

Board 1
North Deals
None Vul

♠ K 3 2		♠ J 9 7 6
♥ A 9 7		♥ J 8 2
♦ A 10 9		♦ J 5 3 2
♣ K 6 5 2		♣ Q 10
♠ 10 8	♠ N	♠ J 9 7 6
♥ K 10 6 5 4	W	♥ J 8 2
♦ K Q 7	E	♦ J 5 3 2
♣ A J 9	S	♣ Q 10
		♠ A Q 5 4
		♥ Q 3
		♦ 8 6 4
		♣ 8 7 4 3

EW 2♥; NS 2♣; NS 1♠; EW 1♦; Par -100:
NS 2♠×-1; NS 3♣×-1

We hope that you have enjoyed playing in this SCCBA simultaneous pairs. The computer has created a collection of boards that is brimming with interest.

In a partscore battle it pays to be declarer when neither side is vulnerable. By doing so you will generally score well if EITHER side can make their contract. This board should see the vultures scrapping over a small piece of carrion. If North opens 1 NT, West will balance with 2♥ and then South may compete with a take-out double, risking a lot of angst for an extra ten points. Luckily for N/S both 2♠ and 3♣ are equally successful.

Board 2
East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 10 7		♠ K 4 3
♥ K		♥ 10 9 8 6 2
♦ A 6 4		♦ K 3
♣ A Q 8 6 5 2		♣ 10 9 4
♠ A 6 2	♠ N	♠ K 4 3
♥ 7 5 4 3	W	♥ 10 9 8 6 2
♦ 10 8 7 5 2	E	♦ K 3
♣ K	S	♣ 10 9 4
		♠ J 9 8 5
		♥ A Q J
		♦ Q J 9
		♣ J 7 3

NS 4N; N 4♠; NS 5♣; S 3♠; NS 2♦; NS 1♥;
Par +630

3 NT should be a universal contract. The defenders need to establish their diamond trick before declarer scores a spade trick, otherwise 11 tricks will be made. Declarer should plan to take a club finesse but must start with a low card from the South hand, not the jack. Taking the suit in isolation it is nearly as good to lead the jack, and then finesse the eight if West covers and East drops ten or nine. This loses to K bare or K4 with West but picks up K104, K94, K10 and K9. In order to adopt this second line of play it is necessary to have a way back to the South hand and declarer should factor that into his calculations.

Board 3
South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A Q 5		♠ K 10 7 4 3
♥ J 10 3		♥ A K 9 7 6 4
♦ K Q 10 7 4		♦ J
♣ 9 8		♣ K
♠ 9 8 6	♠ N	♠ K 10 7 4 3
♥ 5	W	♥ A K 9 7 6 4
♦ 9 8 3	E	♦ J
♣ Q J 10 5 4 2	S	♣ K
		♠ J 2
		♥ Q 8 2
		♦ A 6 5 2
		♣ A 7 6 3

EW 3♠; NS 2N; NS 2♦; EW 2♣; N 1♥; Par -100:
NS 3N×-1

A lot will depend on North's choice of opening bid and on whether or not East has a two-suited overcall available. A heart contract is horrible for E/W but the hand plays very nicely in spades. Let us suppose North opens 1 NT and East bids 2♣, showing both majors. South will make some show of strength and if West alights in 2♠ North needs to bid 2 NT. Furthermore, if East pushes on to 3♠, N/S do best to bid 3 NT and go one down doubled.

It cannot be often that the winning action is to sacrifice in 3 NT doubled against a making partscore.

Board 4
West Deals
Both Vul

♠ K J 8 5 4 2		♠ 10 3
♥ K 6		♥ A 9 5
♦ K 6		♦ A J 8 7 5
♣ Q 7 6		♣ A 4 2
♠ Q 6	♠ N	♠ 10 3
♥ 10 8 7 4 2	W	♥ A 9 5
♦ Q 10 3	E	♦ A J 8 7 5
♣ 10 9 3	S	♣ A 4 2
		♠ A 9 7
		♥ Q J 3
		♦ 9 4 2
		♣ K J 8 5

N 4♠; S 3♠; N 4♣; N 1N; S 2♣; EW 1♥; N 1♦;
Par +620

Some pairs will come to rest in a spade partscore whilst others bid to game. The play will be a very frustrating affair for the defenders. They desperately need to lead a diamond through North, but there is simply no way to access the West hand. Declarer can throw a losing diamond on the fourth round of clubs or third round of hearts. In fact, East can do no better than lead out his three aces; defend too passively and both of declarer's diamonds go away.

