

S&SCBA Simultaneous Pairs 25th January 2023

NORTH

BD: 1 S-KT94 Dir: N
H-T Vul: None

D-AJ6
C-AT986

S-Q75 S-A632
H-AJ96 H-8752
D-T832 D-Q5
C-Q4 C-J32

S-J8
H-KQ43
D-K974
C-K75

BD: 2 S-T95 Dir: E
H-972 Vul: N-S

D-842
C-QJ62

S-KJ6 S-A732
H-AQJ83 H-T65
D-6 D-KQJ93
C-T743 C-5

S-Q84
H-K4
D-AT75
C-AK98

BD: 3 S-QJ94 Dir: S
H-A98 Vul: E-W

D-K942
C-QT

S-753 S-K2
H-7654 H-Q
D-JT6 D-Q8753
C-754 C-J9632

S-AT86
H-KJT32
D-A
C-AK8

BD: 4 S-42 Dir: W
H-J7 Vul: Both

D-AT9852
C-A65

S-QT6 S-AK9853
H-9652 H-AQ
D-Q76 D-3
C-874 C-QT32

S-J7
H-KT843
D-KJ4
C-KJ9

BD: 5 S-Q84 Dir: N
H-QJ7642 Vul: N-S

D-2
C-K52

S-AKJT5 S-7
H-53 H-AT98
D-AKT3 D-Q87
C-A8 C-Q9763

S-9632
H-K
D-J9654
C-JT4

The auction is likely to start 1♣ -P- 1♦-P-1♠ - P and South has to decide whether to rebid 2NT or 3NT. If the former, North might well go on to game with the strong spot cards in the black suits surely worth another point or two, even though stretching to borderline games is not recommended at pairs. West is likely to lead a small heart, giving South two heart tricks to go with two diamonds and four clubs. A ninth will come from spades or diamonds when the queen drops, but no more as EW will have established two hearts, a club and a spade by then.

Ron Klinger's recommended requirement for an opening one bid is to add hcp, cards in the two longest suits and quick tricks, and after minor adjustments the total should be at least 21½ (NV) or 22 (vul). The East hand just about meets this, though many would pass. If it's opened 1♦, South will overcall 1NT, West will double (9+ points, for penalties, all the better with a poor fit for partner's suit) and NS may end up going two down doubled either in 1NT or in 2♣ if they try to escape 1NT doubled. EW may go for their heart game instead. If East passes, South will open 1♣ (playing a weak no trump), West will overcall 1♥ and East will probably make an encouraging bid in diamonds before supporting hearts (it's best to play all jump shifts opposite an overcall as "fit jumps" showing a good suit with heart support), so EW should reach game.

The South hand is too unbalanced for a 2NT opening (adding a point for that good heart suit) and has too many potential places to play for 2♣. I would open 1♥, intending to reverse into spades. When North responds 1♠, South could jump raise to game, although I'd be worried that's not enough on this hand, worth four losers in support of spades with those excellent controls. Splintering on a singleton ace is not a good idea, and the only alternative is a waiting bid of 3♣. If South does bid 4♠, North could ask for keycards (not ideal, but nothing else is better) and sign off in six when one is missing. On a minor-suit lead North could try to ruff two diamonds in dummy, or take a trump finesse and when the queen holds draw trumps and play on hearts. When the queen drops there are thirteen tricks.

West will pass and North may open this a weak 2♦ if that's part of their system, but it's an unattractive hand for a pre-empt with two quick tricks and a flat shape, so I think most Norths will pass. East will open 1♠, and South has a choice between pass, double and 2♥. It looks like a defensive hand to me, so pass would be my choice, and then North might reconsider and compete with 2♦, to avoid giving EW an easy ride in the auction. Now NS can compete safely to 3♦ and they should end up with a plus score whether EW bid on in spades or not.

Some Norths will open a weak 2♥, although the suit is poor and the hand has lots of defensive potential, so a pass is probably wiser. This will be passed round to West who is too strong for a 2♠ overcall, and doesn't have the suit for a strong 3♠, so will start with a double. East may be nervous of passing this for penalties as West doesn't need to be so strong in the pass-out seat, and may bid 3♣ (showing values if playing Lebensohl) and EW will scramble their way to 3NT. If East does pass the double (counting two heart tricks and a likely one in the minors) they should take at least seven tricks on a spade lead when West returns spades through North for East to ruff for +500 or +800, beating those in 3NT. If North passes originally, EW should reach 3NT via the auction: P - 1♠; 1NT - 3NT or P - 1♠; 1NT - 3♦; 3NT.

