

Analysis of the PRBA Pairs

Kaustubh Bendre

April 17, 2021

North/None ♠K543 Deal 1
 ♥A9762
 ♦J
 ♣Q73

♠J92
 ♥JT53
 ♦AKQ
 ♣K84

♠AT87
 ♥K84
 ♦862
 ♣AJ6

♠Q6
 ♥Q
 ♦T97543
 ♣T952

East/N-S ♠Q5 Deal 2
 ♥QJ43
 ♦J964
 ♣542

♠T43
 ♥52
 ♦KT873
 ♣876

♠AJ876
 ♥AT98
 ♦Q
 ♣KQ9

♠K92
 ♥K76
 ♦A52
 ♣AJT3

West	North	East	South
	P	1♦	P
1♥	P	1♠	P
2♣ ¹	P	2♥	P
3NT	AP		

¹artificial game force

Lead: ♣3

West can jump to 3NT after 1♠, but partner could have a distributional hand (e.g. ♠AKQx/♥x/♦J10xxxx/♣Ax), and there is no harm in checking to see if he bids 2♦. When partner bids 2♥, there are no slam possibilities, so West signs off in 3NT.

All leads are speculative; only a heart lead is ruled out as opponents have a 7-card fit there. Dummy plays small on a club lead, in case North has led from 109xx. Winning the ♣K, declarer finesses twice in spades.

Two open hearts can be given, but the ♥Q drops under the king, for +460.

West	North	East	South
		1♣	P
1♦	P	1♠	P
1NT ¹	P	2♣	P
2♠	AP		

¹forcing

Lead: ♠2

A direct raise to 2♠ would show 5-7 hcp. On 1NT, East bids 2♣ to cater to a weak hand with a long minor with partner. West's 2♠ bid now shows a raise with 0-4 hcp.

Declarer wins the spade lead and plays a diamond. There is no tempo to ruff a heart, but the ♠10 can be an entry to cash the ♦K. South wins the ♦A and clears spades. Declarer throws a club on the ♦K and plays a heart to the 10.

Three heart tricks must be lost, along with one each in the other suits. 2♠ goes down one.

South/E-W ♠AJ8 Deal 3
 ♥KJT974
 ♦T32
 ♣4

♠942
 ♥AQ2
 ♦QJ74
 ♣KJ3

♠KQ53
 ♥853
 ♦8
 ♣T8765

♠T76
 ♥6
 ♦AK965
 ♣AQ92

West/Both ♠AQT3 Deal 4
 ♥T82
 ♦K865
 ♣42

♠J652
 ♥K
 ♦JT92
 ♣QJT6

♠987
 ♥AQJ65
 ♦Q74
 ♣A7

♠K4
 ♥9743
 ♦A3
 ♣K9853

West	North	East	South
			1♦
P	1♥	P	2♣
P	2♥	AP	

Lead: ♦8

North has close to an invitational hand, but not so much after South rebids 2♣. It is likely now that South has heart shortness and even 3♥ might be too high. Also, 2♥ doesn't necessarily end the auction; partner is allowed to raise with a fit and extras.

The diamond lead is won in dummy and a heart is played. West wins the ♥A. If declarer has no quick entry to his hand, West can give partner two diamond ruffs. There is no danger of setting up dummy's diamonds as West has the club suit tied up. He therefore returns the ♦J (in case partner has led from a doubleton). East ruffs and dutifully returns a club.

Declarer has not one, but two quick entries to hand. Not that he is in any hurry to use them. He wins the ♣A and plays a spade to the 8. The spades lie unfavourably, so he makes just his 8 tricks for +110.

West	North	East	South
P	P	1♥	P
1♠	AP		

Lead: ♣4

Opposite a passed partner, it is usually right to pass his 1M response if you hold 3 cards in the major, even if you are at the top of your 11-14 range. 1M plays better than 1NT most of the time.

North leads from his club doubleton, and South wins the ♣K when declarer finesses. South cashes the ♦A. Partner would discourage diamonds if he wanted a club ruff. Here, North encourages, so South takes his diamond ruff. Declarer has lost four tricks, and must lose another four trump tricks, going down two.

This hand is an exception to the rule. 1NT by East is a better contract. Declarer has only 6 tricks, but 1NT makes quite comfortably on a natural club lead. An enterprising North could double 1NT for a spade lead. He would cash four spades and shift to a club. Declarer now is down to 5 tricks, but will end up with 6 eventually.

