 2♣ (majors)-Pass-2♦ (no preference)-Pass-2♠; otherwise North will probably pick hearts, which plays a trick worse, as South gets tapped out. East-West will do poorly if they play a suit, e.g. 3♣, but notrump should take an easy eight tricks.

In spades by N/S, a trump lead or shift is needed to prevent a heart ruff, otherwise declarer will lose two spades, one heart and a diamond.

Board 23

South Deals

Both Vul

♠ 8 3

♥ K 10 7 2

♦ 3

♣ Q 10 8 5 4 2

♠ A

♥ A J 6 4

♦ A J 8 5

♣ A K 7 6

N

W

E

S

♠ K J 10 7 5

♥ 3

♦ K 10 4 2

♣ J 9 3

♠ Q 9 6 4 2

♥ Q 9 8 5

♦ Q 9 7 6

♣ —

The North hand is a classic problem - with 21 HCP (and four aces!), but with no clear direction. If North chose to open 1♣ and rebid 2♦ over the 1♠ response, there's a danger the heart suit might get lost in fourth-suit forcing confusion, but otherwise North-South should be able to find their heart fit.

A popular alternative is for North to open 2NT. This should lead to 4♥, unless South chooses to show five spades and then bid 3NT.

In 4♥, there are many bad breaks out there. Played by North, an opening diamond lead will hurt the defense a bit. Declarer does best not to touch trump until after having ruffed their two clubs, and the trump spots might become very relevant. It will probably be a mix of nine, 10 or 11 tricks in hearts - probably still better than 3NT, which also requires good guessing on a black suit lead.

Board 28West Deals
N-S Vul♠ K J 7 2
♥ A 6 2
♦ J 6 2
♣ 10 6 2♠ 10
♥ K Q 10 8
♦ Q 10 8 4
♣ A K J 9

N	W	E
S		

 ♠ 9 6 5 4 3
♥ 9 7 4 3
♦ A K 5
♣ 8

♠ A Q 8
♥ J 5
♦ 9 7 3
♣ Q 7 5 4 3

North should open 1♦, and rebid 2♣ over South's 1NT response. South will raise to 3♣, and North has enough to make one try with 3♥. South can comfortably bid 3NT over that, and take 10 tricks on a spade lead, nine on a heart or club lead, and eight on a (unlikely) diamond lead and a spade shift. No trump played by North can be held to six tricks on a spade lead and diamond return. Clubs plays well for North-South, losing two diamonds and a heart most of the time.

Board 29North Deals
Both Vul♠ A K Q 9
♥ K 7 4 2
♦ Q 7 6
♣ 7 5♠ 3 2
♥ A Q J 10
♦ J 4 3 2
♣ A 9 4

N	W	E
S		

 ♠ 10 8 5
♥ 6 5 3
♦ K 10 9 5
♣ Q 10 2

♠ J 7 6 4
♥ 9 8
♦ A 8
♣ K J 8 6 3

North has a minimum 1♦ opener, and South's 1♠ response will quiet West. North's 1NT rebid should end the auction. With the heart finesse on, and the luscious club layout, declarer will probably take at least nine tricks if they finesse everything that they can – 10 if the opening lead is a heart to the king.

It's tough to see how West can enter the auction, but they don't want to – wherever they play should lead to the dreaded -200 (at least).

Board 30East Deals
None Vul♠ J 10 6 2
♥ A 9 8 5
♦ A 9 6
♣ 6 4♠ A 8 5
♥ K Q 3
♦ 8 5 2
♣ A K J 7

N	W	E
S		

 ♠ K 9 3
♥ 7 2
♦ Q J 7 4 3
♣ Q 10 9

♠ Q 7 4
♥ J 10 6 4
♦ K 10
♣ 8 5 3 2

It's tough to project an auction that goes anything but 1NT by North, passed out. If E/W do manage to get to diamonds, that will only be eight tricks if declarer gets diamonds right and also plays very carefully.

In 1NT, East will probably lead a low diamond. If declarer guesses to play the 10, they should make it, but the percentage play is the king. If East did lead the ♦ Q, West has to make sure not to return the 9!

Board 31South Deals
N-S Vul♠ 10 5 3
♥ 10 8 3
♦ Q 5 2
♣ Q J 9 3♠ K 9
♥ A J 6 4
♦ 10 8 6 4
♣ A 7 6

N	W	E
S		

 ♠ A 4 2
♥ K 7 5
♦ 9 3
♣ K 10 5 4 2

♠ Q J 8 7 6
♥ Q 9 2
♦ A K J 7
♣ 8

There will probably be a lot of minus scores on this hand. South opens 1♠, and North will probably treat their hand as a game force, responding 2♦. South will raise to 3♦, and it's very tough for North to do anything but bid 3NT. This will go down on a club lead and continuation- down one if declarer goes after spades, more if declarer takes a red suit finesse (or two).

North-South might stay out of 3NT if North responds 1NT – possibly 2♦-3♦; 3♥ will let North see the danger in clubs.