BD: 6 S-K	Dir: E
H-AK65	Vul: E-W
D-QJT97	
C-AT3	
S-A9643	S-Q8752
H-43	H-QJ
D-A	D-K86432
C -QJ942	C-
S-JT	
H-T9872	
D-5	
C-K8765	

BD: 7 S-KJ92	Dir: S
H-AJ762	Vul: Both
D-T4	
C-85	
S-87	S-6
H-K95	H-843
D-KQ53	D-987
C-KT97	C-AJ6432
S-AQT543	
H-QT	
D-AJ62	
C-Q	

BD: 8 S-Q643	Dir: W
H-AJ875	Vul: None
D-65	
C-74	
S-K2	S-AJ98
H-Q963	H-K
D-AT982	D-Q74
C-QJ	C-AK863
S-T75	
H-T42	
D-KJ3	
C-T952	

BD: 9 S-432	Dir: N
H-832	Vul: E-W
D-A6	
C-QJ864	
S-AJT865	S-Q9
H-JT95	H-AK74
D-J	D-K9752
C-52	C-T7
S-K7	
H-Q6	
D-QT843	
C-AK93	

BD: 10 S-K432	Dir: E
H-QJ94	Vul: Both
D-A	
C-AK64	
S-	S-AQ98765
H-832	H-T65
D-J7643	D-9
C-QT853	C-92
S-JT	
H-AK7	
D-KQT852	
C-J7	

If East can open a Lucas 2♠ (the suits are rather anaemic, but the extra length is a plus point) to show a weak hand with five spades and another four-card suit, West will raise straight to four and North will double for takeout. South may choose to pass for penalties, but will regret it, as 4♠ is cold. They are more likely to try to scramble for their best fit by bidding 4NT. This shows two places to play, and North will bid 5♦, to play if one of South's suits is diamonds, and happy for a correction to 5♥ if South has hearts and clubs. If East passes originally, South could open a Lucas 2♥ if playing them, otherwise West will open 1♠, North will double, East will raise to 4♠ and NS are in the same position. It's difficult for EW to double 5♥ as they don't know 4♠ is making, so they should settle for a quiet two off.

The auction will probably go 1♠ - 3♠; 4♠ - P. West almost has a takeout double, but is a point and a heart short. On the ♦K lead, South can draw trumps and run ♥Q (West should cover in case East has the ten) and the favourable layout of the suit means they can make twelve tricks. It's difficult to envisage any other outcome on the board.

West has a difficult choice of opening call. Passing wouldn't be terrible, and the alternatives are 1♦ (intending to rebid 2♦ over a black-suit response – yuk!) or 1NT (my choice). Over 1NT I would overcall 2♣ as North, even with a hand this weak, but only at this vulnerability. At love all at pairs you should strive to compete the part-score most fiercely, as your +110 or more if you make your contract will usually outscore the +50 or +100 you'd get for defeating 1NT. If your contract is failing, it will only cost you 50 or 100 points against the 90 or 120 you'd get for defending. Try these calculations at other vulnerabilities and you'll see why you should be most keen to bid at love all and least at game all. Unfortunately, it doesn't work well here. East will double to show an ability to penalise at least one major suit, South will bid 2♦ to ask North to choose and the result would be carnage in 2♥X by North. Expect -800 against -430 for those Norths who showed more restraint and passed. I'm undaunted, however, and will bid the same next time. This theme will be revisited in a later hand.

After North passes, East has a difficult choice of opening bid. They can either try 1NT with imperfect shape, or open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♦ (yuk again!) over a black suit response. I'd prefer 1NT any day, after which South doesn't quite have enough to double, and West will probably transfer to spades rather than bidding Stayman. Although they have great shape and playing strength, they don't really have enough for game, but might make a 3♠ game try, which East will reject. They can make ten tricks if they drop the ♥Q, but the odds favour taking a losing finesse. Bidding a part-score and taking nine tricks should be about par for the board.

