

Suffolk Simultaneous Pairs 2019

22nd - 25th November 2019*

Commentary by Malcolm Pryor

Malcolm Pryor lives in Suffolk and plays most of his bridge with Karen Pryor.

They play regularly together in teams representing Suffolk. Malcolm has several different partners for playing in Seniors events (for which Karen isn't eligible) and has had some success at international level; in the 2018 European Championships Malcolm played in the England Seniors team which successfully qualified for the World Championships; then in 2019 in the D'Orsi Bowl, the Seniors World Championships, Malcolm played in the slightly different England team which won the Silver Medal.

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*For clubs affiliated to the Suffolk Contract Bridge Association.

<p>♠ 532 9 ♥ 62 11 HCP 9 ♦ KQ8 11 ♣ A9843</p> <p>♠ A10 ♠ Q9864 ♥ A943 ♥ KJ85 ♦ 9654 ♦ - ♣ QJ2 ♣ K1065</p> <p>♠ KJ7 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ Q107 N - 3 - - 1 ♦ AJ10732 S - 3 - - 1 ♣ 7 E 2 - 4 3 - W 2 - 4 3 -</p>	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>A wide variety of scores will be obtained on this hand. A few Easts will be playing that an opening 2♠ shows 5 Spades plus a minor and a few who like a really active game might even open 1♠. If East passes South will mostly open 1♦ (although a third in hand 3♦ would be a good bid, causing maximum inconvenience to the opponents) and now if North bids 1NT East should join in with a double (take out of Diamonds) and if instead North bids 2♣ (my choice) East should again join in with a double (other two suits) at pairs to compete the part score. Any E/W pair that bids and makes 4♥ will get an excellent score, and even though 5♦ doubled conceding 300 is a good save, N/S won't get many match points for that. If N/S manage to win the auction in 3♦ they should get a good score.</p>
<p>♠ Q43 14 ♥ KQ107 6 HCP 10 ♦ A83 10 ♣ K92</p> <p>♠ 10986 ♠ A ♥ A43 ♥ 52 ♦ Q109 ♦ K754 ♣ 764 ♣ QJ10853</p> <p>♠ KJ752 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ J986 N - - 2 3 2 ♦ J62 S - - 2 3 2 ♣ A E 3 1 - - - W 3 1 - - -</p>	<p>Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Is East worth an opening 1♣ (or 2♣ playing Precision)? I think so, though some will pass and first in hand green against red at pairs an offbeat 3♣ pre-empt has considerable merit. Over 1♣ South will overcall 1♠ and N/S will play in Spades, some in game. If East passes N/S will locate their 4-4 Heart fit, which would often produce an additional trick, but unluckily not on this hand. However the defence is not that easy. Against Hearts E/W can lead a Spade then switch to Diamonds, North can't get to hand in time to pitch a Diamond on the ♣K, so E/W in total get a Spade 2 Diamonds Ace of Hearts and one Spade ruff. Any E/W pair finding that defence should be very pleased. On Club leads 4♥ can be let through because the Spade ruff disappears and a Diamond loser goes away on the King of Clubs. For N/S making 170 should score well, bidding and making game extremely well, while -200 will be the usual disaster.</p>
<p>♠ 10943 8 ♥ K10964 11 HCP 11 ♦ A6 10 ♣ J3</p> <p>♠ QJ76 ♠ K85 ♥ 83 ♥ AJ72 ♦ KJ103 ♦ 4 ♣ A86 ♣ K9752</p> <p>♠ A2 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ Q5 N - 1 - - - ♦ Q98752 S - 1 - - - ♣ Q104 E 3 - 1 2 2 W 3 - 1 2 2</p>	<p>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <p>This one may be passed out at some tables. There are some guidelines for opening marginal hands in fourth position. The original versions were called either the Pearson count or the Cassino count. Add your HCP to your Spade length (here 11 HCP plus 3 Spades = 14) and open if the total is 15 or more. I prefer to use a total of 14. But is that East hand really a marginal opener with a 5 card suit and no wasted values in the singleton Diamond? The Kaplan and Rubens Evaluator (highly recommended) calculates that the East hand is worth 12.65 HCP, so fully worth an opening bid. There will be a number of E/Ws making 7 or 8 tricks in No Trumps or 8 or 9 tricks in Clubs. A minus score for E/W will score very badly but passing the hand out may well be below average for them.</p>
