

ACBL-wide Senior Pairs

Monday, September 28, 2026

Analysis by Bridge Bulletin Executive Editor Paul Linxwiler

The analyses for this set of hands assumes that pairs use Standard or 2/1 game-forcing methods. Partnerships who use weak notrumps or strong club systems may, of course, have different auctions.

Board 1	North		
North Deals	♠ A92		
None	♥ 76		
Vulnerable	♦ A52		
	♣ AQ874		
West		East	
♠ Q106		♠ KJ84	
♥ Q10985		♥ AK2	
♦ Q7		♦ K1043	
♣ 1092		♣ K6	
	South		
	♠ 753		
	♥ J43		
	♦ J986		
	♣ J53		

14
6 17
3

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 4♥; EW 3♠; EW 1NT;
EW 2♦; EW 1♣ Par -420: EW 4♥ =**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♣	1NT	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	All Pass

This will be a popular sequence, although some Easts will prefer to double initially. They will then face the mildly unpleasant guess as what to do when West bids 1♥. Regardless, most E/W pairs will arrive in a heart partscore. As North is marked with most of the high-card strength, and with the E/W hands fitting well, taking 10 tricks will not be a problem. Most EW pairs will score +170, and any EW pair that somehow makes it to game will get a near top.

Board 2	North	
East Deals	♠ A953	
N-S Vulnerable	♥ 98	
	♦ Q105	
	♣ QJ74	
West		East
♠ K8762		♠ J10
♥ Q632		♥ KJ10
♦ 8		♦ KJ972
♣ AK9		♣ 832
	South	
	♠ Q4	
	♥ A754	
	♦ A643	
	♣ 1065	

9
12 9
10

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 2♥; EW 1NT; EW 1♠;
EW 1♦; N 1♣** **Par -110: EW 1♥ +1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	All Pass

As East is a passed hand, the 1NT response to the 1♠ opening is not forcing regardless of system, but West has an automatic 2♥ rebid, so the final decision will be East's to make: take the preference to 2♠ or pass 2♥? Passing 2♥ will be better if West is 5–5 in the majors but correcting to 2♠ will almost certainly be better if West is 6–4. An advantage to bidding 2♠ is that it keeps the auction open if partner has extra values and can bid a third time.

Both 2♥ and 2♠ are difficult contracts, with the former succeeding on an obscure double-dummy line only. NS will score +50 at most tables.

Board 3	North	
South Deals	♠ Q6	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ 864	
	♦ 10976	
	♣ Q1072	
West		East
♠ 982		♠ AK10754
♥ K7		♥ AJ952
♦ Q854		♦ —
♣ 9865		♣ K4
	South	
	♠ J3	
	♥ Q103	
	♦ AKJ32	
	♣ AJ3	

4
5 15
16

Double-Dummy Results: EW 5♠; EW 4♥; E 3NT; W 1NT; NS 1♦; E 1♣ Par -650: EW 4♠ +1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	2♣ ⁽¹⁾	1NT
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass/2♦
4♠	All Pass		Pass

(1) Majors

There are, of course, many different auctions that are possible here depending on EW's agreements on how to show the majors over 1NT in the balancing position. Once West takes a preference to spades, however, East will bid again to show extra values/length. Jumping to game directly over 2♠ is not advised, as West could have almost nothing and/or an ill-fitting hand. Knowing this, West should appreciate the value of the ♥K and the spade fit when East voluntarily continues to 3♠ (especially at this vulnerability) and bid the game.

With spades 2–2 and hearts 3–3, 11 tricks are easy in spades, so the real difference will be between those EW pairs scoring +200 and +650.

Board 4	North	
West Deals	♠ 7	
Both Vulnerable	♥ K86	
	♦ J65	
	♣ AQJ764	
West		East
♠ AQJ94		♠ K2
♥ A97		♥ Q10432
♦ 4		♦ KQ972
♣ K853		♣ 10
	South	
	♠ 108653	
	♥ J5	
	♦ A1083	
	♣ 92	

11
14 10
5

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 3♠; EW 3♥; EW 1NT;
EW 1♦; NS 1♣ Par -140: EW 1♥ +2; EW 1♠ +2**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♠	2♣	Dbl	Pass
2♥	All Pass		

After 1♠–2♣, East can choose between a negative double or 2♥, a one-round force. Over the double, West should keep it simple with a 2♥ preference, but if East bids 2♥ instead, West will raise to 3♥. EW should be OK as long as they stay out of game because in hearts, the defenders can arrange for North get a spade ruff in addition to the ♥K and their two aces. For example, where East declares 4♥, South leads the ♣9 to North's jack and a spade comes back. Declarer can win the king and play a heart to the ace and another heart, but North rises with the king and puts South on lead with the ♦A to get the spade ruff.

