



Commentary for the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs

Thursday 7th March 2024

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs 2024, and for your continued support for the Association.

The funds that you contribute via these Simultaneous Pairs will help the Association in the rebuilding work ongoing as we emerge from the covid hiatus – training new teachers and new TDs, promoting the game and trying to attract new members, and so on. Many of our input costs, like costs generally these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this event, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the CBAI, is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the chance to pit your bridge wits against your fellow players across Ireland (and for those still playing online, maybe overseas as well). As always, the hands (which are randomly generated by computer with no manual intervention whatsoever) provided lots of tricky problems. Many thanks to our expert commentators Paul Delaney (Monday), Enda Murphy (Tuesday), Fearghal O’Boyle (Wednesday), Brian Senior (Thursday), and Karel De Raeymaeker and one of his junior protegeés, Isabel Burke (Friday) for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. Don’t forget to check your standing in the national results at www.ecatsbridge.com/sims.

And finally, this note gives me a chance to repeat the theme of my presidential year: *“Please cherish and nurture your club’s beginners and novices – they are the future of our game.”*

Gordon Lessells

President, Contract Bridge Association of Ireland

Board 1	♠	AQ932	Dealer N
	♥	A875	Vul: None
	♦	965	
	♣	3	
	♠		♠ KJ1064
	♥	QJ9642	♥ K
	♦	AKQ82	♦ J74
	♣	52	♣ AKQ9
	♠	875	
	♥	103	
	♦	103	
	♣	J108764	

A wild deal with which to start the session off.

North is just shy of opening values, though that may not stop everyone. If North passes East will open 1♠ and West respond 2♥.

Three Clubs from East now means that the best trump suit, the one in which slam is good, is hard to get to as it is fourth-suit and to bid it will not be natural.

Do you play that a jump in the fourth suit is natural, 5-5 or more and game-forcing, or do you play it as a splinter in support of partner's second suit? The former agreement would be

handy here, but I'm guessing most pairs don't play that way.

So, 3♦ from West, and an awkward bid for East. If he judges jack to three to be a stopper or, at least, that 3NT is the closest he can get to a descriptive bid, West will continue with 4♦, which is definitely natural. Four Hearts from East to show the top honour, and it will be down to West to make the key decision.

Six of either red suit is cold as the cards lie, with 6♥ earning the top score, but both need good breaks in the red suits so nobody should feel that they have done badly just because they stop in game. +980 and +920 will both score very well, with +480 the next best result for E/W.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	6	6	1	5
W	2	6	6	1	5

=====

Board 2 ♠ KQ63 Dealer E
 ♥ QJ Vul: N-S
 ♦ 6
 ♣ KQ10863

♠ 109 ♠ J
 ♥ A108652 ♥ K9
 ♦ Q3 ♦ J109875
 ♣ 742 ♣ AJ95

 ♠ A87542
 ♥ 743
 ♦ AK42
 ♣

Board 3 ♠ KQ9843 Dealer S
 ♥ 8 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AQ432
 ♣ 4

♠ 5 ♠ J102
 ♥ 642 ♥ QJ5
 ♦ K10865 ♦ J
 ♣ 9532 ♣ AQJ876

 ♠ A76
 ♥ AK10973
 ♦ 97
 ♣ K10

Again, the dealer is just short of having opening values, so it will be South who sets the ball rolling with a 1♠ opening. West would have made a weak jump overcall over 1♣ or 1♦, but may not think the hand has sufficient playing strength to bid 3♥ over 1♠.

North can splinter, responding 4♦ to show a game raise with singleton or void diamonds and, though South has good controls, having so much strength facing a known shortage should dissuade him from going past game to cuebid the club control. South signs off in 4♠ and North, with no aces, must accept that decision.

West should lead ace and another heart on this auction, and if he fails to do so a heart loser will go away on the king of diamonds. The heart lead and continuation holds declarer to 11 tricks, otherwise there are 12, and conceding 12 tricks should leave E/W with precious few matchpoints.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	-	5	-
S	2	-	-	5	-
E	-	1	1	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

=====

South opens 1♥, North responds 1♠, and East overcalls 2♣. After a 2♥ rebid from South, North shows the diamonds and South gives preference to spades. Of course, after this start, 3♠ is forcing, leaving room for cuebidding should North be interested in slam, and with six-five shape North may well make a cuebid. Four Clubs is better than 4♦ now, as it leaves room for South to show the ♦K should he hold it. When South fails to show that card, instead cuebidding 4♥, North knows that the diamond is missing, so that a finesse is likely to be required for slam to be successful. He therefore signs off in 4♠ and leaves any further move to South.

It is a close decision, but South may well bid on. After all, North was willing to explore slam possibilities facing a minimum 2♥ rebid. Slam is below par, as even if the ♦K is onside declarer will need a decent break in whichever red suit he pins his hopes on, so stopping in game is probably right in theory, quite apart from the risk of a four-nil trump split, which is a roughly 10% chance.

