

EBED



Sim Pairs

Commentary by Michael Byrne

Monday
9th May 2022

Welcome to the English Bridge Education & Development (EBED) Simultaneous Pairs. The proceeds raised by this event will go to EBED, the national charity for the promotion and development of duplicate bridge. EBED have responded to the challenges of the past two years by continuing to improve and develop the infrastructure for bridge teaching in England. This has been achieved, by providing focussed training for bridge teachers (members of EBTA, our English Bridge Teaching Association) to support them with the new skills needed for online teaching and adapting methods used in classroom-based learning. We continue to provide a gentle introduction for new players, to online duplicate bridge through our weekly EBS (English Bridge School) relaxed games. EBED additionally supplies "Bridge for All" teaching materials, organises teacher and director training courses, administers the Junior Award Scheme, organises the Schools Cup, Inter-Schools League and Youth Grand Prix, and runs the Junior Teach In. We continue to support county organisations and individual volunteers at the local level to run youth events. You can read more about EBED's activities in the current issue of English Bridge and at www.ebedcio.org.uk. If you wish to arrange a donation in favour of the charity, please do so at www.ebedcio.org.uk/donate. Amazon customers can effortlessly support us by switching to AmazonSmile. Do please encourage your friends to come to play in these events which are open to all and raise vital funds for our work. We sincerely thank you for your support.

Giorgio Provenza

Chief Executive English Bridge Education & Development, Registered Charity No: 1153543

<p>♠ KQ9872 ♥ A ♦ 54 ♣ AKQJ</p> <p>♠ 3 ♠ 104 ♥ KQJ82 ♥ 10543 ♦ K107 ♦ AJ92 ♣ 7653 ♣ 1094</p> <p>♠ AJ65 ♥ 976 ♦ Q863 ♣ 82</p>	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>NS have a relatively easy deal to start with, does this herald a calmer more relaxed simultaneous pairs, where every contract makes an overtrick? I certainly hope not.</p> <p>North will open 1♠ (the hand isn't far off a strong two, but a) the suit isn't that good and b) no-one plays them any more) and South will raise to 2♠.</p> <p>West will sigh glumly and pass (or wildly overbid with 3♥) and North will bid 4♠. Whilst it is possible from North's point of view that slam might make (Axxx, xxx, Axx, xxx) it is unlikely and hard to find out. (Blackwood is of no use, as xxxx, xxx, AKx, xxx makes slam cold and will elicit the same one ace response as this hand where slam is no play at all).</p> <p>There doesn't seem to be anything to the play, 11 tricks on any lead and play no matter how declarer twists and turns.</p> <p>Any variation on 450? A few will try a slam (oops) and if any EW pairs bid 5♥ that will be at least 500 which will not kick off the evening in the right fashion!</p>																																																												
<table border="1" style="margin-bottom: 5px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>HCP</th> <th colspan="5">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>19</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 5px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>N</th> <th>4</th> <th>1</th> <th>-</th> <th>5</th> <th>4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>5</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP	Makeable contracts						♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	19	4	1	-	5	4	9	4	1	-	5	4	7	-	-	2	-	-		-	-	2	-	-	N	4	1	-	5	4	S	4	1	-	5	4	E	-	-	2	-	-	W	-	-	2	-	-	
HCP	Makeable contracts																																																												
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																																								
19	4	1	-	5	4																																																								
9	4	1	-	5	4																																																								
7	-	-	2	-	-																																																								
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N	4	1	-	5	4																																																								
S	4	1	-	5	4																																																								
E	-	-	2	-	-																																																								
W	-	-	2	-	-																																																								

♠Q1098
 ♥86
 ♦AQ7
 ♣KQ94
 ♠5 ♠J7
 ♥KJ1092 ♥Q743
 ♦109865 ♦KJ
 ♣32 ♣AJ1085
 ♠AK6432
 ♥A5
 ♦432
 ♣76

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
13		-	-	-	4	2
4	12	-	-	-	4	2
11		1	1	3	-	-
		1	1	3	-	-

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

This time it is 4♠ once more, but here there is a bit more interest in the play. East will open 1♣ (he should open 1NT, but most people don't think about the rebid until it's too late) and South will overcall 1♠. West isn't worth a negative double and North should start with 2♣ and then jump to 4♠ after South shows a bit extra. (If South rebids a timid 2♠ then North is worth 3♠ and South must finally show some signs of life and go onto game).

West will lead a club to the King and Ace and East has a natural looking heart switch. (It is pretty unlikely that West has a singleton club, and even then he will be ruffing South's loser anyway). South has a choice of plays now, he might win and eliminate clubs while drawing trumps, he can then exit a heart, even if West wins and plays a high diamond he can rise with the ace and play another, making if East has Kx (likely after he has long clubs, 2 spades and looks like 4 hearts).