Board 5	North	
North Deals	♠ J1054	
N-S Vulnerable	♥ J102	
	♦ 10942	
	♣ 74	
West		East
♠ Q93		♠ AK86
♥ 9		♥ 73
♦ 753		♦ KJ86
♣ AQ9863		♣ K105
	South	
	♠ 72	
8 2 14	♥ AKQ8654	
16	♦ AQ	
	♣ J2	

**Double-Dummy Results: E 3♠; NS 3♥; E 4♣; W 2♠;
EW 3♦; W 3♣ Par -140: E 3♠ =**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♦	4♥
All Pass			

Although some Souths might prefer a slower approach, others – opposite a passed partner – may simply blast into 4♥, hoping to buy a trick in the dummy. This also puts pressure on EW, possibly forcing them too high if they decide to compete. Here, for example, both 3♠ and 4♣ make for EW, but that's as high as they can go, so the best result double-dummy is for EW to double 4♥. It's not at all clear to do so, however, and South may pay just 100 for down one undoubled, a better result than -140 for 3♠ or -130 for 4♣.

Board 6	North	
East Deals	♠ 8752	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ KQ10	
	♦ AK73	
	♣ J6	
West		East
♠ J964		♠ KQ
♥ A985		♥ 7432
♦ 109		♦ Q52
♣ 854		♣ 9732
	South	
	♠ A103	
	♥ J6	
	♦ J864	
	♣ AKQ10	

13
5 7
15

Double-Dummy Results: NS 3NT; NS 3♠; NS 4♦; NS 4♣; NS 2♥
Par +400: NS 3NT =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

This auction will likely be produced at all tables where NS employ a strong notrump.

A low spade lead by West will hold declarer to nine tricks, as the defense will have time to collect a spade, two hearts and a diamond. Say the ♠4 lead goes to the 2, queen and ace. Declarer tries the ♥J, ducked, and another heart which West wins. East wins the spade exit and plays a heart to dummy's king. When East eventually gets in with the ♦Q, the defense will get another heart trick.

Souths who score overtricks will do very well here.

Board 7	North	
South Deals	♠ AJ852	
Both Vulnerable	♥ 4	
	♦ 1074	
	♣ AJ53	
West		East
♠ Q3		♠ 976
♥ QJ10963		♥ 75
♦ AQ		♦ K863
♣ 874		♣ KQ62
	South	
	♠ K104	
	♥ AK82	
	♦ J952	
	♣ 109	

10
11 8
11

Double-Dummy Results: NS 3♠; NS 2NT; NS 2♦; EW 1♥; NS 1♣
Par +140: NS 1♠ +2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♥	1♠	Pass	1♦
All Pass			2♠

As 11-counts go, the South hand has 2-1/2 quick tricks and good intermediates. Opening 1♦ isn't ridiculous. The raise to 2♠ on a three-card suit with a low doubleton on the outside is also unremarkable. It's possible that North will make a game-try of some sort, but NS should not get higher than 3♠.

Where South passes initially, West may open a weak 2♥ and play it there, although many variations exist. Some Norths will be unable to go quietly over 2♥ and come in with 2♠, even with sub-minimum values. This might propel NS to 4♠ down one on a deal where they were otherwise destined to go plus.

Board 8	North		
West Deals	♠ KQ7653		
None	♥ 7		
Vulnerable	♦ 953		
	♣ 543		
West		East	
♠ —		♠ A9842	
♥ AJ10965		♥ 3	
♦ KJ7		♦ AQ2	
♣ J762		♣ KQ108	
	South		
	♠ J10		
	♥ KQ842		
	♦ 10864		
	♣ A9		

5
10 15
10

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 4♥; EW 3NT; EW 5♣;
EW 2♠; EW 3♦ Par -420: EW 4♥ =**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♥	2♠	3NT	All Pass

Opinions will vary on whether the West hand is too good to open 2♥. If West goes for 1♥ instead, the sample auction might well occur. (It's a bit much for East to make a trap pass over 2♠, hoping that West will reopen with a double. If West passes – a real possibility considering the nature of the opening bid – East's tactic could easily backfire.) Some Wests might be tempted to remove to 4♥.

Against 3NT on the ♠J lead, declarer can duck and duck again when South continues with the ♠10. On a diamond switch, declarer can win in hand and play the ♥9, running it if South ducks. The defense can't stop declarer from coming to nine tricks: one spade, two hearts, three diamonds and three clubs to score +400.

4♥ fares better even with the 5–1 split, as West's heart intermediates are just too good (and a significant reason for the upgrade for opening 1♥ instead of 2♥). West will lose two trumps and the ♣A for +420.

Board 9	North	
North Deals	♠ —	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ Q86	
	♦ QJ74	
	♣ Q87654	
West		East
♠ AQ754		♠ KJ982
♥ K104		♥ J953
♦ 9		♦ 652
♣ AKJ10		♣ 3
	South	
	♠ 1063	
	♥ A72	
	♦ AK1083	
	♣ 92	

7
17 5
11

Double-Dummy Results: EW 5♠; NS 4♦; EW 2♥; EW 1NT; NS 2♣
Par -300: NS 6♦ x -2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♦
1♠	3♦	4♠	All Pass

North's preemptive raise to 3♦ will not be everyone's cup of tea at these colors, but even if North chooses to pass or offer a meeker 2♦ raise, East will almost certainly choose a 4♠ jump.