Most East players will open 3♠, giving NS a problem. South will probably overcall 4♦ (to West's relief) and with such a strong hand and good controls, North will be thinking of a slam, but it generally pays in such situations to get to a making game. It might be useful to have the agreement that 4NT is to play, and slam tries have to start with a 4♠ cue-bid, but few pairs have such agreements. If they just raise to 5♦ (which only makes because West doesn't have a spade to lead) they will score better than anyone who gets too high or stops in a part-score. If South passes over 3♠ it will work out much better, as North will bid 3NT, and so long as South doesn't make a 4NT slam try (or North doesn't accept it) they should play in the best game. Note how much more difficult it is than if East opens only 2♠. South can overcall in diamonds and North will bid 3NT.

BD: 11 S-A82 Dir: S
H-J52 Vul: None
D-KT9753
C-9
S-QT S-K974
H-Q4 H-AK863
D-842 D-AQ6
C-AKJ732 C-4
S-J653
H-T97
D-J
C-QT865

BD: 12 S-QJ3 Dir: W
H-Q954 Vul: N-S
D-82
C-Q972
S-K762 S-T954
H-AJ2 H-K763
D-Q6 D-JT95
C-T543 C-8
S-A8
H-T8
D-AK743
C-AKJ6

BD: 13 S-AK Dir: N
H-KQ6 Vul: Both
D-KQT8652
C-J
S-QJT432 S-65
H-94 H-J87532
D-4 D-J7
C-T852 C-Q93
S-987
H-AT
D-A93
C-AK764

BD: 14 S-QJT3 Dir: E
H-AQ42 Vul: None
D-KJ6
C-Q6
S-K5 S-872
H-K H-J9653
D-T95432 D-A7
C-K984 C-AT5
S-A964
H-T87
D-Q8
C-J732

BD: 15 S-QT963 Dir: S
H-J862 Vul: N-S
D-982
C-6
S-AK852 S-74
H-754 H-AKT3
D-3 D-AK65
C-J983 C-K74
S-J
H-Q9
D-QJT74
C-AQT52

The auction is likely to start P - 1♣ - 2♦ - 2♥; P - 3♣ and now East can bid 3NT. On a diamond lead declarer can see seven tricks and needs to set up at least two more without losing the lead more than once to the hand with the long diamonds. A spade to the ten would work well, but could be disastrous, so the best start is probably a club finesse, while the heart entry is still there. If clubs are no worse than 4-2 with the queen onside, you should be able to set the suit up and make eleven tricks, or even twelve if South fails to switch to a spade. When the clubs don't break you have to abandon the suit and play a top spade yourself. When the hearts split you can take three clubs, two diamonds, five hearts and a spade for eleven tricks and a good score.

After three passes South will open 1♦ and rebid 2NT over North's 1♥ response, showing 18-19 points. This is a better choice than 2♣, which could be passed, or 3♣, which is game-forcing, but gives a false impression of the distribution. North has an easy raise to game, but South will struggle to make more than nine tricks. West will lead a spade, or possibly a club if they have an aversion to leading from unsupported kings. A spade will give South a ninth trick immediately, but on a club lead they gain a tempo and can try running the ♥10 through West to set up a trick there and fall back on the spade finesse for a possible tenth that will fail to arise.

North has an awkward choice of opening bid. Opening 1♦ and rebidding 3♦ over a major-suit response does not do justice to the playing strength, and it's not quite good enough for an Acoll 2♣, so with 9½ playing tricks is about tailor-made for an Acoll strong two, if you have one available. Some will be able to open this a Benji 2♣ or a multi-2♦, intending to rebid a strong but non-forcing 3♦. Whether South responds with a waiting 2♥ or a positive 3♣, after North's 3♦ rebid they can set the suit with 4♦ and then North has a perfect hand for RKCB and can bid 7NT with complete confidence when South shows the three missing keycards. West may intervene with 3♠, but after a 4♦ rebid from North, South could cue-bid 4♠ and the same result should be reached.