Alternatively South can duck the heart, it will be hard for West to play a diamond, now eliminate and throw East in with the 4th round of clubs pitching a diamond is enough for ten tricks, and applause from the spectators.

♠A1084
 ♥65
 ♦Q63
 ♣KJ74
 ♠K762 ♠QJ95
 ♥K432 ♥AQ
 ♦J942 ♦K8
 ♣5 ♣A8632
 ♠3
 ♥J10987
 ♦A1075
 ♣Q109

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
10		-	-	-	-	-
7	16	-	-	-	-	-
7		1	1	-	4	1
		1	1	-	4	1

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

4♠ once more! This time EW get to have their revenge, although with trumps 4-1 perhaps it is NS that will have the last laugh.

East will get to open 4th in seat (although most players I know would open that North hand 3rd in, but not if anyone was looking) and EW will surely bid 1♣-1♥-1♦-2♠, now East might try 2NT and West will jump to 4♠. The ♥J is the natural lead and East must ruff clubs in the dummy, and avoid the temptation to lead a diamond to the king. The play does look interesting, when East tries to cash the ♥K if North ruffs it puts declarer back in control, he can over-ruff and ruff the 4th club then try the ♠K. With North and East both having 3 spades North might try ducking, winning the next one and then playing a diamond to partner to get the 4th round of hearts for a force. This doesn't quite work as East will make the ♦K instead of the 5th club.

Alternatively East might try and ruff the 5th round of clubs with the King of trumps, a complete cross ruff, losing just the ♠A and two diamonds at the end, that seems to work easily enough (I say confidently, having looked at all four hands for 20 minutes!).

♠A7
 ♥A42
 ♦10872
 ♣J1063
 ♠QJ53 ♠4
 ♥108 ♥KQJ975
 ♦93 ♦QJ654
 ♣AQ975 ♣2
 ♠K109862
 ♥63
 ♦AK
 ♣K84

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		2	-	-	2	2
9	9	2	-	-	3	2
13		-	1	3	-	-
		-	1	3	-	-

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

Only part-score now, and the hand belongs to the side outgunned in high cards – will their opposition go quietly?

West and North will both pass and East will open some number of hearts. There are reasons to open 1♥, 2♥, 3♥ and even 4♥ so it is anyone's guess what East will choose. (Just to be clear, opening 2♥ would be a huge underbid facing a non passed hand, but 3rd in seat it is up to your imagination).

If East opens 1♥ then South can bid 1♠, and then 2♠ later on. North might well bid 3♠ in competition, and South can make 9 tricks if he plays double dummy (win the ♥A, diamond to hand, spade to the 7, etc) although in practice most declarer's will make 8 tricks.

If East opens 3♥ then South will overcall 3♠, North should raise to 4♠ and West can finally double, even double dummy that ain't making!

Any South players that make 9 tricks in spades, well done, although if you were in 4♠ then -200 won't be much good anyway!

♠K984
 ♥Q1063
 ♦Q1086
 ♣5
 ♠J7 ♠10653
 ♥A972 ♥K85
 ♦943 ♦AJ
 ♣KQ98 ♣A1062
 ♠AQ2
 ♥J4
 ♦K752
 ♣J743

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
7	-	2	-	-	-
10	-	2	-	-	-
11	3	-	1	-	1
	3	-	1	-	1

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

Another nip and tuck part-score with EW having the balance and a gentle 4-4 fit, but the bad break may prove awkward in the play. North will pass and most East players will open 1NT, this will be passed back round to North, who really wants to compete. 2♣ for the majors would surely be right at love all, but vul vs not a cautious pass is certainly best. South has to choose between the minors for a lead, and a club lead works very badly, (handing over 4 tricks in the suit) while a diamond lead works really well. I would expect declarer to come to 7 tricks easily and perhaps an 8th on a club lead, as after 4 rounds of clubs North might throw a heart, although any other combination of discards is probably enough to hold declarer to 7. On a diamond lead declarer should play a club to the king and one back (since the 2♦ lead from South is not consistent with South holding a singleton club) now 4 rounds of clubs only leads to 7 tricks no matter what North discards, since the defence has 3 diamonds and 3 spades to take if East risks ducking a heart. If East opens 1♣ then EW will probably still end up in 1NT, now a diamond lead is easier to find.

♠QJ875
 ♥AKQ9
 ♦732
 ♣Q
 ♠AK9 ♠432
 ♥10764 ♥3
 ♦J109 ♦AQ864
 ♣A107 ♣J842
 ♠106
 ♥J852
 ♦K5
 ♣K9653

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
14	-	-	2	1	-
12	-	-	2	1	-
7	1	3	-	-	1
	1	3	-	-	1

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

Again a (close to) even split of points means that both sides can make a part-score, but only if they play in the best fit. (To be fair it's not clear why they *wouldn't* play in their best fit).

