



Message from
Gianarrigo Rona,
President, World Bridge Federation

Dear Bridge Friends

This year we see the 25th Anniversary of this event, inaugurated by my predecessor José Damiani back in 1986. It is a significant anniversary of this great event and I am proud, as the new elected President of the World Bridge Federation, to be writing this foreword.

I do hope you all enjoyed the event and found the hands interesting and challenging – my thanks go to Eric Kokish for his excellent and most entertaining commentary. You may not be aware that Eric is the Editor of World Bridge News, in which he writes about the World Championships. You can download copies of this publication from the WBF Website at www.worldbridge.org as well as from the site for the results from this event, at www.ecatsbridge.com

Our technology within bridge continues to develop and this will be apparent at the World Championships to be held in Veldhoven, Netherlands, in October when we will not only to have the bulletins and live results on the websites, but also hope to have live transmission of the video from the vu-graph theatre

The 2011 World Championships include the World Transnational Open Teams Championships, where anyone who is a bona fide member of his or her NBO can participate – it is a really exciting event, giving players the opportunity of enjoying an event where they can play against or watch some of the greatest names in bridge today. Do give consideration to joining us there – the WBF would welcome your presence.

Once again, thank you for taking part in the World Wide Bridge Contest – and please continue to enjoy your bridge.

With warm regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gianarrigo Rona'.

Gianarrigo Rona
President, World Bridge Federation

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

At nearly every table where EW employ natural methods, East will declare 3NT on an uncontested auction in the family of: 2NT-3NT or 2NT-3♣; 3♦-3NT. South will concede a fast trick with a black-suit lead, or a tempo with a less likely heart lead. Unless declarer fails to score a trick with the ♠J, the ♣J or West's long heart, he will come to at least 10 tricks.

Some will manage a remunerative eleventh if the defenders have some trouble with their discards, or with some inspired card reading against normal defense. Say that South leads a spade and dummy's jack wins. Declarer leads a diamond to the jack and king and if South has a spade count he will often continue that suit. If declarer decides to play North for the ♥K he can run diamonds and cash the ♠A, discarding a heart and a club from dummy. North must keep three hearts lest declarer play ace and another, ducking in dummy, so must part with two clubs. Declarer can cash ace-king of clubs and lead a heart, covering South's card to endplay North in hearts. The only way the defense can deny declarer this moment in the sun is for South to switch to a heart when in with the ♦K.

If you found this defense or this spectacular line of play, please be sure some ink-stained wretch knows about it and publishes an article worthy of your effort.

Where the East hand is out of range for an opening bid in notrump in some strong-club systems, West may declare 3NT (e.g. IC*-INT; 3NT, perhaps with some exploratory

bids between 1NT and 3NT). It's likely that North will lead a club in this scenario, with South continuing the suit when he gains the lead in diamonds. Though North could still go wrong in the endgame that is most unlikely and declarer will finish with nine tricks and a poor score. On a less likely spade lead, say declarer wins the ace and plays ♦A, diamond; South must get out with a heart to avoid conceding a black-suit trick and careful defense will deprive declarer of a tenth trick.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

The fate of this deal will turn largely on style and judgment. Though some Easts will open 3♣ or start with a tactical pass, the favorable vulnerability will be enough to convince most to try 4♠. Though South or North might double 4♠ (which his partner might pass for penalty or advance with a takeout 4NT), there will be many tables where 4♠ is passed out.

As the only game available to NS is 3NT (declarer must go after diamonds first on a spade lead), their best possible result is to defend 4♠ doubled for one down and +100. Next best will be to pass out 4♠ and chalk up +50. Where someone doubles 4♠ and his partner takes out, N/S will do best to finish in clubs rather than hearts, though that will not be much of a victory: in hearts East can get a club ruff for down three, but in clubs declarer can hold his losses to two hearts, a diamond and a trump. Both -200 and -300 will score poorly for NS though -500 or -800 will be substantially worse where West doubles a five-level contract.

Where East conservatively opens 3♠, South will have no security in doubling or passing, but I suspect that the unsound takeout double will get more votes; if West passes, North will think fleetingly of 3NT or a penalty pass before settling for 4♥, which figures to get past most Wests (though the more aggressive of their number will go for the jugular with a thin penalty double). Whether a double is more or less likely to get East to lead his singleton club rather than a spade may be a partnership matter, but if East does get his club ruff, +500 will be well-rewarded. Where South and West pass 3♠, so might North, but some will protect with a double, leaving West a decision over South's takeout to 4♥, with pass, double and a somewhat eccentric delayed 4♠ possible. Down one on a spade lead is a lively possibility, with -100 yielding a far better score to NS than -200. If West raises to 4♠ over double, North will double and South will pass, but if West's 4♠ raise comes after a pass by South, that may well conclude the bidding.

At the few tables where East passes as dealer, the bidding will begin: 1m-Pass-1♥, and presumably East will bid 3♠ as part of his initial plan. It might continue: Pass-Pass-Double-Pass; 4♥-All pass, but the bidding could end at 4♥ doubled, 4♠, or 4♠ doubled.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

♠ 7 4 2 ♥ 3 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ K Q 7 6 5 4 ♠ K 8 ♥ K 10 6 4 ♦ K Q 10 9 3 2 ♣ 9	♠ A Q 10 5 3 ♥ J 9 8 7 ♦ 8 5 ♣ 10 8 ♠ J 9 6 ♥ A Q 5 2 ♦ A J ♣ A J 3 2
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Most West players will compete over a strong notrump opening by South, but not all of them will have a method to show both hearts and diamonds wholesale, let alone only four hearts with longer diamonds.

Regardless of West's action or inaction over 1NT, North will try to land in 3♣; if he can indicate his long suit, South might compete to 4♣ if EW get together in hearts, though South will like his chances on defense and might prefer to sell out. Some Wests will have to pass over 1NT or focus on their long suit, perhaps by overcalling 3♦, an action that might end the auction, though some South players will protect with a takeout double, and NS will buy the contract at 4♣. Where West's initial action depicts a major-minor two suiter of some sort, East's main mission will be to find the right level.

Where South, out of range for 1NT, opens a natural 1♣, North might bounce to 4♣ over West's 1♦ or 2♦ overcall. Though that figures to end the auction, some Easts will risk a responsive double, leading to West declaring 4♥ doubled or NS finishing at 5♣, perhaps doubled by EW pairs who believe they have some equity to protect.

At some clubs the normal start will be: 1♥-2♦-Pass-2♠, leaving South badly placed; if South passes so will West, and North will trade on the vulnerability to protect with 3♣. That might reasonably end the auction, but someone might find another bid, leading to contracts of 3♦ EW and 4♣ NS; hearts figure to get lost at these tables.

Where South begins with a strong or two-plus-cards 1♣, West will be more inclined to preempt, and though 2♦ might be passed out, NS might get as high as 3NT if South reopens. Though EW can beat 3NT on a high diamond lead followed by accurate discarding, it's easy to imagine that the run of the clubs will create some problems for the defense leading to declarer scoring a second heart trick or perhaps a surprise spade trick.