<p>♠ Q95 11 ♥ J9 10 HCP 5 ♦ AJ872 14 ♣ QJ9</p> <p>♠ AKJ843 ♠ 72 ♥ Q832 ♥ K765 ♦ 5 ♦ Q10964 ♣ 82 ♣ 106</p> <p>♠ 106 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ A104 N 4 2 - - 4 ♦ K3 S 4 2 - - 4 ♣ AK7543 E - - 1 1 - W - - 1 1 -</p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <p>N/S may find it hard to get to their making 3NT if West opens 1♠, even though they have a combined 25 count with a sound 6 card suit. North hasn't really got a bid over 1♠ and East should respond 1NT (only 5 HCP but the playing strength is nearer 7 with the 5 card diamond suit including Q109). South may well only bid 2♣ at this stage. If West bids 2♠ North might now think both Ace and King of Spades are in the opening bidders hand and bid 2NT, which will be raised to 3NT. But if West introduces the Heart suit instead of rebidding Spades North has a much bigger problem and 3NT may now be missed. If West is in range for a 2♠ opener it should be easier for N/S to get to 3NT: South will bid 3♣ and North will probably take a view that the Queen of Spades is a stop, and hope for a Spade trick, 6 Club tricks Ace of Diamonds and at least one other trick somewhere.</p>

<p> ♠ AKJ 13 ♥ J1054 5 HCP 9 ♦ A98 13 ♣ 862 </p> <p> ♠ 742 ♥ Q62 ♦ J ♣ Q109754 </p> <p> ♠ 9653 ♥ K3 ♦ KQ10765 ♣ J </p> <p> ♠ Q108 ♥ A987 ♦ 432 ♣ AK3 </p> <p> ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N N 2 - 3 1 3 S 2 - 3 1 3 E - 1 - - - W - 1 - - - </p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>The mirrored distribution in both hands makes 9 tricks the limit of the hand for N/S, whether they play in 4♥ or 3NT. There is in fact a gadget called SID which enables a partnership to play in 3NT having already located a 4-4 major fit using Stayman. SID is short for Stayman In Doubt. After using Stayman the bid of 3♦ says “we have a 4-4 fit in your major but I am 4-3-3-3 shape – bid 3NT if you are also 4-3-3-3 shape. If you were E/W and your opponents bid 3NT using SID then you were unlucky, also if South just raised 1NT to 3NT without using Stayman (which works on this hand but could have misfired on other hands). SID is not used much these days on grounds of frequency, since the chances of both hands having 4-3-3-3 mirror distribution is very small and you lose the ability to bid a natural 3♦ after using Stayman.</p>
<p> ♠ KJ102 13 ♥ 9765 5 HCP 9 ♦ Q94 13 ♣ A7 </p> <p> ♠ A853 ♥ Q104 ♦ 1076 ♣ J32 </p> <p> ♠ Q94 ♥ 8 ♦ KJ52 ♣ Q8654 </p> <p> ♠ 76 ♥ AKJ32 ♦ A83 ♣ K109 </p> <p> ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N N 1 2 4 2 2 S 1 2 4 2 2 E - - - - - W - - - - - </p>	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>4♥ by South looks fairly normal, but will often go off. On a Club lead the best shot is probably to win in hand and play a Spade. West may go up with the ♠A, after which (double dummy) the ♠Q can be ruffed out, and with careful timing of entries declarer can make 2 Spades 2 Clubs 1 Diamond 4 Hearts plus 1 Club ruff – contract making. If West plays low on the Spade and declarer finesses for the Queen (normal I think) East can't play a Diamond away from the King and declarer can later lead up to the Spades again; West will almost certainly take the Ace and Declarer can once again come to 10 tricks.</p> <p>A Diamond lead is much harder. Declarer has to play low, and ♦J forces ♦A. Now if declarer loses to the Queen of Spades the defence have 4 tricks (West must not hop up with Ace of Spades, as we saw earlier). So declarer has to win with the King of Spades, after which there are some quite complex end games leading to 10 tricks due to the opponents not being able to play Diamonds again (thanks to the 8 and 9 of Diamonds being in the N/S hands).</p>
