Here is an analysis of hands played on October 10, 2020. In this analysis we will assume that players are playing Precision with a 16+ 1♣ opening and a 15-17 NT. Also, we will assume that this is a matchpoints event.

**Deal 1**

| North/None | ♠ K32  | ♥ K986  | ♦ 986  | ♣ 865  |
| West | ♥ QJ98754 | ♠ QJ2 | ♦ T | ♣ A3 |

**North/None**

West North East South

1♠ 1P 1P

1P 2P 3P 3P

**Deal 2**

| East/N-S | ♠ J5  | ♥ J82  | ♦ J3  | ♣ AK9832  |
| West | ♠ T74 | ♥ T6 | ♦ QT98754 | ♣ 754 |

**East/N-S**

West North East South

1♠ 1P 1N

2♠ 3N 4♠ x

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1. **16+**

The very first hand of the evening was an exciting one – East has a very strong hand with a lot of promise. With as little as ♠ 98754 ♥ AQ ♦ T654 ♣ 42 we are almost cold for 6♣ from the West hand. Unfortunately on this hand partner has 9 HCP but no fit and no slam makes and the par contract is 3NT.

The bidding may go as shown upto 3♠ on most tables but paths may diverge after this. Some players may choose to show their seven card Spade by bidding 3♠ after which there is no knowing where things might go.

In 3N the defense is interesting – North might lead a Heart to partner’s Ace and South may return his H7. North will know that his partner has no more than 3 Hearts (with 4 Hearts South should return his lowest Heart) If declarer has the A♣ instead of the A♦, North must duck in order to preserve communication with partner so that when partner wins his CA he can play a Heart and the defense can win 3♥ + 1♣ and hold declarer to 3. On this hand ducking is a losing action since declarer can then run away with 11 tricks!

Another possibility is that North may win K♥ at trick 2 and return a third Heart. Again, this leads to declarer making 11 tricks. Actually after winning the K♥ North should be able to find the Spade switch because there is no danger in switching to Spades – if declarer has the A♣, and the A♠ he is making the remaining tricks anyway but if partner has the A♣, the spade switch can yield an extra trick if partner has just the Q♣ giving declarer ♠ AJxxxx ♥ QJ2 ♦ Tx ♣ xx. If North does switch to Spades, he will probably hold declarer to just nine tricks for an above average score – I am expecting at least a few pairs to cross 3N so those North-South pairs will get the best result.

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2. **After opponent bids 1N, this 2♠ can be quite weak.**

There are many nuances in the bidding here. West’s 2♠ will often be made with hands weaker...
than a normal constructive 2♦ raise (when not vulnerable) because of the 1N overcall – with a decent 9 HCP hand we can either defend the 1N or double. North with his balanced hand should not bother to bid 3♠ but just bid 3N. If North had bid 3♠, East should still bid 4♣, not 3♥. Of course, all this discussion is because of the favourable vulnerability.

In fact, 4♠ doubled is just 2 down and NS can make 5♣ for +600 but in my opinion it is difficult to reach (even if North bids 3♠ at his second turn). In the play, South might start with the ♠A and then switch to the 6♦. Ultimately with Spades 2-2 and Hearts 3-3 declarer will end up with 8 tricks.

Many pairs not familiar with the sharp nature of the matchpoints game will not find the 4♠ sacrifice and get a poor score when opponents bid and make 3N.

West/Both ♠ QJ, ♥ AKQJ6, ♦ AK853, ♣ 9
♠ 765, ♥ 5, ♦ QJ962, ♣ A764
♠ T84, ♥ 9842, ♦
♠ KQ8532

West North East South
1♥ 1♥ X
2♠ 3♥ 2 P 4♥
P P P P

116+

2 should play Leaping Michael’s (4♦ to show ♦ + ♥) here. When opponents open 2♥ or 2♦, many players play the Leaping Michaels convention wherein 4♦/♥ shows ♦/♥ and the unbid major. Had West opened 2♠, North would have employed that convention but very few partnerships have discussed if the same convention applies in a situation such as the one shown above. In my opinion it makes a lot of sense to play that even here.

In 4♥, North should just concede two Spades and a Club and score ten tricks by way of 1♥ + 5♥ in hand, 1♥ ruff + 2♦ + 1♠. But I feel pretty confident that at least some Easts will start with three rounds of Spades and allow an overtrick.