Board 5
North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 7	♠ A K Q J 8	♠ 10 9 5 4 3
♥ 9 7 5	♥ K Q 3	♥ A 8
♦ K Q J 6 2	♦ A 5 4	♦ 10 9 8 3
♣ A J 10 4	♣ K 9	♣ 8 3

♠ 6 2	♠ 6 2
♥ J 10 6 4 2	♥ J 10 6 4 2
♦ 7	♦ 7
♣ Q 7 6 5 2	♣ Q 7 6 5 2

NS 4♥; NS 3♠; NS 1N; EW 2♦; NS 2♣; Par +500;
EW 5♦×-3

In an uncontested auction N/S will probably reach 4♥ regardless of whether North opens 2NT or 2♣. Declarer suffers a spade ruff but there are still ten tricks. Will the auction be uncontested though? After it starts 2NT-3♦ (transfer) or 2♣-2♦ (negative/waiting) West has the chance to double the artificial bid to show length and strength in diamonds. At favourable vulnerability E/W might now sacrifice in 5D. N/S can do no better than double and lead trumps, scoring a below average +500.

Board 6
East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 10 9	♠ K 8 7 6 5 3	♠ A 4 2
♥ K	♥ A J 8 7	♥ Q 9 2
♦ K 8 7 6 4 2	♦ —	♦ A 10 5
♣ 10 6 5	♣ A 7 2	♣ K J 9 3

♠ J	♠ J
♥ 10 6 5 4 3	♥ 10 6 5 4 3
♦ Q J 9 3	♦ Q J 9 3
♣ Q 8 4	♣ Q 8 4

NS 4♥; NS 2♠; EW 1N; EW 2♦; EW 1♣; Par +420

If East opens 1NT this will probably be passed round to North. That hand will certainly bid and may choose 2♠ even having a bid to show both majors. With 6-4 that is a reasonable choice. West may now be tempted to raise the ante by bidding 3♦, even at the adverse vulnerability. This they will regret, for North will either double or bid 3♥ (double is the more flexible option). South will love this turn of events: facing a double he may pass or bid 3♥ and facing 3♥ he will pass or raise. N/S should score well simply by being in hearts rather than spades, +200 through defending will be better still and bidding and making game a shared top.

Board 7
South Deals
Both Vul

♠ K 6 5 4	♠ A 8 7	♠ Q J 2
♥ 6 2	♥ A K 8	♥ Q J 10 4 3
♦ A K 6	♦ Q 9 2	♦ 7 5
♣ K Q 9 5	♣ A 6 3 2	♣ J 8 4

♠ 10 9 3	♠ 10 9 3
♥ 9 7 5	♥ 9 7 5
♦ J 10 8 4 3	♦ J 10 8 4 3
♣ 10 7	♣ 10 7

EW 2N; EW 2♥; EW 3♣; EW 1♠; NS 1♦;
Par -120

If E/W declare this hand they do best to play in no-trumps. The implemation in the black suits means eight tricks can be made without a single trick from the heart suit. The big matchpoint scores, however, will go to those E/W pairs that defend an enemy 1NT contract. West will duck the first or second round of diamonds, after which five tricks is the limit for declarer.

Board 8
West Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 2	♠ K 4	♠ Q J 7 3
♥ K J 10 8 6 3	♥ —	♥ A Q 9 5 2
♦ 7 3	♦ A K Q J 10 4 2	♦ 9 8 5
♣ Q 3 2	♣ K 10 9 8	♣ 5

♠ A 10 8 6 5	♠ A 10 8 6 5
♥ 7 4	♥ 7 4
♦ 6	♦ 6
♣ A J 7 6 4	♣ A J 7 6 4

NS 7♦; NS 7♣; NS 5♠; EW 2♥; NS 1N;
Par +1100; EW 7♥×-5

If West opens a weak 2H, North does not really have a suitable hand for a double. So maybe a bookish 3♥ (partner, bid 3NT with a heart stop please) or some number of diamonds. Let's say North chooses 5♦, bidding what he thinks he might make. With two working aces South's raising to 6♦ is a good shot, made easier if East if bids 5♥. E/W do best to sacrifice in 6H. In 6♦ Declarer draws trumps and plays 3 rounds of spades. It transpires that West was dealt a doubleton in both diamonds and spades and will therefore hold three clubs. Declarer leads a club to the ace and finesses on the way back to hand. This can only go wrong in the unlikely event that the 2H opening was based on a seven card suit.

Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 7 6 2	♠ Q 9	♠ K 8 4
♥ Q 10 7	♥ 9 8 2	♥ A K J 5 4 3
♦ 9 6	♦ K 8 4 3	♦ 10
♣ J 10 9 7 6	♣ A 8 5 3	♣ K Q 2

♠ A J 10 5 3	♠ K 8 4	♠ A 9 7 6 3
♥ 6	♥ A K J 5 4 3	♥ A 9 8 4
♦ A Q J 7 5 2	♦ 10	♦ 8 5
♣ 4	♣ K Q 2	♣ Q 7

NS 6♠; NS 6♦; NS 1N; EW 2♣; EW 1♥; Par +980

Hands with a five card major and a longer or stronger minor are particularly suitable for a two-suited overcall. Consequently, South will be keen to wheel out their favourite convention after East opens 1♥. After this start N/S are quite likely to end up in 6♦. Well done! Any greedy Norths that choose spades over diamonds get lucky as the suit plays for no loser. In fact, just 4♠ should score well as plenty of pairs will only reach 5♦ or even a diamond partscore.

Board 10
East Deals
Both Vul

♠ 2	♠ K 10 4	♠ A 9 7 6 3
♥ K 10 5 3	♥ Q 7	♥ A 9 8 4
♦ K Q J 6 4	♦ A 9 7 3 2	♦ 8 5
♣ 9 6 4	♣ J 10 3	♣ Q 7

♠ Q J 8 5	♠ K 10 4	♠ A 9 7 6 3
♥ J 6 2	♥ Q 7	♥ A 9 8 4
♦ 10	♦ A 9 7 3 2	♦ 8 5
♣ A K 8 5 2	♣ J 10 3	♣ Q 7

NS 2N; NS 2♠; EW 2♥; NS 2♣; EW 1♦; Par +120

This may be passed out at some tables, but at most someone will open the bidding. East may open 1♠. This is ultra light, but there is no rebid problem. If South then overcalls 2♣, West will make a negative double and E/W should emerge with a plus score, playing in 2♥ or defending 3♣. If South passes over 1♠, West should respond 1NT rather than 2♦, passing a 2♥ rebid by partner. If East does not open, South will probably open 1♣ and it is now far more likely that N/S will go plus, possibly in an optimum no-trump contract, and with E/W never finding their heart contract. In short, the side that dares to open the bidding should fare better.

Board 11
South Deals
None Vul

♠ K 10 9 8 6 4 3	♠ 5 2	♠ A J 7
♥ A J	♥ 10 9 4	♥ K Q 7 6 2
♦ A 9 7 5	♦ 8 3	♦ Q 4 2
♣ —	♣ K 10 8 6 5 2	♣ Q 9

♠ Q	♠ A J 7	♠ Q J 8 6
♥ 8 5 3	♥ K Q 7 6 2	♥ 7 6 4 3
♦ K J 10 6	♦ Q 4 2	♦ K 9 2
♣ A J 7 4 3	♣ Q 9	♣ 8 4

EW 7♠; EW 7♥; EW 3♦; EW 1N; NS 2♣;
Par -1510

In Acol, if the bidding starts 1♠-2♥, West is far too good for 2♠ so probably bids 3♠. It would be very feeble for East to raise to 4♠ yet there is no cue-bid available (4♥ sounds like lots of hearts!) E/W do well to bid the small slam, let alone the grand. In 2-over-1 game forcing the bidding starts 1♠-2♥-2♠ and East can set the suit with 3♠. There is now plenty of room for a proper discussion. The key is to agree spades at a low level in an auction that is forcing to game. A few Souths may open the bidding 1♣. This makes the West hand stronger still as there is no wastage in clubs, but it certainly doesn't make it any easier to reach the top spot. Very well done to all pairs that bid the grand slam!

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul


♠ A 10 5	♠ 7 3 2	♠ Q J 8 6
♥ Q 2	♥ J 10 9	♥ 7 6 4 3
♦ Q 7 5 4	♦ A	♦ K 9 2
♣ A Q J 5	♣ K 10 7 6 3 2	♣ 8 4

♠ K 9 4	♠ A 10 5	♠ Q J 8 6
♥ A K 8 5	♥ Q 2	♥ 7 6 4 3
♦ J 10 8 6 3	♦ Q 7 5 4	♦ K 9 2
♣ 9	♣ A Q J 5	♣ 8 4

EW 1N; S 2♣; NS 1♥; N 1♣; Par +90

The adverse vulnerability should keep N/S out of trouble. E/W should declare the hand in 1NT regardless of whether they are playing a weak or strong no-trump. This contract makes on the nose whilst N/S cannot make anything at the two level unless a clairvoyant South plays in 2C. Sometimes it is best to go quietly, even at pairs.