<p> ♠ AKQ10975 ♥ QJ 16 ♦ 3 11 HCP 7 ♣ A97 6 </p> <p> ♠ 4 ♥ K432 ♦ AK954 ♣ J102 </p> <p> ♠ - ♥ A10965 ♦ J1087 ♣ Q853 </p> <p> ♠ J8632 ♥ 87 ♦ Q62 ♣ K64 </p> <p> ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N N - - - 3 - S - - - 3 - E 2 5 5 - - W 2 5 5 - - </p>	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>On this very distributional hand N/S will often play in 4♠ which is unlucky to go off, but is a good save if E/W were about to play in 4♥ making.</p> <p>What if E/W compete to 5♦ or 5♥? It looks tempting to bid 5♠ but in pairs in particular bidding 5 over 5 rarely produces a good score; it is usually better to take your chances on the opponents going off in their contract. Although double dummy E/W can guess the Heart position and also take a Diamond finesse against the Queen, in practice they won't a lot of the time, so N/S can go plus rather than go minus in Spades, possibly doubled.</p>
<p> ♠ QJ62 10 ♥ 942 9 HCP 15 ♦ A74 6 ♣ K54 </p> <p> ♠ 3 ♥ J7 ♦ QJ985 ♣ AJ972 </p> <p> ♠ AK104 ♥ AQ10853 ♦ 3 ♣ Q6 </p> <p> ♠ 9875 ♥ K6 ♦ K1062 ♣ 1083 </p> <p> ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N N - - - - - S - - - - - E 3 2 4 1 3 W 3 2 4 1 3 </p>	<p>Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <p>E/W should get a poor score if they miss game with a combined 24 count and a 6-2 fit in Hearts. It is hard to see anything other than 3 losers if they play in 4♥ (a Heart a Diamond and a Club). Playing in 3NT the opposition are entitled to a Club a Heart and 2 Diamonds, but N/S could have an accident if they keep on playing Spades, setting up 3 Spades for Declarer along with 5 Hearts and at least 2 Clubs (unless North ducks the Q of Clubs and declarer takes another Club finesse).</p>

<p> ♠ 53 4 ♥ J6 22 HCP 5 ♦ 963 9 ♣ QJ9652 ♠ KQJ104 ♠ 96 ♥ A84 ♥ 752 ♦ AJ ♦ KQ75 ♣ AK4 ♣ 10873 ♠ A872 ♥ KQ1093 ♦ 10842 ♣ - </p>	<p> ♠ 53 4 ♥ J6 22 HCP 5 ♦ 963 9 ♣ QJ9652 ♠ KQJ104 ♠ 96 ♥ A84 ♥ 752 ♦ AJ ♦ KQ75 ♣ AK4 ♣ 10873 ♠ A872 ♥ KQ1093 ♦ 10842 ♣ - </p>	<p> Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable After 2 passes South is in the spotlight. Third in hand, particularly non-vul, is the time to get active with this type of hand. Firstly to indicate a lead, and secondly to pave the way for possible disruption to the opponents, should partner be able to support your suit. If playing weak 2s you should try 2♥. Double dummy you could get doubled and go for 500 on this hand with E/W going off in game, but in practice you are pretty safe opening a weak 2 here, particularly at green vs red. If you don't play weak 2s a perfectly reasonable alternative would be 1♥. If you pass E/W will most likely play in 3NT and you will need partner to lead a Heart to beat that. Even worse on this hand partner might well lead a club, leading to at least 11 tricks for E/W. It is true that if you pass throughout and E/W play in their 5-2 fit in 4♠ and partner leads a Club you can beat that contract but they are much more likely to end up in 3NT. </p>
<p> ♠ 65 14 ♥ KQJ62 7 HCP 10 ♦ AK98 9 ♣ J10 ♠ AJ1072 ♠ Q983 ♥ 108 ♥ 9754 ♦ Q652 ♦ J10 ♣ 64 ♣ AK5 ♠ K4 ♥ A3 ♦ 743 ♣ Q98732 </p>	<p> ♠ 65 14 ♥ KQJ62 7 HCP 10 ♦ AK98 9 ♣ J10 ♠ AJ1072 ♠ Q983 ♥ 108 ♥ 9754 ♦ Q652 ♦ J10 ♣ 64 ♣ AK5 ♠ K4 ♥ A3 ♦ 743 ♣ Q98732 </p>	<p> Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable A trap hand for N/S, very difficult to stay low enough to make a plus score. Even playing weak 2s it will be a step too far for most Wests to open that hand vulnerable, so North will often open the bidding with 1♥. South now has a difficult call, this hand looks too good for a 1NT response (Kaplan Rubens reckons it is worth 9.65). If South bids 2♣ North will initially bid only 2♦ but when South gives preference back to 2♥ it will be tough for North to pass that. 3NT played by South may well be the final contract. If N/S somehow manage to stop in 2♥ good defence can beat that contract. If East leads a Spade the defence can take 2 Spades then play 3 rounds of Clubs, West ruffing (should ruff with the 10 although it makes no difference on this hand) and thereby promoting East's 9 of trumps ; North has no way of escaping a Diamond loser as well. A plus score for N/S should score well. </p>