North/N-S ♠K93 Deal 5
 ♥T942
 ♦K652
 ♣QJ

♠A8
 ♥753
 ♦A9743
 ♣753

♠Q654
 ♥AJ6
 ♦J8
 ♣9842

♠JT72
 ♥KQ8
 ♦QT
 ♣AKT6

East/E-W ♠AQ6543 Deal 6
 ♥T84
 ♦75
 ♣AT

♠K2
 ♥Q73
 ♦AK942
 ♣965

♠J9
 ♥AJ92
 ♦JT83
 ♣K82

♠T87
 ♥K65
 ♦Q6
 ♣QJ743

West	North	East	South
	P	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	2NT/3NT	AP	

Lead: ♦4

I like to jump to 3NT with 9 points opposite a 15-17, but not with a Q-J doubleton and not in matchpoints. Also, I think there would be a stronger case for 3NT had South responded 2♦ over the Stayman query, as the club holding would be more likely to pull its full weight. South will reject the invitation here, so North has the final say.

West leads a small diamond, giving declarer a free finesse in the suit. To make 3NT, declarer needs either the ♠A-Q with West, or the ♠Q with West and both major aces with East. He plays a spade to the 9, and that loses to the queen. Now the only chance is if East has all three major honours. That is not the case, however, and down goes the contract.

At double dummy, 3NT makes if declarer plays a spade to the *king* and a spade back. West's entry is knocked out prematurely and the defence has only four tricks now.

West	North	East	South
		P	P
1♦	1♠	X	2♠
P	P	X	P
3♦	3♠	AP	

Lead: ♦ Jack

East doubles again over 2♠. He is at the top of his range as a passed hand. If playing 2/1, he would simply compete to 3♦. North knows that he has a 9-card spade fit and persists with 3♠.

West cashes his top diamonds and needs to shift to a heart. Declarer wins the ♥K on the table and has to decide which black suit to finesse. If he plays on clubs, East wins, cashes the hearts and exits with a club. Declarer must now lose a spade trick as well. If, after winning ♥K, declarer finesses spades, he can re-enter dummy with the third spade to try the club hook (or, he can exit with a heart and force opponents to play clubs).

3♦ is likely to make. It takes an opening *club* lead to beat this contract. This hand is not a good advertisement for the Law of Total Tricks. Both sides have a 9-card fit, but they can make only 8 tricks each on best defence.

South/Both ♠JT43 Deal 7
 ♥AJ754
 ♦QT8
 ♣T

♠AK7
 ♥32
 ♦A962
 ♣9763

♠852
 ♥Q98
 ♦K75
 ♣AKJ2

♠Q96
 ♥KT6
 ♦J43
 ♣Q854

West/None ♠J75 Deal 8
 ♥9842
 ♦KJ652
 ♣Q

♠K9
 ♥Q75
 ♦T3
 ♣AKT842

♠Q6
 ♥AT6
 ♦A984
 ♣9763

♠AT8432
 ♥KJ3
 ♦Q7
 ♣J5

West	North	East	South
			P
1♦	1♥	3NT	AP

Lead: ♥6

If West passes this A-K-A hand, it will lead to a good outcome for his side. After the 1♦ opening, one can hardly expect East to stop short of game.

South leads a small heart. If North wins the ♥A and returns a heart, South cashes his two hearts, but has no safe exit. All suits look dangerous, and he might play a club (as it turns out, the other two choices were safer). That brings declarer's tally to 8 tricks. That's the end though, there is no way to get another trick.

North has no side entries, so he might decide to duck the opening lead. Declarer will now get a heart trick, but has no tempo to develop a club trick. This defence leads to the same outcome – down 1.

West	North	East	South
2♣	P	2NT	AP

Lead: ♠4

Having gone down in 3NT on the last deal, E-W here take the low road. East invites with his 10 hcp and West may reject the invitation. He does have a good 13 with a long suit, but partner knows about the long clubs, and is inviting in that context. If East bids 2♦ over 2♣, South will enter with a 2♠ overcall, possibly raised by North. That would make it difficult for E-W to reach 3NT.

3NT is cold on any defence. The red-suit spots ensure that declarer has two stoppers in either suit. A spade can be established, to go along with the 6 clubs and 2 aces. 3♣ makes 10 tricks on a heart guess. Declarer may be able to avoid the heart guess if he is able to set up the ♦9 for a heart discard. 4♠ is a good sacrifice over 3NT. The defence need to tap dummy to get their fifth trick, else declarer escapes for down 1 and -100.

