British Winter Sim Pairs

in memory of

Peter Jordan

Tuesday
13th January 2026

2025 Winners:

Oksana Remez

David Thompson

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 Brian Senior.

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

	♠A3 ♥862 ♦KQ8 ♣AQ1053	
♠Q109742 ♥93 ♦74 ♣K96		♠K86 ♥AKJ5 ♦A93 ♣J42
	♠J5 ♥Q1074 ♦J10652 ♣87	

HCP	
15	
5	16
4	

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

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

If North opens 1♣, East will have to double, as the hand does not contain a club stopper. If West responds 1♠, that may be that. Some Wests may jump to 2♠, arguing that they would do so with a four-card suit and 9 HCP, and that the two extra spades make the hand roughly of the same value. If so, East may raise to 3♠ to invite game, but now West will decide enough is enough. Just as well, as 3♠ is the limit on the hand.

If North opens a strong NT, some pairs will not be able to double due to their methods, while others will not think the hand quite worth a double.

If East does double, South will run, showing either diamonds or perhaps diamonds and another or diamonds and hearts. All those routes get NS to the safe haven of 2♦, which can be made. However, West competes with 2♠ and that scores +140.

If East passes over 1NT, so will South. Now, 5 HCP or not, West should compete with 2♠. This is only possible if East understands that the primary job against an opposing 1NT opening is to disturb that contract, to compete the partscore, not to bid game in the face of a strong No Trump. East can raise to 3♠, but should not dream of raising all the way to game. Otherwise, next time the situation comes up, West will be scared to compete.

♠KQJ10
♥AK5
♦K96
♣J105

♠73
♥1042
♦AJ852
♣AK9

♠84
♥9
♦Q74
♣Q876432

♠A9652
♥QJ8763
♦103
♣-

HCP	
17	
12	4
7	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	6	6	-
S	-	-	6	6	-
E	3	-	-	-	-
W	3	-	-	-	-

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

Six of either major is cold for NS, with 6♠ played by North the place we would like to reach, as this protects the diamond position.
East should not be afraid of the weakness of the club suit – the vulnerability provides a level of security – and should open 3♣. If South, looking at only 7 HCP, passes, West may raise to 4♣/5♣, or may try 3NT, knowing that he should have all the tricks upon gaining the lead, and not caring about going down since the opposition rate to have a major-suit game most of the time. Whatever West does, North will double. If still available, South will cuebid 4♣ and North bid spades. Will South bid on? He should do, I think. Indeed, I have sympathy with South committing to slam by cuebidding clubs at whatever level is necessary then bidding on to 6♠. Yes, there might be two losers, but the South hand has enormous potential. What if South sees not 7 HCP, but six-five distribution, and so cuebids 4♣ over 3♣? North will expect five-five with opening values, and no number of clubs that West can bid will discourage him. Indeed, the more bidding West does, the more certain North will become that South is very short in clubs. The very least North should do is to go to the five level, jumping to 5♠ if possible, to show a hand too good for 4♠ and asking for a club control. If West has taken away the option to jump to 5♠, North can bid 6♠ instead, knowing that West has club length so South has shortage.

♠QJ32
♥J76543
♦10
♣Q3

♠A105
♥92
♦Q752
♣A1097

♠K874
♥Q
♦AKJ63
♣J86

♠96
♥AK108
♦984
♣K542

HCP	
6	
10	14
10	

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

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

At favourable vulnerability North can open a weak 2♥ in third seat. East will double and South raise to 4♥. With 10 HCP but only three spades, West can make a responsive double, giving East a close decision.
The obvious call is for East to bid 5♦, but that is down one on normal defence. But perhaps East should consider the fact that West is a passed hand, so 11 tricks may be hard work. The alternative is to pass and collect whatever is available on defence to 4♥ doubled.
The penalty proves to be just +100, but that will be OK if many East-Wests are going minus in 5♦ or 4♠.