<p> ♠ A10953 9 ♥ 84 9 HCP 10 ♦ K10972 12 ♣ Q ♠ Q864 ♠ 72 ♥ 96 ♥ AK7532 ♦ A86 ♦ QJ ♣ K985 ♣ 643 ♠ KJ ♥ QJ10 ♦ 543 ♣ AJ1072 </p>	<p> ♠ A10953 9 ♥ 84 9 HCP 10 ♦ K10972 12 ♣ Q ♠ Q864 ♠ 72 ♥ 96 ♥ AK7532 ♦ A86 ♦ QJ ♣ K985 ♣ 643 ♠ KJ ♥ QJ10 ♦ 543 ♣ AJ1072 </p>	<p> Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all Those playing a weak NT will open 1NT with the South hand, North will transfer and if able to double to show Hearts East will do that. Pass now by South should show a doubleton Spade but North is not good enough to bid 3♦ so will sign off in 2♠. If East has doubled already to show Hearts there is nothing more to say, if East has had to pass first time (for instance if the convention is being played that Double of the transfer shows a penalty double of 1NT) then there is a guess whether or not to bid 3♥. Anyone choosing to bid 3♥ will need to avoid getting doubled and then escape for only 2 off, beating those conceding 110 in Diamonds or 110 or 140 in Spades. In practice 140 in Spades requires a number of good guesses (there are 4 top losers even before the Queen of Spades is found). </p>
<p> ♠ AK 15 ♥ KQ932 10 HCP 8 ♦ K542 7 ♣ 74 ♠ QJ632 ♠ 874 ♥ 76 ♥ 4 ♦ A76 ♦ QJ1093 ♣ K109 ♣ AJ86 ♠ 1095 ♥ AJ108 5 ♦ 8 ♣ Q532 </p>	<p> ♠ AK 15 ♥ KQ932 10 HCP 8 ♦ K542 7 ♣ 74 ♠ QJ632 ♠ 874 ♥ 76 ♥ 4 ♦ A76 ♦ QJ1093 ♣ K109 ♣ AJ86 ♠ 1095 ♥ AJ108 5 ♦ 8 ♣ Q532 </p>	<p> Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable N/S should end up playing in Hearts and making 10 tricks. Only 22 HCP's but this 5-5 fit provides an excellent game; even if two trumps are drawn and the ♦A is offside (which it isn't) North can ruff a Spade and two Clubs, creating 8 Hearts tricks in total and 2 Spades. Most routes should lead to 4♥. If North opens 1♥ playing 5 card majors many Souths will respond 4♥; playing 4 card majors some Souths might still respond 4♥; other Souths will count 8 losers and bid 3♥, raised to game by partner; and even after an ultra-cautious 2♥ response by South North should make at least a game try and South should accept with alacrity. There should be no danger of getting too high if the partnership play flexible cue bids. If North opens 1♥ and South bids 3♥, a North contemplating slam should start by cue bidding 3♠; then when partner is unable to cue bid Clubs it becomes clear that there are two Club losers and North signs off in 4. </p>

<p> ♠ Q1052 2 ♥ 962 15 HCP 12 ♦ 97652 11 ♣ 5 ♠ J6 ♠ A9743 ♥ KQ1073 ♥ AJ84 ♦ J ♦ K3 ♣ AKJ43 ♣ 102 ♠ K8 ♥ 5 ♣♦♥♠N ♦ AQ1084 S - 4 - - - ♣ Q9876 S - 3 - - - E 3 - 5 2 4 W 3 - 4 2 2 </p>	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <p>There is a real danger that E/W get too high on this hand, either on their own, or pushed by aggressive bidding by N/S.</p> <p>In an uninterrupted auction East will open 1♠ and West will respond 2♥. East is now only worth 3♥ but West has a 5 loser hand opposite an opening bid. For instance if East's King of Diamonds was the King of Spades slam would have chances. In practice E/W may get away with playing in 5♥ but bidding 6♥ will be a disaster.</p> <p>After partner passes and East opens 1♠ South might make a slightly frisky 2♦ overcall or an "unusual 2NT" overcall for the minors, despite the vulnerability; either call is likely to produce a competitive auction. E/W may be presented eventually with a 5 over 5 decision and need some luck to get away with bidding 5♥.</p>