Though par on the board is 4♣ doubled down one, that will be an infrequent result. NS can arrange two heart ruffs to hold diamond contracts to eight tricks, but hearts offers EW nine winners even on two rounds of clubs as long as declarer cashes three rounds

of spades and a high diamond and does not try to draw trumps.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Though East would like to direct his side to a heart contract, or perhaps reach a diamond partial, the bidding might end before he gets a chance to express a meaningful opinion. Though some Wests will pass as dealer and others will start with a weak notrump, most will open 1♠, and though some Easts will pass, many more of their number will try a hopeful INT. As not every South will fancy overcalling 2♣ with a poor five-card suit and a balanced 14-count, INT (where systemically nonforcing or semi-forcing) will end the auction rather more often than we might expect after a quick glance at the EW cards. NS can take eight top tricks against INT and South will only very rarely try for a ninth by underleading the ♦AK after cashing his clubs. NS +200 should be excellent, +300 off the charts.

Where INT is a one-round force, West will rebid 2♣ if given the opportunity, and East will convert to 2♥, which figures to get past everyone. Unless East can avoid the diamond ruff or three natural diamond losers with a misguess, EW +110 will be the popular result.

Where East passes 1♠, South will protect with INT or 2♣. East will reopen in turn with 2♥ over INT, and might well buy the contract, though North might compete to 2NT or NS might wriggle into 3♣, perhaps via a competitive double by either partner. If East does not volunteer 3♦ (which he might make), West can defeat 2NT by leading hearts, but 3♣ is impregnable.

At the tables where South overcalls in clubs, North will raise to 3♥ and leave East to guess whether to risk 3♥ in an exposed position. If he does and NS do not double to protect their equity in 3♣, NS +100 might not be a particularly good score: so much will depend on system and style --- whether EW languish in INT or find their heart fit or take their six heart tricks against South's notrump contracts or sell out to 3♣.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

Though this is a partscore deal (3♣ for NS, 4♣ for EW), it's easy to imagine each side getting a trick too high, something that could be much more expensive for one side than the other thanks to the prevailing vulnerability and the possibility of a penalty double.

East will open 1♣ or 1♦ after a pass by North, and if South has a weak jump overcall available to him, he should not be dissuaded from making one by his collection of junk outside his strong spade suit. As he is not strong enough to bid twice voluntarily, getting his six-card suit off his chest with his initial action is a sound strategic move. Though West might raise to 2♣ over 1♣, 2♣ should silence him, and North will base his spade raise on systemic options and judgment. East will double 3♣ for takeout, but might not do so over 4♣ as the double is more likely to be passed for penalty at this level: East has some defense, but not as much as West would expect for a voluntary high-level action facing a partner whose hand might be quite weak.

Norths who settle for a raise to 3♣ will

not change their minds and bid 4♣ over EW's 4♣. East will make 4♣ on any lead by building a third heart trick for a diamond discard from the West hand and taking three spade ruffs in East; +130 looks pretty good for EW, but if too many NS pairs go for 200 in 4♣ doubled, that will not be so. For EW to do well at the tables where NS reach 4♣, they must avoid going on to 5♣ and settling for +100 by not doubling. On deals of this type, marginal decisions often carry a high premium for being right, and it remains to be seen how well each side will do in the scoring for achieving a small plus or incurring a small minus with bigger ones available.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

If EW find a way to reach game in one of the majors, they will fail only if declarer goes wrong in spades, and there is no evidence to point him to such misfortune.

Even at favorable vulnerability, it would take a hungry North to enter the auction over West's second-position 1♥ opening, so if EW are going to get to game it figures to be under their own steam, and everything starts with East refusing to pass his partner's opening bid. Whether he chooses 2♥, 1♠, or (where available) a forcing INT, West will revalue his hand positively. After a 1♠ response, he is more likely to drive to 4♣ via a splinter raise of 4♣ than he is to settle for a heavy 3♠. After a raise to 2♥, some will choose a simple 4♥, but others will introduce spades or use a pet method to show club shortage and game interest. Though

some Wests will stop short of game if East rejects a trial bid, most will not, so I believe most EW pairs will indeed finish in 4♥ or 4♣ at the tables where East dredges up a response to 1♥.

Strong clubbers will usually do likewise as East will introduce spades in most variations where NS do not compete, but if it starts: 1♣*-1♦-Pass-2♦, East might pass a nonforcing free bid of 2♥ by the 1♣ opener.

You can be sure that some active South players will deem their unimpressive collection entirely appropriate for a 3♣ opening, their favorable vulnerability being of greater importance to them than having to open in second position. If North does nothing more than compete to 4♣, West will double twice and get his side to 4♣, but at these tables, NS have a chance for a coup because declarer might well misguess the position of the ♠Q thanks to South's preempt. If North jumps to 5♣, the best EW can do is double and collect a 500-point penalty (if they take a diamond ruff they lose their heart trick), which will be below average if EW +620 proves to be a common result, but a good score otherwise. Yes, there will be a few EW pairs going minus in 5♣ to accompany those who fail at 4♣. How revolting!

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

With nothing bad happening in the red suits, NS can make 6♥ or 6♦ if they find a way to bid one of those slams.

West will usually mention his long suit

where South opens with a strong 1♣ or 2♣. East, with nothing but some modest trump support, might raise gently if the level is not too high, but if North introduces diamonds meaningfully, South is not likely to stop short of 6♥. Whether he takes the trouble to look for a spade fit or to set diamonds as trumps in order to check on the ♦Q via his pet form of Roman Keycard Blackwood might be of some scholarly interest, but will probably not affect the bottom line.

If West remains silent over a 2♣ opening and North's style or methods call for a waiting 2♦ response, NS might not have such an easy time of it. Say that North bids 3♦ over a 2♥ rebid, South will continue with 3♥ or 3♠ and in both cases North will not have a descriptive continuation. Sure, South will probably continue over North's 4♥ as a minor-suit ace will usually offer a play for 6♥, but as North could hold something like: xx, x, Jxxxxx, Kxx for his bidding, there will be some anxious moments. Where N can start with a positive response in diamonds after a strong 1♣, or can show a suit headed by two of the top three honors facing a 2♣ opening, life will be infinitely more comfortable for his side.

This is one of those deals where slam is so likely to be reached via good bidding or the other kind that those missing slam rate to score poorly. And though few will play their slam in diamonds, those who do will be disappointed with their score.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

EW have a 23-point slam and might reach the excellent 6♦ if they can determine

they have a 10-card fit to make up for the inadequate high-card strength and misfit in the rounded suits.