♠1098542
♥8
♦86542
♣3

♠A7
♥AK106
♦QJ103
♣J102

♠6
♥QJ9752
♦A7
♣Q874

♠KQJ3
♥43
♦K9
♣AK965

HCP	
0	
15	9
16	

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

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

If West opens a strong NT, North is too weak to come in despite the six-five shape, so will pass.
East should bid to 4♥. Assuming the system permits it, a 4♣ or 4♦ transfer to hearts is superior to transferring with 2♦ then raising the completion to game, as it makes it harder for the opposition to get into the auction.
South must pass over a 2♦ transfer but has enough to then double 4♥ for take-out, which gets a very easy 4♠ from North.
South would also pass a 4♦ transfer but then double 4♥, with the same effect. By agreement, however, a 4♣ transfer could be doubled to show clubs, then 4♥ could be doubled to show not only clubs but also a good hand.
Four Spades is easy, but West may go on to 5♥ which, though down two if the club ruff is found, is an excellent save.
If playing Acol with a weak NT, West may open 1♥ and East make a splinter bid in response. I guess that if East bids 3♠, splinter, South will double and North bid 4♠ over 4♥.

♠Q862
♥A543
♦AJ7
♣43

♠K95
♥K762
♦54
♣J862

♠4
♥J108
♦Q108632
♣K105

♠AJ1073
♥Q9
♦K9
♣AQ97

HCP	
11	
7	6
16	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	2	2	5	3
S	2	1	2	5	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

East can open with a weak 2♦, if methods allow, but this will not inconvenience NS in the slightest. South overcalls 2♠ and North raises that to game, completing the auction.
With one black king onside and the other offside, there should be 11 easy tricks.
If East does not have a weak 2♦ available to him, he will often pass, though the more aggressive players will simple open at the three level instead of two. It is, of course, always less comfortable to be forced to bid a level higher, but South has a 3♠ overcall and North raises to game.
If East does not open, South opens 1♠, North makes an invitational raise, and South accepts.
All roads, other than West leading a heart, lead to 11 tricks in 4♠ for +650.

♠A7
♥J10864
♦K83
♣K76

♠1064
♥A3
♦764
♣QJ985

♠K98
♥KQ952
♦J52
♣43

♠QJ532
♥7
♦AQ109
♣A102

HCP	
11	
7	9
13	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	5	2	4	3
S	2	5	2	4	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

Acol players will respond 2♥ to South's 1♠ opening. With a minimum opener, South will have to rebid 2♠, and North will bid 2NT. On a likely misfit and with little to spare, South should pass.
With hearts bid by declarer, East will pick a minor for the opening lead. Declarer will win and should play ace and another spade. When the queen scores and East has followed with the eight and nine, it is possible that the suit is split four-two, but declarer should play a third round as it would be unlucky to lose four hearts and two spades. Taking that slight risk establishes a ninth trick.
Those who overbid to game will be forced to play for a favourable spade position and will score +400 and a lot of matchpoints.
If playing two-over-one GF, North will have to start with 1NT, then bid 2NT over South's 2♦ rebid. South again can see the misfit, so should pass out 2NT.

♠1098
♥J92
♦1092
♣AJ92

♠AJ72
♥107
♦KJ43
♣1083

♠K654
♥Q865
♦86
♣KQ4

♠Q3
♥AK43
♦AQ75
♣765

HCP	
6	
9	10
15	

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

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

If South opens a strong No Trump, he will often play there. At a different vulnerability East might compete if having a way to show both majors, but with only four-four in the two suits that will be too much of a gamble for most.
As it turns out, there is a four-four fit and the cards lie very well for EW, who can make nine tricks in a spade contract.
How good +140 will be will depend to some extent on how many down 1NT goes. Double dummy, it can be held to down one, but that may require that declarer pin the doubleton ten of hearts offside, and why should he do that? Two down may be the more frequent outcome.
Many Acol players will open the South hand with 1♥ and North will respond 1NT and usually play there. Played by North, there is no possibility of being given a trick on the lead, as a spade lead looks to be pretty automatic. Now declarer will definitely do well to come to a sixth trick.

♠105
♥854
♦Q1062
♣KQJ8

♠A987
♥AJ96
♦3
♣9532

♠J43
♥KQ32
♦A85
♣A106

♠KQ62
♥107
♦KJ974
♣74

HCP	
8	
9	14
9	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	2	-	4	3	2
W	2	-	4	3	2

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

EW can make 4♥ but it may take a second look to spot how this is achieved, as there appear to be two losers in each black suit. Declarer can play spades for one loser courtesy of a technique called an intra-finesse. He starts spades by leading the seven and running it. South wins the trick and gets off play with a club or diamond, and now declarer leads the jack of spades to pin North's ten. The fortunate layout of the spade suit means three spade winners for declarer and ten in all.