In real life, however, hearts are three-three and both the ♦K and ♣A are onside, so 12 tricks roll in for an excellent matchpoint score to those who get to slam.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	3	5	6	5
S	-	3	5	6	5
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 4 ♠ 875 Dealer W
 ♥ AQJ83 Vul: Both
 ♦ AK
 ♣ K74

♠ QJ ♠ A103
 ♥ 9 ♥ 10764
 ♦ 10987 ♦ QJ643
 ♣ AQJ1098 ♣ 2

♠ K9642
 ♥ K52
 ♦ 52
 ♣ 653

Board 5 ♠ KQJ8 Dealer N
 ♥ 10987 Vul: N-S
 ♦ A63
 ♣ KJ

♠ 10976 ♠ 4
 ♥ 2 ♥ QJ543
 ♦ QJ109 ♦ K84
 ♣ A963 ♣ 8542

♠ A532
 ♥ AK6
 ♦ 752
 ♣ Q107

The West hand looks like a 3♣ pre-empt to me, the powerful intermediates and six-four shape making up for the missing seventh club. Three Clubs should ensure a plus score for E/W, as North will overcall 3♥ and that is one level too high on a club lead, declarer's king being ruffed out.

If West does not open the bidding, North will open 1♥ – the good five-card major makes the hand too good for even a strong NT opening – and South will respond 1♠. Now West might make up for lost time and overcall 3♣, and North should double to show extra values. South will admit to some heart support now by bidding 3♥, and a disciplined North will pass, knowing that, for all the 17 HCP, the North hand contains a lot of losers due to its balanced nature.

So, either way, North plays 3♥ down one for –50. I wonder how many completely different contracts and results will be achieved in real life?

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	2	2	2
S	-	-	2	2	2
E	2	3	-	-	-
W	2	3	-	-	-

=====

If playing a weak NT, that will be North's choice of opening bid. Some Souths will look at their 4-3-3-3 shape and simply raise to 3NT, but the majority are likely to use Stayman and get to 4♠.

In 3NT most declarers will win the opening lead and knock out the ace of clubs to set up nine tricks. Yes, on a low heart lead declarer can do better, by running the lead to his hand, but that runs the risk of losing to the jack or queen and getting a diamond switch, which could defeat the contract.

Four Spades is more complicated. While 10 tricks are easy enough on the lead of a heart honour, on a low heart lead declarer probably has to play low from dummy to make the contract. He has only nine tricks so needs either a third heart trick or a ruff to bring the total to 10, and with spades four-one trumps cannot be drawn until that ruff is secured. If declarer plays the ♥A at trick one East cannot be prevented from getting in with the ♦K to give West a heart ruff.

But East may lead a club. That sets up a discard for one of the diamond losers, but if East wins the defensive diamond trick and returns a low heart, declarer is still going to have to get the position right by playing low, and that isn't easy. The contract is much more likely to be made if West wins the club lead and switches to the two of hearts, as declarer is more likely to get the hearts right on this defence.

I would think that 4♠ will fail more often than not, so that +600 will be an above average score and +620 very good.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	2	2	4	3
S	1	2	2	4	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 6		Dealer E	
♠	872	♠	872
♥	82	♥	82
♦	10532	♦	10532
♣	J1072	♣	J1072
♠	QJ6	♠	K943
♥	10953	♥	AQJ764
♦	86	♦	J4
♣	AKQ5	♣	9
♠	A105		
♥	K		
♦	AKQ97		
♣	8643		

East opens 1♥ and South overcalls 2♦. West can raise to 4♥ now, possibly via an artificial constructive game raise such as 2NT. The route shouldn't really matter, as East has a minimum opening and should settle for game.

South has a pretty automatic diamond lead and continuation, so the defence has three top winners and declarer will have to drop the king of hearts to make the contract. With the overcaller having already turned up with all the top diamonds and the ace of spades, there is no real reason why he should also hold the ♥K, so 4♥ will often be down a trick.

Somebody, somewhere, is going to look at North's four-card diamond support and complete lack of defence, and then at the favourable vulnerability, and save in 5♦ over 4♥. Yes, I know, but there is always one. That gets what it deserves, going down five on four rounds of clubs, for -1100.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	-	4	4	1
W	1	-	4	4	1

=====

Board 7		Dealer S	
♠	10982	♠	A3
♥	AQJ	♥	1073
♦	63	♦	KQ975
♣	AQ42	♣	J65
♠	K754	♠	QJ6
♥	62	♥	K9854
♦	AJ102	♦	84
♣	K107	♣	983

Some will upgrade the West hand because of the two tens.

A weak NT opening will probably buy the contract. Though there are seven top tricks for the defenders to cash, in practice that will not happen and, after the normal lead of the ten of spades, declarer can run for home, just making for +90.