NS are likely to remain silent after 1♥ from West, but having the auction to themselves will not necessarily make life easy for EW. Their adventure begins with East having to choose between 1♠ and 2♦ at his first turn. Though he would open his hand in any position, it does not follow that he should drive to game himself when partner opens the bidding in his short suit. Nonetheless, many will start with 2♦, planning to introduce shorter suits as long as catching four-card support remains a possibility. West's hand improves dramatically after a 2♦ response, and West will choose from among 3♦ (where forcing), 4♦, or a splinter raise of 4♣. If West can locate a spade control opposite, he will not quit short of 6♦ and perhaps the main danger for his side will be reaching a no-play grand slam.

I suspect that 1♠ will be a more popular first response for East, although there are dangers in that choice, too. One of them might feature here when West raises to 2♠ as a matter of style. EW are a long way from 6♦ in this scenario, but if East continues with a hopeful 3♦, West will raise to 4♦ and EW's fit will come to light, though neither partner will know of the crucial tenth trump. East, facing known club shortness, will have no idea whether his eight working HCP will stretch to produce a play for 5♦, let alone six. Sure, West might raise East's 5♦ continuation to 6♦, but it will not be a walk in the park at any point in the auction. If West rebids 2♦ rather than raise spades, East will rely on system and judgment to choose from among 3♦, 4♦, 2NT and the most awkward of all fourth-suit forces, 3♣. There is sure to be some guesswork in the ensuing auction in all cases, but as 3NT can be held to three (+400) and 4♠ can be defeated; those who finish in 5♦ will probably fare reasonably well for +420.

Though 6♦ can be made without relying on

North holding at least one of two missing spade honors, the winning lines involve some complex play, including variations where declarer has to finesse against South's doubleton $\diamond Q$. Declarer will save himself considerable anxiety and energy by planning on leading spades twice toward the East hand if it comes to that, but in many cases the defense will lead clubs and simplify the play: North would establish the $\clubsuit K$ outright while a club lead from South would allow declarer to discard a spade from dummy at Trick One and a second spade later on the established $\clubsuit K$.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

\spadesuit J 2	
\heartsuit 10 9 8 4	
\diamond A Q J 5	
\clubsuit Q J 4	
\spadesuit A K Q 6	\spadesuit —
\heartsuit Q 6 2	\heartsuit A K J 7 3
\diamond 10 4 3	\diamond K 8 7
\clubsuit 9 8 6	\clubsuit K 10 5 3 2
\spadesuit 10 9 8 7 5 4 3	
\heartsuit 5	
\diamond 9 6 2	
\clubsuit A 7	

North doesn't have much of a hand, but at favorable vulnerability some will open $1\diamond$, a systemic $1\clubsuit$ or a weak notrump, the latter creating a real possibility that South will bid as high as $4\spadesuit$, perhaps as a two-way direct bash before EW reach their touch-and-go $4\heartsuit$ contract. In auctions in the family of $1m-1\heartsuit-3\spadesuit$, West will have a tough decision with all those minor-suit losers and only three-card support; though he might bid $4\heartsuit$, he might reasonably pass or double for penalty (if that is the partnership agreement).

Where North passes as dealer, South will overcall East's $1\heartsuit$ with $2\spadesuit$ or $3\spadesuit$. Over $2\spadesuit$, West will either raise to $3\heartsuit$ or $4\heartsuit$, bid a natural $2NT$, stall with an atypical negative double, risk a questionable penalty double, or pass, intending to pass a reopening double for penalty. If none of those choices seemed particularly attractive, consider what a $3\spadesuit$ overcall would do. Sure, playing for penalty has more appeal at the three

level, but if doing so means passing $3\spadesuit$, there is more risk that opener will pass out $3\spadesuit$ than $2\spadesuit$; meanwhile a stab at $3NT$ or $4\heartsuit$ focuses on the vulnerable game bonus but either contract could be hopeless facing a variety of normal $1\heartsuit$ openings.

E/W can make $3NT$ easily enough by taking a trick with the $\diamond K$, but on a spade lead declarer might start on clubs and have a shot at a tenth trick and a superb score if he gets the clubs right the defense slips by continuing spades.

The play in the popular $4\heartsuit$ will usually require some care. After a spade lead, declarer must not discard more than one diamond on high spades, lest he create a second tap suit for the defense; he must cash no more than two high trumps and make a winning play in clubs; eventually, he will be able to take a trick with the $\diamond K$.

If the defense starts with two rounds of diamonds, declarer must play two rounds of trumps ending in dummy, take a diamond discard and perhaps one club discard, then play clubs accurately; two high trumps from hand and a third trump to dummy won't work because dummy needs a low trump to control a late force after declarer loses his second club trick. EW pairs who accept a penalty against spade contracts will need a significant number of their counterparts to go minus in $4\heartsuit$ to salvage any sort of score.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

	\spadesuit A K
	\heartsuit A K Q 2
	\diamond Q 9
	\clubsuit A Q J 6 3
\spadesuit Q 10 8 7 5 2	\spadesuit 9 6 4 3
\heartsuit —	\heartsuit J 5 3
\diamond J 7 2	\diamond A K 10 5
\clubsuit K 8 5 4	\clubsuit 10 9
	\spadesuit J
	\heartsuit 10 9 8 7 6 4
	\diamond 8 6 4 3
	\clubsuit 7 2

Many Wests will open $2\spadesuit$ in third seat. East will raise to $3\spadesuit$ or $4\spadesuit$ over North's double,

or make a lead-directing bid in diamonds, perhaps via a transfer. It will be most effective for East to jump to 4♠, as the best NS can do after that is double for +200, but South might pull a second double to 5♥, and a best-guess 5♣ by North won't fare any better as the five level is too high. If East bids only 3♠, North will choose between a second double and 3NT, and NS figure to play in 4♥.

If North is permitted to open an old-fashioned 3NT, South will bid 4♥ or transfer to 4♥. If North opens 2♣, however, West will often come in with 2♠ over South's artificial 2♦ or 2♥ (double negative) response. Some Norths will bid 3NT in this scenario, but others will bid 3♣, double (where that would be for takeout or perhaps the system bid with a game-forcing balanced hand), or try the effect of a forcing pass. Whether East is willing to bid up to 4♠ once West passed in third seat is difficult to predict, but 4♠ is an excellent sacrifice, and if NS do not accept the 200-point penalty, they would have to play in 4NT, not 5♥ to go plus.

It might appear that strong clubbers could have a bit more room to maneuver, but if West's initial action is a weak jump overcall of 2♠, East will often jump to 4♠, and wriggling into 4NT may no longer be a systemic option for NS.

Thanks to the blocked diamond position and the favorable location of the ♣K, NS can take 10 tricks in notrump if they land there rather than in hearts when North is unable to confirm that his game force is based on a balanced hand and South gambles on North running a long suit. Though that might not seem especially important or positive for the NS notrumpers, consider that the more normal 4♥ contract, which seems to yield 11 tricks, will often be held to ten due to the inconvenient three-nil trump break and West's club length. Whether the defense plays on diamonds or spades, declarer will have to lose a trick to the ♥J or the ♣K.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Many Wests will open 1NT in second seat, and though East will give some consideration to raising directly to 3NT, most will use Stayman and raise 2♥ to 4♥. After a 1♥ opening, aggressive Norths (of which there are increasingly greater numbers these days) will overcall 1♠, and now EW might finish in 3NT after East shows his primary support for hearts and a good hand.