West will open 1NT 3rd in seat (will any cautious souls pass I wonder?) and North should show the majors with 2♣ (Landy), East can bid 2♦ and South joins in with 2♥. It's not obvious for either East or West to climb to the 3 level, but it is very much the right decision as both contracts make. Perhaps West will realise partner has a singleton heart, and that the hands are fitting together really well?

Playing in 2♥ there are 4 top losers, but the 4-1 trump break makes things awkward and 8 tricks are the limit on accurate defence, though plenty will make 9. In diamonds East has to be careful in the club suit, missing the 9 means that a careless club to the ten will result in two losers and 3♦ going down. As usual on these part-score deals, if you bid and made a contract you will score well, if you found a way to go minus then I'm sorry, but you will not.

♠AK3
 ♥107
 ♦KQJ63
 ♣J72
 ♠64 ♠QJ972
 ♥KQ842 ♥5
 ♦854 ♦107
 ♣1086 ♣AK953
 ♠1085
 ♥AJ963
 ♦A92
 ♣Q4

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
14	-	4	2	1	3
5	-	3	2	1	2
11	1	-	-	-	-
	1	-	-	-	-

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

NS have 25 points between them and stoppers in every suit, but they will have to be careful to play it from North since a spade lead from West will prove fatal. South has a marginal opening, 1♥ is more attractive in a strong no trump base, where you can delay showing 12 points until the 2nd round. (Playing Acol you might open 1♥ and raise 1♠ to 2♠ I suppose, although this normally delivers a shapely hand). If South does open 1♥ then the auction will surely continue with 2♦ from North giving East a choice of 2♠, double and 2NT (5/5 in the other suits). If East bids 2♠ then North will leap to 3NT and make it on the surprise club lead. (If instead East leads the ♠Q then North might take a double heart finesse and go down). If East bids 2NT or double then West will pick clubs, it will be hard for NS to work out which of them has a club stopper, and they might end elsewhere. If South passes then North will open 1♦ or 1NT and East shows spades and a minor. Again the auction might become crowded and it wouldn't be a surprise for NS to get in a muddle. Well done if you recorded +600 as NS, there will be plenty that don't!

♠KJ6
♥1054
♦J2
♣K9876

♠Q432 ♠1097
♥AKQ87 ♥J962
♦3 ♦KQ108
♣1032 ♣J4

♠A85
♥3
♦A97654
♣AQ5

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
8		N	4	3	-	2
11	7	S	4	3	-	2
14		E	-	-	1	-
		W	-	-	1	-

♠A109653

♥8

♦J4

♣KQ74

♠K8 ♠J7
♥K764 ♥109532
♦AQ2 ♦109653
♣9863 ♣5

♠Q42
♥AQJ
♦K87
♣AJ102

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
10		N	4	-	-	4
12	1	S	5	-	-	5
17		E	-	1	2	-
		W	-	1	2	-

♠K9

♥J9

♦AK865432

♣Q

♠83 ♠QJ76542
♥10752 ♥K3
♦Q107 ♦9
♣KJ65 ♣873

♠A10
♥AQ864
♦J
♣A10942

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
13		N	4	6	4	1
6	6	S	4	6	4	1
15		E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

NS have the values and with it the contract, but the absence of a major suit fit will mean they have to settle for part-score.

West will open 1♥ and East raise to 2♥ (a pre-emptive raise to 3♥ isn't really part of the English armoury) South can either overcall 3♦ (planning to double back in later) or double (planning another action later). The hand isn't really worth double and then diamonds, but that won't stop some people.

Over 3♦ West might bid 3♥ (purely competitive) and if South doubles for take out (he should) then North will bid 4♣ which will make with careful play. (One ruff, draw trumps take the spade finesse).

If instead South doubles 2♥ initially then when EW compete to 3♥ over 3♣ someone will have to take another action, either 4♣ from North or a value showing double passed out.

The right thing for NS to do is actually pull the trigger on 3♥ as they have it two off in top tricks (and will get them, unless South tries to give his partner a diamond ruff) but solid 9 card fits are hard to punish.

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

NS have 27 points and a 9 card fit, so surely everyone in the room will play 4♣ – or will they?

The North hand is far too strong for a “first-at green” weak two, and falls snugly into the 1♠ category. The two defensive tricks, powerful 6-4 shape, points in long suits and strong intermediates all augur well for the play of the hand.

After 1♠-P-2♣-P North has a choice between 2♣ and 3♣, but whatever he chooses 4♣ will be reached shortly. (If South bids 3♣ over 3♣ then North's brisk return to 4♣ will show a minimum and South won't be tempted to bid on).