Having said which, few are likely to be in game.

If East opens a weak No Trump, I strongly recommend using Stayman then passing the 2♥ response. Even a four-three fit could be easier to play than 1NT, with all West's values in the two majors. If East has no major and bids 2♦, West uses Scramble Stayman and bids 2♥, where he will play unless East has three spades and two hearts, when he will convert to 2♠.

If, playing a strong No Trump, East opens 1♣ and raises the 1♥ response to 2♥, West has no reason to bid on since partner will have a weak No Trump more often than not.

The most likely way for EW to get to the thin game will be after a 1♣ opening and 1♦ overcall. If North raises to 3♦, the added momentum might see EW bid higher than they would if left to themselves;

♠K8
♥J754
♦J93
♣AK87

♠AJ94
♥Q832
♦KQ10
♣Q6

♠632
♥AK9
♦A864
♣543

♠Q1075
♥106
♦752
♣J1092

HCP	
12	
14	11
3	

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

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

If North opens with a weak No Trump, there will be two passes to West. Though a borderline decision for some, I expect the majority to double and, if that ends the auction, the contract should be down two for a useful score to EW.

More likely, South will run to 2♣. Whether that just shows clubs, or shows clubs and another suit, it is better than sitting for 1NT doubled. Two Clubs doubled is a big improvement for NS, being down only one, better than allowing the opposition to bid and make a partscore. EW will either double 2♣ or, more likely, bid to their own contract. With ♥AK and ♦A facing a double of 1NT, many Easts will drive to game, presumably 3NT, and that should see them go minus.

If North opens 1♣, there will usually be two passes to West. Some Wests will double, some will overcall 1NT. East will do well to pass the protective NT, which is usually played as 11-14(15) or so, and that will be a comfortable +120. If East invites game, West is likely to accept and go minus.

What if West makes a take-out double of 1♣? With no long suit and no club stopper, East has little option but to respond 2♦ – he is way too good for a simple 1♦ – and that will end the auction, with nine tricks possible, as is indeed the case in either of the other four-three fits.

♠AQJ987
♥82
♦QJ97
♣3

♠K32
♥76
♦AK843
♣Q107

♠1064
♥AK5
♦1065
♣AK62

♠5
♥QJ10943
♦2
♣J9854

HCP	
10	
12	14
4	

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

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

I can see a lot of EWs getting to 3NT, a contract which cannot be beaten at double dummy but which in practice rates to fail by a trick more often than not.

If East opens 1♣, South can overcall 2♥, West bid 3♦, and East 3NT.

If East opens a weak NT, most Souths will pass because they are vulnerable, and West raises straight to 3NT, shutting North out. That is a good news/bad news thing – it means that South will never find a spade lead, but also that declarer will have no clues from the bidding.

There are many ways the play can go after South's likely heart lead. The South hand can always be shut out if declarer reads the layout correctly, and there is even a possible fourth club trick if declarer has a little inspiration. Meanwhile, North can be endplayed.

Say that declarer wins a heart lead and ducks a diamond. North wins and a passive defence sees declarer clear the diamonds to establish an eighth trick. Later, declarer can endplay North in spades or pick up the fourth club trick to bring his total to nine. Neither of those possibilities is automatic, of course.

♠K9873
♥KQJ7
♦542
♣Q

♠Q654
♥8532
♦J6
♣754

♠J2
♥A96
♦K97
♣108632

♠A10
♥104
♦AQ1083
♣AKJ9

HCP	
11	
3	8
18	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	5	5	5	5
S	4	5	5	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all

South opens 1♦ and North responds 1♠. Many experts will now rebid a disciplined 2♣, but many club and congress players will stretch slightly and jump to 3♣. This is game-forcing, the reason why more of the experts will prefer 2♣. If 2♣ is passed out, it doesn't have to be a disaster, while if we survive this round the remainder of the auction will be much more comfortable if we are adding to our strength rather than trying to slightly subtract from what we have already promised. It is far too unwieldy to play 3♣ as other than being GF.

All of that proves to be completely academic. If South rebids 2♣, North bids 2NT and South raises that to game, where 11 tricks are made easily enough, declarer just needing to keep an eye on his communications.