If North leads a spade against 3NT or 4♥ declarer will have an easy tenth trick, but on a minor-suit lead declarer will have to work for that prize. At IMPs, declarer in 4♥ would eliminate the red suits, and, after cashing the ♣A, exit with a club, leaving the opponents to break spades. At Matchpoints, however, where declarer avoids a club lead, declarer might consider playing on spades himself, hoping for three spade tricks (king-third with South) and a timely club club discard. In addition, there might be some subsidiary chances if spades are three-three with a less perfect honor position – the defense might not switch to clubs, but even on a club shift, declarer might duck once, win the second, and find a friendly layout in the endgame: for example, he might play ♠A, spade, and catch the hand forced to win the third spade with only two clubs.

On the actual spade layout, declarer can play the suit for one loser himself by leading the queen or by leading towards the queen and later finessing against North's jack. In theory, then, those who try for 11 tricks by starting on spades can still take ten, but

some will play the ace first or misguess on the second round, so there will be some minus scores in 4♥ and some 400s in 3NT to go along with the more common +420's and +430s.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

If NS reach 4♥, which is not at all unlikely, and are left to play there, the contract can be made for +620, and an overtrick is not out of the question if the defense does not arrange its diamond ruff. However, these reflections may prove to be largely window dressing, as EW will much more often than not, take the push to 4♠ with the expectation of taking eight, nine or ten tricks. With the ♠K and ♥A inside but the ♣K wrong for declarer, 4♠ (doubled or not) should finish down one, for -50 or -100. As is so often the case, though, what "should" happen will be only one variation of what "does" happen. Though we can see that it is safe for North to lead either red suit against a spade contract, at the table North be reluctant to lead an unsupported ace without any evidence that South is likely to have the king or that if the king is in East the lead will not cost; if he feels strongly enough to lead a club instead, declarer can manage ten tricks by playing low from dummy, ten, ace; later a club to the nine will see him home with +170, +420, or +590.

After Pass-1♦-Pass-1♥, West will overcall 1♠ or 2♠. Over 1♠, North will normally choose between 2♥ and 3♥, though some will choose a more optimistic natural or conventional game raise. If East has the room, inclination, and systemic option of

jumping to 3♠ to get his fourth trump into the mix as early as possible, West will go on to 4♠ over 4♥ but might settle for 3♠ otherwise. Where North jumps to 3♥ over West's 1♠, East's 3♠ will not carry the same four-trump message, but at these tables South will surely bid 4♥; West will go on to 4♠ as a two-way action based on his three low hearts (probably little or no wastage), good six-card suit and orientation towards offense.

What happens after that will depend on individual judgment: if North passes 4♠ South will usually double, but some Norths will go on to 5♥ or perhaps 5♦ where South has shown some values by bidding game after being raised, whether or not the partnership has the agreement that North's pass would be forcing over 4♠ at this vulnerability. EW might double 5♥ or 5♦, but few will compete to 5♠. To hold heart contracts to 10 tricks, EW must get their diamond ruff; to hold diamond contracts to 10 tricks, EW must stay off the club suit and avoid setting up South's ♠K for a club discard. Expect a wide spectrum of scores on this one.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

Unless declarer starts clubs by leading the jack, EW can take 12 tricks in notrump or clubs. If they stumble into diamonds (not easy to envision), they can take 12 tricks there too, but would have to finesse the ♦10 to do so. Left alone, West will have to decide how hard to push facing a hand that will in one or two bids describe itself as a balanced 11-14. West will be more optimistic

where East shows four or five clubs and can convey the message that he does not dislike his hand, but even then there will be some guesswork. As both partners will be aware that reaching 5♣ with a combined 30 HCP in two balanced hands figures to be painfully unremunerative, their auction will cater to stopping at 4NT and perhaps even at 5NT if they do try for slam.

If EW locate their club fit relatively early and are able to check on key cards, they will stay out of six when two of the five key cards are missing, but if the ask comes at too high a level or if the partnership has not established a touchstone in notrump, there might be some issues in reaching 4NT or 5NT rather than 6♣, which happens to be a lucky make on normal play. Though West has some concerns about his spade holding for notrump and East his heart holding, one partner or the other will often bid notrump below the three level after East opens 1♣ or 1♦. However: 1♦-2♣; 3♣ is a real possibility; now 3♥-3NT will leave West to decide whether it pays to move forward, though continuing with 4♣ or 4♦ or 4NT should not be fatal. Alternatively, West might bid 3♦ over the raise to 3♣ and East will show his spade guard. This would be somewhat awkward for West, who has plenty in reserve for 3NT but might not be comfortable with a jump to 4NT, especially if East will treat that as Blackwood. There is nearly always an advantage in bidding notrump relatively early when the stopper situation is not a problem because, among things, finding a way to stop in 4NT or 5NT can be difficult if no one has mentioned that strain yet.

In some countries, most Norths would have an opening bid available for a weak major two-suiter and would use it. Whether or not that would help or hurt them is far from clear: EW might find it difficult to reach 3NT but might guess to bid 6♣ under duress.

On this apparently dull deal, NS will be at the mercy of their opponents, with EW

+690, +1440 and +1370 the most common results. EW pairs who learn enough to stay out of slam may be disappointed to learn that a significant number of their counterparts were less enlightened.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

If EW are ambitious enough to bid 6♦ or 6♥ the favorable location of the ♥K will reward them with +920 or +980 and a fabulous score, but it's difficult to see how or why they should get that high. Note that on a spade lead and club switch, this is a four-or-six hand for EW though five will probably be the popular landing level.

Over East's 1♥, South will overcall 1♠ or 2♠. Though some Wests will introduce diamonds (at the two-level), many more will settle for a single raise in hearts – lots of points but a very quacky hand with the ♠Q a dubious asset. North will raise to 2♠ but might not volunteer 3♠ after 1♥-2♠-3♥, hating his ♥K and disliking his balanced pattern with only three trumps. East is going to bid 4♥ and would prefer to play there rather than contend with 4♠ from the enemy, but if worse comes to the worst and NS do bid 4♠, East would like some help from partner in making the winning decision; accordingly many will introduce diamonds, not so much to try for slam but more to get the declare-versus-defend decision right.

Where South has overcalled 1♠, he is likely to bid 4♠ after being raised, but where he has started with a weak jump overcall, he might feel that partner has assumed captaincy and that he is not expected to bid again as he

has described his hand fairly well. However, if South feels North's competitive 3♠ involves him further, he will surely compete to 4♠ (some modern partnerships would define a double of 4♥ as "I want to bid 4♠ unless you would rather defend").