The natural lead for East is the singleton club and North will win and bang out ace and another spade. West can win and exit a club, leaving North to guess the red suits. A simple diamond to the king will result in two losers and only ten tricks, whilst a ruffing finesse in hearts leads to 11.

Since I am not a complete results merchant (honestly) I shall say that a diamond to the king looks right to me, West has turned up with ♠K, and if he has the ♥K then surely the ♠A is with East anyway – but not today!

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

Our first slam of the event? Maybe so, but will anyone reach it, that is the question. East has a soft 3♣ opener (or a poor man's weak two if you are feeling cautious) and South would like to show hearts and clubs. Some do play 4♣ over 3♣ to show these suits (so called “Non Leaping Michaels”) but most will be a bit stuck and have to choose between 4♥, 3NT and an ugly double. Whatever action is taken North will want to introduce diamonds, and it will be anyone's guess where the auction will end.

If North does end in a slam on a spade lead there are several ways to play it. Combining your chances of banging out the top diamonds and then falling back on the heart finesse (70% without the bidding, but less after East has pre-empted) is one way, but another is to win the ♠K, play ace and ruff a club, then two top diamonds, over to the ♠A and ruff another club. Now exit with a trump and West is endplayed, the best he can do is play the last club, but you ruff and the 5th club in dummy is good to avoid the heart finesse, which of course was right all along!

Well done if you followed the suggested line of play for +1370.

♦AQ76

♥KQ6

♦J953

♣J10

♠K532

♠104

♥A98742

♥J3

♦K2

♦AQ1074

♣8

♣A943

♠J98

♥105

♦86

♣KQ7652

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all

A return to earth now, with another gentle part-score – no wait, it's actually a game, but only if played by the right hand.

Lacking a weak two in clubs (some do play such things, but they are mostly bearded ex-students) South will pass and West has a perfect 1♥ opener (too strong and crisp for a weak two, as well as holding 4 cards in the other major). North will have to pass (yes, really) and East is worth 2♦. When West rebids 2♥ this presents a problem in Acol, as it might only be a 5 card suit, and East isn't worth 3♣ (game forcing). 2NT is right on values but the spade holding is ugly. Perhaps 3♥ is right, and West might go on to game on the strength of his 6th heart, 6-4 shape and fitting King of diamonds.

In practice no-one will make 4♥, as the winning line of play (Ace and another heart, then KD and a diamond to the ten) looks highly counter intuitive to me. As usual, just playing in the right strain (hearts) and making plenty of tricks (9 or 10) will be enough for a good score, bidding the thin game is an unnecessary risk.

HCP

Makeable contracts

13	11				
10	6	♣	♦	♥	♠
		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
		-	2	3	1
		-	2	4	1

♦AJ7

♥QJ106

♦J64

♣K103

♠8542

♠Q1093

♥AK

♥72

♦K953

♦1072

♣842

♣Q975

♠K6

♥98543

♦AQ8

♣AJ6

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

NS have two making games here, but 4♥ will be the popular choice, the 9 card fit providing the extra trick despite 4333 shape facing 5332.

Most Norths will open 1NT in 2nd seat (does anyone still pass 12 counts or have we all grown out of that?) and South will either transfer or bid stayman, either way will uncover the heart fit and lead to a final contract of 4♥ by North. If East leads either black suit then that is ten tricks without thinking (in fact a spade lead lets through 11 double dummy, North can cash 6 black tricks throwing a diamond and endplay West with a trump) but a diamond lead leaves North needing to find the ♣Q. Assuming declarer plays low from the dummy then West must win and cash the top hearts before exiting a diamond, now North must cash everything and try and get count. Once East turns up with the ♣Q (they will surely cover the ♦J on the 3rd round holding Q10) then that provides the clue that they also have the ♣Q, otherwise they might have led a club not a diamond. I would expect most to get it right if only because a lot of declarers won't realise they have a two way guess.

HCP

Makeable contracts

12	4				
10	14	♣	♦	♥	♠
		-	2	4	1
		-	2	4	1
		-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-

♦987

♥Q872

♦A8

♣AQJ8

♠KQ4

♠10

♥A9

♥KJ54

♦KJ10642

♦Q97

♣K2

♣76543

♠AJ6532

♥1063

♦53

♣109

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

It's rare for a 9 card diamond fit to outbid a 9 card spade fit, but the absence of points for NS is a blow here, and they must bow to West's power alas.

North will open 1NT (1♣ for some) and South will transfer to spades. West might bid something clever (is 2NT natural in this sequence?) but in practice most will bid a simple 3♦ which will end the auction. (If South does bid 3♠ over 3♦ then this is mostly competitive, but it is far too much with a barren 5 count regardless).