After two passes West could open a weak 2♦ if available, although the kings are all defensive values so many will pass. North will double to get the majors in, South will bid 2♠ and there it will rest if EW don't compete further. At love all (see commentary on board 8) they should bid on, and it's up to East to do so if they are confident that partner has six diamonds. If East guesses their side has eight diamonds and the opponents have eight spades, it is always right to outbid the trick total by one at this vulnerability at pairs. The trump total is 16 (8 + 8), and a bid of 3♦ over 2♠ contracts for one more trick (9 + 8 = 17) than the trump total. You can see that each side can make eight tricks in their best trump suit, so the best NS can do is defend 3♦ and take a plus score. (Doubling will improve their score slightly, but will win matchpoints only against other pairs defending, and only when it works, so is probably not worth the risk.) Going back to the auction, if West doesn't open, when NS reach 2♠ (1♥ - 1♠; 2♠ - P) they should butt in with 3♦ to prevent NS playing in a cosy fit at the two level.

If South opens 1♦ and West overcalls 1♠, what should East do? It looks right on values to bid 2NT, but many partnerships play this as an artificial spade raise, in which case it may be better to take a risk on 3NT. An alternative is to make an unassuming cue-bid of 2♦, nominally showing spade support, and when West rebids 2♠ to show a minimum overcall, either pass or correct to 2NT. On repeated diamond leads from South, East may manage to end-play South (who must have most of the high cards) into eventually playing away from their club honours to allow the contract to make.

BD: 16 S-63 Dir: W
H-97643 Vul: E-W
D-A84
C-732

S-Q2 S-JT54
H-AT2 H-KQJ
D-JT652 D-KQ
C-KQ5 C-JT94

S-AK987
H-85
D-973
C-A86

BD: 17 S-T94 Dir: N
H-T742 Vul: None
D-A63
C-K64

S-QJ76 S-AK52
H-K6 H-Q985
D-KQT875 D-9
C-9 C-AJ32

S-83
H-AJ3
D-J42
C-QT875

BD: 18 S-T86532 Dir: E
H-Q8 Vul: N-S
D-AKT
C-Q8

S-4 S-AKJ
H-97532 H-JT4
D-J74 D-863
C-A942 C-KT75

S-Q97
H-AK6
D-Q952
C-J63

BD: 19 S-85 Dir: S
H-9862 Vul: E-W
D-2
C-A87432

S-3 S-AJT64
H-J753 H-AK
D-KQ8754 D-AJ3
C-96 C-KJT

S-KQ972
H-QT4
D-T96
C-Q5

BD: 20 S-AT Dir: W
H-KQJ64 Vul: Both
D-J
C-AKJ42

S-J852 S-KQ973
H- H-A973
D-AQ9753 D-K6
C-863 C-75

S-64
H-T852
D-T842
C-QT9

Playing a weak no trump, West will open one and East will just raise to three. With such good cards in every suit, it looks as if the hand will play better in no trumps even if they have a 4-4 spade fit, so it's not worth using Stayman and giving the opponents the chance to come in or double for a lead. North doesn't have a clear choice of opening lead. Either major suit looks reasonable. With only one entry they won't be able to set up the heart suit, so I'd choose a spade, hoping partner has a good holding in the suit and that I can get in early with the diamond ace to lead the other while partner's entries remain intact. If South ducks and West plays on diamonds, North will win and play a second spade. South can win, or duck again to set up three spade tricks, but by this time West has nine tricks before the opponents get the lead again. I can't see any outcome other than 3NT making exactly for EW.

With NS silent I can see the auction starting 1♣ - 1♦; 1♥ - 1♠/2♠. Regular partnerships need to agree which out of 1♠ and 2♠ is natural and which is fourth-suit forcing. There are arguments on both sides, and no standard. (Eric Crowhurst's Acol Index has 1♠ as the natural bid, which is my preference.) Now East raises to 2♠, and West will bid game. North will lead the unbid suit (only kidding, probably a trump lead is best, or a small heart) and West will need to set up diamonds before trumps are drawn, so win on table and lead a diamond to the king and ace. North will continue spades, and West should win in hand, ruff a diamond high and lead a heart. They can win any return, cross back to hand with a club ruff to draw the last trump and run the established diamonds for eleven tricks. This line should ensure the contract even when the diamonds are 4-2 and NS can engineer a diamond ruff.

If East opens 1NT, West should transfer to hearts and North overcall 2♠. Even if EW have an agreement to double to show three-card support for partner's suit, it's unappealing on this flat hand, so East will normally pass, but whether they do or not, NS should end up in a part-score in spades making nine tricks, or ten on a heart lead (most likely) if they manage to get a club loser away before tackling trumps.