Where East has bid diamonds, West is likely to compete to the five level, but otherwise West should not be so keen to double 4♠ as East is sure to be short in spades. Whether East passes a double of 4♠ or gambles on +450 rather than settle for +300 or so when he suspects not every NS pair will compete to 4♠ is another question with no easy answer. If West does not double 4♠, East is likely to bid on if has not mentioned diamonds, but should probably double 4♠ if he has, as his sequence would involve West in the final decision.

Souths who buy the contract in spades are likely to guess trumps correctly on the auction (whatever that may have been) and will not go wrong in clubs: nine tricks will be the most common result.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

When you pick up the South hand one of your first thoughts will inevitably be: "I hope partner has the ♠Q and the ♥AQ... and then – greedily, perhaps – a minor-suit ace or two. Here North will be only too pleased to fulfill South's dreams and the main contentious issue for NS will be to get the level right: to bid 5♠ over five-of-a-minor by EW, or to double EW if they go on to 6♣ or 6♦.

Will it come to that? No one could

consider a 2♣ overcall by West a thing of beauty, but for those who believe that favorable vulnerability creates a different set of guiding principles, beauty is not part of the vernacular. Uncontested, NS will usually bid 1s-2x; 4♠, though some will think it reasonable to bid 3♥ and delicately pass a retreat to 3♠ if North hates his hand.

If West overcalls 2♣, however, East might consider bidding 5♣ early (better) or late. Under pressure, South will face a nasty guess where he has not been able to elicit an opinion from his partner. While I suspect that most would take a shot at 5♠, that action is far from clear. Par on the board is 6♣ or 6♦ doubled down three, but that result will rarely if ever be achieved, and it is quite possible that NS +650 will be an almost universal score.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Though West's internally-poor club suit is far from ideal for a three-bid at this vulnerability, that will not prevent a significant number of players from opening 3♣ as dealer. The vulnerability will prevent East from getting too busy at those tables as a raise to 4♣ should not be rejected out of fear (yes, 4♣ doubled can be set 500 with a diamond ruff) when your trump support is good. South will double 4♣ and pass North's comfortable 4♠, reaching a sound contract that yields 10 tricks even with the poor trump break – two rounds of clubs simplify the defense but declarer can't manage an eleventh winner in any case.

Where West passes initially, some North players will be pleased to open 2♠ (or

a Multi 2♦ where permitted) and soon declare 4♠. Where North declines that option, only a handful of East players will open in third seat, which will get West to bid his clubs through the three level in competition. At those tables, NS will reach 4♠ if South doubles; if South overcalls 1♥, 4♥ will be a fairly popular spot. Where South opens 1♥ in fourth seat, West will overcall 2♣ (a passed-hand weak jump overcall carries different connotations for different partnerships – suit quality, side four-card major are considerations) and North will settle for a raise to 2♥. Whether or not East raises clubs, NS are favorites to finish in 4♥, with spades not a factor in the auction.

The play in hearts is much more interesting than in spades. If West leads an unusual club to alert partner that he can ruff something, East might switch to a low spade, West ruffing an honor to exit with a second club or a trump. To make 4♥ now declarer must draw two rounds of trumps ending in dummy before taking any diamond ruffs; now he can lead a spade and East has no good answer: if he splits his honors, declarer can clear spades with a late trump entry to dummy, and if East plays low, the eight wins and declarer gets one diamond ruff for 10 tricks.

More often, though, the defense will start with two rounds of clubs, and declarer might well set about ruffing his diamond losers, intending to use a high spade as an entry: ♦A, ♦K, diamond ruff, spade to the ace . . . West ruffs and exits with a trump and suddenly declarer is a trick short. To get home without a peek, declarer would (curiously, perhaps) have to start spades very early and let West ruff an honor: that would allow him to draw trumps in two rounds, ending in dummy for a spade play, as above. There is no doubt that many declarers will fail at 4♥ without doing anything unreasonable, so NS +420 will be above average, perhaps quite a bit above average.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 10 9 ♥ K Q ♦ A K 8 7 ♣ K Q 9 6 3</p> <p>♠ Q 5 4 3 2 ♥ A 10 7 4 2 ♦ 6 ♣ 8 5</p>	<p>♠ 8 6 ♥ 9 8 ♦ Q 10 9 5 2 ♣ J 10 7 4</p> <p>♠ A K J 7 ♥ J 6 5 3 ♦ J 4 3 ♣ A 2</p>
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If North opens 1NT to try to avoid the complexity that might follow a 1♣ or hopeful 1♦ (aiming for a comfortable 2♣ rebid) opening, NS will coast into 3NT on a simple Stayman sequence. After a 1♣ opening, South might consider suppressing his weak hearts in favor of 1♠, a forcing 2NT or even 3NT, where 2NT would be merely invitational, some of those choices leading to less awkwardness than others. The notrump responses would allow North to make a value bid in notrump or introduce diamonds with a convenient fallback option in notrump. However, 1♥ or 1♠ responses will lead to difficulty on the next round when North reverses to 2♦: systemic dictates will determine whether South continues with a bid in the other major; a particular number of notrump or an improvised forcing preference to 3♣. North may not be able to bid notrump without a spade guard after a fourth-suit 2♠, and might have to choose between 3♣ and preference to 3♥ (both rather ugly options), and South's continuation will be no easier, given his reserve of undescribed strength and in some cases his concern that North will be short in hearts, making notrump a dangerous strain. I suspect some will end in a rather unsatisfactory 6♣ or 6♦. And if North jumps to 2NT over a 1♠ response, South will choose between an invitational 4NT and a slightly pushy 6NT. The more you look at what might happen the less disgusting that 1NT opening looks for North; bridge is the sort of game that looks at what works rather than the aesthetics.

Though declarer can come to 11 tricks in notrump with a series of inspired views, he is more likely to come to 10 on a neutral lead by taking the spade finesse and knocking out the ♠A. However, to take East off a minor-suit squeeze West might have to switch to a club after winning the ♠A to mess with declarer's communications: if he exits passively in a major (♠Q already in his short pile of winners) or his singleton diamond, declarer cashes ace-king of diamonds, crosses to the ♣A and cashes three major suit winners, discarding his low diamonds and a club – East succumbs to a Vienna Coup. Where North declares, East might well lead a diamond and concede a third fast trick in that suit; now declarer can knock out the ♠A and concede a club for 11 easy tricks. As 3NT, 4NT and 6NT will be declared by both North and South across the field and the play will take different turns, there will be enough less successful results to ensure that NS +460 will score very well, and if there are enough unsuccessful slam adventures, NS might not fare too badly for +430.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

NS won't be in the auction on this one, and there's nothing to the play, so it's up to EW to reach their cold 6♣ or 6NT.

With a wide variety of forcing major raise packages on the market, most will have some solid methods in place to deal with this pair of hands. If East can show his clubs, so much the better, but if he can show extra values with no short suit, there should be time for West to show his diamond control, ♠A

and ♣K. If West also denies a short suit, any respectable version of Key Card Blackwood should reveal that the only crucial missing honor is the ♦A, and East can count five spades, two hearts, four clubs and one diamond winner, making 6NT a clear choice.