The defence can get all their tricks on the simple defence of a spade lead to the ace and a club switch, and I would expect most tables to find this as it just seems so natural. If instead North tries a sneaky heart lead then West can win the ace and cross back to the jack and ditch a club, now 9 tricks have become 10. If West does end in no trumps, then the same defence that works against 3♦ will this time beat the contract, North's vital 8♣ providing the setting trick. If NS do buy the hand in spades then 8 tricks are possible, but the defence will get several chances to ruff in and cash their hearts even on a club lead, so 9 are not.

Makeable contracts

13	6				
16	5	♣	♦	♥	♠
		-	-	1	2
		-	-	1	2
		1	3	-	-
		1	3	-	-

♠Q1095**♥AK1085****♦QJ2****♣10****♠K83****♥J63****♦43****♣J9854****♠AJ764****♥Q92****♦A10986****♣-****♠2****♥74****♦K75****♣AKQ7632**

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

Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all

NS might have two opening bids facing each other and a long minor accompanied by stoppers in every suit, but part-score is the limit due to the rather brutal club break.

East will open 1♠ and South can choose between 2♣ (middle of the road) and 3♣ (bold as brass) to ask for a spade stopper. Most will bid 2♣ and West should (must) bid 2♠ to show the fit and deny NS bidding room. North will probably try 3♥ now, and South will either rebid clubs, bid 3♣ to ask for a stopper or raise hearts.

The many different multitude of contracts that NS might reach will only have one thing in common – they won't make. A heart contract falls apart as North's natural play is to take a few discards after ruffing a spade in dummy, now East gets a club ruff and West is threatening to get a diamond ruff. Club contracts makes 9 tricks, losing two trumps and two aces, and no trumps only makes 8, as East can clear the spades and wait for the ♦A to act as an entry. A spade contract makes 8 tricks, but 9 are theoretically possible (and practically impossible) on a top club lead.

♠J432**♥1087****♦AKQ1043****♣-****♠K****♥AKQJ932****♦5****♣5432****♠AQ65****♥6****♦9762****♣A1087****♠10987****♥54****♦J8****♣KQJ96**

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

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

Whether to pre-empt or not is the main issue here, as after South passes West has a traditional problem, should they open 1♥ or 4♥?

The 13 points suggest a one level opening, but a quick look at the honour structure tells us this is misleading, since a singleton King rarely pulls its weight in defence. Holding a solid suit and 7-4 shape it is surely right to take control of the auction and start with 4♥, which should lead to that being the final contract, North does not have enough playing strength to overcall 5♦ at adverse vulnerability.

The defence will surely start with two rounds of diamonds which gives 11 easy tricks to West, who can ruff and draw trumps, then unblock the KS and cross to dummy in clubs to take two discards.

"Why didn't you switch to a club" South will say, and I hope North has a good explanation at the ready(!). Since the room contract will be 4♥ (1♥-2♦-X-P-4♥ is an alternative) the key issue will be whether it is 10 or 11 tricks, but only if they play it by East can the overtrick be stopped.

♠9432**♥10753****♦K52****♣K10****♠KQJ****♥AK864****♦76****♣AJ4****♠1086****♥Q9****♦Q10983****♣876****♠A75****♥J2****♦AJ4****♣Q9532**

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
6	N	2	-	-	1
18	S	2	-	-	1
4	E	-	1	1	-
12	W	-	1	1	-

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

EW have the majority, but the absence of a fit and poor lie of the cards mean that in a surprising twist of fate the hand belongs to NS.

West will start brightly with 1♥ and this will probably be passed round to South, who can choose between double and 1NT (2♣ is something out of Hammer's House of Horrors).

As an aside it is often right to respond light on hands such as that held by East, but without a convenient suit to show and at this vulnerability a shrewd pass is probably better.

Those Souths that choose 1NT will get to play there, this is a fair contract as North's ♥10 is a valuable stopper, spades are 3-3 and the diamond finesse is right. Mind you South will have to get the club right (low to the ten is not that natural a play) otherwise there are 7 losers. If South doubles then perhaps West will play 1NT. On a spade lead and continuation this time West will make 7 tricks, giving up a heart trick to give him 4 heart tricks, to go with 2 spades and the ♣A. Who won the race and got to 1NT first?

