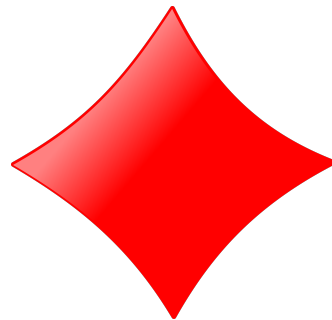
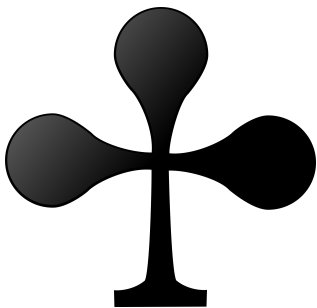
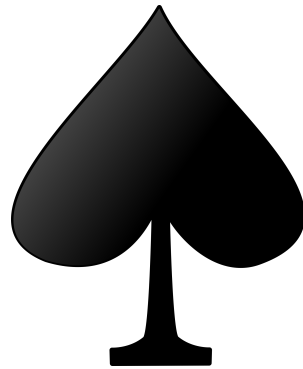


Club Stratified Sim Pairs



Thursday
11th March 2021

Welcome to the tenth 'Club Stratified Simultaneous Pairs'. Our commentator today is Brian Senior, experienced bridge teacher and writer.

How stratification works (and which stratum you should be in):

There are four strata.

1. Stratum 'A' is open to everyone but if either member of the pair is a Tournament Master or above you will be in this stratum and can only get master points from the overall ranking.
2. If both of you are below the rank of Tournament Master you will be 'B' stratum;
3. both below Master means you will be in 'C' stratum and
4. both below District Master will make you 'D' stratum.

Blue points and local points will be awarded to the top third of the overall ranking list. In addition the top third of each stratum will get blue points and local points. If you are entitled to overall points and points for your stratum, you will only get the higher of the awards – you won't get two lots of points! You will appreciate that Master Points cannot be allocated until after the event is finalised, which usually takes about three weeks. Please keep your scorecard for that period: if we find any unusual scores we may need to contact the club scorer and the players.

Full results may be found at www.ebu.co.uk/sims/

Whichever stratum you find yourself in, I hope you find this set of hands enjoyable and challenging.