It is a little more attractive to open 1♣ when playing strong NT, than to open 1NT when playing weak NT, so surely there will be plenty of tables where West opens 1♣, North passes due to having the wrong shortage to make a take-out double, and East responds 1♦. If West now rebids 1NT, that will usually be that, and the spade lead still concedes seven tricks.

What about the tables where West does not open the bidding?

Now North may open a weak NT, but South will transfer to hearts. If 2♥ is passed out, it takes a spade ruff to beat 2♥. But West can make a take-out double when South passes the completion of the transfer. That gets East to 3♦, and that is a routine make for +110.

And if North has to open 1♣? Then East will overcall 1♦ and South will bid 1♥. Were West to pass over that, North would raise to 2♥ but, of course, with four-card diamond support and useful values, West will support diamonds, perhaps via a 2♥ constructive raise to the three level. East will sign off in 3♦ and play there.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	-	3	-	-	-
W	1	3	-	-	-

=====

Board 8	♠	AKQ	Dealer W
	♥	Q96	Vul: None
	♦	QJ103	
	♣	QJ10	
♠			♠ J109753
♥	A432		♥ 1085
♦	8752		♦ 9
♣	K8764		♣ A95
	♠	8642	
	♥	KJ7	
	♦	AK64	
	♣	32	

North has a strong NT and, if that is the opening bid, East is likely to pass and South use Stayman. On finding that there is no eight-card major-suit fit, South will settle for 3NT. The contract makes on anything other than a club lead, after which the suit can be established and West waits to get in with the ace of hearts to cash the long clubs. Even though Stayman has been used, East will do very well to find a club lead.

If North has to open either 1♣ or 1♦, East may come in with a 2♠ weak jump overcall. South can raise to 3♦ facing a diamond opening or double facing a club opening. In both cases, North can jump to 3NT.

If North opened 1♣, even if not promising a genuine suit, the club lead will be even harder to find than previously.

I expect most N/Ss to play in 3NT and make it, sometimes with an overtrick. Those who find the killing club lead should be richly rewarded. And if North chooses to defend 2♠ doubled East can get out for down two and – 300, which should also be well above average.

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

=====

Board 9	♠	743	Dealer N
	♥	Q3	Vul: E-W
	♦	Q72	
	♣	AKQ53	
♠	QJ1086		♠ K
♥	K987		♥ J1052
♦	1095		♦ AJ4
♣	7		♣ J10862
	♠	A952	
	♥	A64	
	♦	K863	
	♣	94	

At most tables North will either open with a weak NT or will open 1♣ then rebid 1NT over the likely 1♠ response.

At teams scoring, many Souths would invite game with a raise to 2NT, and North might accept the invitation because of the good club suit. Well, the clubs provide just the three top tricks on this layout, and a three-three break was only ever a little over a 35% shot at the best of times.

3NT should fail by at least a couple of tricks, and 2NT by at least one. It follows that those who stop in 1NT, which can be made with a little care, should score very well.

Should South pass 1NT? Well, I would be inclined to use Stayman in response to a 1NT opening because if there is a spade fit two aces and a king, plus a potential ruffing value suggest that there could be a good game, and even 3♠ will often score better than 1NT. However, in the second scenario, where North has opened 1♣ then rebid 1NT, South already knows that there is no spade fit. Two aces and a king are nice to have, but otherwise the hand is empty, with not even a ten to back up those top cards. The values for game will be there far less often than not and,

as on the actual deal, even 2NT may not be making.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	1	-	-	1
S	1	1	-	-	1
E	-	-	2	1	-
W	-	-	2	1	-

=====

Board 10 ♠ Q6 Dealer E
 ♥ 98 Vul: Both
 ♦ AK98
 ♣ KQ432

♠ 1097432	♠ J8
♥ 104	♥ KQJ762
♦ J32	♦ 64
♣ 76	♣ A98

 ♠ AK5
 ♥ A53
 ♦ Q1075
 ♣ J105

Six Diamonds is cold on a three-two trump break and has chances even if trumps are four-one. Six Clubs is even better, as a four-one club split is not a problem and a diamond ruff in 6♣ is less likely than a club ruff in 6♦.

However, getting to either slam will prove to be much less straightforward than making it, especially at matchpoints, where players are wary of going beyond 3NT unless certain that the NT game is not an option.

East will open 1♥ and South double – not ideal on a 3-3-4-3 hand, but the only alternative will be to pass. Assuming a pass from West, North will cuebid 2♥ to create a game force and South, with that sterile shape and a sure heart stopper, will presumably respond 2NT.