If South rebids 3♣, North may give preference to diamonds, over which South will bid 3♥, FSF, and North conclude the bidding with 3NT. Alternatively, with most of his strength in partner's short suits, North may give up on a possible diamond slam and simply bid 3NT over 3♣. South, of course, will have no reason to bid on over that.

♠A65
♥8
♦AQJ85432
♣9

♠109872
♥95
♦-
♣KQJ642

♠K43
♥AQ42
♦97
♣10873

♠QJ
♥KJ10763
♦K106
♣A5

HCP	
11	
6	9
14	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	6	2	-	4
S	-	5	2	-	4
E	3	-	-	3	-
W	3	-	-	3	-

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

A player who is willing to risk missing a spade fit to put pressure on the opposition might open the West hand with a club pre-empt. Not your cup of tea? Fair enough, there is absolutely nothing wrong with passing as dealer.

If West passes, North can open 1♦ or 5♦ – the hand is way too good for 4♦, of course, which would be the recommended action without the ace of spades.

A 5♦ opening ends the auction. A 1♦ opening sees South respond 1♥ and now West can bid whatever takes his fancy – a simple 2♣, a club pre-empt which, by inference should have a four-card or longer major on the side to explain the original pass, or even perhaps a two-suited overcall. The likelihood is that North will become declarer in a diamond contract, often just game, but sometimes maybe slam.

And if West does open with a club pre-empt? North will overcall 3♦/4♦. East should take all the investigative bidding space away by bidding 5♣, and that may force South to settle for 5♦.

In a diamond contract played by North, with the spade position protected, hearts can be established and 12 tricks made. +1370 will score very well.

♠J97
♥A542
♦875
♣KQ4

♠6
♥KJ
♦KQJ10932
♣653

♠852
♥10973
♦6
♣AJ972

♠AKQ1043
♥Q86
♦A4
♣108

HCP	
10	
10	5
15	

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

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

There should be two passes to South, who opens 1♠. West has the strength to allow a simple 2♦ overcall, and no doubt some will choose that bid. North has an easy negative double – 10 HCP is a little too much for a quiet 2♠, even facing a known five-card suit, when that would be many people's first thought. South will rebid 3♠ and North raise to game.

West will lead the king of diamonds to declarer's ace and declarer can play a club, losing to the ace. The position of the ♣A tells declarer that West should have the ♥K, so he can play hearts by ducking the second round to the king and so make the ♥Q as his tenth trick.

That inference about the position of the king of hearts is less clear if West makes a pre-emptive overcall, whether 3♦ or 4♦, which I prefer to the simple 2♦ call. West has playing strength but very little defence against the majors, so NS will often have a game on. That being the case, why not try to make bidding it as difficult as possible?

On this occasion, nothing is likely to silence North who, as a passed hand, has a near maximum, and has the safety net of three-card spade support. Those playing five-card majors will bid 3♠ over 3♦, or perhaps double over 4♦. Either should see 4♠ reached.

♠K106
♥QJ432
♦A5
♣K98

♠Q
♥75
♦K9832
♣AJ1062

♠AJ7432
♥K6
♦J107
♣43

♠985
♥A1098
♦Q64
♣Q75

HCP	
13	
10	9
8	

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

Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all

East opens with a weak two bid and that will often buy the contract. Would you find a bid with the North hand? With such a weak heart suit it looks dangerous to come in and, of course, if South has the right cards for 3♥ to be making, he would probably have raised to 4♥, which is not. North is too weak for 2NT, and double would be ridiculous on this shape, so pass is all that is left.
3♥ can be made on the NS cards, and even one down in 4♥ will score well if EW are making 2♠ at many tables.
Two Spades cannot be beaten if declarer gets the play right. The defence needs both a trump trick and a diamond ruff to beat 2♠, and it is impossible to get both: when declarer gets to dummy by winning the second diamond, he plays the ♠Q, and if North covers there is no diamond ruff, while if he doesn't cover he gets the ruff but not the trump trick.