West will "know" where the red aces are located on the auction, so even if the defense starts with the ♦Q lead from North, overtaken by South with the king to switch to a low heart, West can rise with the king. But to make an overtrick, declarer must then draw trumps, cash the ♣A K (pitching a heart from dummy) and take a ruffing finesse against North's putative ♣Q. If North covers, declarer ruffs in dummy, ruffs a diamond, and pitches another heart on the good ♣10. In this line, West loses only a diamond and a heart.

				North	
Board 10				♠ 10943	
East Deals				♥ KQ5	
Both Vulnerable				♦ QJ107	
				♣ 65	
West					East
♠ QJ65					♠ 72
♥ J64					♥ 107
♦ A854					♦ K92
♣ KJ					♣ A109842
				South	
				♠ AK8	
		8		♥ A9832	
	12		7	♦ 63	
		13		♣ Q73	

Double-Dummy Results: S 2NT; NS 2♥; W 2♣; NS 1♠; E 1♣
Par +120: S 2NT =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1♥
Pass	2♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	3♣	All Pass

This deal features a typical partscore skirmish, and there are several ways it could go. Some Wests will try a takeout double on the first round (dangerous opposite a passed partner), some Easts will “pre-balance” with 3♣ after North raises to 2♥ (also dangerous), and some Wests will double at their second turn, as in the sample auction.

2♥ by NS makes, and 3♣ by EW fails by a trick (if declarer plays South for the trump queen), so as long as NS don’t double, the balancing action works here. And it can also work by pushing NS to 3♥, which fails on this layout.

Board 11	North		
South Deals	♠ AK53		
None	♥ K76		
Vulnerable	♦ K103		
	♣ AQ2		
West		East	
♠ 10642		♠ J97	
♥ 932		♥ AJ84	
♦ A72		♦ 9864	
♣ J76		♣ K9	
	South		
	♠ Q8		
	♥ Q105		
	♦ QJ5		
	♣ 108543		

19
5 9
7

Double-Dummy Results: NS 3NT; NS 3♠; NS 3♥; NS 4♣; NS 3♦
Par +400: NS 3NT =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	Pass
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

Variations will occur, but this will be a popular auction. But the play in 3NT by South requires a good view by declarer.

South starts with four top tricks in the black suits; driving out the red aces will provide another trick in hearts and two in diamonds, bringing the total to seven. Therefore, most declarers will look to the club suit as a trick vehicle.

Say West leads a low spade to the East's jack and declarer's queen. When a club to the queen loses to the king, East returns the ♠9, won in dummy. Now what? Declarer has to decide how the remaining clubs lie. If the ♣J is now singleton, banging down the ♣A works. But another approach is to try to return to the closed hand to play the ♣10, hoping to pin the 9 in the East hand, which works on this layout.

So after winning the second spade, a low diamond to the queen is captured by West's ace, and the spade continuation is won in dummy. Now the ♦10 is overtaken by South's jack, and declarer can finally play the ♣10.

This is not easy.

Board 12	North	
West Deals	♠ Q3	
N-S Vulnerable	♥ 10742	
	♦ 65	
	♣ Q10764	
West		East
♠ 96		♠ A752
♥ A983		♥ J6
♦ Q10743		♦ AKJ82
♣ K3		♣ J2
	South	
	♠ KJ1084	
	♥ KQ5	
	♦ 9	
	♣ A985	

4
9 14
13

Double-Dummy Results: EW 4♦; EW 2NT; NS 2♠; NS 3♣; NS 1♥
Par -130: EW 3♦ +1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
Dbl	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
3♦	All Pass		

West can make a negative double without club length because he has diamond length instead: If East responds to the double by bidding clubs, West can just retreat to diamonds at the same level. Note that South should not sell out to 2♦ with shortness and good values. A reopening double is automatic with that hand, but West continues to 3♦, keeping North quiet.

		North	
Board 13		♠ A832	
North Deals		♥ AQJ75	
Both Vulnerable		♦ Q5	
		♣ A5	
West			East
♠ —			♠ 10765
♥ K4			♥ 1082
♦ AK1072			♦ J43
♣ K109764			♣ QJ3
		South	
		♠ KQJ94	
	17	♥ 963	
13	4	♦ 986	
	6	♣ 82	

Double-Dummy Results: NS 5♠; W 5♣; NS 3♥; EW 4♦; E 4♣; NS 2NT **Par +200: W 6♣ x -1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♥	Pass	1♠
2NT	3♠	Pass	Pass
4♣	Pass?	5♣	All Pass?

The question marks in the bidding diagram reflect that many ways that the auction could develop on this layout, especially given West's freakish hand.

After 1♥–Pass–1♠, West can try 2NT for the minors, though some may prefer an immediate 4NT to convey the same message. Over 2NT, North has extra values and four-card spade support, so 3♠ or even 4♠ are possibilities. If North chooses 3♠, neither East nor South has anything to say, but West is not giving up, continuing with 4♣ to show extra values and length. (Had North chosen 4♠ on the previous round, we'd expect most to forge ahead with 5♣ by West.) But even if North passes or bids 4♠ over 4♣, East should come to life and bid 5♣. Despite holding a mere 4 HCP, his honors are all in the minors, making them worth their weight in gold.