Ian Payn, Chairman EBU

<p>♠ 10762 ♥ 108 ♦ K865 ♣ 763</p> <p>♠ QJ843 ♠ K9 ♥ Q543 ♥ AKJ972 ♦ A74 ♦ QJ10 ♣ J ♣ Q8</p> <p>♠ A5 ♥ 6 ♦ 932 ♣ AK109542</p>	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>E/W can make 4♥ – indeed, if South does not switch to a diamond after cashing a top club the spades can be established for diamond discards and an overtrick made. That defence should not be too difficult to find – after all, what else are you going to do on sight of that dummy?</p> <p>NS have a paying save in 5♣ doubled, down only two for –300. Can they find it? Well, probably not if South makes the normal 2♣ overcall as North has nothing like enough playing strength to get involved.</p> <p>Perhaps, if South makes the non-standard pre-emptive overcall of 4♣, that would be sufficient to convince North to sacrifice, but even that is not guaranteed at Love All, and the 4♣ bid would be decidedly quirky.</p>																																																		
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<p>♠ A ♥ KQ ♦ J987 ♣ J97542</p> <p>♠ K7653 ♠ Q10942 ♥ J8 ♥ A9642 ♦ K5 ♦ 1032 ♣ AK108 ♣ -</p> <p>♠ J8 ♥ 10753 ♦ AQ64 ♣ Q63</p>	<p>Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Unless East has a bid for a weak major two-suiter, there will be two passes to West, who will open 1♠. Should North overcall? Honestly, facing a passed partner and vulnerable against not, I would not get involved. The clubs are weak, risking a large penalty, and it would take a stronger stomach than mine to make a weak jump overcall on jack to six. With only three cards in the majors, North knows that he will be outgunned and outbid, and does best to not offer the opposition the extra option of collecting a juicy penalty while taking no bidding space away from them.</p> <p>East has only 6 HCP, but that distribution is worth a lot, or at least potentially so. I would not settle for a semi-pre-emptive raise to 4♠, preferring a 4♣ splinter. That will not suit West at all, as half his strength is facing partner's shortage, so he will sign off in 4♠ and that will be that.</p> <p>There is nothing to the play, declarer having to concede a spade, a heart and a diamond so coming to 10 tricks for +420.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ 104 ♥ AJ52 ♦ 642 ♣ AQJ9</p> <p>♠ AQ65 ♠ J8 ♥ 10764 ♥ Q93 ♦ QJ ♦ 1095 ♣ K72 ♣ 108653</p> <p>♠ K9732 ♥ K8 ♦ AK873 ♣ 4</p>	<p>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <p>South opens 1♠ and, after a pass from West, who may have 12 HCP but has quite the wrong distribution to get involved, North responds 2♣ and South introduces the diamonds. Some Norths will jump to 3NT now but I would content myself with 2NT as the North hand has little with which to aid the establishment of either of partner's suits and no long suit of its own.</p> <p>Now, you will of course know whether 3♦ over 2NT would be forcing, but are you sure that your partner knows? It would be convenient for a strong hand to be able to bid out its shape, but a strong hand could go through fourth-suit-forcing, while a 5-5 10- or 11-count would have no other way to continue than via a non-forcing 3♦. It is, of course, a matter for a regular partnership to agree upon.</p> <p>On the actual deal, South will probably settle for a raise to 3NT, seeing the fifth diamond as a potentially crucial winner in an otherwise borderline hand. And so it proves. 3NT is by no means cold, but it can always be made and that fifth diamond is indeed a whole extra trick and vital to declarer's cause.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ K1087 ♥ 94 ♦ K62 ♣ 9875</p> <p>♠ 93 ♠ QJ4 ♥ A852 ♥ QJ1073 ♦ AJ94 ♦ 53 ♣ QJ6 ♣ K42</p> <p>♠ A652 ♥ K6 ♦ Q1087 ♣ A103</p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <p>Say that West opens a weak NT and East transfers to hearts. South should pass for now but, when the 2♥ completion is passed round, can then double for take-out. And if West actually looks at the four-card heart support and ruffing value on the side and breaks the transfer with a jump to 3♥, well then South might still double, though with somewhat less security.</p> <p>EW have nine secure tricks in a heart contract once the trump finesse wins. Meanwhile, NS should be held to seven tricks in a spade contract. If they are pushed to the three level, -200 will be horrible. They will rarely, however, be allowed to play in only 2♠, but anyone who does play there should score very well for -100.</p> <p>If West's system opening is 1♣ or 1♦, South may be able to double the 1♥ response. NS can compete up to 2♠, but neither player has the wherewithal to compete further so EW should be allowed to play in 3♥ for a peaceful +140.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ J4 ♥ A107 ♦ K93 ♣ K10952</p> <p>♠ A86 ♠ 75 ♥ QJ ♥ K9842 ♦ Q10854 ♦ AJ6 ♣ Q43 ♣ J86</p> <p>♠ KQ10932 ♥ 653 ♦ 72 ♣ A7</p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Many will like the intermediate cards sufficiently to upgrade the North hand to an opening bid, though this is likely to be a more popular choice amongst those who can open 1♣ than those obliged to open with a weak NT when vulnerable. If North opens 1NT, South will transfer to spades and pass the completion – there is no premium on getting to thin games at matchpoints and the South hand is a little way short of what is required to invite game. It is not clear that either East or West has a way into the auction now.</p> <p>2♠ can be held to eight tricks but, with the clubs setting up with one ruff to provide potential red-suit discards, they will need to defend accurately or may concede an overtrick.</p> <p>EW can get into the auction if North opens 1♣. East can overcall 1♥, after which it will be down to West to decide how far to compete, starting with a take-out double of South's 1♠ response. Three of either red suit is a good save against 2♠ and may have the excellent effect of pushing NS to 3♠, allowing EW to go plus. Where North does not open, South opens 2♠ and plays there for a safe and secure +110.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
11		N	-	-	-	2	-
11	9	S	-	-	-	2	-
		E	1	2	2	-	-
		W	1	2	2	-	-

<p>♠ 105 ♥ Q10987 ♦ 852 ♣ A95</p> <p>♠ J84 ♠ AKQ932 ♥ 65 ♥ A4 ♦ J7 ♦ 1064 ♣ KJ10873 ♣ Q2</p> <p>♠ 76 ♥ KJ32 ♦ AKQ93 ♣ 64</p>	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>East opens 1♠ and South has an easy double if playing equal-level-conversion where converting a club response to diamonds does not guarantee a strong hand. Whether or not 2♣ would be forcing, West will probably give precedence to taking a level of bidding space away from the opposition and raise to 2♠. Will that be sufficient to shut out North? Possibly not, when looking at five cards in the other major plus a side ace, though a 3♥ bid does rely on partner to give a little leeway to allow for a purely competitive bid. East will compete with 3♠ over 3♥ – the East hand has too many potential losers to commit to game – and now South may bid 4♥, not necessarily with any great confidence of making, but as a two-way shot, maybe 4♥ is making, and maybe down one will be a good save against a making 3♠.</p> <p>That is exactly right. Both sides can make nine tricks in their chosen trump suit, assuming accurate defence. Even if NS are doubled in 4♥, and that is unlikely given how much of East's length and strength is in spades, the price is only –100.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
6		N	-	3	3	-	-
6	15	S	-	3	3	-	-
		E	3	-	-	3	1
		W	3	-	-	3	1

<p>♠ AQ92 ♥ - ♦ A10842 ♣ Q863</p> <p>♠ 84 ♠ KJ ♥ AJ8654 ♥ K972 ♦ K7 ♦ J963 ♣ A107 ♣ 542</p> <p>♠ 107653 ♥ Q103 ♦ Q5 ♣ KJ9</p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>When West opens 1♥, North has a classic take-out double and East must decide to what level to raise hearts. If playing Acoll, East should settle for a simple 2♥ with a little in hand. The hand is not suitable for a pre-empt and partner will expect something different for a jump to 3♥, while it is clearly not strong enough for 2NT, showing an invitational or better hand.</p> <p>South has an easy 2♠ now and West will compete to 3♥. Will North bid 3♠ or 4♠ now? Either rates to end the auction so the decision is quite critical to the destination of the bulk of the matchpoints. There should be no difficulty in coming to 10 tricks so bidding game is the winning choice and scores a very useful +620.</p> <p>If West's 1♥ opening promises five, some Easts may have an extra club in their bag, with some bid to show what is known as a Mixed Raise, too good for a pre-empt, not good enough for a limit raise, roughly 6-9 with four-card support. If so, this hand is ideal. However, whatever the bid used for this hand-type may be, it will not often silence South and may actually add momentum to the auction such that the NS game is more likely to be reached.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
12		N	2	2	-	4	-
12	8	S	2	2	-	4	-
		E	-	-	2	-	2
		W	-	-	2	-	2