Board 13
North Deals
Both Vul

<p>♠ J 10 9 8 7 4 ♥ 3 ♦ 5 3 ♣ 10 4 3 2</p>		<p>♠ K 2 ♥ 8 5 4 2 ♦ A K 10 6 ♣ A K J</p>	<p>♠ Q 6 ♥ A 9 ♦ J 8 2 ♣ Q 9 8 7 6 5</p>
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EW 6N; EW 6♥; EW 5♦; EW 1♠; EW 1♣;
Par -1440

The bidding will start 1♦-1♥, or possibly 1♦-2♥ (a jump-shift based on the diamond fit).
After 1♦-1♥, East may bid 3♥ (conservative), 4♥ (practical) or try an advance cue-bid (we all wear rose coloured spectacles occasionally). In all cases West will fancy a bash at 6♥. Assuming that 6♥ is reached some Easts may consider converting to 6NT. Their holding in the black suits makes this fairly attractive. There is risk involved for it is not certain that no ruff in dummy will be required, but the extra ten points could prove all important. Partner may grimace at this hoggish bid (inwardly, of course) but this will soon give way to a cheerful 'Well bid, partner!'


Board 14
East Deals
None Vul

<p>♠ 8 5 2 ♥ 10 8 7 3 ♦ K Q 9 3 ♣ 9 2</p>		<p>♠ 10 9 6 ♥ A Q 6 ♦ J 8 7 ♣ J 7 6 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q ♥ K J 9 ♦ A 10 6 5 2 ♣ A K 8</p>
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EW 2N; EW 2♠; EW 2♥; EW 3♦; EW 2♣;
Par -120

3NT by West should be the 'room' contract. The number of tricks made may vary wildly. A ♠ lead gives declarer no chance despite the combined 28 points. A low ♦ gifts a quick second trick in the suit following which declarer can play a top spade. South can choose to win this or not, without success. Declarer cashes three hearts and exits with a spade, forcing South to play a club. A high diamond lead at trick one is worse still and allows an easy overtrick. The popular lead may be a heart. After this passive start declarer will be the architect of his own demise if he plays for four diamond tricks by leading low to the ten and later cashing the ace. Three diamond tricks are assured (unless they break 5-0) simply by playing ace and another. If declarer does that, North needs to win and find the spade switch at once.


Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

<p>♠ 9 7 6 3 2 ♥ J 6 ♦ K Q ♣ Q 8 6 5</p>		<p>♠ A 5 ♥ Q 8 7 5 4 ♦ J 8 7 4 ♣ 4 2</p>	<p>♠ K J ♥ K 3 ♦ A 9 5 3 2 ♣ A 9 7 3</p>
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EW 4♦; EW 2N; EW 2♥; NS 1♠; Par -130

If West opens 1♦, East will respond 1♥ and West has a choice of rebids. With nearly half of their points in the short suits 1NT looks preferable to 2♣, but the latter allows partner to give preference to diamonds and that denomination plays for TWO more tricks than no-trumps. There is a downside to settling in 2♦ however. North may balance with a double or with 2♠, which makes unless the defenders find their club ruff. West may push on to 3♦ and South to 3♠, but this is unlikely to be doubled and will probably escape for one down. Suddenly +120 is looking like a fair result for E/W. Sometimes one has to settle for the best result possible rather than the best possible result. Hopefully no North will overcall 1S immediately and make the above analysis look silly!

Board 16
West Deals
E-W Vul

<p>♠ J 9 8 5 ♥ K 9 7 6 ♦ 4 ♣ K J 10 4</p>		<p>♠ A Q 10 6 ♥ A 5 4 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A 9 5 3</p>	<p>♠ K 7 4 3 2 ♥ Q 10 2 ♦ Q J ♣ Q 8 2</p>
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W 3♠; NS 4♦; E 2♠; N 1N; NS 1♥; EW 1♣;
Par +130

If East opens 1NT, 4♦ looks about right on the South hand and will probably end the auction. No doubt declarer will get the clubs right and make the contract. Strangely, though, the feeble looking overcall of 3♦ might turn out better. West may now scrape up a 3♠ bid and although this is only competitive it would take a superhuman effort from East not to raise. North may double 4♠ and the contract will go at least one down. At tables where East opens 1♣ or 1♠, the 4♦ bid is rather more likely to be effective.