♦2
♥Q10762
♦J532
♣AQ3

♠AKJ83 ♠Q1074
♥A4 ♥J98
♦106 ♦AK97
♣10954 ♣J8

♦965
♥K53
♦Q84
♣K762

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		-	-	1	-	-
12	11	-	-	1	-	-
8		1	1	-	4	2
		1	1	-	4	2

♦J10875
♥Q10
♦KQ4
♣752

♠9632 ♠K
♥AJ98 ♥754
♦98 ♦AJ107653
♣KJ8 ♣96

♦AQ4
♥K632
♦2
♣AQ1043

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
8		3	-	1	3	2
9	8	3	-	2	4	2
15		-	2	-	-	-
		-	2	-	-	-

♦95
♥QJ10765
♦AKJ2
♣Q

♠QJ642 ♠10873
♥K ♥A9
♦643 ♦985
♣10863 ♣AKJ2

♦AK
♥8432
♦Q107
♣9754

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
13		-	4	4	-	-
6	12	-	4	4	-	-
9		2	-	-	1	-
		2	-	-	1	-

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

EW might only have a combined 23 count, but the good fit and 9 card fit mean that game is easy.

The most likely start to the auction is three passes (although no doubt a handful of tables will refuse to quietly go, if only to disrupt the recommended auction) and West will open 1♦ in 4th chair. East will show a limit raise, mostly by responding 3♦ (although some 5 card majorites will bid a fancy "drury") and West might choose to go onto game – it would be a good time to trot out some nonsense about the losing trick count and give it one for the road.

The auction would be the same if East had three losing clubs of course, but today the honours fit like a glove. There are just two clubs and a heart to lose, although West will have to make sure they play clubs immediately, luckily South can't gain the lead twice to carry on with trumps.

Well done if you overbid to 4♦, today your luck was in and 420 (and a top score) is your reward!

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

Pre-emptive deals are always good fun, and this hand will be no exception, as inevitably there is a question about strain and level.

East should open 3♦ and South has a clear cut take out double, West will pass (although a raise to 4♦ is enterprising) and North will have to choose between 3♣ and 4♣. With the wrong diamond holding (Axx would be much more useful) I would err on the side of auction and bid only 3♣, which South should pass. Regardless of the final level East must find something to lead. The ♦A will only serve to help declarer, a club is best (shortest side suit) but that won't be obvious.

Despite the lucky spade break ten tricks are only possible with an endplay, otherwise there are two club losers and the red aces. Say East leads two rounds of diamonds, North picks up trumps and takes a club finesse, West has to give ground in either hearts or clubs.

Well done if you made 620, but I suspect with the play being tricky that +170 won't have scored too badly either.

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

This time the play is a bit easier, the ten card fit coming in very useful, and it is a question of what level will be reached in the bidding!

After two passes North will open 1♥ and East has a dubious take out double that a few bold players will make. If East does double then South can stretch to 2NT (the old fashioned Truscott, showing a good raise to the 3 level or better) and NS will reach game, whether or not West sticks in a 3♣ nuisance bid (he should).

Alternatively NS might just bid 1♥-3♥-4♥, or 1♥-2♥-3♦-4♥.

The play in hearts looks pretty straightforward, being as there are 3 top losers and not a penny more. The only interest is if East leads Ace and another trump, the sight of West's king hitting the green baize will no doubt be accompanied by a black look of death. If instead East leads two rounds of clubs and North ruffs to play the ♥Q then East must not give into temptation and play the Ace, a different way to have the same disaster.

420 for most 450 for a few lucky souls – make sure you are on the right side of the freak result!

♦AQ2**♥QJ42****♦752****♣842****♠K5****♥A1087****♦J83****♣AQJ7****♠987643****♥K3****♦A106****♣106****♠J10****♥965****♦KQ94****♣K953**

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9	-	-	-	-	-
15	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-
9	2	2	2	3	1
	W	1	2	2	1

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

EW have a good play for game here, but with the ♠A offside must be careful not to over-reach themselves.

West has a pleasant strong NT, most will open 1♥, although some will bid 1♣ or 1NT. With NS keeping quiet East must decide how high to go after responding 1♠ and seeing partner rebid 1NT (15-17). On the plus side the side honours are a powerful Ace and King, on the downside neither of them are in trump suit. Ideally the best bid would be to invite with spades, perhaps 2♣-2♦-2♠ in the modern “2 way checkback” style. That leaves West with a hasty pass (minimum and only a doubleton spade to boot) and declarer is under no pressure.

If instead West opens 1NT and East transfer and overbids to game then there is some scope for a defensive accident. If North leads the ♥Q, wins the first trump and continues with hearts then that is ten tricks. Alternatively a club switch might be fatal if South puts the king up.

Well done if you stopped low and made 140, for every lucky player to slip game home there will be plenty that went minus through overbidding.

♠10975**♥2****♦AK10832****♣J2****♠3****♥AKQJ1043****♦Q****♣7643****♠K2****♥98765****♦J654****♣KQ****♠AQJ864****♥-****♦97****♣A10985**

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
8	5	5	-	6	-
12	5	5	-	6	-
9	-	-	4	-	-
11	-	-	4	-	-
	W	-	-	4	-

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

Another solid 7 card heart suit (and side 4 card suit) for West, but a variation in the bidding since NS can make a lot of tricks in spades!

