

British Winter Sim Pairs



Monday

12th January 2026

Welcome to the British Winter 2026 Simultaneous Pairs, whether you are playing online or Face to Face. I sincerely hope you enjoy the event and also the commentary provided by a leading expert who, for this set of hands, is Michael Byrne.

Simultaneous Pairs are a great opportunity to play against new opposition – all the pairs from the other participating Clubs from all over the country. It's always fascinating to see how your 'local' score in your own Club (against opponents whom you know) changes once all the national results are incorporated.

This is the start of the 2026 Simultaneous Pairs season, so it's a new year for prizes. Every host club will be entered in to a prize draw made at the AGM in November, so every participating club has a chance to win one of eight cash prizes of £200. Not only clubs win prizes, but so do players – the prize for the overall winners of each Sim Pairs is £100, and we wish you luck.

You can find all the full details, results and last year's prize winners at www.ebu.co.uk/sims/

Blue points are awarded to the top third of the field but please don't be impatient for the results! Although provisional results will appear fairly quickly they won't be finalised, nor will the Master Points, until all the results are in and any score corrections have been made. This can take up to three weeks. It really helps us sort any issues if you have kept your scorecard.

Thanks for choosing to play in this Sim Pairs event. Good luck and do enjoy your bridge.

Adrian Darnell, Chairman EBU

♠AK953
♥Q1054
♦64
♣97

♠J842 ♠Q7
♥872 ♥93
♦K1097 ♦AJ8532
♣A5 ♣J102

♠ 106
♥ AKJ6
♦ Q
♣ KQ8643

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

Our simultaneous pairs starts with a simple hand, where NS have a huge fit and tons of points, and consequently can make a game.

If North passes, East might choose to open a weak two in diamonds (more common at tournament level than club level I'd wager) in which case South will have to start with 3♣. If West raises diamonds (and surely they should) then North should double for take out and try and get both suits in. South can then drive to 4♥.

If instead East passes, then NS will have a nice free run, 1♣-1♠-2♣-2♥-4♥, or perhaps 1♣-1♠-2♥-3♥-4♥, with South reversing and North making a forcing raise.

Since 11 tricks are pretty routine (every suit breaks 3-2, how pleasant!) I would expect the bidding to be where the match points are won and lost.

It might not be as easy as I suggest to find the heart fit. If you were one of the pairs to miss game, have a look at both hands and see where you went wrong.

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		N	5	-	5	3
8	8	S	5	-	5	3
15		E	-	2	-	-
		W	-	2	-	-
						1

♠J952

♥K763

♦K

♣K643

♠874

♠AK10

♥Q104

♥AJ952

♦Q985

♦43

♣875

♣A92

♠Q63

♥8

♦AJ10762

♣QJ10

HCP	
10	
4	16
10	

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

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

The first of our 20/20 deals! The two sides have equal values, yet only one side has a fit. You would consequently be forgiven for assuming it is that side who owns the hand – not so.

East will open the bidding, and the choice of suit will determine the auction. A 1NT opening bid will often be passed out, most players using a 2♦ overcall as conventional. On a diamond lead and black suit switch declarer can knock out the heart king and make seven tricks easily enough.

If instead East opens 1♥, then South will bid 2♦ and West will either pass or dredge up a raise to 2♥. North might pass or bid a natural 2NT, and East will reopen with a double if 2♦ is passed round to them – so many different possibilities, where will it all end? EW must be careful not to get too high in hearts: South's natural club lead means that they have only seven winners, since they can't get to dummy to take the heart finesse.

NS can just about make 2♦ (it takes a top heart lead to beat it, getting a force going) or an unlikely 2♠. Well done if your side got a plus score; you will be rewarded with a bunch of match points as usual on 20/20 deals.

♠AQJ103

♥AK7

♦7

♣K874

♠72

♠9854

♥J1032

♥8

♦AK1092

♦J8643

♣62

♣AQ9

♠K6

♥Q9654

♦Q5

♣J1053

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

NS have 25 points and an 8-card major-suit fit, so obviously the hand belongs to EW!

North will open 1♠ in third seat, and South should respond 1NT, not quite having the values for a light 2-over-1 response (even playing Acol). West might spring to life with 2♦ but having only a 5-card suit and no singleton, coupled with adverse vulnerability, means that most players will be cowed into a pass. North will rebid 2♣, and South has a choice between pass (feeble), 3♣ (mainstream) and 2♠ (eccentric).

Playing in spades, North will win the heart lead and draw trumps, then be disappointed when the hearts don't run. If the defence get a force going, then North will be held to eight top tricks.

Playing in clubs, nine tricks are easy, and ten will be made unless the defence get their heart ruff, using the top diamond as an entry.

If EW do find a way into the auction, then ten tricks are a piece of cake: five trumps in hand, three ruffs in dummy and the ♣AQ.

♠Q

♥KJ5

♦A54

♣KJ10964

♠AKJ10753

♠9

♥A63

♥10972

♦-

♦K10983

♣AQ8

♣752

♠8642

♥Q84

♦QJ762

♣3

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West has a powerful distributional hand and will have high hopes of a game or slam, which must instantly be curbed when partner has nothing at all.