♠72
♥A32
♦A10954
♣K87

♠Q1085
♥Q10964
♦KJ3
♣6

♠J964
♥KJ75
♦86
♣AQ3

♠AK3
♥8
♦Q72
♣J109542

HCP	
11	
8	11
10	

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

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

EW can make 2♥/2♠, while NS can make 3♦ or 4♣, but will anyone actually open the bidding?
Not South, who is close but the long suit is a weak one and it would be at adverse vulnerability, and not West unless they play a 2♦ or 2♥ opener to show a weak hand with both majors. A few may do so, but only a few. North? Maybe, but vulnerable against not and short in spades – I would just be hoping the board might get passed out. Which leaves East, who has an empty 11 HCP with no long suit. If East does open, NS are likely to compete to the three level in clubs, so EW will go minus despite the double fit in the majors.
Whoever goes plus should score OK, with a significant number passing the board out.

♠AQ8652
♥64
♦K854
♣9

♠J7
♥103
♦AQ102
♣KJ873

♠109
♥AQJ872
♦J3
♣Q102

♠K43
♥K95
♦976
♣A654

HCP	
9	
11	10
10	

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

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

If West opens 1♣, North overcalls 1♠ and East may stretch to bid 2♥. South has no room to do anything clever so competes with a simple 2♠, and that may run round to East, who repeats the hearts. That is likely to see North, who may have only 9 HCP but does have six-four distribution, compete to 3♠.
Both red aces are onside for NS and spades are two-two, so that declarer cannot be prevented from taking a diamond ruff in the dummy. All that means that ten tricks are a matter of routine.
EW are actually better off in a club contract, where eight tricks can be made, but of course the vulnerability precludes their competing effectively to the four level, even if they escape undoubled.
As for a heart contract, if South leads a low spade and North switches to the singleton club, he can have two ruffs and, though the defence cannot now get at their diamond trick, that still leaves declarer with only seven tricks. With very few NSs bidding the lucky spade game, –200 will not be good for EW.

♠J8
♥J986
♦K974
♣J102

♠632
♥AQ10
♦J106
♣KQ85

♠K975
♥7432
♦3
♣A943

♠AQ104
♥K5
♦AQ852
♣76

HCP	
6	
12	7
15	

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

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

South opens 1♦ and some Wests will double – it is, after all, Love All, the best vulnerability at which to declare the final contract should this prove to be a competitive partscore deal, which looks quite likely.
If 1♦ does not promise four cards, North will probably bid 1♥ and East 1♠. Now South is a bit stuck if 1NT would show 12-14, and may pass, happy to defend against a spade contract. North, however, will compete to 2♦, and if East in turn competes further it will be easy for South to compete with3♦, which will end the auction.
But if 1♦ did promise four, there is a strong case for North bidding 2♦ rather than 1♥. We have seen an auction in which North was comfortable in showing the diamond support on the second round, but suppose that on a slightly different hand East had bid 2♠ or 3♣. Now bidding 1♥ followed by 3♦ is a bit of an overbid. North is worth only one bid so, if the methods permit it, make a that bid a raise of partner's suit – that is what he will most want to hear, and North can leave the rest to him.
Three Diamonds is an easy make, while the best EW can do is to play in clubs, where they can make eight tricks.

♠K32
♥KJ865
♦AKQ
♣K9

♠A4
♥4
♦10865432
♣1087

♠Q98765
♥1072
♦-
♣Q532

♠J10
♥AQ93
♦J97
♣AJ64

HCP	
19	
4	4
13	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	3	5	1	6
S	4	3	4	1	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

At this vulnerability East should open a weak 2♠. South is just about worth a take-out double, and it would be no surprise to see North drive to slam. He does, after all, hold 19 HCP and a five-card suit.
If NS do bid to the heart slam, they should be unlucky, in that the contract could, and should, be defeated. East leads the ♠9, suit-preference for diamonds. West wins, and duly does as requested, returning a diamond for East to ruff – down one.
Bidding slam is OK, just not the obvious one, as the inferior 6NT cannot be defeated. East will probably lead a spade as nothing else is very attractive, and that takes away the spade guess for the eleventh trick. Now declarer needs only the club finesse for his twelfth trick. Said finesse is actually a show-up position as, after two rounds of spades and eight red tricks, East will have to come down to only two clubs to guard against declarer's third spade.