<p> ♠ Q5 13 ♥ K 12 HCP 8 ♦ K8752 7 ♣ KQ1072 ♠ A987 ♠ J ♥ QJ76 ♥ 10832 ♦ J104 ♦ AQ96 ♣ A4 ♣ J965 ♠ K106432 ♥ A954 ♣♦♥♠N ♦ 3 S - - - 2 - ♣ 83 S - - - 2 - E 1 1 2 - 1 W 1 1 2 - 2 </p>	<p>Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <p>If playing weak 2s an off shape 2♠ opener by South will probably win the auction; whether 2♠ makes in another matter, the play is quite complex with lots of variations, one involving declarer playing a cross ruff, another involving declarer forcing West to ruff clubs with what turn out to be trump winners. Any South making 2♠ will have played well and will earn a good score.</p> <p>If West opens a weak NT North might compete with 2NT for the minors, which will produce a very poor result. If North passes South might reasonably compete on the known combined values (opponents have a weak no trump opposite a passed hand, therefore partner has some values), and possibly end up in 2♠ via a different route.</p> <p>If E/W are playing 5 card majors with a strong NT a competitive auction is likely, and some E/W pairs may end up going minus in 3♥.</p>
<p> ♠ 9 18 ♥ AQ72 6 HCP 11 ♦ AQ2 5 ♣ AQ1084 ♠ K832 ♠ A10654 ♥ 106 ♥ KJ95 ♦ 9653 ♦ K108 ♣ K53 ♣ 7 ♠ QJ7 ♣♦♥♠N ♥ 843 S 3 - 2 - 2 ♦ J74 S 2 - 1 - 2 ♣ J962 E - 1 - 2 - W - 1 - 2 - </p>	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <p>After North opens 1♣ East may double with both majors or just overcall in the 5 card Spade suit. After a double South should support Clubs, giving West a tough decision with the 9 loser hand. On balance West should join in with a stretched 2♠ bid. Double by North now is not penalties but should show additional values, South is not interested in anything more than 3♣, and East may eventually buy the contract in 3♠.</p> <p>If East overcalls 1♠, again South should bid a stretched 2♣ and West should raise Spades pre-emptively to the 3 level (it generally pays to pre-empt to the 3 level with a 9 card fit). Once again North should double to show extra values and South has a tough decision, whether to go to the 4 level or try to collect a penalty against 3♠. 3♠ should go off with the defence making a Spade a Club a Heart and 2 Diamonds, but the defence needs to be careful.</p> <p>This hand will produce a wide variety of scores and is one of the toughest hands in the set to bid, with a number of typically close calls in a tight pairs game.</p>
<p> ♠ AK765 13 ♥ 103 6 HCP 10 ♦ K6 11 ♣ K1094 ♠ 2 ♠ QJ104 ♥ A74 ♥ Q852 ♦ 109732 ♦ J85 ♣ Q873 ♣ A2 ♠ 983 ♣♦♥♠N ♥ KJ96 S 3 2 3 3 3 ♦ AQ4 S 3 2 3 3 3 ♣ J65 E - - - - W - - - - </p>	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <p>N/S have a combined 24 count with a 5-3 fit and many pairs will get to game in the major, which is unlikely to make with the 4-1 trump break. A bit unlucky, although the Queen of Hearts and Queen of Clubs are both favourably placed. It is possible that some pairs will bid and make 3NT for an excellent score, and cautious bidders making a part score should do OK.</p>

<p> ♠ AKQJ7 17 ♥ J8 5 HCP 13 ♦ 5 5 ♣ AQ432 </p> <p> ♠ 652 ♠ 3 ♥ Q72 ♥ K105 ♦ 98432 ♦ AKQ7 ♣ K8 ♣ J10765 </p> <p> ♠ 10984 ♥ A9643 ♦ J106 ♣ 9 </p> <p> ♣♦♥♠N N 2 - 2 5 2 S 2 - 2 5 2 E - 1 - - - W - 1 - - - </p>	<p>Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>Playing Acol or similar, what should North open? With 5 Spades and 5 of a red suit it is normal to open 1 Spade. With 5 Spades and 5 Clubs some players open 1 Spade with a weak hand (more pre-emptive) and 1 Club with a stronger hand, like this one, where the Spades can be rebid twice.</p> <p>Either way North has a good enough hand to bid game once the Spade fit comes to light (only 4 losers using Losing Trick Count).</p> <p>If North is declarer East is likely to lead two rounds of Diamonds, after which some declarers may try to ruff the clubs good. When the club King falls on the first ruff declarer can come back to hand with a Spade ruff another Club return to hand with a trump draw trumps and concede a club making 10 tricks. There are routes to 11 tricks but these are against the odds.</p>