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

<p>♠ J 8 3 ♥ 7 6 3 2 ♦ A K 7 ♣ 7 4 3</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	<p>♠ A 6 5 2 ♥ 9 5 4 ♦ 5 2 ♣ A 9 5 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 4 ♥ A K Q 8 ♦ 10 6 3 ♣ K J 10</p>
N		E							
W		S							

NS 2N; NS 2♠; NS 2♥; NS 3♦; NS 2♣; Par +120

If South opens 1♥, North has to choose between a conservative 1NT, which will end the auction, or 2♦ which may end at 3NT. A lead of either black suit restricts declarer to eight tricks. The defence scores two tricks in the suit led, the ace of the other black suit and two top diamonds.

A passive heart lead loses a vital tempo for the defence. West needs to duck a round of diamonds and the first round is as good as time as any. Declarer plays a second round and West is stymied. Cashing the other top diamond allows declarer three tricks in the suit as there is still a heart entry in dummy. Therefore West plays a heart straight away and dummy is dead. Now, though, the defender's communications are cut and declarer can establish two tricks in each black suit to go with the one diamond and four hearts.

Board 19
South Deals
E-W Vul

<p>♠ K Q 10 7 ♥ J 8 6 5 2 ♦ Q 5 ♣ J 6</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	<p>♠ 6 ♥ K 10 9 3 ♦ A 7 4 2 ♣ K 9 5 4</p>	<p>♠ A J 4 3 2 ♥ A Q ♦ J 10 9 6 ♣ 10 7</p>
N		E							
W		S							

EW 3♠; NS 3♣; EW 1♥; NS 1♦; Par -100;
NS 4♣×-1

East will open 1♠ and South may or may not overcall. 2♣ does not pass the suit quality test for overcalls, but in a pairs game at favourable vulnerability plenty of players will make the bid. This enables North to win the board by competing to the four level.

Should South pass over 1♠, West does well to raise to 3♠ and this will probably end the auction. Some Wests may take a dim view of their holdings in the minor suits and raise conservatively to 2♠. Bad move! Now North will balance in the direct seat with a double and again E/W may not be allowed the comfort of playing at the three level.

Board 18
East Deals
N-S Vul

<p>♠ Q J 10 2 ♥ A 7 2 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A 10 7 3</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	<p>♠ A 8 6 5 3 ♥ Q 10 8 ♦ 9 2 ♣ Q J 2</p>	<p>♠ 7 4 ♥ J 9 6 5 3 ♦ 10 8 6 3 ♣ K 5</p>
N		E							
W		S							

EW 2♠; NS 3♦; NS 1N; EW 2♣; NS 1♥; Par +100;
EW 3♠×-1

At tables where South opens 1NT, North will transfer into hearts and then East will balance with 2S. He will probably be allowed to play there and will be delighted by the sight of dummy.

Where South opens the more orthodox 1♦, the opponents will still find their spade fit but it will be much easier for N/S to compete to the three level. E/W can do no better than push on to 3♠. This has to go one down but is unlikely to be doubled.

Either side will do very well if they score in excess of +100.

Board 20
West Deals
Both Vul

<p>♠ 10 8 6 5 4 ♥ Q 8 ♦ 8 ♣ 9 7 5 3 2</p>	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N		E	W		S	<p>♠ A J 7 ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ 10 5 ♣ A K Q 10 8</p>	<p>♠ K Q 9 2 ♥ A 10 9 3 ♦ K 7 4 2 ♣ 6</p>
N		E							
W		S							

N 5N; S 4N; NS 5♦; NS 5♣; NS 3♥; EW 1♠;
Par +660

3NT by North is the likely contract. East may start with the K♠ but must find a switch when North ducks. A low heart is as good as anything and if declarer guesses to play the king eleven tricks can be made. There are five club tricks, one spade, one heart and three diamonds (with the aid of repeated finesses): that is ten in total. However, the run of the clubs puts E under insuperable pressure. Declarer should run the 10♦ early on but NOT repeat the finesse at this stage. All five club tricks are cashed and East is squeezed down to Q9 in spades and K74 in diamonds. Declarer now repeats the diamond finesse, cashes the ace and exits with a diamond. East wins but has to lead into the spade tenace in declarer's hand.