<p>♠ 82 ♥ K10874 ♦ AK9 ♣ J62</p> <p>♠ AK5 ♠ J107643 ♥ AQJ65 ♥ 3 ♦ 4 ♦ Q108 ♣ Q1084 ♣ A53</p> <p>♠ Q9 ♥ 92 ♦ J76532 ♣ K97</p>	<p>Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <p>Slightly to North's surprise, West will open 1♥. East responds 1♠ and West rebids 2♣. Most Easts will now repeat the spades and West will be delighted to jump to the spade game.</p> <p>Most Souths will lead a diamond, North winning and switching to either a trump or a low club.</p> <p>A club switch makes for quick and painless play. Declarer ducks to South's king and has 11 tricks with the aid of one diamond ruff once both black suits break kindly. A trump switch is a little more challenging. Say that declarer puts up the jack and it is allowed to hold the trick. He will have to broach either hearts or clubs himself in search of extra tricks and either will require a guess – for the king and jack in one case, a two-way finesse in the other.</p> <p>The contract should be secure even when declarer gets a suit wrong, but it will cost the overtrick.</p> <p>Hearts does look to be a guess, but declarer might get clubs right by arguing that North might have switched to a club away from the jack, but would be far less likely to do so away from the king.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
11		N	-	1	-	-	-
16	7	S	-	1	-	-	-
6		E	5	-	2	5	3
		W	5	-	2	5	4

<p>♠ K108 ♥ AJ1042 ♦ Q10 ♣ AJ10</p> <p>♠ AQ762 ♠ 3 ♥ 9863 ♥ KQ75 ♦ 94 ♦ 7653 ♣ 75 ♣ K642</p> <p>♠ J954 ♥ - ♦ AKJ82 ♣ Q983</p>	<p>Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable</p> <p>If North opens 1NT, South will use Stayman then settle for 3NT on finding partner with four or five hearts.</p> <p>If North opens 1♥, South will respond 1♠ and raise the 1NT rebid to game. It is better to respond 1♠ rather than 2♦, the latter with the intention to bid 2♠ if opener rebids 2♥, as the latter auction is best played as game-forcing – though not universally played as such. Also, after 1♥ – 2♦ – 2♥, it is sometimes expedient to bid a strong three-card spade suit as a NT probe, so that the clearest way to get spades into the auction is with the initial response.</p> <p>Whatever the opening lead, communications make it awkward for declarer to take the club finesse and North does best just to win as soon as he can and play ace then jack of clubs. That guarantees eight minor-suit winners to go with the ♥A and a spade from dummy will establish a tenth. If the defence slips, a few declarers may be able to come to 11 tricks.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
15		N	4	4	1	3	4
6	8	S	4	4	1	3	4
11		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

<p>♠ KQJ5 ♥ K32 ♦ A10985 ♣ 8</p> <p>♠ A73 ♠ 10986 ♥ 95 ♥ QJ876 ♦ QJ7642 ♦ - ♣ Q3 ♣ J1072</p> <p>♠ 42 ♥ A104 ♦ K3 ♣ AK9654</p>	<p>Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <p>There may be some blood spilt on this one.</p> <p>South opens 1♣ and West will surely overcall either 1♦ or 2♦. If North plays for penalties by passing and South reopens with a double, EW are in trouble. North leaves in the double, of course, and EW can be held to three tricks if they remain in a diamond contract. But East will certainly rescue 1♦ into 1♥, though he may be less eager to rescue a 2♦ overcall.</p> <p>Hearts are a little better for EW, as four tricks are possible, but even 1♥ doubled is –800.</p> <p>If NS do not attempt to penalise their opponents they will presumably bid to 3NT, which is only a matter of overtricks. There are 11 tricks double dummy, though some are likely to have to settle for a trick fewer. But will the number of penalties collected at other tables make the number of overtricks of little importance?</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
13		N	4	4	3	4	5
9	4	S	4	4	3	3	5
14		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