If West opens a sensible 1♠, then North will bid 2♣ and East and South pass. West would be forgiven for bidding a simple 4♠.

If West opens an Acol 2♣, then game will also be reached. Some may stay out of it by starting with a Benjamin bid to show 8 ¾ playing tricks, or whatever the current definition is.

4♠ has ten easy tricks – well, only a club lead. In practice North does have a tricky lead problem: it doesn't look obvious to me to lead a heart, and even then the ♥5 to the queen and Ace leaves West with a lot of fire power; they can run the spades and try and get North to lead a club into them in the end game.

I think in practice 4♠ will make more often than it will go down, so if you did stop carefully and make +140 on sharp defence, don't begrudge your opponents too much, it is their job not to give you a free ride!

HCP	
14	
18	3
5	

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

<p>♠AK63 ♥AK1082 ♦Q ♣KJ5</p> <p>♠J942 ♠Q8 ♥QJ6 ♥7543 ♦9854 ♦K2 ♣AQ ♣109632</p> <p>♠1075 ♥9 ♦AJ10763 ♣874</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="230 572 468 774"> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="5">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> <tr> <td>20</td> <td>5</td> <td>N</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>5</td> <td>S</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	20	5	N	4	5	3	4	3	10	5	S	4	5	3	4	3			E	-	-	-	-	-			W	-	-	-	-	-	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>This is more like it, North has a strong hand and their partner provides enough bits and pieces to make game playable in several strains.</p> <p>The first problem is what to open on such a hand. In my view 1♥ is clear cut, but a few people will try 2NT (bleugh) or some sort of strong opening (also bleugh). If 1♥ is passed out then you will at least get a plus score, but today South has enough to respond, the good 6-card suit giving the hand some playing strength. North can then reverse into 2♠, and correct the 3♦ response to 3NT. (In practice many will just raise 1NT to 3NT, which is a little lazy: just imagine South's minor suits reversed!)</p> <p>3NT isn't much of a contract, but the cards lie very well, with two club tricks available, four heart tricks (just duck one) and ♦Kx diamonds onside. In practice the defence just don't have enough neutral cards to play, and at some point West will have to give South access to their hand.</p> <p>I can see some West players leading the ♦8 to the queen, king and ace, then winning the ♥Q and playing another diamond... -690 will not score well.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																													
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																									
20	5	N	4	5	3	4	3																																								
10	5	S	4	5	3	4	3																																								
		E	-	-	-	-	-																																								
		W	-	-	-	-	-																																								
<p>♠108 ♥6 ♦K1086 ♣AJ9643</p> <p>♠KQ9653 ♠A7 ♥- ♥AJ975432 ♦J974 ♦A2 ♣KQ7 ♣5</p> <p>♠J42 ♥KQ108 ♦Q53 ♣1082</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="230 1257 468 1448"> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="5">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>11</td> <td>N</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>13</td> <td>S</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	8	11	N	2	-	-	-	-	11	13	S	2	-	-	-	-	8		E	-	1	3	3	3			W	-	1	3	3	3	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>East and West both have powerful and shapely opening hands, but game is not as easy as it might first appear.</p> <p>1♥-Pass-1♠ is the obvious start and North might come in with 2♣ or 3♣. If East gets excited and rebids 4♥ then South might double (facing a 2♣ overcall he will for certain) and now West will need to show discretion and run to 4♠. 4♥ is off in top tricks but, if South doesn't lead a club for whatever reason, then East can cash the ♥A and play four rounds of spades, throwing two losers as South ruffs, and that is ten tricks.</p> <p>A contract of 4♠ is trickier: on a singleton heart lead West will win and lead a club; now North can win the Ace and switch to a diamond and West is stuck on table. Despite there being "ten top tricks" (six spades, one club, two aces and a club ruff) I think West is fated to go down, North always getting a trump promotion.</p> <p>Of course, the easy way to beat 4♠ is to lead a trump, win the ♣A and play another one, but that's hard to do when on lead with a singleton.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																													
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																									
8	11	N	2	-	-	-	-																																								
11	13	S	2	-	-	-	-																																								
8		E	-	1	3	3	3																																								
		W	-	1	3	3	3																																								
<p>♠- ♥K83 ♦A8642 ♣QJ1074</p> <p>♠53 ♠KJ9864 ♥AQJ754 ♥109 ♦10 ♦J9 ♣K962 ♣A53</p> <p>♠AQ1072 ♥62 ♦KQ753 ♣8</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="230 1931 468 2120"> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="5">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> <td>N</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>9</td> <td>S</td> <td>1</td> <td>5</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	10	10	N	1	5	-	-	1	11	9	S	1	5	-	-	1			E	-	-	1	-	-			W	-	-	1	-	-	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>Despite the relative equality of points (21/19) it is NS who can make a game, due to their enormous fit and powerful distribution.</p> <p>South will open 1♠ and West will bid 2♥. North has a grim hand now but has to take some action, a negative double (probably followed by an off centre 2NT if South rebids 2♠) looks best. East might want to do something but nothing appeals, and South can rebid 3♦, not a reverse since he is effectively raising partner's suit. North has a good hand now, since the ♥K looks to be working and partner might well be short in clubs. North can raise to 4♦, and South might go on to game, with the extra trump and likelihood that North is short in spades.</p> <p>5♦ isn't trivial to make: the way to do so is on a big cross-ruff, and to stop that West will have to lead a trump when they win the ♥A and let East play another when they win the ♣A, and that allows declarer to win the second round in dummy and set up the clubs.</p> <p>+600 will be a great score, and +150 won't be disastrous – many declarers will no doubt struggle with the play if they have stopped in part-score.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																													
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT																																									
10	10	N	1	5	-	-	1																																								
11	9	S	1	5	-	-	1																																								
		E	-	-	1	-	-																																								
		W	-	-	1	-	-																																								