4♠ and 4♥ both are going to be challenging, but with both majors breaking 3-3, either should make – as should 5♦ by North, as long as declarer tackles spades before trumps, avoiding a deadly heart shift.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul♠ K 9 5 2
♥ 9 8 6 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ Q 9♠ 6 3
♥ K J 7 4
♦ K J 8
♣ 10 7 4 3

N	W	E
S		

 ♠ A 10 4
♥ A Q 10
♦ A Q 10
♣ K J 6 2

♠ Q J 8 7
♥ 5 3
♦ 9 5 3 2
♣ A 8 5

Finally East-West get a hand. After two passes, East will open 2NT, and West will look for a minor fit before resting in 3NT. Almost every lead gives up a trick, and with all the red-suit finesses onside, declarer will make it, most with an overtrick or two. A spade lead probably works worst, although declarer isn't really going to put in the 9 from dummy. The ♠ Q will almost certainly lead to 11 tricks, as North is going to be under pressure in three suits.

Board 33

North Deals
None Vul

♦ A Q J 3

♥ 8 5 4

♦ K 9 7

♣ A 5 4

♠ 10 9 5
♥ A Q 9 7
♦ Q 10
♣ J 10 6 3

N
W E
S

♠ 7 6 2
♥ 10 6 3
♦ J 8 6 5
♣ Q 8 7

♠ K 8 4
♥ K J 2
♦ A 4 3 2
♣ K 9 2

Another quick one – North South will end up in 3NT; probably on the auction 1♣-Pass-3NT-All Pass. If West leads passively – the ♠10, for example – declarer has only eight tricks, and with the heart honors offside and diamonds splitting badly, they might go down despite the combined 28 HCP. Double-dummy, it can be made by endplaying West, but that's tough to do in real life. By North, it plays about the same, but there is no chance to make it if East somehow finds a heart lead.

Board 34

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 7 6

♥ 9 7

♦ Q 10 9 5

♣ 9 8 7 4

♠ J 10 8 4 3
♥ A K 10 8 5
♦ —
♣ K J 3

N
W E
S

♠ A 9 5
♥ Q 4 2
♦ 8 7 3
♣ 10 6 5 2

♠ Q 2
♥ J 6 3
♦ A K J 6 4 2
♣ A Q

This should be competitive. South is in range for 1NT, but with a great six-card suit, it should be considered as too strong, and be opened with 1♦. West has an in-between hand; Michaels is attractive, but it's neither weak nor strong. Whatever West chooses, North might raise diamonds, and South will probably make a move towards no trump. There are a lot of different scenarios depending on how active East-West are; they can make 4♥ or 5♠ (spades plays better because hearts gets tapped out), but N/S might play 3NT (down at least one, even if East-West don't cash their hearts right away). If N/S go plus, they'll have a great board

Board 35

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 5

♥ Q 6 3

♦ 10 9 3 2

♣ Q 8 6 4

♠ J 8
♥ 10 8
♦ J 7 6 5
♣ A 7 5 3 2

N
W E
S

♠ Q 10 2
♥ A K J 9 5 4
♦ K Q 8
♣ 9

♠ K 9 7 6 4 3
♥ 7 2
♦ A 4
♣ K J 10

Assuming South opens 1♠, North will respond 1NT, and East will overcall 2♥. Despite being minimum, most Souths will bid 2♠ – after two passes, East will probably rebid 3♥. Pass, pass, and North has a choice – since they're not vul, they will probably bid 3♠. This should end the auction, unless someone gets creative.

Against spades, on a heart lead, East West have to get two trump tricks to defeat the contract two. That isn't done via a club ruff, although that looks attractive. East has to play three rounds of hearts, and even if declarer pitches their diamond loser, continue a fourth to let West uppercut. Otherwise, five tricks should be normal, although there is a danger of the diamond going away if they go after club ruffs, then switch to the ♦K.

Hearts plays similarly – to get four tricks as N/S, they have to play three rounds of spades, letting North ruff in. Otherwise it makes four.

Board 36

West Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 10 9 4

♥ 8 7 6 3

♦ 10 2

♣ A 7 2

♠ 7 6
♥ K Q J 5 4
♦ K Q J
♣ 8 6 4

N
W E
S

♠ Q J 5
♥ A 10 2
♦ 9 8 5 3
♣ J 9 5

♠ K 8 3 2
♥ 9
♦ A 7 6 4
♣ K Q 10 3

The auction will start 1♥-Pass-2♥-Dbl; Pass. North's action depends on partnership style – if South is a "pre-balancer," North might content themselves with 2♠, but if not, the hand is probably worth a jump. Still, it's tough for North-South to get to 4♠, which makes with careful timing (duck a diamond, then play ♠A K), and away you go. There won't be many in 4♠, and taking 10 tricks in a spade partscore should be above average.

If E/W gets frisky and bids 3♥, that should be an easy down two; vulnerable, that's the dreaded -200.