<p>♠ A953 ♥ 107 ♦ KQ53 ♣ 1072</p> <p>♠ 64 ♠ KQ10 ♥ AQ9 ♥ J632 ♦ J10742 ♦ A86 ♣ J85 ♣ A96</p> <p>♠ J872 ♥ K854 ♦ 9 ♣ KQ43</p>	<p>Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>Double dummy, EW can make 3NT, but I wouldn't expect anyone to get there and neither would I expect most declarers to come to nine tricks.</p> <p>There will usually be three passes to East, who will often open a weak NT. Alternatively, East may open 1♣ and rebid 1NT. In both cases that may well be that. If South leads a low club declarer will do the normal thing by going wrong and calling for a low card from dummy. When the ♠10 appears, declarer will need to duck twice to cut out the thirteenth club.</p> <p>A spade or heart lead is better for declarer, but nine tricks still needs some work to be done – heart to dummy, jack of diamonds and set up the suit – but North can save a trick by twice refusing to split his honours and declarer gets three diamond tricks instead of four.</p> <p>If East opens 1NT, South may compete if the system has a bid to show both majors. True, the suits are only four-four, when five-four would be more normal, but it is Love All, a good time to compete a partscore, and partner is marked with some values. 2♠ should be defeated, but only by a trick, a good save against 1NT with overtricks.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		N	-	-	-	1	-
8	14	S	-	-	-	1	-
9		E	1	3	2	-	3
		W	1	3	2	-	3

<p>♠ 953 ♥ 973 ♦ K108 ♣ K1054</p> <p>♠ QJ87 ♠ 4 ♥ 842 ♥ KQ5 ♦ AJ73 ♦ 6542 ♣ 32 ♣ A9876</p> <p>♠ AK1062 ♥ AJ106 ♦ Q9 ♣ QJ</p>	<p>Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <p>There are likely to be three passes to South, who will open 1♠ then rebid 2♥ over the 1NT response. North has an easy simple preference to 2♠, and now South must decide whether to bid on.</p> <p>If he does so, the obvious continuation is 2NT, not a spade raise. 2NT should show 5-4-2-2 and around 17-18 HCP and, with the two well-placed tens, South is just worth the bid.</p> <p>Though there is a known eight-card fit, I would pass 2NT with the North cards. There is no possibility of a ruff in dummy and North has two honour cards in each of South's doubletons, so every suit should be reasonably well covered, and eight tricks may prove to be easier than nine.</p> <p>Passing 2NT works out very well on this layout where, because of the bad spade position, there are two trumps losers and five in all in a spade contract, while the defence can twist and turn as much as they like but 2NT cannot be defeated and, indeed, if declarer gets things just right, an overtrick is possible.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
6		N	2	-	2	2	3
8	9	S	2	-	2	2	3
17		E	-	1	-	-	-
		W	-	1	-	-	-

<p>♠ AQ1054 ♥ Q87 ♦ Q86 ♣ Q7</p> <p>♠ 632 ♠ 97 ♥ K62 ♥ AJ104 ♦ 1093 ♦ AKJ ♣ K1053 ♣ J982</p> <p>♠ KJ8 ♥ 953 ♦ 7542 ♣ A64</p>	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <p>North may open a weak NT and play there. A club lead, ducked to the king and a red-suit switch, could mean down two if the defence is accurate from that point onward. But a club lead to the king and a club continuation, which would probably be the correct defence every time that declarer does not hold the queen, would see him home with seven quick tricks. My sympathies for any West who gets that one wrong, as I would probably also go wrong if I held the hand.</p> <p>A heart lead should allow the defence to take the first four heart tricks. The fourth one not only permits West an opportunity to signal for the best switch, but also squeezes North, who will probably bare the queen of clubs.</p> <p>When East now switches to a club, declarer does best to rise with the ace and settle for down one.</p> <p>If North opens 1♠, East will double and South raise to 2♠. That may silence everyone – unfortunately for NS, who should be down two on careful defence, and -200 will not be good.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
12		N	-	-	-	-	-
6	14	S	-	-	-	-	-
8		E	3	1	3	1	1
		W	3	1	3	1	1

<p>♠ 4 ♥ AK94 ♦ Q6532 ♣ J98</p> <p>♠ AQ85 ♠ KJ976 ♥ 83 ♥ QJ5 ♦ A8 ♦ KJ1094 ♣ K10754 ♣ -</p> <p>♠ 1032 ♥ 10762 ♦ 7 ♣ AQ632</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td></td><td>N</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>11</td><td>S</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>6</td><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>4</td><td>3</td></tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	10		N	1	-	1	-	-	13	11	S	1	-	1	-	-			E	-	2	-	4	3		6	W	-	2	-	4	3	<p>Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <p>East opens 1♠ and West may respond 2NT, game-forcing spade raise. What East rebids will be dependent on which of the many variations of the basic idea EW have agreed to play. Whichever version is in play, there should be no problem in stopping at a safe level, i.e. in 4♠.</p> <p>Say that EW are playing the version that I play, where 3♦ would be natural. West could now bid 3♣, asking for a shortage, and East would show it by bidding 4}. That is not such good news for West, as the ♣K may be wastepaper, but he can afford to cuebid 4♦ on the way to game. However, as soon as east is unable to cuebid 4♥, West knows that the ace and king of that suit are missing so signs off in 4♠, and that is that.</p> <p>The five-one diamond break should mean that declarer has a third loser, unless there is a serious defensive slip up, and most tables will see the result of 4♠ made exactly for +420.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																														
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																										
10		N	1	-	1	-	-																																									
13	11	S	1	-	1	-	-																																									
		E	-	2	-	4	3																																									
	6	W	-	2	-	4	3																																									