North/N-S ♠ T5, ♥ T852, ♦ AJ2, ♣ T864
♠ AKQJ972, ♥ K43, ♦ Q73, ♣ 8
♠ 864, ♥ A6, ♦ 954, ♣ AKQJ3

116+

Again, there are many unknowns in this deal. Many Souths may content themselves with just a 3♥ raise but that would be wrong at this vulnerability. On 3♠ West has an easy 3♥ bid and East will surely raise to 4. In fact if North passes 4♠, he may well play there or may even get to defend 4♠ by an adventurous East!

West North East South
P P 1♥
4♠ P P P

This seems like a straightforward hand – West facing a passed partner will probably just blast into 4♠ and the vulnerability will ensure that he
will get to play there. With Spades breaking 3-2 and DJ inside, he will end up making eleven tricks easily. Note that if Spades had been 4-1 though, he may have ended making just ten because he might not have dared to take the finesse against the J ♠ (work this out yourself).

One other twist is that some enterprising Souths, in spite of the vulnerability might give in to their mischievous urges, upgrade their hands and open with a 1NT!. That might be a spectacular success if West passes in anticipation of a juicy penalty and ends up getting just 100.

East/E-W

♠ 3
♥ KT2
♦ KT64
♣ T7642
♠ AQT9
♥ Q96
♦ Q7
♣ K853

Deal 6

♠ 8754
♥ 874
♦ AJ52
♣ A9

West North East South

1 ♠ P
1 ♠ P 2 ♠ P
3N P P P

Although he has 12 HCP East’s hand is pretty lousy – his QJ in ♠ is bad, and he does not have any intermediates in his long suit and of course he has a flat hand. But everybody opens these hands these days and in pairs it will be very wrong to pass – far better to stay with the rest of the field than take an unusual action so early and end up being the only pair in a wrong contract. In matchpoints it is riskier to take actions that are very anti-field.

In the bidding, West should suggest a 3N contract despite the 4-4 fit since he is balanced and has wasted values in his doubleton. East with his doubleton QJ in ♠ should pass 3N. North will probably lead the 4♠ and South will take the Ace. West should falsecard with the 5♠ to give South the chance to think his partner has led from a six card holding. If South continues with a Club West might make 3N on misdefense or if there is a favourable position in Hearts (North having ♥ Kx).

In 4♠ it is likely that declarer may go 2 down if the defense keeps playing trumps at every opportunity.

South/Both

♠ Q2
♥ K865
♦ 963
♣ 8743

♠ 987
♥ 7
♦ KQT742
♣ AT6

♠ K6
♥ JT432
♦ A5
♣ KQ92

West North East South

1 ♠ P
2N P 3♣ P
3P P P P

11-14
Diamonds or weak 5-5 in minors
3 prefer Clubs

Given that he is vulnerable, North should just pass partner’s 1♠ opening since attempting any heroics might lead to a -200, a very poor score in matchpoints generally. But on the actual hand bidding 1N on 1♠ is the winning action since NS can make 3♠ for a score of 140.

Good partnerships should decide what system they play over a balancing 1N. But few partnerships have had this discussion and I have bid assuming that they play four suit transfers in this situation too (most people play that system over an opening 1N. That will lead to 3♠ making 4, one way or other.

West/None

♠ KJ965
♥ 953
♦
♣ AQ954

♠ 84
♥ J742
♦ J85
♣ K632

♠ A7
♥ KQT6
♦ A6432
♣ T7

West North East South

P 1♠ P 2♠
P 3♠ P 3N

All pass

Once North opens the hand, NS will end up in a doomed 3N contract. I am sure there are
too many results possible on this hand – just not worth analyzing ...

West North East South
P P 1
P 1♠ P 1N
P P P

Finally a hand where the bidding may match at most tables. The play too is likely to go the same – a Heart lead which declarer will win and play back another Heart. Ultimately declarer will end up making eight tricks unless West can find the inspired switch to the A♦ in which case NS is held to just seven tricks. At the table I will be very surprised if all Wests do not play back a third Heart.

I have assumed South will open 1♦ with this hand – I recommend it – but if he does not, the fate of the hand will be determined by whether or not West opens 1♠. North has a real problem about what to do after the 1♠ overcall. He dare not pass nor does it seem right to distort the description of his hand with a bid of 2♣ or 2♦. In a discussed partnership the 2♦ bid should suggest a 15+ balanced hand (a direct 3N would show about 13-14 balanced, denying the other major).

Notice that we recommend the 1♠ overcall on this hand but not on the previous hand. The difference between the two is the texture of the suit we are overcalling in (♥ A8765 (bad) versus ♠ KJT63 (good) ) and the fact that high cards are concentrated.