With both sides vulnerable, it's hard to say if many NS pairs would continue to 5♠ after this. Many players are hesitant to bid "five over five" anyway, although it's the winning choice on this board, as NS lose just two diamond tricks playing in spades. Double-dummy, EW must take the sacrifice in 6♣ to prevent NS from scoring 650.

Board 14	North	
East Deals	♠ A875	
None	♥ Q10	
Vulnerable	♦ J1053	
	♣ AQ5	
West		East
♠ Q964		♠ 3
♥ J832		♥ AK765
♦ AK		♦ 964
♣ K64		♣ J873
	South	
	♠ KJ102	
13	♥ 94	
13	♦ Q872	
8	♣ 1092	
6		

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 4♥; EW 3♣; EW 1NT;
NS 1♠; NS 1♦ Par -420: EW 4♥ =**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	All Pass		

Matchpoint maniacs don't like allowing the opponents to play a peaceful two-level contract on this type of auction if they can prevent it, so it's possible that North or South will make a takeout double in the latter part of the bidding – aiming to play in 2♠ – to push EW to the three level. It doesn't matter on this deal, as EW lose only a spade and two clubs on this friendly layout: Trumps are 2–2 and the ♣Q is in front of the jack. We expect to see most EW pairs scoring +170.

Board 15	North	
South Deals	♠ A96	
N-S Vulnerable	♥ 542	
	♦ 843	
	♣ K852	
West		East
♠ K1075		♠ 8432
♥ AQ63		♥ K987
♦ KQ10		♦ 972
♣ 97		♣ 63
	South	
	♠ QJ	
	♥ J10	
	♦ AJ65	
	♣ AQJ104	

7
14 3
16

Double-Dummy Results: NS 2NT; NS 3♦; NS 3♣; EW 1♠; EW 1♥
Par +120: NS 2NT =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass?	Pass	Pass	1NT

Experienced South players will opt for 1NT as their first call because it's simpler than opening 1♣ and guessing what to do over North's one-of-a-major response. The hand is too "quacky" for a 1♣-then-2♦ reverse, so 1NT is easier to start with. If South chooses this path, it could well end the auction unless West decides to intervene with, say, a conventional call to show the majors, despite being only 4–4. Matchpoints is an ugly game. 2♥ down one is better for EW obviously than defending 1NT on this board, and as South is likely to take eight tricks (+120), the interference also succeeds even if NS manage to get to 3♣ (+110).

Board 16	North	
West Deals	♠ Q7	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ J104	
	♦ K842	
	♣ KQ87	
West		East
♠ AJ92		♠ 5
♥ 762		♥ Q953
♦ A1095		♦ J763
♣ J9		♣ A1042
	South	
	♠ K108643	
	♥ AK8	
	♦ Q	
	♣ 653	

11
10 7
12

Double-Dummy Results: NS 2♠; NS 1NT; EW 1♥; EW 1♦; NS 1♣
Par +110; NS 1♠ +1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

Depending on methods, many pairs treat a four-seat 2♠ bid as showing 11–13 HCP and a six-card suit, a hand that would rebid 2♠ after 1♠–1NT; 2♠ in any other position. The idea is to squelch any competition. There are some East players who would balance with a takeout double after 2♠ got passed around with their 1=4=4=4 pattern, but as this likely forces EW to the three level, West would expect East to have a bit more strength for such an action.

In 2♠, declarer will lose three trumps, a club and a diamond; South can establish the ♦K in dummy for a club pitch.

Board 17	North				East
North Deals	♠ 109				♠ KQ753
None	♥ J105				♥ 742
Vulnerable	♦ J1042				♦ 6
	♣ 9432				♣ AQ105
West					
♠ A82					
♥ AKQ8					
♦ AQ93					
♣ 76					
	South				
	♠ J64				
	♥ 963				
	♦ K875				
	♣ KJ8				

2
19 11
8

Double-Dummy Results: EW 7♥; EW 6NT; EW 6♠; E 4♦; EW 4♣; W 3♦ Par -1510: EW 7♥ =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♠	Pass
5NT	Pass	6♠	All Pass

The East hand has 11 HCP but has 2-1/2 quick tricks and an easy rebid, so 1♠ it is. This poses an interesting problem for West with his prime 19-count. One way that 2/1 bidders might proceed is to start with a game-forcing 2♦. Ordinarily, this promises at least five diamonds, but as West intends to reveal the three-card spade support on the next round, this is a harmless lie.

East's rebid depends on methods. Some 2/1 enthusiasts insist that rebid two of the major shows at least six cards, while others treat it as a temporizing bid to see what responder does next, promising no more than five cards in the suit. Here, West makes the obvious raise to 3♠ (4♠ would show a bare minimum without slam interest), and East, with a minimum and no fit for responder's first suit, signs off in 4♠.

West, of course, has too much to pass, so continues with 4NT, Roman Keycard Blackwood. It's usually a no-no to do this with a low doubleton in a side suit, but here, it's hard to compose an opening hand for East that doesn't include at least the ♣K. After East shows two key cards and the ♠Q with 5♠, West checks for side kings, but when East denies any (6♠), the auction ends.