Some old-fashioned Jacoby 2NT sequences:

- (1) 1♠-2NT; 3♠ (best hand with no shortness)-3NT (waiting); 4♣-4♦; 4♥-6NT/
- (2) 1♠-2NT; 3♠-4♥ (all three side-suit controls); 4NT-5♠ (2 KC+ the SQ because of the fifth trump); 6NT/
- (3) 1♠-2NT; 3♠-4♣; 4♥-5♥ (must have the "missing" diamond control, but not the ace, else 5♦); 6NT/

Where opener makes natural rebids over a forcing 2NT raise:

1♠-2NT; 3♣-3♥; 3♣-4♣; 4♥-5♦; 6NT/

Though those auctions or some variations might seem fairly straightforward, there will be plenty of pairs who stop at 6♣, so 6NT will score well. Very few will miss slam altogether.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

After a pass from South, West will choose between 1♣ and a sure-to-be-less-popular 1♦, basing his decision on how he feels about his rebid after a 1♠ response and to a lesser degree a 1♥ response. Not everyone believes in overcalling at the one level on a strong four-card suit with modest values and a balanced hand, but for those needing more damning evidence not to get involved at this vulnerability, 1♠ will be an easy choice, and at those tables South will bid 3♣ at his earliest convenience. Whether EW can reach 6♦ after this start is not so

clear, but it is certainly a lively possibility. After: 1♣-1♠-2♦-3♠, West might simply rely on Blackwood. After 1♦-1♠-2♠-3♠, it will not be as easy for West to value his hand because his diamonds are not strong and East has not promised strong five-card support. Still, if West does not use Blackwood directly, he will try for slam with 4♣ and East will cooperate; on balance EW will reach slam most of the time when NS are in their auction.

Say that North passes over 1♣ and East responds 1♦. West will raise to 3♦ or force to game with a 3♠ splinter bid, and East should be willing to drive to slam in the latter case and go past 3NT in the former.

Where West opens 1♦, East will use a forcing raise if he has one and West should either get his side to slam or try often enough for East to do so. Where East has no conventional forcing raise in his arsenal, he will have to improvise by responding 2♣, one of a major, or a particularly unpleasant 2NT or 3NT. Curiously, 2♣ might work better than the other choices, while 1♥ risks some confusion once East shows a good hand later (and therefore at least four hearts); EW might have to escape to 6NT, which doesn't quite fetch with clubs four-two.

Again, one pair will be largely at the mercy of the other's constructive bidding. Though 6♦ will be a popular contract, there will be enough EW pairs going down in 6NT or stopping short of slam to ensure that EW +1370 will score very well.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

The bidding will usually begin 1♠-2♥-Pass. Though there could be a better strain or possibly a game for NS opposite some suitable non-minimum overcalls, the percentage action at Matchpoints is to pass. West has an easy reopening double, which sets a peculiar bidding problem for East, whose trump length suggests defending while his negligible strength and possible landing spots in 2♠ or 3♣ speak for taking out the double.

Say that East judges to pass. South has a lot more strength than he might have but if East has a true trump stack, 2NT, 3♣, or 3♦ might be significantly better contracts than 2♥ doubled. If South passes, North will make two (+670) with careful but unexceptional play if East leads anything but his singleton diamond, but of course, that is precisely what East will lead most of the time. West takes three diamonds to let East discard spades, and the defense takes two spade ruffs, East crossing to the ♣A for the second. Now East exits with a trump and the defense gets a spade trick in the end for two down, -500.

South will do better to look for greener pastures, and this time the best place for NS to be is 2NT, which South should offer to play once he intends to escape. If EW do not consider themselves forced after the leave-in of West's takeout double, neither partner should double 2NT, which is cold and might well yield an overtrick. If instead, South redoubles for rescue, North might try 2NT, but if NS wriggle into 3♦, West will double and the result figures to be one down, -200.

If East decides not to pass the double, 2♣ will have more appeal than 3♣, though neither action is remotely attractive. Neither contract will stand a chance on normal defense, but 2♣ has the advantage of being a trick lower and less likely to run into a penalty double, though North might well convert a takeout double of 2♣ by South (it's unlikely many partnerships have discussed that obscure double, and

those who have would probably decide on penalty). 2♠, a fairly popular contract on this difficult deal, will generally go down two (-200, or perhaps -500), 3♣ at least three (-300 or -800), so NS may not score as well as they expect for +120 or +150.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ A ♥ Q 10 8 3 2 ♦ J 5 ♣ A K J 8 6</p> <p>♠ K 10 8 6 5 ♠ 4 3 2 ♥ 6 ♥ A 9 ♦ 7 6 ♦ K 8 4 3 2 ♣ Q 10 5 4 2 ♣ 9 7 3</p> <p>♠ Q J 9 7 ♥ K J 7 5 4 ♦ A Q 10 9 ♣ —</p>	
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Whether declarer takes the straight finesse in diamonds or the ruffing finesse in spades, he will take 12 tricks in hearts, so this time it pays NS to contract for slam.

The South hand lends itself to several different approaches after North opens 1♥. Choices will include a natural or artificial forcing raise, a splinter raise, a void splinter, and a natural 2♦. Even with all that duplicated strength in clubs facing shortness, North's playing strength merits going past game if the diamond-control issue has not yet been resolved, and 6♥ will be a much more popular contract than 4♥ or 5♥.

After 1♥-Pass-2♦, West might trade on the vulnerability to show his black two-suiter, either via a takeout double or a 2NT. Though NS can extract a significant penalty against 3♣ or 3♦, South has too many hearts to suppress his support when a vulnerable slam is still in the picture. The net effect of West entering the auction will usually be to steer declarer towards taking the ruffing finesse against the ♠K.

Though East might give North an anxious moment in 6♥ by leading the ♦8, there really is no reasonable way for declarer to go wrong on the actual lie, so if NS reach

6♥, EW will have to hope that very few NS pairs will miss it and their poor result will be only slightly below average.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ Q J 10 5 ♥ K 7 6 5 ♦ A Q 8 6 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ K 3 ♥ J 8 4 ♦ K 10 5 4 ♣ J 9 8 3</p> <p>♠ 9 8 6 ♥ A 10 3 2 ♦ 9 7 3 2 ♣ 6 4</p>	<p>♠ A 7 4 2 ♥ Q 9 ♦ J ♣ A K Q 10 7 2</p>
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To defeat an EW 3NT contract, NS need to start on spades immediately or declarer will have time to build a ninth trick in the red suit that the defense leads.

Will EW reach 3NT, though? West will respond 1♦, INT, or – less often – 2♣ to East's 1♣. North will double for takeout in each case.

Where West has responded 1♦, East will choose from among 1♠, 2♣, 3♣, and a strength-showing redouble. If South mentions hearts EW will be at least mildly concerned with stopping that suit for notrump purposes and the bidding might well end at 3♣, +130.