<p>♠ 85 ♥ AJ762 ♦ AJ ♣ AK87</p> <p>♠ 94 ♠ J1063 ♥ KQ10 ♥ 853 ♦ Q7653 ♦ K10 ♣ 1092 ♣ 6543</p> <p>♠ AKQ72 ♥ 94 ♦ 9842 ♣ QJ</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td></td><td>N</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>4</td><td>S</td><td>5</td><td>3</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>12</td><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	17		N	5	4	5	5	5	7	4	S	5	3	5	5	5			E	-	-	-	-	-		12	W	-	-	-	-	-	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Doubleton QJ or not, South's good spade suit should see everyone opening with 1♠.</p> <p>North responds 2♥ and South repeats the spades, so now North bids 3♣. North has forced to game so there is no need for a bid of the fourth suit to show extra values, rather, it simply means that South has no good descriptive bid available at this point. He therefore bids 3♦, asking North for further guidance.</p> <p>North should settle for 3NT, knowing that neither player has much help for their partner's long suit, which will make it harder to establish and run those suits. Of course, South will pass 3NT.</p> <p>King-ten doubleton is hardly an attractive lead but on the actual deal it may be the only way for the defence to come to a second trick. Perhaps East will lead a passive club. The winning line is to play on hearts now. Low towards the jack, ducking if West splits the king-queen, will produce four heart tricks and 12 in all. Not everyone will manage 12 tricks, of course, so +690 should score quite well.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																														
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																										
17		N	5	4	5	5	5																																									
7	4	S	5	3	5	5	5																																									
		E	-	-	-	-	-																																									
	12	W	-	-	-	-	-																																									

<p>♠ KJ32 ♥ 8 ♦ A1095 ♣ A1082</p> <p>♠ 64 ♠ Q9875 ♥ KJ752 ♥ A96 ♦ Q74 ♦ 62 ♣ K63 ♣ J97</p> <p>♠ A10 ♥ Q1043 ♦ KJ83 ♣ Q54</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td></td><td>N</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>7</td><td>S</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>12</td><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	12		N	3	4	1	2	2	9	7	S	3	4	1	2	3			E	-	-	-	-	-		12	W	-	-	-	-	-	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <p>South can make 3NT, but that requires some good guessing plus an endplay, and is not a desperately attractive contract, to say the least.</p> <p>Say that North opens 1♣ and South responds 1♥, East being unwilling to make such a light overcall when vulnerable. North will rebid 1♠ and South jump to 2NT, invitational. With nothing to spare, North will pass and West may lead a heart despite South's bid. 2NT can be made, but it is not a sure thing.</p> <p>Or perhaps South will respond 1♦ at his first turn. Now West may overcall 1♥ and North raise to 2♦. After 2♥ from East, South tries 2NT and North converts to the relative safety of 3♦, ending the auction.</p> <p>Ten tricks can always be made in a diamond contract, but I suspect that nine will be the more common outcome. If the North hand is obliged to ruff hearts, it may prove to be inconvenient to pick up the trumps without loss, and whichever side opens up the clubs will cost themselves a trick as the cards lie.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																														
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																										
12		N	3	4	1	2	2																																									
9	7	S	3	4	1	2	3																																									
		E	-	-	-	-	-																																									
	12	W	-	-	-	-	-																																									

<p>♠ K987 ♥ 75 ♦ AJ65 ♣ AQ9</p> <p>♠ QJ ♠ 10432 ♥ J986 ♥ Q1032 ♦ K9 ♦ 732 ♣ K8654 ♣ J2</p> <p>♠ A65 ♥ AK4 ♦ Q1084 ♣ 1073</p>	<p>Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>The bidding is unlikely to be very interesting on this one. North will either open or rebid 1NT and be raised to game.</p> <p>East is likely to lead a heart. If declarer wins and plays the ten of diamonds, he will shortly find that he has four diamond winners. Having cashed those, he can play three rounds of spades, which produces an extra trick whenever the suit is three-three or two honours are doubleton, as on the actual deal. Finally, winning the heart return he finesses the queen of clubs and has 11 tricks when that holds the trick. It all sounds so simple when I put it like that, doesn't it? However, at the table declarer has to decide what to do after finding the ♦K onside. He might, for example, try the double club finesse. If he loses to the ♣J, he will no longer be able to set up a third spade trick as East will be then have a heart established and ready to cash. Or declarer might play as in the line I first described but then be fearful of a losing club finesse, East again having heart ready to cash, so may lead to the ace instead of the queen.</p> <p>You see, there are more ways to hold yourself to 10 tricks than there are to make 11, so +460 could score pretty well.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
14		N	3	6	3	5	5
10	3	S	3	6	2	5	5
13		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