1Passing makes things too easy for opponents
2doubleton Spade, bid 3♥ with singleton

Notice West’s double on the second round? That is for takeout and suggests a hand that could not double earlier because of a flaw in his distribution. Here it was the Spade shortage. East with his double stoppers in both majors bids 3N. South should not lead a Heart since he can see that this may break his communication with partner. After the lead of the 8♠, North has an easy switch to a Heart and the defense cashes four tricks to restrict declarer.

In practice I can imagine at least some pairs playing in some contract other than 3N so this should be a good score for E-W.
This should be one flat board for everybody playing in 4♥. Whatever variations in the play there may be, I guess South will make 11 tricks.

Some pairs might play in 3NT instead in which case they are very likely to end up with 11 tricks too for a great score.

If declarer plays another trump, North will be in control and will get 5 more tricks. He therefore starts playing Diamonds and North just discards his Clubs. Finally he ruffs the fourth Diamond and plays yet another Heart scoring yet another trump trick.

So there are many subtle points here.

- North should immediately win the SA at the first opportunity before declarer has learnt of the 4-1 break so that declarer will not know to discard on the second Heart play.
- If he were playing IMPs, West would have refrained from ruffing the second Heart and
played safely to make (by discarding a Diamond) – that is harder to do in matchpoints because the overtrick may be important.

- Do make a note of North’s defense of discarding his Club losers on the Diamonds – that essentially allowed North to cut communication between the opposing hands else declarer can use the Club suit as communication to draw North’s last trump in the end game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East/None</th>
<th>♠ Q9643</th>
<th>Deal 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♥ 742</td>
<td>♦ AKT</td>
<td>♣ A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♠ AK8</td>
<td>♥ JT7</td>
<td>♦ 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ JT3</td>
<td>♦ JT7</td>
<td>♥ 986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ J97</td>
<td>♦ AKQ5</td>
<td>♥ 86542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♠ KT43</td>
<td>♦ Q3</td>
<td>♣ Q85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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West North East South
1P 1P 1N 2P
All Pass

North is endplayed on the lead. Assuming that he leads a Spade, declarer can just run the 9♣, and end up with 9 tricks. Of course, it is possible that South has the A♥, but that is slightly against the odds given South’s pass.

<table>
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<th>South/N-S</th>
<th>♠ J83</th>
<th>♥ KT97</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♥ J92</td>
<td>♦ A</td>
<td>♣ 9762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♠ KQ83</td>
<td>♥ 83</td>
<td>♣ 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♥ 8653</td>
<td>♦ QT</td>
<td>♣ 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♠ Q974</td>
<td>♣ K</td>
<td>♣ 85</td>
</tr>
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West North East South
1♥ 1♥ P 1N
All Pass

This should be one of the flattest boards, at least in the bidding. West may lead a Diamond or the 4♥. If West leads a Club South should insert the Ten since if it wins he can use the entry to finesse Diamonds. When the Diamond finesse works he turns his attention to Hearts and the A♥ too pops up. Now West plays back (say) a Diamond and there is an interesting squeeze situation that develops against West.

<table>
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<th>South/N-S</th>
<th>♠ J83</th>
<th>♥ KT97</th>
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<tr>
<td>♦ 2</td>
<td>♠ A</td>
<td>♣ 9762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♠ A3</td>
<td>♥ 83</td>
<td>♣ 85</td>
</tr>
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Declarer sees the Diamond break and then cashes the A♥ and West is squeezed. If he throws a Spade declarer will duck a Spade so he has to let go of a minor. Now declarer can cash his minor suit cards ending in hand and exit with a Spade, collecting two more Spade tricks in the end for a total of ten tricks! Note that cashing the Heart before cashing the minors is important – if you cash your minor suit winners first, West will be able to throw a low Spade on the Heart King. It is true that this play may not be found but it still helps to be familiar with the technique for situations where such squeezes can be identified ...

<table>
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<th>West/E-W</th>
<th>♠ A62</th>
<th>♥ J7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>♥ Q83</td>
<td>♦ A</td>
<td>♣ 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦ J85</td>
<td>♣ 85</td>
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West North East South
1P 1♥ P 1N
All Pass

North has a hard choice of leads and he may lead a Club by process of elimination.
West’s dummy will immediately start getting squeezed! It is very hard to guess what might happen but declarer might throw one Diamond and one Spade. He will win the third Club, lead a Heart to dummy’s Queen and run the T♦ and ultimately come to eight tricks (NS can win at most 1 Spade, 2 Diamonds and 2 Clubs even when declarer plays Diamonds from dummy.)