<p> ♠ Q54 11 ♥ KJ64 11 HCP 13 ♦ KQ84 5 ♣ 86 </p> <p> ♠ K8 ♠ A2 ♥ AQ985 ♥ 102 ♦ J1076 ♦ 952 ♣ J4 ♣ AKQ952 </p> <p> ♠ J109763 ♥ 73 ♦ A3 ♣ 1073 </p> <p> ♣♦♥♠N N - - - 2 - S - - - 2 - E 3 2 2 - 3 W 3 2 2 - 3 </p>	<p>Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <p>An easy 9 tricks here for E/W in 3NT (6 Clubs 2 Spades and a Heart). The East hand has significant playing strength over and above the 13 HCP. The fifth and in particular the sixth card in the strong Club suit are worth at least a point each and the presence of the 9 of Clubs assists in improving the quality of the suit.</p> <p>East should treat the hand as a strong No Trump, opening 1NT if playing an opening 1NT as strong, or rebidding 1NT if playing an opening 1NT as weak. The Kaplan Rubens Evaluator has the East hand as worth 16.60 points.</p>
<p> ♠ 94 12 ♥ AJ765 7 HCP 4 ♦ J64 17 ♣ AQ3 </p> <p> ♠ 83 ♠ A765 ♥ 983 ♥ 1042 ♦ K1082 ♦ 75 ♣ KJ82 ♣ 10765 </p> <p> ♠ KQJ102 ♥ KQ ♦ AQ93 ♣ 94 </p> <p> ♣♦♥♠N N 2 4 5 5 5 S 2 4 6 6 6 E - - - - - W - - - - - </p>	<p>Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <p>This is not a great slam for N/S, although I am sure we have all been in worse ones. Assuming a contract of 6NT the Ace of Spades will have to be lost to set up the Spades. So, if the contract is played by South on an initial Club lead the finesse has to work, and if played by North on an initial Diamond finesse that has to work. Even on other leads there are only 11 tricks after knocking out the Ace of Spades so declarer will have to pick the right minor suit finesse to go for. Having said that if North is declarer East might take the guess away either with an initial Club lead or by playing a Club when in with the Ace of Spades.</p> <p>On some lines of play on this hand West holding both the relevant Kings will end up being squeezed.</p> <p>With the actual layout a Diamond lead from East scuppers the slam immediately if it is played by North.</p>
<p> ♠ AQJ864 12 ♥ 7 2 HCP 7 ♦ K10832 19 ♣ Q </p> <p> ♠ 1072 ♠ K953 ♥ 83 ♥ QJ106 ♦ Q974 ♦ J5 ♣ 9876 ♣ 1042 </p> <p> ♠ - ♥ AK9542 ♦ A6 ♣ AKJ53 </p> <p> ♣♦♥♠N N 6 6 5 5 5 S 6 6 5 5 5 E - - - - - W - - - - - </p>	<p>Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <p>There will be quite a wide variety of results on this awkward misfit. N/S have a combined 31 HCP, but two 7 card fits and two 6 card fits. It is quite likely that once North has opened with 1♠ South with the huge 19 count will end up driving to slam. 6♥ effectively requires a 3-3- trump break and will go 1 off. In 6NT it is reasonable to hope for 5 Club tricks two Diamonds 2 Hearts and 1 Spade, but the extra 2 tricks are going to have to come from one of the longer suits, and again the 3-3 Heart break is a reasonable thing to go for (unless South is declarer and West has cruelly led a Spade). Double dummy 6♣ and 6♦ both make, but I don't see any sensible bidding sequence to play in the 5-1 Club fit or any normal line of play to make 6♦.</p>

<p> ♠ AK8754 8 ♥ 6 9 HCP 12 ♦ 42 11 ♣ J753 </p> <p> ♠ J9 ♠ Q1062 ♥ J87543 ♥ AQ ♦ AK97 ♦ J103 ♣ 10 ♣ K942 </p> <p> ♠ 3 ♥ K1092 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♦ Q865 N 2 - - 2 - ♣ AQ86 S 2 - - 2 - E - 1 2 - 1 W - 1 2 - - </p>	<p>Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>If North opens a weak 2♠ then after 2 passes will West protect with 3♥? If they do East will find it hard to pass and will probably bid 3NT. Overall I think it is with the odds to protect with 3♥ even though it may not work on this hand. If North passes and East opens a weak NT West will transfer into Hearts and then pass. Now North should protect with 2♠ (bidding on known combined values). I think West should bid 3♥ now knowing partner will not bid again. If East opens 1♣ West bids 1♥ and if North bids 2♠ West should again bid 3♥ to end the auction. If North only bids 1♠ E/W may buy the contract in 2♥. There are lots of decisions in the play of both 2♠ and 2♥ (and 3♥) and anyone making 110 will have done well. On these typically competitive hands where the points are fairly evenly divided between the two sides the first objective is to get a plus score which usually obtains a reasonable number of match points.</p>