<p>♠ K8 ♥ A86 ♦ AK92 ♣ AJ54</p> <p>♠ Q9763 ♠ 1054 ♥ Q ♥ K107532 ♦ Q1075 ♦ J3 ♣ Q92 ♣ K8</p> <p>♠ AJ2 ♥ J94 ♦ 864 ♣ 10763</p>	<p>Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <p>East has a normal weak 2♥ opener and that will run round to North, whose 19 HCP make the hand a bid good for a 2NT overcall. Having said which, nothing else is quite ideal either. Double works well if partner bids 2♠ or 3♠ in response, as North can then convert to NT, but what if South's response is 2NT, Lebensohl? Should North bid 3♣ as requested, guess to raise to 3NT, guess to pass?</p> <p>I suppose that North could solve that conundrum by just overcalling 3NT in the first place, but that looks something of an overbid.</p> <p>For what it's worth, I would double then, since I am perfectly happy with a club contract, do as requested and convert to 3♣ when partner responds with a Lebensohl 2NT.</p> <p>As it happens, there is a line to make 3NT as the cards lie – essentially, declarer must play for East to have a doubleton club honour. However, I'd be happier in 3♣, where I can afford two club losers and still make my contract.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
19		N	3	3	2	1	3
8	7	S	3	3	2	1	3
6		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

<p>♠ A105 ♥ J1094 ♦ K2 ♣ AQJ2</p> <p>♠ J6 ♠ Q9874 ♥ K753 ♥ A86 ♦ QJ1074 ♦ 96 ♣ 108 ♣ 975</p> <p>♠ K32 ♥ Q2 ♦ A853 ♣ K643</p>	<p>Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <p>This is another dull one as far as the auction is concerned. South will either open or rebid 1NT and declare the NT game.</p> <p>West will lead the queen of diamonds and if declarer wins dummy's king he may be defeated. East plays the ♦9 at trick one, wins the first heart with the ace and returns a diamond. West wins when declarer ducks, clears the diamonds, and waits to win the next round of hearts – down one.</p> <p>This is a classic situation for a technical play. Holding two stoppers and with two cards to knock out, guard against a five-two break with split honours by ducking the first diamond and the defence cannot both establish and cash winners in the suit. But that is not the end of the story. What if West, who knows we have the ♦A, finds the ♠J switch. If we win and play on hearts, this time he wins the first round and leads his remaining spade and that suit is established ready for East. Again the contract is defeated.</p> <p>When both suits are five-two, we can survive by ducking the first round of spades also. Now the defence can get neither suit going and we have nine tricks. But all this ducking actually costs the contract if one of their suits is four-three as we cannot now shut out the thirteenth card and they get two top hearts, two of the four-three suit, and one of their other suit. Oops!</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
15		N	4	1	2	2	3
7	6	S	4	1	2	2	3
12		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

<p>♠ K104 ♥ J2 ♦ A9753 ♣ J94</p> <p>♠ J62 ♠ A8 ♥ 8765 ♥ AK10 ♦ KJ86 ♦ 4 ♣ A7 ♣ KQ108652</p> <p>♠ Q9753 ♥ Q943 ♦ Q102 ♣ 3</p>	<p>Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <p>After two passes, East opens 1♣ and rebids 3♣ over West's 1♦/♥ response. With every prospect of being able to run six club tricks, West takes a stab at 3NT.</p> <p>If West's first response was 1♥, North is sure to lead a low diamond. That runs round to the queen and king, and West has 11 tricks.</p> <p>What if West's initial response was 1♦? Now North has no attractive lead. A spade lead looks dangerous, but North may want to attack because his club holding suggests that declarer will be happy with the way that suit is laid out. On the four of spades lead, declarer can only take the 10 top tricks with which he begins.</p> <p>A heart lead is very dangerous if declarer has bid the suit – a Jack-doubleton lead could easily cost a trick on another day. On this day, the heart honours are in dummy so no harm is done, except that declarer gets time to try a diamond play. If he guesses right he has his eleventh trick, if wrong, only 10.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		N	-	-	-	1	-
9	16	S	-	1	-	1	-
		E	5	-	2	-	4
		W	5	-	2	-	4

<p>♠ Q653 ♥ 10 ♦ 6 ♣ AJ108752</p> <p>♠ 108 ♠ A972 ♥ 93 ♥ K874 ♦ AQ8754 ♦ J1092 ♣ KQ6 ♣ 4</p> <p>♠ KJ4 ♥ AQJ652 ♦ K3 ♣ 93</p>	<p>Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>I know that this isn't the way we used to be taught to bid, pre-empting with a four-card major on the side indeed, but I would open the North hand 3♣. Yes, we might miss a spade fit once in a while, but far more often we will cause problems for the opposition. Remember, there are two of them to mess about and only one partner.</p> <p>A 3♣ opening is likely to go two passes round to West, who will overcall 3♦. That is the EW limit, but East will presumably raise to 4♦, and now NS should go plus. Say that North passes, now South will open 1♥ in third seat and West overcall 2♦. If North has some strange notion that a 3♣ bid would promise some heart support then he will have to pass and East will have room to get his hand off his chest via a 2♥ unassuming cuebid. EW can now stop at the three level with ease.</p> <p>If North bids 3♣ over 2♦, a cautious East might just compete with 3♦, but some will surely think, quite reasonably, the hand to be too good – four trumps, and ace, a king and the right singleton. If they raise to the four level they too will present NS with a plus score.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
7		N	3	-	1	1	-
11	8	S	4	-	1	1	-
		E	-	3	-	-	2
		W	-	3	-	-	2