Board 18		North	
East Deals		♠ QJ1053	
N-S Vulnerable		♥ 5	
		♦ Q964	
		♣ K103	
West		East	
♠ K9642		♠ A7	
♥ J8762		♥ AKQ43	
♦ K		♦ AJ108	
♣ Q7		♣ 64	
		South	
		♠ 8	
		♥ 109	
		♦ 7532	
		♣ AJ9852	

8
9 18
5

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 5♥; EW 2♠; EW 1NT;
EW 1♦; NS 1♣** **Par -450: EW 4♥ +1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
4♥	All Pass	1♥	Pass

Some Souths, unconcerned with the vulnerability, may try 3♣, but West will still bid 4♥, as in the sample auction. Where South stays silent, West may feel that 4♥ is a bit of an underbid, but it's a difficult hand to evaluate with the unsupported minor-suit honors, so 4♥ is a practical (if unscientific) shot.

In order to hold declarer to 11 tricks, the defense must cash two clubs right away. On any other lead, declarer will be able to make 12 tricks by arranging a club pitch from dummy on the ♦A after having unblocked the ♦K first.

Board 19		North	
South Deals		♠ AK8	
E-W Vulnerable		♥ Q92	
		♦ AKQ1076	
		♣ K	
West			East
♠ Q1092			♠ 63
♥ K73			♥ AJ5
♦ 54			♦ 92
♣ 9543			♣ AQ10862
		South	
		♠ J754	
		♥ 10864	
		♦ J83	
		♣ J7	

21
5 11
3

Double-Dummy Results: EW 3♣; NS 2♦; EW 1♠; NS 1♥
Par -100: NS 3♦ x -1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♦	2♣	Pass
3♣	3♦	All Pass	Pass

The difficult-to-describe North hand makes multiple auctions possible. The sample auction features a top-of-range one-level opening, but there will be fans of 2NT as North's first call, too. Don't laugh: If the auction goes 2NT–All Pass, East may lead a low club and watch North scoop up nine tricks. Be honest: Would you lead the ♣A at trick one?

Against 3♦, the defense will score a spade, three hearts and a club for down one. Any North that falls in love with their hand and jumps higher in diamonds will get a poor score.

		North	
Board 20		♠ J	
West Deals		♥ QJ109	
Both Vulnerable		♦ KQ97432	
		♣ 8	
West		East	
♠ K973		♠ 65	
♥ 843		♥ K72	
♦ J865		♦ 10	
♣ A5		♣ KQ76432	
		South	
		♠ AQ10842	
		♥ A65	
		♦ A	
		♣ J109	

9
8 8
15

Double-Dummy Results: NS 4♥; NS 5♦; EW 2NT; NS 2♠; E 1♣
Par +600: NS 5♦ =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	3♣	3♠
Pass	?		

Trying to predict possible auctions on deal like this is a fool's errand. Some Norths will preempt 3♦ at their first turn despite the presence of a chunky four-card major on the side. This could easily cause a heart game to be missed, so it's not recommended.

If North decides that no call can really describe this collection and decides to pass instead, things don't get better. East has a normal-looking 3♣ preempt, and South has an equally normal-looking 3♠ overcall. When West passes, what should North do? You guess is as good as mine, though passing seems best. If North were confident that 4♦ denied spade interest and showed this type of hand, that would be great, but is that logical? And if South persists with 4♠ (entirely possible here), North will have erred. Yuck.

Board 21	North	
North Deals	♠ Q72	
N-S Vulnerable	♥ Q106	
	♦ 6543	
	♣ KJ10	
West		East
♠ A1063		♠ J85
♥ K5		♥ 9742
♦ 987		♦ KQJ
♣ 9876		♣ AQ5
	South	
	♠ K94	
	♥ AJ83	
	♦ A102	
	♣ 432	

8
7 13
12

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 2♠; EW 1NT; EW 2♣;
EW 1♥** **Par -110: EW 1♠ +1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	All Pass

Despite the balanced pattern, some Souths may try a takeout double over East's 1♣ opening; with all of South's values concentrated in the other suits, this is certainly an option. Where South stays quiet, however, we suspect the sample auction will be popular at most tables.

Although it looks like East has just six tricks (a spade, a heart, two diamonds and two clubs), declarer has time to duck two rounds of spades and take an extra spade trick when the suit proves to be 3–3.

Board 22	North	
East Deals	♠ J1082	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ A6	
	♦ 53	
	♣ Q9652	
West		East
♠ AKQ6		♠ 954
♥ J83		♥ Q974
♦ AK94		♦ 10876
♣ 87		♣ A4
	South	
	♠ 73	
	♥ K1052	
	♦ QJ2	
	♣ KJ103	

7
17 6
10

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 2♠; EW 2♥; EW 1NT;
EW 2♦; NS 2♣ Par -100: NS 3♣ x -1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

Some West players might decide to open their hand 1♦ instead of 1NT; the concentration of values in spades and diamonds make an auction such as 1♦–1♥; 1♠–2♦ a possibility. Those players will be right on this layout as a suit contract plays better than notrump for EW.