♠ A1065

♥ K62

♦ A86542

♣ -

♠ KJ32

♠ Q74

♥ Q107

♥ 984

♦ 107

♦ J9

♣ KJ102

♣ A9875

♠ 98

♥ AJ53

♦ KQ3

♣ Q643

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
11		N	-	5	4	2
10	7	S	-	5	4	2
	12	E	1	-	-	-
		W	1	-	-	-

♠ Q94

♥ AK42

♦ AKJ642

♣ -

♠ K102

♠ J87

♥ QJ

♥ 9873

♦ 853

♦ Q7

♣ J10743

♣ K982

♠ A653

♥ 1065

♦ 109

♣ AQ65

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
17		N	2	6	5	6
7	6	S	2	6	5	6
	10	E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

♠ 1087

♥ J10653

♦ -

♣ KQ1075

♠ A9

♠ 643

♥ AQ74

♥ 82

♦ A10975

♦ Q843

♣ J9

♣ A842

♠ KQJ52

♥ K9

♦ KJ62

♣ 63

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
6		N	1	-	1	2
15	6	S	1	-	1	2
	13	E	-	3	-	-
		W	-	3	-	1

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

EW are banished to the sidelines once more as, despite their 9-card fit and modest assets, it is NS that own the hand with their big red suit fit.

1♦ seems the best place to start and South will respond 1♥. What should North say now? They can rebid 1♠, or perhaps consider a raise to 2♥ (which will probably come as shock to most people reading). If they rebid 1♠ then you could forgive South making a lazy jump to 3NT. Providing that they don't lose their cool on the ♣J lead and try the queen too early, they will make an easy nine tricks. (If West leads the ♣2 they might even make ten!)

If North raises hearts, then South should probe for game with 3♣ or 3♦, which might lead to a game of 4♥, which can be made on razor sharp declarer play (ruff two clubs in dummy then play three rounds of trumps, using the diamonds as transportation).

5♦ is a nice easy game with both red suits breaking you make 11 tricks easily, although not as lucrative as 4♥. Which game did you land in, and did you make it? If not, the traveller will not be kind to you....

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

A slam for NS! Only joking, that's on a ludicrous lie of the cards, and even then needs double dummy play.

Most NS pairs (dare I say all NS pairs?) will reach game, and 3NT is the most likely candidate. 1♦-1♠-2♥-3NT might be possible, with North reversing and then South jumping with a sturdy club stop. The ♣J lead seems likely (low is reasonable as well) and now running the ♦10 looks attractive. East will win and play a club back and South must decide what to do. With ten on top, it seems natural to win and run the diamonds. East must be careful to keep three hearts, otherwise the suit can be unblocked. West may come under some pressure (either real or imaginary!) as they have to keep the guarded ♠K and some club winners. In any event, South can cash three hearts to bring their total up to 11 and there should be no real chance of 12.

The traveller will have all sorts of results on it (some will play 4♠) but few will make a slam (dropping the diamond is well against the odds) so a steady +460 will be fine.

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

Another close deal! Not quite 20/20 but 19/21 and as usual the 9-card fit wins, EW outclassing their opponent's spade fit.

South will open 1♠ and West has a choice of three calls. Pass is the cautious view, double is the normal one, with 1NT an outside choice. (Note that 2♦ is not one of the choices, since that shows a 6-card suit). If West doubles then North will raise to 2♠ (3-card support is fine even playing 4-card majors) and East pass. South will pass also and West is a bit stuck: they have the strength to double again but not the right shape. My advice is to keep bidding, as when they have a fit so do we. It is vital that East not just pick a suit – when equal length in the minors they should respond 2NT, showing “two places to play”, and the diamond fit is found very easily.

A diamond part-score plays well: East will take the heart finesse and ruff one with the eight, later ruffing one with the queen. South will make the King and Jack, but with only two black tricks to lose that is +110 to the good guys.

If NS are left to play in spades then there are only four obvious losers, but if East forces the dummy it generates a fifth loser.