North should pass (a diamond pre-empt is wrong with such powerful cards and 4 spades on the side as well, you will often be called to outbid the opponents hearts with your spade suit) and South can open with a number of spades in 3rd seat. 1♠ is mainstream, but with this shape 4♠ has a lot of merit as well. West will overcall 4♥ and North raises to 4♠, East might bid 5♥ and South should definitely bid on. EW must be careful to quit now as any more bidding might tip NS into the slam which they will surely make but won't bid. I suppose that's not true, since 7♥ is only 3 off for 500, and 7♠ won't make. So EW should plough on regardless and buy the hand at whatever level they need to. Playing in spades South just has to take the spade finesse, then he can set up diamonds or clubs, whichever he fancies.

I wonder if a boring 680 will be enough to score well for NS? I doubt it, as more will make a slam (or 5♠) than will save as EW.

♠AQJ987653**♥97****♦10****♣9****♠42****♥Q854****♦Q6****♣KJ864****♠K10****♥A2****♦J532****♣Q10752****♠-****♥KJ1063****♦AK9874****♣A3**

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
7	-	3	3	5	-
8	-	3	3	5	-
10	1	-	-	-	-
15	1	-	-	-	-
	W	1	-	-	-

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

This hand reminds me of the classic joke - “What do you call a 9 card suit?” (The answer of course, being “trumps”).

North will bid spades, spades and more spades, and if he doesn't end up with spades as trumps he should bid them again. The trouble is, that South hand is powerful and worth a reverse, it might need one of North or South to put the breaks on before they end up in an unmakeable slam.

If South opens 1♥ (some people still do this, I've never understood why) then South will respond 1♠ and jump to 4♠ over the 2♦ bid. South might not be happy but should pass, his top cards will come in handy.

If instead South opens 1♦ and reverse into 2♥ (as would I) then North can jump to 3♠ as a slam try, South can bid 4♥ and North will sign off in 4♠. Even if NS have a trip to the 5 level I am sure no East will under-lead the ♥A, now there are 11 tricks (3 top red ones and 8 spades) easily enough.

450 for everyone then? Not in my experience, I am sure a few pairs will find a way to make this hand “interesting” if not lucrative!

♠A6542**♥62****♦J72****♣K98****♠-****♥3****♦K98543****♣AQ10542****♠KQ983****♥KQJ74****♦A****♣J3****♠J107****♥A10985****♦Q106****♣76**

HCP	
8	
9	16
7	

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

♠K95**♥KJ6****♦Q975****♣532****♠Q108****♥107****♦AKJ106****♣K106****♠AJ62****♥A54****♦832****♣984****♠743****♥Q9832****♦4****♣AQJ7**

HCP	
9	
13	9
9	

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

♠KQ1054**♥J76****♦-****♣Q10962****♠J3****♥Q1083****♦AQ653****♣K5****♠986****♥A94****♦1097****♣A743****♠A72****♥K52****♦KJ842****♣J8**

HCP	
8	
12	8
12	

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

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

This is a real humdinger of a deal, West is 6-6 in the minors and East is 5-5 in the majors!

Despite the 25 points, communication are terrible and 3NT will fail if North does a simple hold-up play in clubs.

How might the bidding go? If West opens 1♦ (I can't think of anything better) North should pass (empty suit, facing a passed hand) and East will respond 1♠ and bid 3NT after West's 2♣ rebid (he might bid 4th suit forcing first) West will not pass this, but bid 4♣, East will bid 4NT (to play) and then pass West's sign off in 5♣.

Well that's one way to get to the making game, but in practice there will be contracts all over the place, some will make 6♣ on the ♠A lead, some will make loads of tricks in 3NT, and some will go off in 6NT (as that is what some pairs always end up in). If you were EW and emerged with a plus score (perhaps by stopping several levels lower than I have suggested!) then well done and enjoy your good score, secure in the knowledge you are not an over-bidder.

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

There doesn't appear to be too much danger of getting too high here, as EW have a combined 22 count and no shape at all, but NS might push them around if they get the chance.

For those Acol players that start with 1NT this will be passed around to South, who should compete if he gets the chance, some will be able to bid 2♥ to show hearts and a minor suit, or perhaps 2♣ to show hearts and another. That will probably get NS to 2♥, and EW will have been robbed of their part-score. If instead West opens 1♦ and East responds 1♠ then it is not as attractive for South to bid, West will rebid either 1NT or 2♣, and if there is further bidding will probably compete to 2♣.