♠6
♥K763
♦AKJ87
♣832

♠J985
♥J82
♦-
♣KQ10974

♠AK32
♥Q54
♦10432
♣AJ

♠Q1074
♥A109
♦Q965
♣65

HCP	
11	
7	14
8	

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

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

While the occasional aggressive player may open 3♣ on the West cards, these should be few and far between at the prevailing vulnerability, and at most tables it will be North who starts the ball rolling with 1♦.
The East hand is far from ideal for the call, but most will no doubt double, and South either introduce the spades or raise diamonds. Even if spades have not been bid by right-hand-opponent, West should appreciate that his hand is really about the club suit. Three Clubs, with or without a jump, as required, looks right and now North, if facing a diamond raise, or South if his first effort was 1♠, will compete with 3♦.
If 3♦ ends the auction, it is an easy make, as would have been 3♣. Four Clubs, however, has four losers so long as the defenders leave declarer to open up the heart suit. Does that mean then that the hand belongs to NS? No. Were West to compete with 3♠, which he surely should if nobody else has yet bid the suit, and which he might try anyway on the way to 4♣, he would find that careful play brings home nine tricks.

♠KQJ83
♥Q82
♦9
♣K1064

♠A974
♥A104
♦A753
♣97

♠10
♥KJ63
♦KJ1064
♣AJ3

♠652
♥975
♦Q82
♣Q852

HCP	
11	
12	13
4	

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

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

If West opens 1♦, North will overcall and East, perhaps, make a negative double to get hearts into the game, though there is a strong case for showing the diamond support, perhaps via a 3♠ splinter bid. If East does make the splinter bid, West may bid 3NT and play there, not seeing much prospect of the flat 12-count being enough to make slam a realistic prospect. If West opens a weak No Trump, North will overcall either to show spades, or to show spades and another, according to what the methods permit. After a take-out double from East, West will either pass, collecting +500, or respond 3♦ then bid 3NT should East opt to bid 3♠ to ask for a stopper. In 3NT, declarer may duck one spade but win the second, fearing a club switch. He will then get the diamonds right as he cannot afford to let South on lead to push a spade through the nine. That ensures nine tricks, and declarer can gamble in hearts by playing North for the queen, making 11 tricks, or finesse into the North hand to play safe for ten. Had North held the ♦Q, declarer would still have had the two-way heart guess as his second chance for the contract. 6♦ can be made, even if declarer gets the trumps wrong. Say that he wins the spade lead and cashes the ace and king of diamonds. A successful heart guess sees the club loser go away on the thirteenth heart, and there is just the diamond to be lost.

♠9532
♥10863
♦5
♣K876

♠AK6
♥K52
♦KQJ102
♣A3

♠Q4
♥97
♦A98763
♣942

♠J1087
♥AQJ4
♦4
♣QJ105

HCP	
3	
20	6
11	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	-	5	-	1	4
W	-	5	-	1	4

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

North will pass, and those Easts with that club in their bag will open a weak 2♦. The hand is not one that is likely to be opened a level higher by those for whom 2♦ is not an option.
South can double 2♦ but West can ignore that and just blast 3NT, where he will play. One time in a hundred this approach may mean a missed slam, but it is far more likely that a slow approach will see the lower-scoring 5♦ being reached, or gratuitous information being given to the defence.
A club lead holds 3NT to the ten top tricks. A heart lead means that declarer also wins the ♥K, for 11 tricks, and after a spade lead declarer can cash the diamonds then try the heart, again making 11.
A pass from East will give South the opportunity to open 1♣. West will double and North perhaps make a pre-emptive raise to 3♣, assuming that 1♣ promised at least four cards. With a six-card suit, East will not want to be shut out so will bid 3♦, and West will again bid 3NT. NS can make nothing. Given the prevailing vulnerability, they had already gone too high by bidding 3♣. Fortunately, it is hard for either East or West to play for a penalty.

♠9
♥1054
♦AK985
♣K832

♠AK84
♥AQ
♦Q764
♣Q96

♠J102
♥986
♦J32
♣AJ105

♠Q7653
♥KJ732
♦10
♣74

HCP	
10	
17	7
6	

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

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

If West opens a strong No Trump there will be two passes to South, who should make whatever bid his methods require to show a major two-suiter. That should see NS get to 2♥ and that may end the auction as it is not clear which of East and West has another bid. If North declares 2♥, a trump lead is an attractive choice from the East hand. West wins the queen and ace and switches to a club. Say that declarer judges well to play low: East wins the ten and plays a third trump, and declarer is left with three trump winners but no ruffs in the short hand. With the defence able to pick up four spade tricks, it looks as though declarer can be held to five tricks for –150.
If West opens 1♦, that will silence North, and after a 1NT response it will be up to South to cuebid 2♦ to show the majors. West will surely feel the need to show the extra values at some point, and those who manage to defend 2♥ doubled should score very well. If West's methods require a 1♠ opening, everything changes, because South no longer has two unbid suits with which to compete. South is unlikely to get involved, but North might overcall 2♦, and will sometimes be left to play there. That will be no fun, as EW can make 3♦ despite North's diamond holding. There is also the possibility of EW bidding uncontested to 3NT after a 1♠ opening – 1NT – 2NT – 3NT. An easy make as the cards lie.