<p>♠AQ8753 ♥64 ♦AQ72 ♣A</p> <p>♠102 ♠6 ♥A87 ♥K32 ♦K43 ♦J965 ♣J10962 ♣KQ874</p> <p>♠KJ94 ♥QJ1095 ♦108 ♣53</p>	<p>Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>A chance to relax now, as the ten-card fit provides a nice flat board, with everyone scoring a gentle 450.</p> <p>North will open 1♠ in third, and East should banish any thoughts they had of bidding. South can raise to 2♠ or 3♠, and North will go on to game. I can't see any possible way that this won't make 11 tricks. A club lead seems routine and then we draw trumps and knock out the two top hearts. If West wins the first heart and fires through a diamond then North must shrug and take the finesse, but in practice many will continue clubs and North can claim. Since a 5♣ sacrifice has five top losers and goes for 500 this will be one of the flattest boards of the evening.</p>																																														
<table border="1" data-bbox="215 550 492 772"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="215 550 492 590">HCP</th> <th colspan="5" data-bbox="215 590 492 631">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="215 631 492 671"></th> <th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 671 269 711">16</td><td data-bbox="269 671 328 711">9</td><td data-bbox="328 671 358 711">N</td><td data-bbox="358 671 387 711">-</td><td data-bbox="387 671 417 711">1</td><td data-bbox="417 671 447 711">3</td><td data-bbox="447 671 476 711">5</td><td data-bbox="476 671 506 711">3</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 711 269 752">8</td><td data-bbox="269 711 328 752">7</td><td data-bbox="328 711 358 752">S</td><td data-bbox="358 711 387 752">-</td><td data-bbox="387 711 417 752">1</td><td data-bbox="417 711 447 752">3</td><td data-bbox="447 711 476 752">5</td><td data-bbox="476 711 506 752">3</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 752 269 792"></td><td data-bbox="269 752 328 792"></td><td data-bbox="328 752 358 792">E</td><td data-bbox="358 752 387 792">2</td><td data-bbox="387 752 417 792">-</td><td data-bbox="417 752 447 792">-</td><td data-bbox="447 752 476 792">-</td><td data-bbox="476 752 506 792">-</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 792 269 835"></td><td data-bbox="269 792 328 835"></td><td data-bbox="328 792 358 835">W</td><td data-bbox="358 792 387 835">2</td><td data-bbox="387 792 417 835">-</td><td data-bbox="417 792 447 835">-</td><td data-bbox="447 792 476 835">-</td><td data-bbox="476 792 506 835">-</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	16	9	N	-	1	3	5	3	8	7	S	-	1	3	5	3			E	2	-	-	-	-			W	2	-	-	-	-	<p>Actually, there is a lot of interest in a club contract: double dummy North must lead a low spade to the King to get the diamond switch, resulting in a ruff for three down. Having said that surely no-one will find a way into the auction though?</p>
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		W	2	-	-	-	-																																								
<p>♠AJ93 ♥J95 ♦A2 ♣7654</p> <p>♠Q42 ♠K10876 ♥AQ2 ♥1087 ♦K76 ♦10 ♣A93 ♣KQ102</p> <p>♠5 ♥K643 ♦Q98543 ♣J8</p>	<p>Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <p>A low point count game for EW now, although the play is far more interesting than deep finesse would have you believe....</p> <p>West will start with 1♦, or a strong no trump for those that play it. 1♦-P-1♠-P-1NT will get EW to the same place, and now East should employ whatever methods he uses to find a 5-3 spade fit. (An old-fashioned jump to 3♣ for rubber bridge style players, and 2♣ checkback for modern scientists).</p> <p>The best lead for South is a small heart, but East can counter this by winning the queen, crossing to hand with a club and running the ♦10, North can win and continue hearts, but East can take a discard and continue spades, leading low to the ten to make the game. In practice many Souths will lead a diamond, and declarer has time to take things very leisurely, duck to the Ace, spade to the queen etc.</p> <p>If West is declarer (after 1NT, transfer) then North will probably lead a heart or club, and the play will go similarly.</p> <p>Well done if you made 420; few will beat it in practice.</p>																																														
<table border="1" data-bbox="215 1302 492 1884"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="215 1302 492 1343">HCP</th> <th colspan="5" data-bbox="215 1343 492 1383">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="215 1383 492 1423"></th> <th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 1423 269 1464">10</td><td data-bbox="269 1423 328 1464">8</td><td data-bbox="328 1423 358 1464">N</td><td data-bbox="358 1423 387 1464">-</td><td data-bbox="387 1423 417 1464">1</td><td data-bbox="417 1423 447 1464">-</td><td data-bbox="447 1423 476 1464">-</td><td data-bbox="476 1423 506 1464">-</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 1464 269 1504">16</td><td data-bbox="269 1464 328 1504">6</td><td data-bbox="328 1464 358 1504">S</td><td data-bbox="358 1464 387 1504">-</td><td data-bbox="387 1464 417 1504">1</td><td data-bbox="417 1464 447 1504">-</td><td data-bbox="447 1464 476 1504">-</td><td data-bbox="476 1464 506 1504">-</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 1504 269 1545"></td><td data-bbox="269 1504 328 1545"></td><td data-bbox="328 1504 358 1545">E</td><td data-bbox="358 1504 387 1545">3</td><td data-bbox="387 1504 417 1545">-</td><td data-bbox="417 1504 447 1545">2</td><td data-bbox="447 1504 476 1545">5</td><td data-bbox="476 1504 506 1545">4</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="215 1545 269 1587"></td><td data-bbox="269 1545 328 1587"></td><td data-bbox="328 1545 358 1587">W</td><td data-bbox="358 1545 387 1587">3</td><td data-bbox="387 1545 417 1587">-</td><td data-bbox="417 1545 447 1587">2</td><td data-bbox="447 1545 476 1587">5</td><td data-bbox="476 1545 506 1587">5</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	10	8	N	-	1	-	-	-	16	6	S	-	1	-	-	-			E	3	-	2	5	4			W	3	-	2	5	5	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <p>Another close deal, our third of the evening where the points are split 21/19, and it's only hand 13!