<p>♠ KQ1093 ♥ 1076 ♦ AK ♣ A76</p> <p>♠ AJ7 ♠ 865 ♥ A42 ♥ Q93 ♦ 9643 ♦ J872 ♣ KQ4 ♣ 1095</p> <p>♠ 42 ♥ KJ85 ♦ Q105 ♣ J832</p>	<p>Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>If West opens a weak NT and North doubles, EW are in deep trouble. Though EW have a four-four diamond fit, even 2♦ can be held to five tricks, and that is -800. With NS cold for 3NT, staying in 1NT doubled is no better for EW. All they can do is to pray that if they start to wriggle NS may forget to double and instead bid something of their own. That, so far as I can see, is the sole benefit to running with the East hand, as there is no reason to believe that two of a suit will be any better than 1NT when looking at a 3-3-4-3 hand. Personally, I would prefer to be left in 1NT doubled and hope that the defence is not spot on.</p> <p>The weak NT doesn't often get caught for a big penalty but this is definitely a good deal on which to be playing a strong NT. West opens 1♣/♦ and North will either double or overcall 1♠, according to style – 1♠ for me. It is impossible for NS to guess to defend so NS will usually play a quiet partscore in spades or NT and make something between +140 and +180. How good will +170 or +180 be, well, that rather depends on how many weak no-trumpers get caught for a penalty. In some countries that number would be very few, with most pairs playing a 15-17 NT, but in England...</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
16		N	3	2	3	3	3
14	3	S	3	2	4	4	4
		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

<p>♠ J6532 ♥ AK62 ♦ 654 ♣ Q</p> <p>♠ - ♠ AKQ974 ♥ J53 ♥ 104 ♦ Q97 ♦ AJ3 ♣ K1098762 ♣ A4</p> <p>♠ 108 ♥ Q987 ♦ K1082 ♣ J53</p>	<p>Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>Not a particularly great suit, but another 3♣ opener for me. I am a very strong believer in pre-empting whenever the opportunity presents itself, as pre-empts so often cause difficulties for the opposition. Curiously, three of a minor causes more problems than three of a major, despite being a cheaper bid. This is because against three of a major the opposition generally have to worry about NT or the other major, with the minors a last resort. Against three of a minor, there is NT but also both majors to consider and often not enough room to do so.</p> <p>Anyway, this time it is East who has the problem. East will respond 3♠, normally played as forcing, and West rebid 4♣ – I think 3NT should be reserved for better hands – say the same as here but turning the ♣2 into the ♣Q.</p> <p>East may raise to 5♣. Now it takes three rounds of hearts to beat the contract, as that forces dummy to ruff, after which declarer cannot pick-up the trumps without loss.</p> <p>On a diamond lead, declarer rises with the ace and plays ace of clubs then three top spades. Two hearts go away and if South ruffs the third spade the trump loser disappears, if South does not, the third heart disappears. Either way, there are 11 tricks.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
10		N	-	-	1	-	-
6	18	S	-	-	1	-	-
		E	4	1	-	2	3
		W	4	1	-	2	3

<p>♠ 953 ♥ K732 ♦ 72 ♣ K1082</p> <p>♠ 742 ♠ J ♥ QJ95 ♥ 108 ♦ 654 ♦ AKQ103 ♣ AQ7 ♣ J9543</p> <p>♠ AKQ1086 ♥ A64 ♦ J98 ♣ 6</p>	<p>Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <p>East has only 10 HCP but, after two passes, should certainly open something. There is very little chance that a pass will see the board passed out, so now is the time to bid diamonds. Firstly, that gets the only lead in which East is interested, secondly, it takes some bidding space away from the opposition, making it a little less likely that they will find their best spot.</p> <p>But, you say, a 1♦ opening will hardly make life difficult for anybody. Absolutely. I was not suggesting a 1♦ opening. If playing a weak 2♦, that would be a much better option, while if not I would seriously consider opening 3♦. Scary, I know, but we are looking at the frequency of gain or loss not the size of it, and this will cause NS problems more often than it will just see our side in a ridiculous contract.</p> <p>OK, you have seen my bidding style and no doubt crossed me off your potential future partners list. In real life, this will all come down to whether NS get to 4♠ or stop in partscore. My guess is a slight majority for partscore, but I've been wrong before, so...</p> <p>Assuming that declarer can get a diamond ruff in the dummy, which in practice cannot be prevented, game is on the position of the ace of clubs, as the ♣K is needed to provide a discard for declarer's heart losers. Today, game is cold.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
6		N	-	-	1	4	1
9	11	S	-	-	1	4	1
		E	2	2	-	-	-
		W	2	2	-	-	-

<p>♠ J10542 ♥ 54 ♦ QJ54 ♣ 87</p> <p>♠ AKQ86 ♠ 973 ♥ 63 ♥ Q107 ♦ 732 ♦ AK1086 ♣ A105 ♣ 63</p> <p>♠ - ♥ AKJ982 ♦ 9 ♣ KQJ942</p>	<p>Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable</p> <p>South opens 1♥ and West overcalls 1♠. East should raise that, and 2♣ forces South to bid at the three level.</p> <p>That is not exactly a problem for South, who always planned to jump at his second turn. For now 4♣ fits the bill – South would no doubt follow through with 5♣ were West to bid 4♠ and that come back around, but for now why risk the five level when 4♥ might be the limit.</p> <p>Sure enough, North converts to 4♥, though probably not with very much enthusiasm. It could be worse – occasionally we are forced to choose between our two singletons, at least this time we have doubletons.</p> <p>Though there is no entry to dummy to pick up the queen of hearts, 4♥ is quite cold. Declarer just loses one trick in each minor plus the trump. This would not be a good time for West to lead a trump, but then why would he do so when looking at those spades?</p> <p>While nobody really has a vulnerable 4♠ bid, suppose that EW bid 4♠ over 4♥. Would South let partner make the decision or would he bid on with 5♣? The latter would be awfully tempting to most players but would turn a modest plus into a minus.</p>
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HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
4		N	4	-	4	-	-
13	9	S	4	-	4	-	-
		E	-	3	-	3	3
		W	-	3	-	3	1