Many Norths will think the job is done and raise to 3NT, a contract which is down one on a heart lead – embarrassing with a choice of slams available. Even if North bids 3♣ over 2NT, which he should, will South co-operate? Plus 1370 will score very well. As for +600, that will depend on how many -100s there are in 3NT.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	6	1	2	2
S	5	6	1	2	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 11 ♠ 762 Dealer S
 ♥ 10873 Vul: None
 ♦ 1064
 ♣ AQ6

♠ A10	♠ KQ853
♥ Q542	♥ KJ9
♦ AK532	♦ Q8
♣ 98	♣ K104

 ♠ J94
 ♥ A6
 ♦ J97
 ♣ J7532

E/W will have the auction to themselves on this one.

If East opens a weak NT, West will use Stayman then raise to 3NT. If East opens 1♠, West will respond 2♦ and East may rebid 2♠ if playing Acol, over which West bids 3♥ and East 3NT, ending the auction. Playing a strong NT, East can open 1♠ and rebid 2NT over the 2♦ response, and West will raise that to game. Most roads, then, lead to 3NT played by East.

South will lead a club, North putting in the queen, forcing declarer to win the king. However, while that has kept defensive communications open, when both spades and diamonds turn out to be three-three there are 11 tricks to be cashed.

With +460 the normal result, anyone who gets to 4♠ for +450 will score pretty badly.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	5	5	5	5
W	2	5	5	5	5

=====

Board 12	♠ QJ109	Dealer W
	♥ QJ107	Vul: N-S
	♦ KJ63	
	♣ 10	
♠ A432		♠ K75
♥ 86		♥ AK9
♦ Q9		♦ A104
♣ KQ872		♣ 9643
	♠ 86	
	♥ 5432	
	♦ 8752	
	♣ AJ5	

West opens 1♣ and North has the perfect distribution to make a light take-out double. East can redouble but, when N/S wriggle out into 1♦, nobody has a penalty double and East will probably just jump to 3NT.

Declarer will win the lead in hand, whatever it may be, and lead a club to the king then come back to hand with a major other than the one led at trick one, so as to keep control of each suit while being where he wants to be to lead a second club up.

South may be able to clear one of the majors now, but it does North no good at all. The only defender able to guard any of the three suits on the run of the clubs, the North hand is crushed and, in one way or another, will always have to concede a tenth trick via a squeeze or endplay.

E/W should score +430, while anyone who stops off, tempted by the vulnerability, to double 1♦/♥ can be held to just down one for +200 and a poor score.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	1	1	3	4
W	4	1	1	3	4

=====

Board 13	♠ KJ92	Dealer N
	♥ 108653	Vul: Both
	♦ A10	
	♣ 63	
♠ 753		♠ AQ1086
♥ K92		♥ J
♦ K87		♦ Q654
♣ J752		♣ A108
	♠ 4	
	♥ AQ74	
	♦ J932	
	♣ KQ94	

East opens 1♠ after a pass from North, and South has a classic take-out double. West can raise a five-card opener to 2♠ or, if playing Acoll, bid INT to show his values while he has the chance.

Over 2♠, North has an easy 3♥ bid, despite having half his strength in the opponents' suit. Knowing that this might be a light stretch, South should not go on to game.

East has little to spare for a five-card 1♠ opening and has a lot of potential losers, so should also pass, leaving North to declare 3♥, where careful play should restrict the losers to one in each suit, so just made for +140. Three Spades should be down two for -200.

If West responds INT, North has the option of bidding a free 2♥ rather than jumping to 3♥. With the spades potentially stacked over North's holding, 2♥ is enough and, if it ends the auction, nine tricks should again be the outcome.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	3	-	-
S	-	-	3	-	-
E	1	1	-	1	-
W	1	1	-	1	-

=====

Board 14 ♠ AQ102 Dealer E
 ♥ Q6 Vul: None
 ♦ AJ6
 ♣ A1084

♠ 53 ♠ K964
 ♥ K1085 ♥ J943
 ♦ Q92 ♦ K85
 ♣ KJ52 ♣ 73

♠ J87
 ♥ A72
 ♦ 10743
 ♣ Q96

Board 15 ♠ Q976 Dealer S
 ♥ Q1054 Vul: N-S
 ♦ J75
 ♣ 74

♠ K ♠ 53
 ♥ KJ9832 ♥ A76
 ♦ 2 ♦ Q10864
 ♣ KJ1098 ♣ Q53

♠ AJ10842
 ♥
 ♦ AK93
 ♣ A62

There will normally be three passes to North, who opens INT if that is the agreement, and plays there. A 1♠ opening gets INT from South and North raises to 2NT, which South probably passes. A 1♣ opening sees South respond 1♦ and North rebid INT and play there.

Just looking at those three possible auctions, it seems that opening the four-card major when holding a strong NT type is the worst of the methods as it involves getting to 2NT where the other two auctions stop a level lower.

However, if declarer reads the play correctly, nothing can prevent nine tricks, so getting to the two level is not an issue.