The double-dummy analysis says the EW can make 1NT on this deal, but that's because it can "see" the diamond position. Where West declares and North leads a club, dummy's ace wins the trick, and a diamond is covered by the jack and king. To succeed from here, declarer must then switch to a low heart to the queen and South's king. The defense can rattle off their club winners, but in the ending, things get tangled for the defense, and declarer can force his way to seven tricks through endplays or even a squeeze against South in some variations. Again, this is completely double-dummy, and we expect many EW pairs to finish down one in 1NT.

Board 23	North	
South Deals	♠ KQ10	
Both Vulnerable	♥ 9873	
	♦ Q85	
	♣ Q74	
West		East
♠ 54		♠ A862
♥ AK65		♥ QJ2
♦ AJ2		♦ K10763
♣ 8632		♣ 5
	South	
	♠ J973	
	♥ 104	
	♦ 94	
	♣ AKJ109	

9
 12 10
 9

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 4♥; EW 5♦; EW 2NT;
EW 1♠; NS 1♣ Par -620: EW 4♥ =**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	All Pass		Pass

After a 1♣ opening, many pairs play that responder may bypass a longer diamond suit to bid a four-card major. Pairs who use that treatment may have the sample auction above. But this layout is better suited to the old-fashioned approach of responding 1♦ first. After 1♣–1♦; 1♥–1NT, opener could try 2♦. As with Board 22, some suit contracts (diamonds and hearts) play better than notrump on this deal, though getting to game is a bit rich. Pairs that play in diamond or heart partscores on this deal will score well anyway.

Board 24	North	
West Deals	♠ 98	
None	♥ Q8765	
Vulnerable	♦ QJ9754	
	♣ —	
West		East
♠ AQJ7		♠ 10432
♥ A9		♥ K1042
♦ A8		♦ K2
♣ Q9832		♣ K75
	South	
	♠ K65	
	♥ J3	
	♦ 1063	
	♣ AJ1064	

5
17 9
9

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 5♠; EW 3NT; EW 3♥;
EW 4♣; NS 1♦ Par -450: EW 4♠ +1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Some Wests will prefer opening 1NT instead, and there the auction will likely be 1NT–2♣; 2♠–3♠; 4♠.

With North on lead, there's no way for the defense to obtain a club ruff. Declarer will pick up the trump suit for no losers but eventually have to surrender two club tricks. Plus 450 should be normal.

Board 25	North	
North Deals	♠ 105	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ Q72	
	♦ Q72	
	♣ AKQ53	
West		East
♠ A9763		♠ J42
♥ 843		♥ J1095
♦ 943		♦ A85
♣ 96		♣ 872
	South	
	♠ KQ8	
	♥ AK6	
	♦ KJ106	
	♣ J104	

13
4 6
17

Double-Dummy Results: NS 5NT; NS 4♥; NS 5♦; NS 5♣; NS 3♠
Par +460: NS 3NT +2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♣	Pass	2♣
All Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT

After North opens 1♣, South's hand is too strong for a jump to 3NT (typically showing 13–15 HCP), so those that play inverted minor raises can start with a forcing 2♣ raise instead. Others may have to start with a 1♦ response and improvise later. Over the 2♣ artificial response, North, who has no real stopper to show in another suit, will rebid 3♣, and South can proceed to 3NT from there. It's not perfect, but it's practical at matchpoints.

On a low spade lead from West, declarer plays low from dummy, and if East produces the jack, declarer can win and knock out the ♦A. The defense can only score the ♠A from there.

		North	
Board 26		♠ 8	
East Deals		♥ K5	
Both Vulnerable		♦ AJ9765	
		♣ J954	
West		East	
♠ KQJ54		♠ A10963	
♥ QJ1087		♥ 432	
♦ 3		♦ KQ104	
♣ K2		♣ 10	
		South	
		♠ 72	
		♥ A96	
		♦ 82	
		♣ AQ8763	

9
12 9
10

Double-Dummy Results: NS 4♣; EW 2♠; EW 2♥; NS 2♦
Par +130: NS 3♣ +1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2♣	2♦	Pass 4♠	1♣ All Pass

Some Souths will pass the shapely 10-count while others will open 1♣ and try to rebid clubs cheaply, as the hand has 2-1/2 quick tricks and a rebid. (And please: This hand is far too good for a 3♣ preempt.) Where South passes initially, West will open 1♠ at most tables and get raised to 4♠. On the sample auction provided, South opens 1♣ and West makes a Michaels 2♣ cuebid showing the majors. Whatever North decides to try (2♦ is typically considered non-forcing), East will likely jump to 4♠.

The spade game has no legitimate play, but unless the defense figures out they need to give North a heart ruff, declarer will escape for down one instead of down two.

Double-Dummy Results: NS 3NT; NS 3♥; NS 2♠; NS 3♣; NS 1♦ **Par +400: NS 3NT =**

When South shows 18–19 HCP with the jump rebid of 2NT, South must decide between passing and 3NT (or trying for a spade fit). At IMPs, there's justification for going after the game bonus, but at matchpoints, going plus is more important.