Board 21
North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 9 8	♠ K J 3	♠ Q 5 4 2
♥ A K 4	♥ 5 3	♥ Q 10 8 7 2
♦ A 10 9 4	♦ K J 5 3 2	♦ 6
♣ 7 3 2	♣ K J 8	♣ 10 9 5

♠ A 7 6	♠ A 7 6 5	♠ A Q 4
♥ J 9 6	♥ J 9 6	♥ A K Q 6 3
♦ Q 8 7	♦ Q 8 7	♦ 9 7 6
♣ A Q 6 4	♣ A Q 6 4	♣ Q 8

NS 4♦; EW 2♥; NS 1N; NS 2♣; Par +130

N/S look set to play in 3 NT, losing the first six tricks with a sad inevitability. Some players in the South seat (glass half empty types!) may deduct a point in view of their 3-3-3-4 distribution. They will no doubt be punching the air when partner is just one down in 2 NT.

Board 22
East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 10 8 7 2	♠ 10 8 7 2	♠ A Q 4
♥ 7 5	♥ 7 5	♥ A K Q 6 3
♦ A K 3 2	♦ A K 3 2	♦ 9 7 6
♣ A J 6	♣ A J 6	♣ Q 8

♠ K J 9 6 5	♠ K J 9 6 5	♠ 3
♥ J 10	♥ J 10	♥ 9 8 4 2
♦ 5	♦ 5	♦ Q J 10 8 4
♣ K 10 9 4 2	♣ K 10 9 4 2	♣ 7 5 3

EW 5♠; EW 5♥; EW 3♣; EW 1N; NS 1♦; Par -650

If East opens 1♥ there should be a chance to show delayed support for spades and if the opening is a strong no-trump West will transfer. Either way the contract will be 4♠. Two rounds of diamonds forces declarer to ruff. When trumps break 4-1 declarer may just cash out and concede the last three tricks. Making the contract should score a little above average as a few pairs may miss game or play in a hopeless 3 NT.

Eleven tricks can be scored despite the bad trump break. Declarer establishes the clubs by finessing (getting forced again when the lead is lost) and then cashes just one top trump in the East hand. Then the J10 of hearts are cashed and master clubs led. North will have to ruff in at some stage, but declarer can over-ruff and draw the remaining trumps.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 6	♠ K Q 5 3	♠ 10 7 4 2
♥ Q 8 3 2	♥ A K 6 4	♥ 10 7 5
♦ K J 8 6	♦ 7 3 2	♦ A 10
♣ Q 10 2	♣ J 3	♣ A 7 6 5

♠ J 9 8	♠ J 9 8	♠ A J 5 3
♥ J 9	♥ J 9	♥ A Q 10
♦ Q 9 5 4	♦ Q 9 5 4	♦ 10 5 3
♣ K 9 8 4	♣ K 9 8 4	♣ Q J 6

EW 2♥; EW 1♦; EW 1♣; Par -110

If West opens a weak 1 NT he will be left to play there. This contract should fail. However, at tables where West opens one of a minor, North will fancy a double and now it is his side that will be struggling. Finally, should West open 1♥ (playing Blue Club or a Bob Hamman style strong NT with four card majors) E/W may reach the optimum contract of 2♥ for East may decide, somewhat dubiously, to raise in preference to bidding 1♠ with such a poor suit. Any plus score for either side should score fairly well.

Board 24
West Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 7 2	♠ 9 7 2	♠ A J 5 3
♥ 8 6 3	♥ 8 6 3	♥ A Q 10
♦ A Q J 8 6	♦ A Q J 8 6	♦ 10 5 3
♣ 9 2	♣ 9 2	♣ Q J 6

♠ Q 10 6 4	♠ Q 10 6 4	♠ K 8
♥ 7 5 4	♥ 7 5 4	♥ K J 9 2
♦ K 9 2	♦ K 9 2	♦ 7 4
♣ K 10 3	♣ K 10 3	♣ A 8 7 5 4

NS 3♥; NS 4♦; NS 2N; NS 3♣; NS 1♠; Par +140

N/S are outgunned in terms of high cards but it is only that side that can make anything: the cards are all sitting perfectly from their point of view. If East opens 1 NT this may be passed out. It can go 3 down if the defence is spot on, but it would be all too easy to allow declarer to make three spade tricks, one heart and two clubs, thereby escaping with minus 50. Defending 1 NT is usually a difficult task and N/S are more likely to avoid an accident if they declare this hand. If South has an Asptro style bid (hearts and another suit) at his disposal a heart contract will be reached. Declarer will agonise about how to set about the play but luckily just about anything works!