Say that East leads a heart, ducked to the king and a heart continued. Declarer can negotiate three tricks in each black suit, two hearts and a diamond. And if West switches to a diamond? Well, now declarer has extra diamond tricks. Whatever suit the defence plays on helps declarer to reach his goal of nine before they can get to five. Those who stretch to 3NT can therefore make their contracts and +400 should score very well.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

When South opens 1♠, West can make a two-suited overcall, the most popular version being a 2♠ cuebid to show at least five-five in hearts and an unspecified minor. Though well short of having a genuine raise to 3♠, North can compete at the three level because partner will know that this is all that North is doing, with a 3♥ cuebid showing a full-blooded raise to 3♠. With a reasonable heart fit and the guarantee of having a useful card in partner's minor, East may bid 4♥.

South will clearly bid on, the only question being whether he settled for 4♠ or makes a slam try. With all those controls it is very tempting to just blast 6♠, but 5♥ is enough. If partner has what is needed to make slam good he will usually be able to bid it facing this very strong invitation. Of course, with a queen-high hand, North will say no thanks, and swiftly sign-off in 5♠.

Even 5♠ is not a guaranteed make but, while declarer may lose a trick to the bare king of spades, that priceless nine of diamonds means that he can pick up the diamonds without loss to bring home 11 tricks. The double finesse is the clear odds play remembering West's two-suited overcall.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	2	-	6	4
S	-	2	-	6	4
E	2	-	2	-	-
W	2	-	2	-	-

=====

Board 16	♠ 6	Dealer W
	♥ A643	Vul: E-W
	♦ 107543	
	♣ Q54	
♠ KJ75		♠ Q108432
♥ 98752		♥ J10
♦ J		♦ AK2
♣ J108		♣ K2
	♠ A9	
	♥ KQ	
	♦ Q986	
	♣ A9763	

When East opens 1♠, South has a choice between a number of flawed calls. The South hand is unsuitable for a take-out double because of having only a doubleton heart. It is unsuitable for a 1NT overcall because it is a bare minimum for the bid and, again, the heart holding should be downgraded. And it is unsuitable for a 2♣ overcall because of the empty club suit. But who could bear to pass with 15 HCP?

At least the vulnerability reduces South's risk a little and, out of the stomach-churning options, I guess I find a 2♣ overcall the least repulsive.

None of South's agonising proves to be relevant, because West has a pre-emptive raise to 3♠, and should make that bid over any intervention by South. Three Spades will shut North out, and the East hand, while being better than it might be, is not worth a game bid facing a pre-emptive raise, so 3♠ should be the final contract.

The fate of 3♠ is decided by declarer's club play, though this may be avoided if South leads a low diamond to dummy's bare jack, and declarer gets two club discards from dummy. It doesn't really matter whether declarer has to guess clubs or not, as he will surely get it right given South's bid, whatever that may be. Plus 140 will be a solid result for E/W. N/S can come to nine tricks in a club contract or 10 in diamonds, though both outcomes rely on declarer picking up diamonds for only two losers, which is not guaranteed.

Makeable Contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	4	1	-	-
S	3	4	1	-	-
E	-	-	-	3	-
W	-	-	-	3	-

=====

Board 17	♠ 1074	Dealer N
	♥ A5	Vul: None
	♦ K1086	
	♣ K983	
♠ KJ53		♠ AQ862
♥ K9642		♥ Q8
♦ 74		♦ QJ93
♣ J10		♣ A2
	♠ 9	
	♥ J1073	
	♦ A52	
	♣ Q7654	

This may be a good deal for those playing four-card majors, though in a slightly strange way.

East will open 1♠ and West will show spade support. Facing a known five-card suit, the hand, which looks to be worth two-and-a-half spades, will often be tempted to raise to 3♠ because of the known nine-card fit, and East will usually accept the invitation. But facing what might be only a four-card suit, some players will be more inclined to raise only to 2♠, over which East may well pass.

West's bid is a borderline one, but I would bet on a higher percentage of five-card majorities getting to game than four-card majorities. And, of course, after a club lead from South, which looks normal to me, there are four losers so that those in game should be defeated. We shall see, because on a heart lead 4♠ has definite chances.

Makeable Contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	1	-	-	-
S	3	-	-	-	-
E	-	-	1	3	-
W	-	-	1	3	-

=====

Board 18 ♠ AQ1054 Dealer E
 ♥ J4 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 652
 ♣ 1083

♠ J98 ♠ K7632
 ♥ 10976 ♥ Q3
 ♦ AJ87 ♦ Q104
 ♣ K4 ♣ 976

♠
 ♥ AK852
 ♦ K93
 ♣ AQJ52

South opens 1♥ and North responds 1♠. I know some Souths will now jump to 3♣, but that is best played as game-forcing, and the South hand is not worth a game-force, particularly as the 1♠ response has not improved it at all. It is always easier to add to what has previously been shown than to subtract from something already promised, so I would rebid 2♣ and hope to get another chance.