Where West has responded INT, his range might affect East's strategy – opposite 8-10, East will always at least investigate for game, but facing 6-9 he is more likely to settle for competing in clubs. If East bids 2♠ or 3♣ and South does not bid, West will either bid 3NT or show a stopper, which might lead to 3NT after another bid or two. With North on lead, the routine spade lead should defeat the contract whether or not NS untangle the spade suit for two winners.

Where West has raised to 2♣, East will bid 2♠ over North's double and West will bid 2NT or 3NT or stall with 3♦, looking for some help in hearts. Again, if West declares

3NT, he will not succeed, but if East bids notrump first, South may lead a heart, fatally for the defense.

The fate of each side for EW's +130 in clubs will turn on how often the other EW pairs reach 3NT and how often they succeed. I believe that there will be more EW -100s than EW +600s, but I could be very wrong about that.

If NS boldly compete to 3♥, EW will not score well for selling out and collecting 50 or 100 on defense or for doubling and missing the not-so-obvious defense for two down: ♠K, ♠A, spade ruff, club to the queen, fourth spade to promote a trump trick.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

♠ K J 9 4 3 ♥ 3 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ K 4 3 2 ♠ 7 6 2 ♥ J 8 6 4 2 ♦ J 9 2 ♣ A 10 ♠ Q 10 5 ♥ K Q 10 9 7 5 ♦ 8 3 ♣ J 6	♠ A 8 ♥ A ♦ A Q 10 5 4 ♣ Q 9 8 7 5
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South's weak 2♥ opening will come around to East, who has a nice hand but no perfect action. His spade holding is wrong for a takeout double and his shape/heart holding are not ideal for a natural 2NT; he could show both minors by jumping to 4NT or (for some) 4♥, but the strength and somewhat flexible nature of the hand do not merit committing to an 11-trick contract; bidding either minor risks missing a better contract in the other, but 3♦ is probably the best East can do to make a start on describing his hand. There will be plenty of support for 4NT, however.

West will not advance 3♦, and North can't compete further, so EW will stop in a sound contract. Declarer has two winning lines in the club suit: low to the ten, and ace, low to the queen if North follows low to the second round. The latter is certainly more

attractive after the weak two-bid but some will go wrong and need two of dummy's diamonds to ruff clubs; they will not be able to neutralize North's twice-guarded ♦K, but those who guess clubs correctly will be able to take two diamond finesses.

The difference between +130 and +150, or -100 and +600 will be significant.

If East prefers to reopen 2♥ with a double, West might gamble a pass, which would work well (-300 likely) if North sit for the double. If North escapes to 2♠ directly or via a redouble, it's not easy to see who would double, and in any case declarer is likely to come to seven tricks, giving EW a poor return on their investment. In that rescue scenario, East is more likely to bid a suit or cue bid and EW might alight in 3NT, which will fail on a spade lead but perhaps not on a heart lead: ♥A, ♣A, ♦9, ♦J covered, ♣Q; or perhaps: ♥A, club to the ten – in both cases declarer will take 11 tricks for +660; not bad at all!

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

♠ Q 6 ♥ K 2 ♦ A 10 9 8 5 3 ♣ A 7 6 ♠ K 8 5 ♥ J 9 5 3 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ 10 5 2 ♠ 10 4 2 ♥ A Q 4 ♦ K J 6 ♣ K Q 9 4	♠ A J 9 7 3 ♥ 10 8 7 6 ♦ Q ♣ J 8 3
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Without a spade lead NS will take all 13 tricks in notrump, and had South been the dealer, 1NT-3NT would have left West in lead with no strong clue to lead spades.

Here, however, North will open 1♦ and many Easts will overcall 1♠. South will try 2♣ or improvise with an imperfect negative double, a 2♠ cue-bid (ostensibly showing diamond support) or perhaps unleash 3♠ (an old-fashioned Western cue bid, showing this type of hand). If West raises spades or doubles a spade bid, NS will not be able to

make 3NT if they bid it, and they will usually avoid 3NT to land in 5♦, with variations including 5♣ (no problem this time) and a frustrated 6♦ (not likely to avoid the essential spade lead).

Where East does not overcall 1♠, NS might bid 1♦-2♣; 2♦-2♥; 3♣-3♦; leaving North to choose from among a flawed 3NT, a last chance 3♠ and four-of-a-minor. We can imagine NS landing in 3NT without a sure spade guard, but if they bid it after this sort of start, both East and West would lead a spade.

Some will prefer the simplicity of 1♦-2NT (forcing); 3NT/ or 1♦-3NT/ despite the spade flaw, and most of them will chalk up +520 for their enterprise (or random bidding, if you're a purist). Wests who find the killing spade lead on a blind auction deserve our congratulations. The spade lead is quite reasonable, more likely to hit a five-card suit in East than the unattractive heart lead from J953, and even if the spade lead blow a fast trick, it might come back on many layouts.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

Though EW can make 3NT or 4♠, taking the requisite number of tricks may not be straightforward, and reaching game is not a given. Though it would be difficult to describe a 3♣ opening by North as other than outrageous, it would be short-sighted to assume it will not happen; imagine 3♣-Pass-4♣, to West, for example. It's that type of scenario that will add EW +500, +800, and even +130 to the frequency sheets.

More often, of course, South will be left to open 1♣, 1♦, 1♠ or 1NT in third seat (only a few will elect to pass), and West will double or overcall according to system and judgment (though a space-eating 1♠ opening by South will force West to choose between a trap pass, a heavy off-center 1NT overcall, and a can-of-worms double). A 1♣ opening will inspire North to bounce to 3♣ over West's intervention, and might lead to East gambling a pass when West doubles on the way out, but 3NT and 3♦ are logical alternatives; the latter might end the auction. A 1♦ opening will usually lead to: 1♦-Double-Pass-1NT; Pass-3NT/, or West might look for 4♠ and might end there. After Pass-Pass-1NT-Double, North will escape to 2♣ or 3♣, and though EW might defend one of those contracts doubled or stop in a partscore, it's more likely that they will reach 3NT or 4♠. Where South opens 1♠, it's not out of the question that his bid will end the auction.

Whether those EW plus scores that do not include the game bonus score fairly well or fairly badly will turn on whether the pairs in game are successful. The play in 3NT (by East) will require some accurate card reading by declarer on any non-heart lead, but where South has opened the bidding it is probable that he will find one of several winning lines; the fact that the heart suit is "frozen" makes it difficult for the defenders to get out of their own way, even if declarer does not simply pass the ♥10 (a play that might secure an overtrick and a superb score).

West, in 4♠ on a likely club lead, will encounter no problems, even if South wins and switches to a low diamond. Declarer takes the second diamond (easiest), draws trumps, discarding a heart and a club, and exits with a diamond to endplay South. In some variations, declarer will have to guess hearts but should have no trouble doing so. Lots of possibilities on this one, but any EW minus is sure to be awful, with +600 or more sure to be good.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

With the points evenly divided, this is a partscore deal, but with NS owning a 10-card spade fit, that pair is a favorite to buy the contract. It is EW's mission to push their opponents beyond their security level (3♠), particularly because they can make four of a minor.