Board 25
North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 8 6 4		♠ A 5 2
♥ A 7		♥ J 9 6 3 2
♦ 9 7 5		♦ A 3 2
♣ 10 7 3 2		♣ K 8
♠ J 10 3		♠ Q 9 7
♥ K Q 10 4		♥ 8 5
♦ K 6 4		♦ Q J 10 8
♣ 9 5 4		♣ A Q J 6

NS 2♠; EW 1N; NS 2♦; NS 2♣; EW 1♥; Par +110

This board illustrates a point that some players overlook: locating a major suit fit is not always best. As it happens, E/W can make the same number of tricks in no-trumps as they can in hearts but that is not the real issue here. If they bid to 2♥, South has an easy double in the pass-out seat and North bids 2♠, thereby winning the board. On the other hand, if East opens 1NT he will be left to play there. So, this is a good hand for the weak 1NT, provided East chooses to open exactly that.

Board 26
East Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 9 4 3		♠ 5
♥ —		♥ A 10 9 8 6
♦ K 9 8 4		♦ A Q 10 3
♣ 6 5 4 3 2		♣ A 9 7
♠ K 10 8 7 6		♠ A J 2
♥ K Q 7		♥ J 5 4 3 2
♦ 7 6 5		♦ J 2
♣ K 10		♣ Q J 8

EW 5♥; EW 4N; EW 3♠; EW 4♦; Par -650

E/W should sail into 4♥ and with the king of diamonds and ace of spades well placed ten tricks are fairly easy despite the 5-0 trump break. Very well done (and lots of match points) to anyone that manages eleven. This can be achieved by stripping South of their holdings in the side suits: Three rounds of spades leading the first one from hand and later pitching a diamond on the king and ruffing the third, three rounds of clubs, ruffing the third, the two top trumps in dummy and two diamonds by way of the winning finesse. That is ten tricks played and only one trick lost. South has only trumps left and will have to ruff his partner's winner when declarer exits with a diamond. To add insult to injury he will then have to lead a trump into declarer's tenace. Will anyone be lucky enough to be doubled?

Board 27
South Deals
None Vul

♠ A K 9 7 5 3		♠ J 10 4 2
♥ A J 3		♥ Q 10
♦ 8		♦ A 6 2
♣ A 8 4		♣ J 10 3 2
♠ 6		♠ Q 8
♥ 8 7 5		♥ K 9 6 4 2
♦ K Q 10 9 7		♦ J 5 4 3
♣ K Q 9 5		♣ 7 6

NS 4♠; NS 4♥; NS 2N; EW 1♦; EW 1♣; Par +420

On the assumption that 4S is a popular contract one should play with the odds for the maximum number of tricks. Let's say East leads the J♣. There is a chance of 12 tricks so declarer wins, crosses to the queen of trumps and takes a first round finesse of the jack of hearts. It loses, and when trumps break 4-1 the contract has to go down. Well played but very unlucky. Anyone that does start by cashing the ace of hearts gets lucky!

It is also possible some may take a different view of the hand and plan to ruff a club. Having lost a club, a diamond and a trump they need just three tricks from hearts. They start with the king of hearts and eye the fall of the ten with great suspicion. They may now drop the queen, conveniently forgetting that there are four possible doubletons including the ten, not to mention the chance that the ten is a singleton.

Board 28
West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 6 2		♠ 7
♥ K J 9 6 5		♥ A 10 4
♦ 4		♦ K 7 6 3
♣ Q J 6 3		♣ A K 10 7 4
♠ K 9 8 4		♠ A Q J 5 3
♥ 3 2		♥ Q 8 7
♦ Q 10 8 5 2		♦ A J 9
♣ 9 5		♣ 8 2

EW 4♦; NS 2♠; NS 2♥; EW 1N; EW 2♣; Par -130

This should be another fiercely contested partscore, East opening 1♣, South bidding 1♠, raised to 2♠ by North. East should double (it would be nicer to have four hearts but with shortage in spades it is imperative to compete). Now West can bid diamonds and his side are booked for a plus score. If N/S take the push and bid 3♠ West might risk a tigerish penalty double. The defence should come to two trump tricks, either via a heart ruff or by way of a trump promotion (three rounds of clubs, West declining to over-ruff if declarer ruffs with the queen or jack) If, instead, West bids 4♦ the trumps lie favourably and the contract makes. The 'normal' action though is to simply pass, happy to have shifted the opponents off the two level. It will be interesting to see how well plus 100 scores.