<p>♠ AK1074 ♥ Q ♦ Q52 ♣ QJ42</p> <p>♠ J92 ♠ 865 ♥ 9643 ♥ KJ108 ♦ 103 ♦ A64 ♣ K975 ♣ 1063</p> <p>♠ Q3 ♥ A752 ♦ KJ987 ♣ A8</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>8</td> <td>S</td> <td>3</td> <td>5</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		14		N	3	5	1	5	3	4	8	S	3	5	1	5	3	14		E	-	-	-	-	-			W	-	-	-	-	-	<p>Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <p>If playing weak NT, that would be my opening bid of choice with the South hand rather than 1♦ and often have to rebid 2♦. Surely this hand is closer to being balanced than to being a single-suiter?</p> <p>That sees North transfer to spades then offer a choice of games, and at most tables South will choose 3NT.</p> <p>A heart lead holds 3NT to nine tricks, while there is an overtrick available in 4♠ as the trump suit gives declarer all the control required. Even if there had been a trump loser, 4♠ would still have been the better contract, as it would have delivered 10 tricks while 3NT was still making only nine. Sometimes, that is too hard to see during the auction, but well done to those who get to 4♠ and earn a deserved reward.</p> <p>If South opens 1♦ and North bids 1♠, I would rebid 1NT if that would show 12-14, and we would be back to North looking for a five-three spade fit then settling for 3NT when there proved not to be one.</p> <p>1♦ – 1♠ – 2♦ – 3♣ – ? South might still choose 3NT, but a fourth-suit-forcing 3♥ might see North bid 3♠ and South raise to 4♠.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																															
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		W	-	-	-	-	-																																										

<p>♠ J86 ♥ A9832 ♦ AQ9 ♣ 95</p> <p>♠ 752 ♠ KQ3 ♥ K74 ♥ J105 ♦ KJ10532 ♦ - ♣ J ♣ AQ107632</p> <p>♠ A1094 ♥ Q6 ♦ 8764 ♣ K84</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>12</td> <td>S</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		11		N	-	1	1	2	-	8	12	S	-	1	1	1	-	9		E	2	-	-	-	-			W	2	-	-	-	-	<p>Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>If West opens a weak 2♦ that may end the auction because, of course, most people play that a 3♣ response is a one-round force. 2♦ will not be a success – NS can make 1♦ double dummy.</p> <p>Where West passes, North will often open 1♥ and East overcall 2♣. After a negative double from South, West can show the diamonds, and that relieves North of the need to bid. East will rebid the clubs and 3♣ will often end the auction.</p> <p>With no help from the defence, declarer has two losers in each major plus the king of clubs, so is down one. However, South will often lead the queen of hearts in response to partner's opening bid, and that costs the second heart trick unless North finds the inspiration to duck when dummy's king is played. That would be too tough for most of us, I'm sure, but it is the only way to keep defensive communications open to allow South to ruff a heart and get back to down one.</p>
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<p>♠ A ♥ KQ84 ♦ AK4 ♣ AJ964</p> <p>♠ QJ765 ♠ K1094 ♥ 6 ♥ 105 ♦ 92 ♦ QJ1075 ♣ Q8732 ♣ K10</p> <p>♠ 832 ♥ AJ9732 ♦ 863 ♣ 5</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>21</td> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>6</td> <td>-</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>9</td> <td>S</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td>6</td> <td>-</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		21		N	2	2	6	-	4	5	9	S	2	2	6	-	4	5		E	-	-	-	1	-			W	-	-	-	1	-	<p>Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Assuming a pass from West, North must decide on an opening bid. I violently disagree with opening 2NT with this type of hand. It is not so much the fact that the spade holding is so inflexible, the ace having to be played immediately the suit is led, as that if there is a trump fit anywhere this hand is grossly undervalued by a 2NT bid such that slams will be missed.</p> <p>This deal is a case in point. Facing a 2NT opener South will almost always settle for 4♥, even if North breaks the transfer, yet slam is cold and on a four-three club break even 7♥ could be making.</p> <p>No, North should grit his teeth and open 1♣. If he survives and gets a response from partner, he is so much better placed.</p> <p>If South responds with a 2♥ weak jump shift, North can just blast 6♥ and expect it to have good play.</p> <p>If South responds 1♥, North is too good for any heart raise, but can manufacture a 2♦ reverse to see what South's rebid is. When that rebid proves to be 2♥, North is off to the races. There are various routes from here but North should eventually be in a position to bid slam.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																															
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