<p> ♠ AJ9532 11 ♥ J106 13 HCP 8 ♦ KQ 8 ♣ 84 </p> <p> ♠ 8 ♠ Q104 ♥ A7 ♥ Q9532 ♦ 10973 ♦ A85 ♣ AKQ975 ♣ 32 </p> <p> ♠ K76 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ K84 N - - - 2 - ♦ J642 S - - - 2 - ♣ J106 E 3 3 2 - 3 W 3 3 2 - 3 </p>	<p>Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>3NT by East needs a favourable Club layout and also that you are able to read the Spade position if North wins the first Spade and returns a low one. The correct technical play is to play the 10 on the second round rather than the Queen. Originally there were two combinations where that would be right, A10 in the North hand and K10 in the North hand, and one combination where that would be wrong, AK in the North hand, so the play of the 10 is twice as likely to work as the play of the Queen. It is a "restricted choice" situation. E/W can make 3♣ (a second Diamond trick can be developed along with 6 Clubs and a Heart) and N/S should compete to 3♠. In a competitive auction it is often right to bid 3 over 3 with a 9 card fit.</p>
<p> ♠ 108732 6 ♥ AQ107 6 HCP 10 ♦ 54 18 ♣ 104 </p> <p> ♠ QJ9 ♠ 654 ♥ 943 ♥ K82 ♦ 8763 ♦ KJ9 ♣ K96 ♣ QJ85 </p> <p> ♠ AK ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ J65 N 3 3 5 4 3 ♦ AQ102 S 3 3 4 4 3 ♣ A732 E - - - - W - - - - </p>	<p>Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>Several lines produce 9 tricks for N/S in No Trumps, even on the best lead for the defence which is a Club. It seems fairly normal to take a Heart finesse when in with the ♣A, when that loses the defenders have 1 Heart and 3 Clubs so declarer needs the rest. Declarer now has 2 Spades 1 Club 3 Hearts and 1 top Diamond and needs another 2 tricks. The combination finesse in Diamonds works, fortunately, first playing low to the 10 then playing to the Queen. For that line declarer needs a couple of entries to the North hand, which are only available in Hearts.</p> <p>The hand plays better in the 4-3 Heart fit, but that is very hard to bid and no one has done anything wrong if the final contract is in No Trumps. For most players the South hand will be too strong for a 1NT opener, after North responds 1♠ many will rebid 2NT showing 18-19, and although there is a case in pairs for North to pass that in practice many Norths will now look for a major fit and then bid 3NT.</p>
<p> ♠ A952 13 ♥ 83 10 HCP 13 ♦ KJ10 4 ♣ AJ72 </p> <p> ♠ J10 ♠ K87 ♥ KQ10964 ♥ AJ ♦ A7 ♦ Q9842 ♣ 1085 ♣ K64 </p> <p> ♠ Q643 ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N ♥ 752 N - - - 1 - ♦ 653 S - - - 1 - ♣ Q93 E - 3 3 - 3 W - 3 3 - 3 </p>	<p>Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <p>Most E/W pairs should end up in a Heart part score losing, which more often than not will make 9 tricks. It would be a bit pushy in pairs for West to invite game opposite weak No Trump values, although some may. Going minus will be produce a terrible score. Playing in No Trumps might produce 9 tricks (and an excellent score) for E/W. In No Trumps North comes under huge pressure when the Hearts are run. Say the initial lead is a Spade from South and declarer wins the second Spade. Now 6 Hearts are cashed. After 8 tricks North has to keep the 9 of Spades (since East has the 8) and King Jack of Diamonds (to stop East's Queen coming good) and so is down to Ace Jack of Clubs. Now declarer plays a Club and the best North can do is win the Ace cash the 9 of Spades and exit with a Club to stop the overtrick. The play on a Club lead is a little more complex but similar.</p>