Sure enough, North gives false preference to 2♥, and now South, who knows that this will often be only doubleton support, can repeat the clubs to show at least five-five and also game-invitational values.

With only two hearts and no honour apart from the J in either of partner's suits, I would be inclined to pass out 3♣ as North, as this will surely be the easier partscore to bring home due to the extra trump.

With no attractive opening lead, West may begin with the ten of hearts as the least dangerous option. Though there is a double dummy line to 10 tricks, in practice this rates to hold the contract to nine – three rounds of hearts, ruffing with the ten, diamond discard on the ace of spades, and lose two diamonds, a club, and a heart over-ruff. Stopping in 3♣ should score well.

Those in a heart contract will probably also get a heart lead. They will have to lose two hearts and a club, so will need to force an entry to the ace of spades to get rid of a diamond loser if they are to come to even eight tricks.

Of course, things are much less difficult if West leads a spade or a diamond early in the play.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	1	-	1
S	4	-	2	-	1
E	-	1	-	1	-
W	-	1	-	1	-

=====

Board 19 ♠ J104 Dealer S
 ♥ Q10 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 108
 ♣ AJ9432

♠ K972 ♠ Q85
 ♥ 63 ♥ J987542
 ♦ 9542 ♦ AJ3
 ♣ 765 ♣

♠ A63
 ♥ AK
 ♦ KQ76
 ♣ KQ108

South will open 2NT and North probably just raise quietly to game.

Declarer has nine top tricks and a spade lead would give a tenth. After that start only one diamond trick is required to bring the total to 11.

On a passive lead, declarer can create three club entries to dummy so can lead twice up to the diamond honours to again claim 11 tricks. If West is sufficiently careless as to discard a diamond, declarer could come to three diamond winners and 12 in all for an excellent result.

Six Clubs is off on a spade lead, and on a passive lead can only make if West throws a diamond.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	3	-	1	5
S	5	2	-	1	5
E	-	-	2	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

=====

Board 20 ♠ Q1074 Dealer W
 ♥ AJ104 Vul: Both
 ♦ 54
 ♣ AQ4

♠ 953 ♠ AKJ8
 ♥ 963 ♥ 8
 ♦ AJ73 ♦ KQ109
 ♣ KJ5 ♣ 10983

♠ 62
 ♥ KQ752
 ♦ 862
 ♣ 762

Board 21 ♠ K87 Dealer N
 ♥ AJ954 Vul: N-S
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ Q42

♠ Q10 ♠ AJ96432
 ♥ K8 ♥ Q7
 ♦ 763 ♦ KJ92
 ♣ AK10963 ♣

♠ 5
 ♥ 10632
 ♦ A1084
 ♣ J875

North may open a weak NT and that will probably silence East – for now. However, South will transfer to hearts and, if North simply does as requested and rebids 2♥, East can now double for take-out. That gets E/W to 3♦, which is a comfortable make, even with an overtrick in most cases.

Even if North breaks the transfer and jumps to 3♥ over the 2♦ response, there is a strong case for East to double. This is not quite as risky as it might at first appear because, if the opposition have a nine-card fit, E/W must have an at least eight-card fit. This time West gets to declare 4♦ but that too is unbeatable. If North opens 1♣, East has the wrong shape to come in immediately, so passes. South responds 1♥ and North raises to 2♥. Now East has the perfect distribution for a double and West responds 3♦. As we have seen, if left to play there that is an easy make, while if someone competes to 3♥ that should be down a trick, which is OK unless someone doubles, which is very unlikely.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	2	-	-
S	-	-	2	-	-
E	2	4	-	2	-
W	2	4	-	2	-

=====

If North opens a weak NT, East will overcall either 2♠ or 3♠ and that will silence South. If 3♠ is played as a strong bid, West will raise to game. West may also bid on facing a 2♠ overcall, perhaps bidding 3♣. East will go back to 3♠, as 3♣ hardly improves the East hand, and that should be that.

If North opens 1♥, 1♠ rates to be the popular choice with the east cards, as the hand is way too good for a pre-emptive 3♠ overcall and doesn't feel right for a 4♠ bid. South can make a 3♥ pre-emptive raise, and West may double to show values, over which East will probably jump to 4♠. If instead West passes over 3♥, East will compete with 3♠ and West probably raise that to game.

Four Spades looks OK, until you realise that there is no entry to dummy on accurate defence, so the top clubs cannot be cashed, nor can the trump finesse be taken. On a heart lead, North must put in the jack to prevent dummy's king becoming the required entry. Declarer will play a heart straight back to the king and ace. Now the five of diamonds to jack and ace and a diamond back to the queen, and declarer is snookered – down one.