After South passes West will have to decide whether to open this a weak two in diamonds. The suit and shape are good, but the four-card heart suit will put some people off. If they pass, North will have a similar problem. If they're going to pre-empt, it will have to be at the three level, the suit is much poorer, they also have four hearts, but on the plus side they are not vulnerable and third-in-hand. If both decide to pass, East will open 2NT, and most Wests will probably just bid Stayman and sign off in 3NT. If South chooses to lead ♠K it will be easy for East to set up a tenth trick in spades, but it's unattractive in pairs to lead from strength round to the strong hand, so some might opt for a diamond, in which case East can safely set up a tenth trick in clubs.

Assuming West passes, I can see the auction starting P - 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♥; 3♣ - 4♣ - 4♠, a contract NS can only beat by leading an unlikely diamond (or a club and a diamond switch from North) to set up a ruff in the North hand. North is likely to take further action with such a strong hand, and may double or make a further try with 5♣. Double looks best to me, and South won't be removing it very often, so I can see a lot of pairs ending up in 4♣X✓ from East. North might be tempted to open 2♣ which might put East off competing, as they have too much defence and not enough shape to intervene over a strong bid. West might come in with 3♦ over a relay response, but that will discourage East and NS might be allowed to play quietly in 4♥. The best defence is two rounds of diamonds, forcing North to ruff, then to duck the ace of trumps for two rounds. At this point North, especially if they don't know how the diamonds split, should switch to clubs and allow East to ruff in, then continue clubs to discard a spade when East switches to K♠. East should just make two trumps and a diamond.

BD: 21 S-K743 Dir: N
H-AQ52 Vul: N-S
D-T
C-QJ82
S-QJ9 S-AT6
H-JT84 H-9
D-95 D-AK762
C-K753 C-T964
S-852
H-K763
D-QJ843
C-A

The auction will probably start 1♣ - 1♦ - 1♥ - P; 2♥ and unless East competes further with a double, that will be the end of the EW contribution. South, with a heart fit and seven losers may make a game try and end up at the three level or even in game. But with the suits misfitting and splitting badly (as the auction implies) it's better at pairs to stay low. If West leads ♠Q there are three immediate losers, and if they lead their partner's suit East will win and switch to a club. Now the best line is probably to lead a trump to the table and run the ♠Q, discarding a spade, trying eventually to make three top trumps, two club tricks, a club ruff, a diamond ruff and possibly the spade king, if the ace is lying favourably or East can be forced to lead the suit. One down will probably be a reasonable score for those who stop in 2♥, but two or more off vulnerable is never a good score on a part-score deal.

BD: 22 S-64 Dir: E
H-AQJ2 Vul: E-W
D-6543
C-KJ5
S-KJ75 S-AQ92
H-764 H-KT98
D-AK9 D-T872
C-984 C-2
S-T83
H-53
D-QJ
C-AQT763

There's a fair chance that this hand will be passed out. The South hand is not suitable for a 3♣ pre-empt, and North is the only one that scrapes into Ron Klinger's "rule of 21" (hcp + cards in the two longest suits + quick tricks + adjustments > 21) but it doesn't meet "Pearson's rule" (hcp + number of spades ≥ 15) for a fourth seat opening. If you don't play bridge by numbers, and exercise a little imagination, you could open the West hand 1♠ (I'd prefer to have KQxx or better), or even a semi-psycho 1♦, intending to pass any response from partner. North will double 1♠ and East will probably raise to three, shutting out South. West can make ten tricks by setting up a heart for a diamond discard, but it's not a game you want to bid.

BD: 23 S-J42 Dir: S
H-AQ974 Vul: Both
D-QJ9
C-86
S-T9 S-AKQ873
H-KT632 H-
D-KT86 D-75432
C-A3 C-K2
S-65
H-J85
D-A
C-QJT9754

The South hand looks just about ideal for a 3♣ pre-emptive opening, and when this is passed round to East they should just bid 4♠. South will probably choose ♦A for an opening lead and then try to get partner in for a ruff at trick three. (North, guessing the lead is a singleton, can try dropping the queen to signal for a higher-ranking suit; they'd play the nine if they had a club void). A heart switch will raise North's hopes, but when that's ruffed by East, trumps will be drawn and another diamond given up for eleven tricks. It's difficult to see any other result on the board.