Where EW get to 1NT with no suits having been mentioned North will surely lead a diamond and now 9 tricks are easy (4 diamonds, ♥A, 4 spade tricks with the aid of the handy finesse), +150 will just beat those that play a spade partial well for +140. If NS do buy the hand in hearts then they have 7 easy tricks, it doesn't matter if they go one off or two, as they have beaten every part-score that EW might have had.

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

The points are split 20/20, but the spade suit reigns supreme as ever, with NS 8 card fit giving them the power to declarer the hand comfortably.

Some North players might open 2♣ (either spades and a minor, or a dubious weak two) but most will pass and South will open 1NT (or 1♦) in 3rd seat. Well will pass regardless, and North will transfer to spades and pass the completion, or respond 1♠ and then remove the 1NT rebid to 2♣ the same.

EW don't have much to compete with, as although they can make 9 tricks in diamonds (losing two spades, one heart and a miraculous one diamond trick) in practice they will find it very hard to even push NS up.

Playing in spades you are likely to get the ♦10 lead, now it is not safe to ruff and draw 3 rounds of trumps before starting on clubs, the defence could duck the 1st one and you lack the entries to set the suit up. Best is to play clubs immediately, if the defence play 3 rounds you need to ruff high and finesse the 10♣ (actually with Jx onside it doesn't matter what you do). A lot of interest in a pedestrian board, some simple +140s are less simple than others!

♠KQ10952**♥102****♦QJ10****♣Q7****♠-****♥KJ43****♦AK85****♣AK985****♠A763****♥A875****♦96****♣632****♠J84****♥Q96****♦7432****♣J104**

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
10	-	-	-	-	-
18	8	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-
	6	4	7	2	4
	6	4	7	2	4

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

A grand slam for EW! Of course not, even at double dummy it might take you a minute or two to work out how 13 tricks can be made (take a 2nd look at those diamond pips!) and stopping in a safe 6 will be plenty.

West will open 1♣, North will interject with 1♦ (perhaps 2♦ as he is facing a passed hand?) and East should negative double to locate the heart fit (1NT would be a very poor second alternative). West is worth game now, but should bid 3♦ as a splinter, even so it's hard for East to make a move beyond 4♥.

In practice anyone getting to slam will have done very well, but the play is far from routine, even with the nice lie of the cards. After a spade lead West can win the ace, draw two rounds of trumps with the finesse, ruff out the QJ10 tripleton diamond, cash the top clubs, throw a club on the 3rd diamond, ruff a club, reach his hand to draw the last trump and enjoy the long clubs. Very fanciful indeed, and in practice drawing trumps and losing a club will be fine for +680. Anyone bidding slam and making +1430 will score nicely. If you were the one poor NS pair in the country who conceded 2210 then you have my sympathy, but I suspect you would prefer a few more match points.

♠AK10973**♥3****♦986****♣A32****♠8****♥AK76****♦QJ72****♣10875****♠J6****♥Q982****♦AK1053****♣K4**

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all

NS can get their revenge here, although again few will bid a slam since it is in fact a terrible contract.

South should open 1NT (1♦ then 2♦ is a fair alternative) and North can transfer and leave it in 4♦. Played by South, West will probably lead a diamond (I think the ♣Q is better, but a singleton is well trod ground) this might well tip South into getting the diamonds right.

The correct play in the trump suit is to run the Jack on the first round, whilst this will lose if East has a singleton queen, it will gain if he has a singleton 2, 4, 5 or 8. On this occasion South can win the ♦A and pick up trumps, then run the 8♦ on the next round and make 6 spades, 5 diamonds and two top clubs – 13 tricks!

Played by North (as most will) East will lead a top heart, now if he carries on with hearts he does something brilliant. With the ♥Q for a discard he can ruff a club and not need the double diamond finesse, but in doing so he can't pick up the trumps, so might hold himself to 11 tricks.

Did you make 12 tricks? Well done if so.

♠10763**♥QJ9****♦AJ****♣AKQ9****♠KJ4****♥K1083****♦952****♣862****♠985****♥A754****♦10874****♣103**

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

Again an even split of points, but unbelievably NS can make 8 tricks in every single strain!

If West opens 1NT then North can double, East and South have nowhere to go and North is on lead. After a top club (south dropping the ten) North knows to switch, the ♥Q is risky unless partner's high card is exactly the ♥A, whilst that is true today, it's not with the odds. Perhaps North should switch to a spade at trick two, bad only if declarer has A9x or A9xx, this will be fine today. West has nowhere to go for tricks and can only build up 5 in total.

If instead West opens 1♦ then North can bid 1NT (double is fine as well but two diamond honours suggest a simple call) and make 120, a diamond lead actually helps declarer develop tricks.

Well done if you got a penalty out of 1NT, it's always harder in practice than it sounds in theory!

HCP	Makeable contracts				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
17	2	2	2	2	2
12	1	2	2	2	1
4	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-



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