Of course, the heart lead is easy when North has opened 1♥, but if North's opening is 1NT some Souths may lead a club. Now declarer has two discards and needs only to take the trump finesse then score one red-suit trick to bring the total to 10.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 22	♠ AQ7	Dealer E
	♥ AKQ84	Vul: E-W
	♦ KQ107	
	♣ 4	
♠ 106		♠ J9543
♥ 2		♥ J107
♦ A98		♦ J42
♣ AK109865		♣ J7
	♠ K82	
	♥ 9653	
	♦ 653	
	♣ Q32	

Whether West opens 1♣ or 3♣ in third seat, North will start with a double. East will presumably pass in both cases, and South will respond in hearts at the lowest level available to him.

Again, in both cases North can make the same call, of 4♣, though with slightly different meanings in the two cases. Where South has responded 1♥ to a take-out double, North can jump to 4♣ as a splinter bid, club shortage, slam try; if South has had to respond at the three level, 4♣ is just a general heart slam try. In either case, South will waste no time in signing off in 4♥, and North will respect that sign-off and pass.

West can cash a top club but must then switch. Declarer wins, draws trumps, then plays a spade to the king followed by a diamond to the king. When that scores, he can lead a heart to the nine and a second diamond up. A winning guess produces an overtrick.

This line is not quite secure. If West has opened at the one level, playing for West to hold the ♦A is a reasonable shot, but where West has opened 3♣ there is a danger that East has ♦AJ9x and has ducked the first diamond. Playing the fourth round of trumps

now runs the risk of losing three diamond tricks and four in all.

If the auction sees North become declarer in a heart contract, the defence can lead two rounds of clubs, forcing the North hand to ruff. Now the three-one trump split means that declarer cannot lead up twice to the diamonds and must instead lead to the king then concede two diamonds, holding him to 10 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	3	4	1	-
S	-	4	5	1	3
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 23	♠ KQ72	Dealer S
	♥ 98	Vul: Both
	♦ KQJ75	
	♣ Q6	
♠ AJ1096		♠ 5
♥ 762		♥ AK1053
♦ 1082		♦ A963
♣ A4		♣ K73
	♠ 843	
	♥ QJ4	
	♦ 4	
	♣ J109852	

North will open 1♦ and East overcall 1♥. After a pass from South, West could raise hearts on the three small but is more likely to introduce the spades. Over 1♠, East can bid 1NT, and now West converts to 2♥. That ought to be a constructive combination – 1♠ followed by 2♥ – with a weaker hand simply raising to 2♥ immediately as being the thing partner will most want to see.

Now East has a close decision, bidding on the assumption that he is facing three hearts, a spade side-suit which includes some high-card strength, and in all about 9 or 10 HCP. Vulnerable at teams, East would surely go on, possibly even just raising himself to game. Matchpoints is a different animal, however, and we only want to be in games that are at least 50-50 shots to make. More often than

not, West will have wasted spade values – imagine king-queen instead of ace-jack, for example. Now game will rarely be good.

Perhaps I am getting old, but I have a lot of sympathy with East not even making a game try here, though that isn't the winning approach. I think that finding West with both black aces, a doubleton club, and those priceless diamond intermediates, is just too much to ask.

After a diamond lead to the jack and ace, declarer cashes the top hearts then takes the club ruff before conceding a diamond. He loses just two diamonds and one heart for +170. Note that it is easy to get careless here and fail to cash the hearts before taking the ruff. That results in North getting an over-ruff with the doubleton trump, and the contract is down one.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	3	4	2	2
W	1	3	4	2	2

=====

Board 24	♠ 104	Dealer W
	♥ QJ983	Vul: None
	♦ K5	
	♣ J543	
♠ Q75		♠ J9863
♥ 752		♥ AK106
♦ J87		♦ A106
♣ AK82		♣ 9
	♠ AK2	
	♥ 4	
	♦ Q9432	
	♣ Q1076	

East opens 1♠ after two passes and I think that South should pass. Yes, even at Love All, as I just cannot stomach a two-level overcall on that diamond suit.

If South does pass, West will bid 2♣. For Acol players, that will simply be a natural bid, while for five-card majorites it may be Drury,

promising three spades and a better hand than one which would simply raise to 2♠.

The Acol players will see East rebid 2♥ and will give simple preference to 2♠, ending the auction. The five-card majorites will also see East rebid 2♥, natural and not a horrible hand. However, three low hearts does not encourage West to bid on, and he just shows a near-minimum Drury bid by signing off in 2♠. East is allowed to go on, of course, but will not be tempted on this hand.