BD: 24 S-53 Dir: W
H-A7 Vul: None
D-AKT532
C-A43
S-T742 S-AKQ96
H-93 H-T864
D-Q4 D-976
C-T9876 C-J
S-J8
H-KQJ52
D-J8
C-KQ52

The auction is likely to start P - 1♦ - 1♠ - 2♥ and West will have to decide how high to raise. "Bidding to the level of the fit" (contracting for as many tricks as your side has trumps) is usually a good yardstick, and is what I would probably do, but on a ten-loser hand this looks dangerous, and I'd have a lot of sympathy for anyone who just raised to two. (None whatsoever for anyone who passes.) Deep Finesse says that EW can make no more than six tricks in spades, but I can't see how they can be prevented from taking seven (five spades and two ruffs in the dummy, or four spades and three club ruffs in hand), and two off doubled should be a good save against NS's game in hearts or diamonds. And how are NS going to bid game? Over 2♠ from West, North can rebid 3♦ or cue-bid 3♠, but over 3♠ they probably can't do any better than double.

BD: 25 S-KT843 Dir: N
H-AJ7 Vul: E-W
D-652
C-63
S-6 S-97
H-KQT3 H-984
D-AQ74 D-T8
C-J842 C-AKQT75
S-AQJ52
H-652
D-KJ93
C-9

After North passes, East really has the wrong hand to open a pre-emptive 3♣, so will probably pass. It's vulnerable, lacks the seventh club, and flat outside the suit, with top cards that might be useful in defence. South will open 1♠, West will make a takeout double and now East's hand looks a lot rosier. North will raise to 4♠ (bidding to the level of the fit, as South will often have a five-card suit) or to 3♠ (8½-ish losers, after adjustments) and East will need to be disciplined not to compete to 5♣. It might well be the right thing to do, as the contract could be making, or it could push the opponents into 5♠. In fact, NS can't make more than eight tricks in spades, so defending would have been wiser.

BD: 26 S-875 Dir: E
H-76 Vul: Both
D-J84
C-KJ742
S-KJ62 S-94
H-J95 H-AKQT42
D-632 D-A7
C-AT8 C-653
S-AQT3
H-83
D-KQT95
C-Q9

East will open 1♥ and South can safely double if they have an agreement known as “equal-level conversion”. If North bids clubs they can correct to diamonds at the same level, and with this agreement doesn’t show any more than an opening bid with a four-card major and longer diamonds. (You can’t do it with the minors reversed.) It can get you into trouble if the opponents compete higher and North assumes you have good club tolerance, but the price of not playing it is that you have to pass these hands, or overcall 2♦ and leave the spades out of the picture. West will bid 1NT, North 2♣ and East will rebid 3♥, which West will raise to four. On a minor suit lead, East can win, draw trumps and lead towards the spade honours to discard a loser in the other minor for ten tricks.

BD: 27 S-K9432 Dir: S
H-KT873 Vul: None
D-J96
C-
S-AT8 S-Q6
H-2 H-Q9654
D-AKQ852 D-7
C-T53 C-AQ862
S-J75
H-AJ
D-T43
C-KJ974

If East opens 1♦ North might well overcall 2♦ to show the majors, although the suits are rather ragged. East might try a double to show some defence to the majors, South will choose 2♠, and that should be an end to NS’s contribution to the auction. If West rebids 3♦ they are likely to play there, as East is not strong enough to insist on game, particularly with no fit for partner. (West could also pass, leaving room for East to double 2♠ for penalty, but when they can’t they’ll just bid 3♣ which West will convert to 3♦.) EW can make 3NT, but it relies on the diamonds splitting 3-3 and probably an endplay for a ninth trick.

BD: 28 S-AT Dir: W
H-832 Vul: N-S
D-T9543
C-KQ4
S-K94 S-J752
H-KJ74 H-T95
D-J2 D-K7
C-J753 C-A962
S-Q863
H-AQ6
D-AQ86
C-T8

I expect South to open 1NT after three passes and to play there. West doesn’t have a safe lead, and a small heart will probably be most people’s choice. My immediate thought was to win in hand, cross to dummy with the ♠A and finesse the ♦Q. This gives you the best chance of the maximum number of tricks, and is probably the best line at matchpoints. The alternative is a safety play of cashing the ace then crossing in spades to lead to the queen (or finesse the 10 if the king dropped from West). It reduces your chances of losing two tricks in the suit by about 6%, but reduces your chances of taking all five tricks by about 20%, so is probably not worth trying.