North/E-W ♠43 Deal 9
 ♥KQT953
 ♦A82
 ♣72

♠AQ9
 ♥4
 ♦QT4
 ♣KQJ864

♠J2
 ♥87
 ♦KJ9763
 ♣T53

♠KT8765
 ♥AJ62
 ♦5
 ♣A9

East/Both ♠AT96 Deal 10
 ♥8
 ♦T854
 ♣AT32

♠Q5
 ♥9654
 ♦AKQJ6
 ♣Q8

♠J432
 ♥QT2
 ♦2
 ♣K7654

♠K87
 ♥AKJ73
 ♦973
 ♣J9

West	North	East	South
	2♥	P	4♥
5♣	P	P	5♥
AP			

Lead: ♣ 3

That's quite a heavy 2♥ opening; some will open 1♥. South raises to 4, and West 'sacrifices' with 5♣. It will be a good sacrifice on some days, on other days 5♣ will make (on a really good day, partner will raise to 6♣ and that will make too). Thinking along similar lines, South takes the push to 5♥.

The club lead sets up a loser. Declarer ruffs a diamond on table and plays a heart to the king. He ruffs another diamond and now plays a club from dummy. If West wins this trick, he will find that he has endplayed himself and sold the contract. West has to duck this trick, hoping that partner has the ♣10.

5♥ turns out to be a phantom save. North would lead the ♥K, overtaken by South. South would shift to his singleton diamond and get a ruff. The trump ace would be the fourth trick for the defence.

West	North	East	South
		P	1♥
2♦	X	P	2♠
AP			

Lead: ♦ Ace

With length in the opponent's suit, North could pass 2♦. The problem with this is that if partner re-opens with a double, North doesn't know whether to bid 2♠ (in case partner has a minimum) or 3♠ (if partner has extras). It is better to get the hand off one's chest with an immediate negative double.

South's 2♠ bid does not guarantee 4 spades. Partner almost always has 4 spades for his double, and sometimes may have more. Secondly, partner has definitely denied a heart fit, so bidding 2♥ seems wrong.

West starts the defence with four rounds of diamonds, squeezing his partner mercilessly. South ruffs the fourth one and plays ♠K, A and a third spade. If East has held on to his heart stopper, he must come down to a doubleton club. In that case, declarer ducks the ♣K exit and dummy is good. If East has bared the ♥Q, declarer wins the ♣A, draws the last trump and enjoys his heart tricks.

South/None ♠T6 Deal 11
 ♥Q9652
 ♦532
 ♣632

♠QJ92
 ♥43
 ♦Q876
 ♣AQT

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠K7543
 ♥K8
 ♦AJ
 ♣KJ54

♠A8
 ♥AJT7
 ♦KT94
 ♣987

West/N-S ♠AJ Deal 12
 ♥KT2
 ♦AQJ54
 ♣987

♠987
 ♥AJ876
 ♦K62
 ♣A2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠K53
 ♥95
 ♦83
 ♣QJT653

♠QT642
 ♥Q43
 ♦T97
 ♣K4

West	North	East	South
			1♦
P	1♥	1♠	2♥
3♥	P	4♠	AP

Lead: ♣7

The 1♥ bid is a blatant attempt at daylight robbery. East has an easy 1♠ overcall here, so E-W escape with their possessions intact. West invites with a strong raise and East accepts with alacrity. Especially if playing Precision, no opening bid should be passed when non-vul. There is really no downside to bidding with tram tickets, and the opponents may have difficulty reaching their game.

4♠ does not pose any problems for declarer. Dummy's heart goes away on the fourth club. Alternately, declarer's heart can be discarded on the ♦Q. North never enters to push a heart through. South gets his two tricks, making 5.

West	North	East	South
			2♥
1♥	1NT	P	
P	2♠	AP	

Lead: ♣ Queen

Why can't East bid 2♣? Many people play 2♣ here as a limit raise of hearts. Playing this convention, a penalty double denies a heart fit and so simplifies matters later in the auction. South transfers to spades and may think of inviting game. After all, an overcall 1NT is often sounder than an opening 1NT.

The opening ♣Q lead is ducked in dummy. The ♣A is known to be off, and declarer doesn't want a possible trump promotion if West started with only 2 clubs. East now switches to his partner's suit. The ♥9 runs to the 10, and declarer plays two rounds of spades. East wins the ♠K and takes his heart ruff. 2♠ making on the nose.

If East bids 2♣, South will be the declarer in 2♠. West is unlikely to lead a heart, and then declarer will make an overtrick.