Board 29
North Deals
Both Vul

♠ 10 9 4	♠ A K 6	♠ Q 7 2
♥ A Q 8	♥ 10 7 6 5	♥ K 9 4 3 2
♦ Q J 9 8 3	♦ 10 5 4	♦ K 6
♣ K 4	♣ 9 7 5	♣ Q 10 8

♠ J 8 5 3	♠ J 8 6
♥ J	♥ A 7 2
♦ A 7 2	♦ A J 6 3 2
♣ A J 6 3 2	

EW 3♥; EW 2N; EW 1♦; NS 1♣; Par -140

Many Souths will fancy opening 1♣ in third seat, an attractive choice given their length in spades. This is a winning decision for it will prevent E/W from finding their heart fit (North bidding 1♥ after West overcalls 1♦. East, with balanced strength and K6 in partner's suit may try no-trumps and this should score reasonably well.

Board 30
East Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 7	♠ A J 8 6	♠ K 10 9 5 4 3
♥ A K 7	♥ 9 6 4 2	♥ J 8 3
♦ Q J 10 8 7	♦ 4 3	♦ 9 6
♣ 9 6 3	♣ Q 5 2	♣ 8 7

♠ 2	♠ 2
♥ Q 10 5	♥ Q 10 5
♦ A K 5 2	♦ A K 5 2
♣ A K J 10 4	♣ A K J 10 4

NS 3♥; NS 2N; NS 3♣; NS 2♦; EW 1♠; Par +140

A light non-vulnerable 2♠ opening by East may backfire, for South will double and North will get to play in 3♥, the optimum (albeit somewhat fortuitous) spot. West may prevent this by making an unsound raise to 3♠ and now North must double to get a decent matchpoint score (probably turning a near bottom into a near top for his side). If East does not open, N/S are likely to reach the lower scoring, but much sounder, contract of 3♣.

Board 31
South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 5 2	♠ 8 6 3	♠ A J 9 7 4
♥ Q 9 6	♥ A 10	♥ K J 4
♦ A Q 10 4	♦ J 9 7 6	♦ K 8 5
♣ A Q 7	♣ K J 8 6	♣ 9 2

♠ K Q	♠ K Q
♥ 8 7 5 3 2	♥ 8 7 5 3 2
♦ 3 2	♦ 3 2
♣ 10 5 4 3	♣ 10 5 4 3

W 4N; EW 4♠; E 2N; EW 3♦; EW 1♥; Par -430

E/W are likely to record a minus score regardless of whether they play in 4♠ or 3NT. This is because the percentage play in spades (i.e. two finesses) fails. 4♠ should not go more than one down whereas 3NT may fail by two if the defenders manage to establish three club tricks in time. One scenario in which 4♠ may make is if the defence start with two rounds of hearts. Declarer may read N for a doubleton in hearts and try ace and another trump. This wins if North is forced to win, even if there are two trump losers, for North is end played and has to lead a minor. Declarer thus avoids a club loser. It also succeeds on the actual lie of the trump suit. South wins and can give partner a ruff, but North is then end played as above. Alternatively, South can switch to clubs but now declarer escapes with just one loser in the trump suit.

Board 32
West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 8 4	♠ K 9 7 3	♠ J 10 6
♥ Q 10 5 4	♥ A K J 8	♥ 6 2
♦ Q J 8 4	♦ 10 5	♦ 9 7 3 2
♣ Q 4	♣ 10 6 5	♣ A J 9 2

♠ A 5 2	♠ A 5 2
♥ 9 7 3	♥ 9 7 3
♦ A K 6	♦ A K 6
♣ K 8 7 3	♣ K 8 7 3

NS 4♠; NS 3N; NS 3♥; NS 4♣; NS 1♦; Par +420

South will play in 3NT and make anything from eight to eleven tricks. In isolation, the percentage play in hearts for four tricks is to cash a top honour and then finesse the jack. This is better than two finesses for that loses to 10X and 10XX offside. However, if West leads a♥ at trick one it is sensible to play low from dummy as he probably holds four or more cards in the suit. If the play starts like that declarer can make ten tricks. On a club lead, 9 tricks is the limit. On a top diamond lead declarer makes 9 or 10 tricks depending on how the hearts are played.

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