The layout is friendly for South: the ♥A is onside and the ♦J comes down in two rounds, so declarer can take nine tricks. If either one of these conditions is changed, South likely has just eight tricks, while if neither is working for South, 2NT could be in danger. Lesson: Don't be a results merchant. Passing 2NT is likely right more of the time. And if South has just 18 HCP instead of the actual, prime 19-count, 3NT is almost certainly too high.

Yes, the analysis sheet says 6♥ makes, but would you really want to be there?

		North	
Board 29		♠ J106	
North Deals		♥ AK7	
Both Vulnerable		♦ K963	
		♣ AQ10	
West		East	
♠ Q85		♠ 432	
♥ J63		♥ Q42	
♦ AJ875		♦ Q4	
♣ K5		♣ J8763	
		South	
		♠ AK97	
		♥ 10985	
		♦ 102	
		♣ 942	

17
11 5
7

Double-Dummy Results: NS 3NT; NS 3♠; NS 3♥; NS 2♦; NS 2♣
Par +600: NS 3NT =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1NT	All Pass	

Not much to say here. Both North and South have maximum values for their respective calls in the bidding, and it's a friendly layout for declarer – hearts and spades are 3–3, and the ♣K and ♦A are onside – so nine tricks can be taken, but it requires a bit of luck on a low club lead from East. North captures West's king with the ace and then must decide which major suit to tackle. Here, hearts are better because after cashing the ♥A K and playing a third round, East is on lead again and can't profitably continue clubs. And if East tries to thwart declarer's plan by unblocking the ♥Q so that West wins the third round of hearts to play a club, the East hand has no more entries; declarer can simply win West's club exit with the queen and take the spade finesse, praying that West has the ♦A.

Board 30	North	
East Deals	♠ 73	
None	♥ Q975	
Vulnerable	♦ K42	
	♣ AQ73	
West		East
♠ KJ6		♠ Q95
♥ J64		♥ AK103
♦ A1075		♦ QJ93
♣ K108		♣ 92
	South	
	♠ A10842	
	♥ 82	
	♦ 86	
	♣ J654	

11
12 12
5

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 2NT; EW 2♥; EW 2♦;
NS 2♣; NS 1♠ Par -100: NS 3♣ x -1**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2NT	All Pass	1♦	Pass

This will be a popular sequence, and the defense can hold declarer to exactly eight tricks in several ways. Even if North makes the seemingly unlucky but normal-looking lead of a low heart, declarer can win the jack in hand, play a heart to the 10 and run the ♦Q to North's king. As long as North switches to a club (even the ace followed by another club), the defense will eventually come to five tricks.

Board 31	North	
South Deals	♠ 74	
N-S Vulnerable	♥ AJ82	
	♦ KQ32	
	♣ A96	
West		East
♠ KQJ8		♠ 962
♥ K973		♥ Q65
♦ A84		♦ J1096
♣ KQ		♣ J82
	South	
	♠ A1053	
14	♥ 104	
18	♦ 75	
4	♣ 107543	

Double-Dummy Results: EW 1NT; NS 2♣; W 1♥; W 1♦
Par +90: NS 2♣ =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♦	All Pass		Pass

Yes, North has 14 HCP but has nothing to say over West's 1♦ opening. East can pass comfortably with four-card diamond support, and South just doesn't have the tickets or shape to balance.

In the play, West is a favorite to get to seven tricks to make the contract, especially if North leads a spade to South's ace and a spade comes back. Declarer wins and drives out the ♣A, and North is essentially endplayed. Even if North wins the first club trick and exits passively with another club, declarer wins and plays a low heart toward the dummy; North has no good answer. In most lines, declarer will score one spade, one heart, three trumps and two clubs.

Board 32	North	
West Deals	♠ J854	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ 9	
	♦ Q64	
	♣ 108764	
West		East
♠ Q9		♠ 763
♥ Q10732		♥ J4
♦ KJ75		♦ A10982
♣ 52		♣ Q93
	South	
	♠ AK102	
	♥ AK865	
	♦ 3	
	♣ AKJ	

Double-Dummy Results: NS 6♠; NS 5♣; NS 2NT; NS 2♥; EW 1♦
Par +980: NS 6♠ =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

This is not a beautiful auction, but South's hand is a difficult one to bid. Assuming South starts with a strong 2♣ and continues with 2♥ over North's "waiting" 2♦, North has some unpleasant choices. If playing "cheaper minor" to show a poor hand, North can try 3♣, as in the sample auction. South must then decide whether to risk a game-forcing 3♠ call. It's the most descriptive choice, but it's a bit of a stretch. Here, fortune favors the bold, and South finds North with a spade fit. North can breathe a sigh of relief and bid 4♠ (passing is not an option on this strong sequence).

If South guesses everything perfectly (dropping the doubleton ♠Q instead of finessing; finessing the ♣Q instead of playing for the drop), 12 tricks are possible.