Three rounds of spades sees declarer in dummy to lead a heart towards the ten. Supposing that North splits his honours, now declarer will have to cross to the top clubs, take a red-suit discard on the second club, then lead a second heart to the ten. There will be two red-suit losers at the end so nine tricks made. If North fails to split on the first heart, the ten will score. Declarer cashes a top heart, discovering the five-one split, crosses to the clubs and discards the fourth heart on the ♣K. Now a diamond to the ten sees him get two diamond winners and 10 in all.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 25	♠ K72	Dealer N
	♥ J6	Vul: E-W
	♦ AJ87	
	♣ AQ65	
♠ QJ953		♠
♥ K1053		♥ A972
♦ K102		♦ 543
♣ 10		♣ J98742
	♠ A10864	
	♥ Q84	
	♦ Q96	
	♣ K3	

If North opens a strong NT, South will transfer to spades then jump to 3NT to offer a choice of games. North, with king to three

spades and a weak doubleton heart, will usually choose to play 4♠ and will be very disappointed to find that spades are five-zero and that he has to be down two. Worse, diamonds can be played for four tricks, and that means nine tricks in 3NT on a non-heart lead, and 10 on a heart lead.

If N/S are playing a weak NT, North will open 1♣ or 1♦ according to taste, and will rebid 1NT over the 1♠ response. With moderate spades and a high honour in every suit, some Souths will not bother to check back for a five-three spade fit, and will be thrilled with their decision when they see the spade layout. Others will, perfectly reasonably, use Checkback and get to 4♠ then curse their luck.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 26	♠	1063	Dealer E
	♥	932	Vul: Both
	♦	A87	
	♣	KQ76	
♠	7		♠ KQ82
♥	AKQJ4		♥ 108
♦	Q1064		♦ KJ9
♣	J84		♣ 10952
	♠	AJ954	
	♥	765	
	♦	532	
	♣	A3	

West will open 1♥ after two passes and East respond 1♠, which will keep South quiet. After a 2♦ rebid from West, East should give false preference to 2♥. This is not only because hearts scores better than diamonds, but also it gives partner one more chance in case he has a strong hand, when game could be on. If East had only 5 or 6 HCP, there would be less case for false preference, as East would not want to see partner take a third bid.

All of the above is academic, of course, as West passes out 2♥.

East's diamond honours prove to be just what West requires. There is no reason why South should duck the first spade, so the defence should come to three clubs and two more aces, but that is all, a solid +110 for E/W.

N/S can make 2♠, but few will find that contract in the face of East's 1♠ response.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	-	2	-
E	1	2	2	-	-
W	1	2	2	-	-

=====

Board 27	♠	K2	Dealer S
	♥	J85	Vul: None
	♦	AJ962	
	♣	982	
♠	AJ9		♠ 876
♥	K72		♥ A109
♦	10753		♦ 4
♣	653		♣ AKQJ104
	♠	Q10543	
	♥	Q643	
	♦	KQ8	
	♣	7	

I suppose that North could open an off-centre weak 2♦ in third seat, or even a light 1♦, but at the majority of tables there will be three passes to East, who will open 1♣.

If South now overcalls 1♠, West will bid 1NT and East, with seven running tricks, may take a shot at 3NT. That, of course, can be defeated if the defence leads and cashes diamonds, but if North leads the king of spades declarer will be able to grab the ace and cash out the first nine tricks.

If South prefers to double 1♣ on his semi-three-suited hand, rather than stress what is after all quite a weak spade suit, West may bid 1♦, and if North can double that to show diamonds that will put paid to 3NT's chances. Or perhaps West will prefer to bid 1NT rather than bid the weak diamonds. Again,

North has a natural diamond lead against NT, so 3NT would be doomed.

East may still try 3NT but, if North has already shown diamonds, East will surely be content to bid just 3♣, which is a nice safe +130 if declarer gets the spades right.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	4	-	-	-	2
W	4	-	-	-	2

=====

Board 28 Dealer W
Vul: N-S

♠ KQ95	♠ A108
♥ 973	♥ A10852
♦ J84	♦ A107
♣ Q107	♣ A4

♠ 43	♠ J762
♥ K64	♥ QJ
♦ Q953	♦ K62
♣ 8632	♣ KJ95

East has a strong NT and, if that is what he plays, 1NT will be the first and last bid in the auction.

Whichever black suit South chooses to lead sets up three winners for the defence. However, if declarer gets the hearts right he will then have time to play diamonds for his ninth trick. That involves a second guess, of course, but the defenders will have made some discards on the hearts, which should give a useful clue as to the diamond position. There should be a number of +150s.

It is much more convenient for declarer to play for the actual heart position, but some may think that a second-round finesse guarantees four tricks in the suit and the contract, while cashing the ace means only two if South's honour was a singleton and now the contract is no longer assured.

If East opens 1♥, West can raise to 2♥ and that will often end the auction. Winning plays in both red suits means no fewer than 10 tricks. Losing plays in both red suits means only eight.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	1	4	4	-	3
W	1	4	4	-	3

=====