North/Both ♠T982 Deal 13
 ♥654
 ♦42
 ♣AQ87

♠53
 ♥AT92
 ♦QJ86
 ♣KT3

♠K7
 ♥KQ7
 ♦AK975
 ♣642

♠AQJ64
 ♥J83
 ♦T3
 ♣J95

East/None ♠KQ65 Deal 14
 ♥Q976
 ♦A6
 ♣653

♠87
 ♥K4
 ♦Q875
 ♣AQ972

♠A943
 ♥J5
 ♦K943
 ♣KT4

♠JT2
 ♥AT832
 ♦JT2
 ♣J8

West	North	East	South
	P	1NT	P
2♣	P	2♦	P
3NT	AP		

Lead: ♠ Queen

A routine Stayman auction to 3NT. If South overcalls his spade suit, West will double for takeout, then force to game. The same contract will be reached via a different route.

On the auction given above, South will lead a spade. The plan is to concede a trick to the ♠K, then cash out the spades when partner enters. Here, partner does have two club entries, but declarer has 9 red suit tricks to go with his ♠K.

If South has overcalled, he is less likely to lead a spade. A red suit lead will restrict declarer to 9 tricks (unless declarer finesses hearts through North). That will be a good score, losing only to those who find a club lead. On a club lead, the defenders take the first nine tricks!

West	North	East	South
		1♦	P
2NT	AP		

Lead: ♠5

A light opening leads to another perilous contract. 2♣ is played as forcing to game, so West must bid 2NT. Well, at least the ♥K is protected on opening lead.

Declarer can work out a lot about the hand from the inferences offered by the opening lead. Hearts are likely to be 4-5 (no preempt by South, no heart lead by North). North also holds 4 or 5 spades in addition to his 4 hearts. South didn't overcall his 5-card suit, so the ♦A is likely with North.

The spade lead is won in dummy and the ♣10 is played to the ace. A diamond to the king holds, and the clubs are cashed. With 7 tricks in the bag, declarer ducks a diamond felling the ace. If the discarding has been accurate, South will now enter with a spade and return a small heart. 9 tricks if declarer guesses correctly, 7 if he doesn't.

South/N-S Deal 15

♠J97
♥8
♦Q65
♣Q87532

♠A32
♥T9765
♦K94
♣94

♠864
♥AK4
♦83
♣AKJT6

♠KQT5
♥QJ32
♦AJT72
♣

West/E-W Deal 16

♠J94
♥973
♦T
♣T98654

♠AKQ732
♥5
♦KQJ54
♣A

♠5
♥J864
♦83
♣KQJ732

♠T86
♥AKQT2
♦A9762
♣

West	North	East	South
			1♦
P	P	X	P
1♥	P	P	1♠
2♥	AP		

Lead: ♠7

South would be worried that North holds long clubs, but letting opponents play 1♥ doesn't feel right. He balances with 1♠, showing spades and long diamonds. West competes to 2♥ and buys it there.

In 2♥, declarer wins the spade lead and tries to cross to the ♣A in order to play a diamond to the king. He will then concede a diamond and ruff one in dummy. South ruffs the first club itself and returns the ♥Q. Winning in dummy, declarer now plays two more rounds of trumps. The club finesse is marked and the third diamond will go away on the club winner.

South wins and can cash his spade tricks and the ♦A, but that is the end of the defence.

West	North	East	South
1♣	P	2♣	2♥
2♠	P	3♣	P
3♦	P	3NT	P
4♠	AP		

Lead: ♦10

A difficult hand to bid for West. Partner shows no interest in either spades or diamonds. However, if partner had two aces and two spades, West wants to be in slam. There is no sensible way to explore this without risking going to the 5-level, so he signs off in 4♠. He is definitely not about to let partner play 3NT.

That is an unfortunate decision. 3NT is the last making game for E-W. In 4♠, North leads a diamond and gets a diamond ruff. He then crosses back with a heart for another diamond ruff. South might cash a high heart before giving the first ruff, but in that case declarer still has to lose another diamond trick at the end.

The spades break, so 3NT will not be defeated. If South plays a passive defence, declarer just knocks out the ♦A. And if South clears his heart suit, declarer can unblock the ♣A on the fourth heart. The only effective defence is if South leads a *small* heart!

North/None Deal 17

♠KJT63		♠A8
♥		♥KJT95
♦A8762		♦T
♣AQ3		♣T9642

	♠52	
	♥AQ742	
	♦Q9	
	♣J875	

West	North	East	South
	P	P	P

East/N-S Deal 18

♠T52		♠Q73
♥		♥Q7632
♦AK87543		♦T92
♣J75		♣T3

	♠KJ864	
	♥AKJ54	
	♦Q	
	♣K4	

West	North	East	South
		P	P