Board 33	North		
North Deals	♠ A53		
None	♥ 84		
Vulnerable	♦ AKJ107		
	♣ 1095		
West		East	
♠ 762		♠ Q8	
♥ AK1093		♥ 7	
♦ 82		♦ Q963	
♣ 743		♣ AKQJ82	
	South		
	♠ KJ1094		
	♥ QJ652		
	♦ 54		
	♣ 6		

12
7 14
7

Double-Dummy Results: NS 3♠; NS 2♥; NS 2♦; EW 2♣
Par +140: NS 3♠ =

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♦	2♣	Dbl
3♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl(?)
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

After North's 1♦ opening and East's 2♣ overcall, South can make a negative double to show the majors. West, with three-card club support and constructive values, should raise to 3♣. When this is passed back to South, the temptation to take another call will be strong. A second double or even 3♥ (asking North to pass or correct to spades) are possibilities. It's just a 7-count, but the values are concentrated. Here, North would pull to 3♠ if asked to bid again, and NS will reach the top spot.

If South passes, however, NS will have the unpleasant task of defending 3♣, and defeating it requires some specific play. South must lead a trump AND North must play low (not the 9 or 10). The reason? The defense must deny declarer the opportunity to ruff diamonds in dummy, and they must also restrict declarer's access to the dummy to prevent him from leading up to the ♦Q twice. Where North plays low on the first trump, declarer wins, cashes the ♥A K in dummy (pitching, say, a spade) and plays a diamond toward the closed hand. North rises and plays the ♣10; declarer will ultimately lose four diamonds and a spade. But if North played the ♣10 or ♣9 at trick one, things are different: The ♣7 turns into an entry to lead a second diamond toward the queen! When it comes time to play a second trump to cut down on the diamond ruffs, North will be unable to prevent declarer from making use of the 7.

		North	
Board 34		♠ K109872	
East Deals		♥ Q1098	
N-S Vulnerable		♦ K8	
		♣ 8	
West			East
♠ A4			♠ Q3
♥ A43			♥ 75
♦ 10943			♦ 72
♣ 9654			♣ AKQJ732
		South	
		♠ J65	
		♥ KJ62	
		♦ AQJ65	
		♣ 10	

Double-Dummy Results: NS 4♥; NS 3♠; EW 2NT; NS 3♦; EW 3♣ Par +300; EW 4NT x -2; EW 5♣ x -2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1♣	Dbl
1NT	2♠	3♣	Pass
Pass	3♥	All Pass	

Several options exist for each player. Some Easts will see the seven-card club suit and automatically preempt 3♣, but this is a 12-count with a solid suit. Those that play a gambling 3NT may choose that option instead. To compete against that, NS will need to have some basic agreements; a popular one is to use 4♣ as a general takeout, with emphasis on the majors.

Against 1♣, South has an obvious takeout double, and West's hand is not quite strong enough to redouble, so 1NT it is. North, however, has an unexpectedly good hand given the auction, and must decide how high to bid at his first turn. If there was an easy way to show both majors without risking confusion, that would be an attractive choice, but even so, there's two-card length disparity between spades and hearts, so emphasizing spades is reasonable. Is 2♠ enough? 3♠ is better on values, but it could lose hearts if that's a better place to play (as it is on the actual layout). When East persists with 3♣ (3NT would be a clever try, too!), North will get a second chance and show his four-card heart suit.

To make 10 tricks in hearts, South must guess the spade position.

Board 35	North	
South Deals	♠ KQJ4	
E-W Vulnerable	♥ K864	
	♦ J64	
	♣ 64	
West		East
♠ 732		♠ A95
♥ A2		♥ J10975
♦ K932		♦ A87
♣ AKQ7		♣ 102
	South	
	♠ 1086	
	♥ Q3	
	♦ Q105	
	♣ J9853	

10
16 9
5

**Double-Dummy Results: EW 3♥; EW 2NT; EW 2♠;
EW 3♦; EW 2♣ Par -140: EW 1♥ +2**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT?	All Pass		

The transfer-then-notrump plan will be duplicated at most tables, and although the majority of East players will simply invite with 2NT, there are some aggressive Easts who try 3NT instead as a choice of games.

Where East is content with just 2NT, West must guess whether to pass or bid 3NT. The 16-count contains prime values, but the three low spades are worrisome. Those that take the low road will score better this time.

Board 36		North	
West Deals		♠ J82	
Both Vulnerable		♥ AQ10876	
		♦ 98	
		♣ A4	
West		East	
♠ Q753		♠ AK96	
♥ 542		♥ 9	
♦ A653		♦ KJ1042	
♣ KQ		♣ J32	
		South	
		♠ 104	
		♥ KJ3	
		♦ Q7	
		♣ 1098765	

11 11 12
6

Double-Dummy Results: EW 5♠; EW 5♦; NS 2♥; NS 1♣
Par -650: EW 4♠ +1

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♥	Dbl	2♥
3♠	All Pass		

Some Wests will open with this scattered 11-count, but let's say West passes and North opens 1♥. (For shame if you opened this nice hand with a weak 2♥ opening.) East makes a takeout double, and South raises to 2♥. East, with maximum values for the initial pass, must do something more than a simple 2♠. Jumping to 3♠ is certainly better, and some will blast to 4♠. Although that works on this layout, it will sometimes be wrong when East has doubled on a shapely hand with fewer high-card points and/or three spades.