</p> <p>South will surely get a free kick to start with (East might open 2♠ if it shows spades and a minor, but otherwise pass – 2nd seat is not the time for bent bids) and 1NT seems a good choice. The alternative of opening 1♣ and rebidding 2♣ is horrible, and 1♦ then 2♣ (a popular treatment over the Pond) is misleading in suit length. North will take out to 2♥ via a transfer and East can bid 2♥ as a Michaels Cue Bid, or just bid 2♠ if they want to play the hand themselves! Despite South's maximum hand, the deal belongs to EW, as 3♣ must fail and they don't have a heart fit.</p> <p>A spade contract looks very easy with only three top losers, but all these diamonds have to go somewhere and the defence can lead clubs and force you to ruff, preventing you getting the fifth card going.</p> <p>In practice some will be allowed to make nine or even ten tricks in spades and it is to them the spoils of war will go.</p>
HCP		Makeable contracts																																													
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<p>♠83 ♥1042 ♦KJ762 ♣K108</p> <p>♠KQ7 ♥K873 ♦A109 ♣AJ5</p> <p>♠A965 ♥Q9 ♦8 ♣Q97642</p>	<p>Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <p>A more traditional one-sided game now, and EW hold 25 points between them and a 4-4 heart fit.</p> <p>A common start to the auction will be P-P-1♥-P and now East must decide how high to raise. The point count suggests just 2♥ but the singleton and juicy ♠10 suggests 3♥ might be closer to the mark. it's all a moot point today as over 3♥ West will bid 4♥, and over 2♥ West will bid 2NT, allowing East to jump to 4♥.</p> <p>North doesn't have a very attractive lead. A trump is possible but that might tip off West as to the location of the queen: they can win the King, lead back to the ace, draw the trump and knock out the spade, ruff one club, pitch the other on the fourth spade, then bang out ace and another diamond and you can't misguess, an "easy" 11 tricks.</p> <p>If instead North leads a spade then South might win and switch to their singleton. West must be careful not to run it, or they only make ten tricks.</p> <p>I would think everyone will find a way home here (most people let's say) so the crucial over-trick will be the deciding goal.</p>																																										
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<p>♠J875 ♥A982 ♦2 ♣AJ96</p> <p>♠Q103 ♥KQ73 ♦KQJ10 ♣Q10</p> <p>♠A2 ♥J ♦A8764 ♣87532</p>	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Another 21/19 now and once again the side with the big fit and singleton is the one that rules the roost.</p> <p>West has an aceless strong no trump and many will open 1♥, this will get raised to 2♥ immediately and South (as a passed hand) can bid 2NT to show both minors. West shouldn't really bid again with such defensive rubbish; if they do then North might double them and lead the singleton diamond, that will be an easy +300 via two ruffs.</p> <p>If instead West passes, then North will bid 3♣, which is very easy to play. Once more we see that the fact that there are just two top losers does not translate into 11 winners, as you can't ruff three diamonds in the North hand without conceding an over-ruff.</p> <p>Still a pleasant +130 should be a good score, since many Norths will not double 3♥, and some EW pairs will buy the hand in 1NT, which should run out of winners before NS can get the clubs going.</p>																																										
<table border="1" data-bbox="215 1316 492 1522"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="5">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>6</td> <td>N</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>1 1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15</td> <td>9</td> <td>S</td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>1 1</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	10	6	N	4	1	-	1 1	15	9	S	4	1	-	1 1			E	-	-	1	-			W	-	-	1	-	
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		W	-	-	1	-																																					
<p>♠K1096 ♥AJ108 ♦104 ♣1052</p> <p>♠AJ84 ♥54 ♦KQ93 ♣A63</p> <p>♠5 ♥9763 ♦7652 ♣Q874</p>	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <p>EW have plenty of points now, but the hand falls into that no man's land between game and slam, and as usual 3NT is the big winner.</p> <p>If West opens 1NT then a raise to 3NT (no stayman) has a lot to recommend it, and would definitely be my choice, especially in these enlightened times when everyone leads a major suit. If the ♠10 is led, then that blows the suit and 11 tricks are a piece of cake.</p> <p>If instead West opens 1♦ then West will raise the 1♠ response to 2♠ and might have trouble passing 3NT: the low doubleton heart does not bode well. Playing in spades ten tricks are easy but North has three tricks in their own hand and nothing can change that, 620 is the limit.</p> <p>Playing in no trumps by East, a club lead into the KJ coupled with the ♥A being onside makes this quite gentle. A heart lead and continuation, then clearing the hearts when you win the ♠K will hold this to ten tricks, unless East finds the "inspired view" (perhaps we should use another term) of running the ♣J. 660? 630? 620? Game for all, but match points only for some.</p>																																										
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14	2	S	-	-	-	-																																					
		E	4	5	3	4 5																																					
		W	4	5	3	4 5																																					