♠K7
♥KQ62
♦KQ9854
♣5

♠A10843 ♠Q52
♥A43 ♥J985
♦A2 ♦106
♣K84 ♣10976

♠J96
♥107
♦J73
♣AQJ32

HCP	
13	
15	3
9	

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

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West will open a strong No Trump if that is the agreed method, and North will compete. If North has a way to show a four-card major and longer minor, that is what he will do, otherwise he may just jump to 3♦, a simple 2♦ not being a natural bid for most pairs. Either way, NS should get to 3♦.
If playing a weak No Trump, West will of course have to open 1♠. Do NS play equal level conversion as not promising a strong hand? In other words, can North double, thereby getting hearts into the picture, then convert a club response to diamonds, without showing much more than a minimum take-out double? If yes, that is what he will do. But if playing the more traditional style, where double followed by a change of suit shows a strong hand, North will have to content himself with a simple 2♦ overcall.
South might raise to 3♦ anyway, but North will not have sufficient spare strength to justify going on, so 3♦ should be the popular resting place.
Ten tricks are possible in 3♦ on another friendly layout.
EW can be held to seven tricks in a spade contract and, being vulnerable, 3♠ down two will not score well.

♠A1052
♥92
♦KJ98
♣764

♠K97 ♠Q863
♥QJ73 ♥104
♦A102 ♦753
♣J98 ♣AK103

♠J4
♥AK865
♦Q64
♣Q52

HCP	
8	
11	9
12	

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

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

Some Wests will open the moderate 11-count with a weak No Trump. There is nothing about the hand to justify an upgrade, but it is Love All, when everyone should strain to buy the contract if it is a partscore deal, so getting in the first blow could be a winning strategy. There will be two passes to South, and the vulnerability will tempt some to compete with 2♥. Again, what is essentially a weak No Trump is not anyone's idea of an ideal hand for an overcall, but partner isn't going to find a heart lead if 1NT is passed out.
If South competes in hearts, East should double for take-out and West leave it in for a probable down one. Plus 100 just beats the +90 or –50 likely if West is left to play in 1NT.
Some Wests will pass as dealer and it will be South who opens, usually with 1♥, though a weak NT is possible. NS can make seven tricks in any denomination, their most likely landing spot being 1NT.
And finally, some Wests will open 1♣, East responding 1♠. If South passes, West will rebid 1NT, which may or may not make. If South now competes, 2♥ is down a trick.
It looks like one of those deals where the key is to go plus.

♠J732
♥AJ109
♦AKQ7
♣5

♠86 ♠5
♥85 ♥KQ762
♦J1086 ♦32
♣AK1083 ♣QJ972

♠AKQ1094
♥43
♦954
♣64

HCP	
15	
8	8
9	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	3	-	6	2
S	-	3	-	6	2
E	3	-	-	-	-
W	3	-	-	-	-

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

North's choice of opening bid may have a major effect on how the auction progresses.
If North opens 1♥, East is likely to stay silent. South responds 1♠ and North raises. If North settles for 3♠, South may see no way in which to explore slam prospects and so settle for a simple re-raise to 4♠, ending the auction. A jump to 5♠ appeal to anyone?
However, if North sees a game raise in the hand and opts to make a 4♣ splinter, South should see a huge trump suit and no wastage opposite the shortage. With nothing to cuebid, he could just blast 6♠, or perhaps ask for key cards – with nothing in either black suit, North would have to have a lot of red-suit strength.
But suppose that North opens 1♦. Now some Easts will make a two-suited overcall of 2NT, showing the lowest two unbid suits. That won't shut South out, but West's jump to 5♣ will leave NS with no room to explore and someone is going to have to guess well. And if NS do guess well and bid the small slam, the vulnerability is the only one at which a save in 7♣ doubled would be too expensive.