<p> ♠ KQ95 9 ♥ Q853 9 HCP 15 ♦ Q73 7 ♣ 74 ♠ AJ106 ♠ 2 ♥ 92 ♥ AJ764 ♦ 852 ♦ KJ9 ♣ A983 ♣ KQJ10 ♠ 8743 ♥ K10 ♦ A1064 ♣ 652 </p> <p> N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ N S E 1 2 1 3 W 1 1 2 1 3 </p>	<p>Board 25: Dealer North : EW vulnerable</p> <p>A tough hand for E/W to bid. After 1♥ - 1♠ any East playing a weak NT has a choice of calls. 3♣ game-force is way too much, so the options are 1NT or 2♣. 1NT is too much of a distortion, with a singleton Spade, 5 Hearts and such good Clubs; however the bid could work well on some hands. That leaves 2♣, which seems like an underbid, but is probably the least bad option. Now West has a decision. Some will pass and some will raise Clubs, but it is quite reasonable, particularly at pairs, to put partner back into Hearts, in the known 5-2 fit. My choice would be 3♣, after which East has another difficult decision. Some Easts will now bid 3NT which will probably produce a minus score and a poor result. If E/W are playing a strong NT then the bidding should start 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♣, and now West and then East will have the same decisions as above.</p>
<p> ♠ K542 5 ♥ J97 24 HCP 6 ♦ J87 5 ♣ 753 ♠ AJ8 ♠ 1076 ♥ AQ2 ♥ K854 ♦ AQ93 ♦ K654 ♣ AK2 ♣ 104 ♠ Q93 ♥ 1063 ♦ 102 ♣ QJ986 </p> <p> N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ N S E 6 5 6 6 3 W 6 5 6 6 3 </p>	<p>Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <p>How good is 6♦ on this hand? You are probably not making the slam unless the trumps are 3-2. Then you need either the Hearts 3-3 or a lucky layout in Spades so that can two Spade tricks can be obtained. Overall that is well against the odds. On this hand everything you need is there, so 6♦ makes. 6NT is an even worse contract, needing not only the 3-2 Diamond break, but also 4 tricks from Hearts and two tricks from Spades.</p> <p>Many pairs will end up playing in 3NT by West, and to get the maximum number of tricks on the hand declarer needs to play a Spade to the 8, finessing against the 9, then a spade to the Jack. This combination finesse is better odds than hoping for both Spade honours to be with South.</p>
<p> ♠ J9864 4 ♥ 84 13 HCP 6 ♦ 65 17 ♣ K983 ♠ 10 ♠ K53 ♥ KJ52 ♥ Q1096 ♦ AQ9 ♦ J1032 ♣ QJ1054 ♣ 62 ♠ AQ7 2 ♥ A73 ♦ K874 ♣ A7 </p> <p> N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ N 2 4 1 S 2 4 1 E 3 W 2 </p>	<p>Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>N/S should win the auction in a Spade part score and the outcome will depend partly on who is declarer and what the lead is. If North is declarer and receives the Jack of Diamonds lead it will be clear not to play the King of Diamonds since West will certainly hold the Ace. With good timing declarer can engineer to draw the trumps and set up the King of Diamonds by ruffing the Ace on the third round. That way declarer makes 10 tricks by way of 5 natural Spade tricks, two Clubs, one Club ruff plus the Ace of Hearts and King of Diamonds.</p> <p>Without that revealing lead many declarers will only make 9 tricks, at some point playing up to the King of Diamonds hoping the Ace is on side. Some may try to take two Club ruffs and will now lose a trick to the King of Spades, in addition to two Diamonds and a Heart.</p>
<p> ♠ QJ107 10 ♥ J6 10 HCP 16 ♦ QJ5 4 ♣ K832 ♠ 3 ♠ AK95 ♥ Q107532 ♥ K4 ♦ A832 ♦ K4 ♣ A10 ♣ QJ974 ♠ 8642 ♥ A98 ♦ 10976 ♣ 65 </p> <p> N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ N S E 5 2 5 3 5 W 5 2 5 3 5 </p>	<p>Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <p>On this hand a common contract will be 4♥ by West (playing the 6-2 major fit in preference to 3NT.) Let's say there is a Spade lead. Declarer wins and now might well try a Club finesse which loses. In due course declarer will play a Heart to the King and Ace, and then later will play a Heart towards the Q10. There is unlikely to be any inference from the play to suggest dropping the double Jack rather than taking the normal finesse, and so many Wests will lose three tricks (1 Club and 2 Hearts).</p>