♠9632
 ♥Q62
 ♦Q765
 ♣95
 ♠AJ
 ♥K5
 ♦AJ92
 ♣K10862
 ♠107
 ♥J10984
 ♦K1083
 ♣Q4

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

A grand slam now, and what's more, some of the field might actually reach Six! I feel confident in predicting that NS will pass throughout, so let's see if we can get EW to at least a small slam.

East will open 1♠ and West respond 2♣. Now East will probably just make a simple raise to 3♣, although a splinter bid of 3♦ is also possible for those playing a heavier system of two-level responses. (Many of you might be surprised to see I advocate using 1♠-2♣-3♦ as a splinter, but since 2♦ is forcing there is no need to jump to show a decent hand). The West hand might shut up shop with a bid of 3NT now, but in my view that's very lazy, as your hand keeps growing in strength with every bid that partner makes: as little as Kxxx, Qxx, x, AQxx makes slam fantastic, and that is a grotty 11-count.

1♠-2♣-3♣-3♦-3NT-4♣ looks a good start, followed by cuebidding and Blackwood. RKCB should locate that EW have everything – but not quite, as the ♣Q is missing, so we will stop in a safe 6♣. The match point winner is 6♠, and on today's kindly lay out 6NT (or any black suit grand slam) will also make.

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
4		-	-	-	-	-
16	14	-	-	-	-	-
6		7	3	3	7	7
		7	3	3	7	7

♠53
 ♥AJ4
 ♦AK73
 ♣AK54
 ♠AJ876
 ♥5
 ♦9865
 ♣1093
 ♠1094
 ♥1072
 ♦Q42
 ♣Q872

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

A return to earth now, with a gentle part-score deal, although both sides will be in the bidding (which is always more exciting).

East will open 1♥ and West respond 1♠, North will wonder where all these points are coming from; fortunately, double to show the other suits is perfect. East will rebid 2♥ (some will show 3♠ with a support redouble although it's not that popular a method) and South and West will pass it round to North. North should bid again; it looks natural to double a second time (there is a certain spade issue regarding 2NT!) and now South can bid 3♣.

The play is actually very straight forward: with trumps 3-2 there are nine top tricks (providing South doesn't duck the heart lead!) although some will make ten if they can get it played by North, and get the ♥K lead. (The ♠K is far safer; leading from KQ98 when partner is short isn't ideal)

If EW buy the hand, then they also have six top losers in hearts, and five top losers in spades. 3♠ doubled might just be a good part-score save, but 3♥ doubled won't be and North will be waiting to wield the axe!

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
19		3	2	-	-	2
5	12	3	2	-	-	2
4		-	-	1	2	-
		-	-	1	2	-

♠864
 ♥K987
 ♦K76
 ♣K83
 ♠Q2
 ♥104
 ♦432
 ♣AQJ1072
 ♠KJ1095
 ♥AQ2
 ♦AQ
 ♣654

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

A normal game for NS now, but which game, and how many tricks will they make?

Those playing strong no trump will bid 1NT-P-3NT and West will lead the ♣Q and continue the suit. There is no way to set up spades without letting West on lead, so that is a quick three down for anyone that takes the spade finesse. Those playing Acol might bid 1♠-P-2♣-P-2NT-P-3NT and get the same, or North might bid 3♠ and reach the 5-3 fit, (probably right when your points are kings, since if partner has 5 spades they have a doubleton somewhere).

4♠ looks to be a struggle: you might well win the red-suit lead and cross to the ♥K to lead a spade to the jack, but now West has an easy switch to ♣A and another, to beat the contract by one.

Those that go plus might well start 1♠-P-1NT-P-2NT-P-3NT. Now with East on lead the ♦J is tempting and North can find a way home. This assumes West won't overcall 2♣, which is very tempting with such a good suit, even at this vulnerability. If West does bid then NS do best to defend: 500 for 2♣ doubled; even undoubled is the magic +200 on a deal where most will go down in game.

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		1	1	2	4	2
9	6	1	1	2	4	2
16		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-

♠62
♥J643
♦Q1072
♣A85

♠AQ1087 ♠J4
♥K109 ♥Q875
♦J84 ♦K3
♣76 ♣KQ1093

♠K953
♥A2
♦A965
♣J42

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
7		-	-	-	-	-
10	11	-	-	-	-	-
12		2	-	3	2	2
		2	-	3	2	2

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

Another 21/19 hand! They seem to be growing on trees...

Two passes to East who should open 1♣ to get the good suit in, before the inevitable spade overcall comes – not so on this hand! South will pass 1♣ and West respond 1♦, and now East can rebid 2♦ (if playing Acol) or 1NT (if not). West might bid 2NT over 2♦ if feeling bold, or pass if feeling cautious; both of those are sensible part-scores. Alternatively, if East doesn't open then South might well open 1NT and play there....so how did everyone do?

If West plays in 2NT then a heart lead makes life very easy and eight tricks will be simple, maybe nine if the defence don't get around to diamonds in time. If instead North leads a diamond, then West will struggle, but should find a way home if they play hearts in the natural fashion (low to the King and run the 10). Playing in clubs East should make at least eight, and the defence have to be on the ball to hold him to that.

If South opens 1NT then a low spade lead means that guessing diamonds is enough to make 6 tricks and get out for one off. How will -100 fair? Not great, as minus scores always score badly even when you are not entitled to a plus!