♠754
♥KQ952
♦7643
♣J

♠K86
♥643
♦AK5
♣Q1064

♠AQ93
♥A87
♦-
♣AK8752

♠J102
♥J10
♦QJ10982
♣93

HCP	
6	
12	17
5	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	7	1	2	7	7
W	7	1	2	7	7

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

EW are cold for 7♣, and also for 7♠ or 7NT, though both of those require that spades play for four tricks, so are not good bets. In 7♣, of course, the thirteenth trick can come from a spade ruff if required.
When East opens 1♣, South can overcall 2♦ and West is likely to try No Trumps, despite the four-card club support. If West bids 3NT, East can bid 4♣ to invite cuebidding and West will show the ♦A then, over East's 4♥, the ♠K. That improves the East hand dramatically and, if clubs are playing without loss, just one more trick is needed – a red king. East can bid 4NT and West shows one key card. Next East asks for the ♣Q and the answer has to be 5NT to show the queen plus a side-suit king – which king cannot be shown as that would go past 6♣. Whichever that king is, East can see a good chance of 13 tricks. If West bids only 2NT, East jumps to 4♣ and the auction continues on the same lines.
If West bids 3♣ rather than any number of No Trumps, East might bid 3♠, or more likely jump to 4♦ to show the shortage with slam interest. That may not excite West so much, due to having so much in diamonds, and the Grand may be out of the picture. But all of the above assumes that EW are allowed a free ride apart from the 2♦ overcall. All those exploratory bids are not available if North pre-empts in support of diamonds. If North bids 4♦ at his first turn, EW can only guess, which emphasises the value of taking bidding space away from the opposition when they are known to have at least game values, even if in theory 4♦ could cost a four-figure penalty.

♠QJ74
♥J63
♦AQ
♣KQJ10

♠K52
♥Q52
♦K983
♣984

♠103
♥1074
♦J754
♣7653

♠A986
♥AK98
♦1062
♣A2

HCP	
16	
8	1
15	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	3	5	6	5
S	5	3	5	6	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all

NS have a borderline slam.
Say that South opens a strong No Trump: North will use Stayman then do what his system requires over the 2♥ response. 4NT to show four spades in an invitational balanced hand, perhaps? It would be nicer to be able to get the message across at a lower level, leaving room to explore, but many have no such option available to them. If North does jump to 4NT with that meaning, South has a minimum but four spades and all prime values. I think he should bid the spade slam. West will lead passively on this auction, a club. Declarer wins in dummy and runs the queen of spades, losing to the king. If a diamond is returned declarer will have to hold his nerve and call for the queen, as the simple finesse is more likely to succeed than the ♥Q to come down should declarer choose to win the ♦A and pitch diamonds on the clubs.
Everything is fine. Spades are three-two, the diamond is onside, and the jack of hearts can be ruffed in hand – 12 tricks.
If South opens 1♥, North responds 1♠ and South raises quietly to 2♠. North is unlikely to do more than jump to 3NT to offer a choice of games. We have seen that 12 are available in 4♠, but normally only 11 in 3NT. Of course, if South overbids slightly and raises to 3♠, that probably sees North drive to slam.

♠9763
♥KJ73
♦AJ6
♣AQ

♠J5
♥109865
♦52
♣J1083

♠KQ1084
♥A
♦Q104
♣7652

♠A2
♥Q42
♦K9873
♣K94

HCP	
15	
2	11
12	

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

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

If North opens 1♥, East will overcall 1♠ and South bid 2♦. North may raise to 3♦ and South try 3♥. Knowing that there is only a four-three heart fit, North may cuebid 3♠ to ask for a spade stopper, and South play in 3NT. The jack of spades lead sees the contract quickly defeated.
If, however, North becomes declarer in 3NT, for example after opening a strong No Trump, the king of spades lead to the ace and jack sees North with a second spade stopper. The contract can now be made on careful play.
Somewhat surprisingly, given the five-one trump split, 4♥ can be made whatever the defence.
If the opening bid is 1NT, East should overcall, whether the methods permit spades and a minor to be shown or if it has to be just spades. South could start with a take-out double but, with a sure spade stopper and only three hearts, may prefer a simple jump to 3NT.