BD: 29 S-AJ85 Dir: N
H-832 Vul: Both
D-A42
C-932
S-K S-QT962
H-T9765 H-A
D-KQJ6 D-T975
C-QJ5 C-AKT
S-743
H-KQJ4
D-83
C-8764

East will open 1♠, and West has an awkward response. The choices are between 2♥, 2NT (if that’s played as natural) and 2♦. The problem with the normal-looking 2♥ (even if the suit’s a bit weak) is that it is very difficult to stop below game after this start. Many modern pairs play a raise to 3♥ as forcing to allow efficient slam investigation, so minimum openers with heart support just have to bid game and hope to make it. Possible auctions I can envisage are 1♠ - 2♥; 2♠ - 2NT after which East might pass but might raise to three on the strength of the 109 combinations, or 1♠ - 2♦; 3♦ - P. Anyone who stops below game in either of these denominations will be rewarded.

BD: 30 S-AQ74 Dir: E
H-87 Vul: None
D-AJ53
C-K92
S-K2 S-T8653
H-KT642 H-A3
D-K6 D-T42
C-JT63 C-AQ5
S-J9
H-QJ95
D-Q987
C-874

After three passes North will open 1NT. With an eye on the vulnerability (love all again), East will overcall 2♠ even with a weak suit of only five cards, and probably play there, as South doesn’t really have enough to double, even if that is played for takeout. South will probably lead ♥Q, and East might try to play two more rounds of hearts to discard a diamond, or play a diamond to the king to try to ruff the losing diamond. After North wins the ♦A they will have to return a red card to avoid giving away a trick. I expect East to make seven or eight tricks in spades, and note that even one down is a triumph compared to allowing North to make 1NT (three spades on the lead after inserting dummy’s nine, and four diamonds by the best line of finessing the jack and cashing the ace next if it loses, or running the nine if it wins).

BD: 31	S-5	Dir: S
H-AJ874		Vul: N-S
D-83		
C-AQJ52		
S-AJ9874	S-32	
H-	H-QT53	
D-A542	D-KQJT7	
C-T83	C-96	
S-KQT6		
H-K962		
D-96		
C-K74		

I can see lots of interesting possibilities for the auction on this board. After South passes, the West hand (just) qualifies for an opening bid of 1♠. (Inveterate point counters might open it 2♠, but the two aces and the void pull more in the direction of a one bid.) North can bid 2♠ to show hearts and a minor, and East might be tempted to double to show they can penalize at least one of North's suits. The lack of a fit for partner and the vulnerability make playing for a penalty attractive. South will bid 3♥, and West will be reluctant to defend, so may take out into 3♠. If South doubles this, East may manage to scramble into diamonds, and NS will find it difficult to double, as neither has yet shown their values. If West passes initially, North will open 1♥, East will overcall 2♦, South should do whatever shows a good heart raise for their initial pass (2NT, or 3♦, according to agreement), and NS should reach 4♥, which fails by a trick even if hearts are guessed correctly. Now if EW unwisely press on to 5♦, South has enough to double, knowing North has a full opening hand, and will lead a diamond to hold EW to nine tricks.

BD: 32	S-QT9	Dir: W
H-AJ		Vul: E-W
D-K9872		
C-J72		
S-AK65	S-84	
H-43	H-KQ8762	
D-3	D-54	
C-Q96543	C-AT8	
S-J732		
H-T95		
D-AQJT6		
C-K		

In contrast to board 31, this West hand is not quite an opening bid, and neither is the North hand. East should open 2♥, South might double, particularly if they can correct a club bid to diamonds (see commentary on board 26), but is more likely to pass. The opponent who is short in hearts should be the one to take borderline competitive action. So now North doubles, and South will probably prefer to stay low with a 2♠ response rather than introduce the better diamond suit. They should be keen not to overbid as this will discourage partner from competing in future. West is likely to attack hearts, and if EW switch to spades to stop South ruffing a heart winner, South will win the third round and play on diamonds (West ruffing) while they still have a trump to get back in to finish the diamonds. To beat the contract EW have to switch early to clubs and force South to ruff in the long trump hand. Anyone who manages to play at the three level in diamonds or hearts will have a happier time.