♠AJ8532

♥J3
♦Q73
♣Q6

♠Q ♠K1076
♥K8764 ♥A95
♦J10642 ♦5
♣A5 ♣K10742

♠94
♥Q102
♦AK98
♣J983

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
10		-	-	-	-	-
10	10	-	-	-	-	-
10		1	1	2	1	1
		1	1	2	1	1

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

At last, it arrives: the perfect square and everyone holds ten points. A passed-out deal? Surely not with three players at the table actually having a bit of shape.

North has an in-between hand, not great for a weak two (with a patchy suit and a load of soft honours outside the long spade suit) but not quite worth a 1♦ opener. If they do bite the bullet and open 2♦ then that will be passed out: West doesn't quite have enough to bid with 20% of their points being completely wasted. If instead we try 1♦ as North then South will respond 2♣ and now it is tempting for West to enter (perhaps with double or 2NT) to show the other two suits. This will get EW to 3♥, which is too high for them.

A spade contract looks horrible. With four side suit losers, two trumps and a ruff lurking, six tricks are the limit for NS. No trumps for NS looks a little better, as there is some chance West will lead a diamond rather than the killing heart. The only real chance of a plus score to NS is if EW buy the hand in 3♥, where the defence need to get around to trumps in time to stop ruffs.

♠Q10764

♥7
♦932
♣Q432

♠AK3 ♠J92
♥J9 ♥AK852
♦K7 ♦Q1065
♣A109765 ♣K

♠85
♥Q10643
♦AJ84
♣J8

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
4		-	-	-	-	-
15	13	-	-	-	-	-
8		4	3	4	3	3
		4	2	3	3	4

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

EW will continue their winning ways here, with the balance of power and every suit stopped. Once more the question is "which game" they shall play in. East will open 1♥ and West respond 2♣; now East will say 2♦ and West might well shut up shop with a slightly lazy 3NT. (Imagine East is 6-4 with a small singleton in one of the black suits, then 4♥ will surely be the better contract). If North leads a fourth-best spade against this then West is in clover. They can win in dummy, unblock the ♣K, cross to the ♠A and continue clubs, making 11 easy tricks. Mind you, it might feel better to cross to the ♦K, and now a diamond switch by North will hold them to ten tricks. If West does bid 4th suit forcing, then East might play in No Trumps. On a spade lead through, the play is nowhere near as rosy; nine tricks are a struggle.

Surprisingly 4♥ by East can be made by ruffing diamonds in dummy and then leaving South endplayed to ruff his partner's black suit winners. That looks tricky, but you should stumble into it if you're doubled, and there will be a few 790s on the score sheet to score all the match points I would think.

♠AK109872

♥93

♦A7

♣97

♠ -

♠Q54

♥J852

♥AK10764

♦986

♦Q54

♣AKQ853

♣J

♠J63

♥Q

♦KJ1032

♣10642

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

Spade vs Hearts...the final showdown!

South will pass, West will open 1♣ and North will bid any number of spades ranging from 1 to 4. If it is a gentle 1♠ then East will bid 2♥, South 2♠, West 4♥, North will save in 4♦ and surely East will double?

If instead North bids 3♠ then East will bid 4♥ and South bid 4♦, and now West will go to 5♥ and everyone will pass.

If instead North overcalls 4♠ then East has a tricky choice: if they double, the hearts might be lost for ever, although West will surely remove it to 5♣ in any event.

A spade contract has four top losers so 4♦ doubled is a great save, just one down. In theory 4♥ is the limit for EW but in practice everyone will make 13 tricks, as who will lead a diamond as South?

Some EW pairs might bid and make a slam, and if I were NS I would be happy with a gentle -200 from buying the hand in my ten-card fit.

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
11	12	N	-	-	3	-
10	7	S	-	-	3	-
		E	3	-	4	-
		W	3	-	4	-

♠A54

♥AK

♦AKJ5

♣8654

♠Q10

♠J8762

♥J109532

♥Q

♦Q9

♦87632

♣KQ9

♣32

♠K93

♥8764

♦104

♣AJ107

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

NS have a comfortable game now, and with 27 points between them and every suit stopped, surely 3NT will be the natural destination?

West might start the ball rolling with 2♥, although again the hand is unsuitable with a poor suit, dull 6322 shape and 90% of the points outside the long suit. If they do, then North will probably double and alight later in 3NT. Other West players might open 1♥. Now it is smoother: North will double, South respond 2♣ and North rebid 2NT raised to 3NT by South. If West passes then 1♦-1♥-2NT-3NT looks simple.

The play will be a little disappointing for North. Both club honours are wrong and on a heart lead it looks natural to go down: take a club finesse, win the heart return and take another club finesse – oops, the roof falls in. A spade lead isn't quite as bad, as now you have time to knock out both of West's entries before they get the hearts going.

You can always make 3NT double dummy, and you might just find this if West has opened 1♥ (cash some winners and endplay West with a heart) but it's very hard work and if you did make 3NT on a heart lead then do take a bow.

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
19	3	N	4	2	2	2
10	8	S	4	2	2	2
		E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

♠109

♥KQ4

♦J

♣K1098742

♠KQ4

♠A753

♥1096

♥A873

♦6542

♦KQ1093

♣QJ5

♣-

♠J862

♥J52

♦A87

♣A63

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

What's this I see... another 21/19 deal? Surely not!

Most North players will open 3♣, hardly classical with three honours outside, but if you wait around for the perfect pre-empt you'll be waiting until Christmas 2058 before you open one. East can double a 3♣ opener and, if South passes, West will choose from pass, 3NT or 3♦. Today the big winner is 3♦ as partner has a void club and 5-card support, but that won't always be the case. 3♣ doubled is cold and 3NT dies a quick death on a club lead assuming North ducks the 2nd round, which is normal technique.

If South raises clubs, then West can pass and East might be tempted to double again although the hand isn't worth it. If they do, then West should certainly pass and take a peaceful +100.

Playing in diamonds, ten tricks can be made but West will need to be careful and discard on a club lead, otherwise the ♦8 threatens to grow up. By throwing a heart and then taking a ruffing finesse against the King, you can ditch two heart losers, but this is often hard to spot.

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9	8	N	3	-	-	-
13	10	S	3	-	-	-
		E	-	4	2	1
		W	-	4	2	1

♠ K854

♥ 94

♦ QJ8

♣ Q1064

♠ 62

♠ A107

♥ AQ652

♥ 108

♦ 95432

♦ 107

♣ 8

♣ A97532

♠ QJ93

♥ KJ73

♦ AK6

♣ KJ

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
8		N	1	-	-	1	3
6	8	S	1	-	-	1	3
18		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

♠ 109

♥ A1073

♦ Q53

♣ QJ106

♠ 842

♠ AQJ6

♥ Q952

♥ 84

♦ 742

♦ KJ109

♣ K74

♣ A93

♠ K753

♥ KJ6

♦ A86

♣ 852

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
9		N	2	1	2	-	-
5	15	S	1	-	1	-	-
11		E	-	-	-	1	-
		W	-	-	-	1	-

♠ A42

♥ J932

♦ K2

♣ Q1082

♠ 985

♠ Q10

♥ AK75

♥ Q64

♦ AQ108

♦ J65

♣ 76

♣ AKJ94

♠ KJ763

♥ 108

♦ 9743

♣ 53

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
10		N	-	-	-	-	-
13	13	S	-	-	-	-	-
4		E	4	4	3	1	2
		W	4	4	3	1	2

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

NS look to have a boring game at first glance, but a closer look reveals that the normal spot is doomed to failure. Read on for the gory details...

Assuming East passes then South will open 1♥ and North respond 1♠, South can raise to 3♠ and North has enough to bid on to game.

With East on lead declarer has a chance: the ♦10 is a reasonable start since the opponents have bid hearts, and now North will win in hand and lead a spade towards the queen. East can go in with the Ace and play ace and another club to give partner a ruff, West will return a diamond and come to two heart tricks later on for down two. Alternatively, if East ducks the spade to the queen then a spade is returned to the King and Ace. East must find the heart switch to score two heart tricks and promote the ♠10, and again that is two off. (West should know not to play a diamond as if East has a singleton diamond they have a 7-card club suit). The winning game is 3NT but that is surely too hard to find, at least on purpose. If people miss their spade fit by accident and roll in +600, smile and say well done!

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all

Another 20/20 deal and with no-one at the table holding a singleton or 5-card suit this really will be a battle of the low levels.

Most South players will pass, and East will be left to open in 4th chair. For those die-hard Acol players, 1♠ will appeal and that might actually be passed out, or West will respond 1NT and play there. Alternatively 1♦-1♥-1NT might be the auction, or even 1♦-1♥-1♠-Pass for some.

If EW buy the hand in No Trumps, then despite the ♦Q being onside they lack the firepower to make it. The defence can take four heart tricks (leading the Jack to pin 8x in East's hand) and attack clubs as well. East can take two club tricks, three spade tricks and a diamond, but doesn't have the wherewithal to make seven. The limit of the hand is 1♠ which should scramble home as the ♠8 in dummy is a key pip! Mind you East will have to guess to ignore the spade finesse and take the diamond finesse instead, perhaps a little far-fetched. Well done if you got a plus score as EW – who knew that when you held that EW hand and had three passes to you, the winning action was to throw the deal in!

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

Our evening draws to a close with 26 points, two balanced hands and a comfortable game for EW...not so fast!

A common and simple auction will be 1NT-P-3NT and North has to find a lead. "A spade lead was obvious" South will claim afterwards, but the ♥2 looks a bit more mainstream to me. Now West will win in hand and probably play a club to the Ace to take a diamond finesse. North can win and now might find a spade switch (Smith Peters would help here) to beat the contract by two tricks.

An old ruse used to be to win the lead and play on your weak suit, a spade to the ten might fool the defence for a little while but North should count points and realise that West has too much in the red suits to hold the ♠K as well.

If North leads the ♣2 at trick one, then on today's layout West should play the ♣9 from dummy. They can try a heart to hand and cash five clubs, making nine tricks (or ten if North discards a heart on the 5th club). If EW reach 3NT in slower fashion I doubt this will affect the play much, 1♦-2♣-2NT-3NT will get a heart lead and North will be faced with the same decision. Thank you to everyone who played tonight, and I hope you enjoyed the bridge!



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