Easier said than done. Where South opens 1♣ or 1♦ (Precision-style), West will overcall 1♥; North will bid 1♠ or perhaps a weak 2♠. After 1♣-1♥-1♠, East can try INT or perhaps use a Snapdragon (or fourth-suit) double to show diamonds with heart tolerance and some values. When South raises to 2♠, it won't be easy for EW to bid again, and finding clubs will be a tall order. Where East has indicated diamond length, West might compete to 3♦, but it's tough to see how EW can do any more when NS compete to 3♠.

Where South starts with INT, in-range or otherwise, not all the West players who can show hearts and clubs, hearts and a minor, or clubs and a major will take direct action. North will transfer to spades and West will be in the wrong seat to protect when South takes the transfer. Though we see that this time East can safely reopen 2♠ with a two-suited two notrump, that would be a high-risk action as NS might be able to double their vulnerable opponents in search of a one-trick (+200) set to protect their equity of 110 or so. And here, where EW have a haven in clubs or diamonds, NS are almost certain to forge on in spades, and West will be reluctant to

undo East's good work by over-competing to the four level.

Where South opens 1♠ (an increasingly less popular choice these days), West might well double for takeout, and whether North bids 3♠ or 4♠, many Easts will risk a responsive double despite the unsociable spade holding. West will rarely pass the double of 3♠, but will usually pass when the double is one level higher. West would do well to take out to 4♣ and not 4♥, but some will do the wrong thing; 4♥ is sure to fail, perhaps doubled, and the defenders can arrange a diamond ruff for two down, with NS +200 or +500 certain to be huge results while +100 will be well below average.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Maximum for EW is to bid 6NT, declare from the East side as South has the ♠K, and neutralize North's ♣Q. It's not easy to see how that might happen, though, and it will be far more common for West to declare 3NT or 4NT, or for EW to bid 6♦, which can be defeated if West declares and North leads a spade, and would in any case require a good view in clubs to succeed.

If West opens 1♦, North might trade on his non-vulnerable status to risk a very light takeout double. Though South might bid up to 3♥, East will not easily be talked out of bidding 6♦ if he is so inclined. Where he is able to show his singleton heart at a relatively low level, he might well respect West's vote or votes to play in notrump

below the slam level. An occupational hazard in doubling 1♦ is that declarer will be more inclined to find the ♣Q, though with diamonds three-zero his inclination would be to play North for club length, regardless.

Where opens 1♣ for systemic reasons, East might try a bit harder to reach 6♣ as it might be important to discard spade losers on diamonds opposite something like:

Qxx, Kxx, Kxx, AQxx, but pairs that open 1♣ will normally be able to indicate that they do not four of them relatively early in the auction.

Say that West declares 3NT or 4NT on a spade lead against silent opponents, ducked to the king. South must switch to a heart this time or risk losing North's ace; declarer will take the rest if he gets clubs right and +490 figures to be a good score. Plus 460 might not be awful if there are lots of EW slams going down or 5♦ contracts (+400 or +420), but otherwise there will be too many +490s, +920s and occasional +990s to leave enough matchpoints to richly reward those very reasonable +460s.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Though diamonds are three-three, the four-one trump break might create some difficulties in the play for declarer in hearts. But first the bidding: Pass-Pass-1♦-Pass; 1♥-Pass, will leave East to choose from among 3♥ (an underbid), 4♣, and the fancier alternatives of 2♠ and 4♦. System

and evaluation/judgment will determine East's strategy, but most will reach 4♥, generally but not always (some club systems will lead to East declaring) from the West side.

Even though the South hand is some distance from being a classic 2♣ overcall at unfavorable vulnerability, the active bidders will not be plagued by remorse in stepping in over 1♦. West should pass, and North will raise to 3♣. East will double and West will have to choose from among 3♥, 3♠, a 4♣ cue bid aimed at finding the best strain, and a penalty pass. EW might not reach game at some of these tables. Club contracts will usually produce eight tricks on the singleton diamond lead, though a trump lead and perfect defense (including East discarding the ♠10) can limit South to seven tricks. Minus 200 might turn out to be a good score for NS but -500 will be a disaster.

Say that North leads a club against 4♥: declarer ruffs and faces potential control problems as it seems he will need to ruff at least one diamond in hand and dummy has already been forced. In such cases it is often best to think about playing on cross-ruff lines, and if declarer does that without touching trumps, he can come to 11 tricks, ruffing the third diamond low, ruffing all four clubs in dummy, and eventually scoring his own third trump winner en passant in the endgame. If, instead, declarer follows a more optimistic line and tries to draw trumps before or after establishing diamonds, he will go down if he plays a second round, but can still scramble 10 tricks if he changes tack after taking a second club force in dummy, perhaps suspicious that South took the ♥A immediately. Where East declares 4♥, South might not lead a club; if he starts with a spade and carelessly continues spades when in with the ♥A, declarer can make six, finessing against the ♠J, cashing the ♥J, ruffing a diamond high and taking the marked finesse against the ♥9. As there

will be a significant number of -50s, +420 should be reasonable, +450 as good as it gets, except for the odd +500.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

North would like to have a bit more for a vulnerable weak 2♦ opening, but that won't stop most of them who have this club in their bag. East doesn't have the solid values he'd like for a takeout double with 4333 shape, but with prime cards and nothing in diamonds, I suspect many will take the plunge. If East passes, so will South, even though he will have reservations. West, in turn, will have a decision of sorts: his hand is terrible for a vulnerable bid at the three level, but his long suit is chunky and East figures to have some cards.

The danger in West protecting is not so much that he will incur a vulnerable penalty in 3♣ with nothing much on for his opponents, but rather that East will bid too much, counting on West for a real hand. Here East would try 3♦ over 3♣ and West would probably try 3NT as the least awful choice of a bad lot. As it takes a heart lead from North to defeat 3NT (else declarer plays on spades, with diamonds blocked), there will be a lot of matchpoints at stake at these tables. If West passes out 2♦, North can make his contract, and +90 figures to be good for NS unless too many EW pairs get too high and go set at 100 points a trick. Where East doubles 2♦, West will pick a number of clubs or a number of notrump; East will pass whenever he is permitted to do so, and South is unlikely to compete to 3♦ though some will do so.

EW +110 and -100, and NS -100 will grace the frequency sheets, along with EW +120, +150, and +600.

Where North passes, East will open 1♣, 1♦, INT or 1♠. Over 1♣/1♦ South will overcall 1♠ or show both majors with systemic 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥ overcalls. West will either raise East's clubs or bid his own club suit directly or wait for an opportunity to reopen. That second chance won't come where South has overcalled 1♠, as everyone will pass. The defense can prevail against 1♠ by switching to diamonds early, but there will be some NS +80s to go along with the +110s in hearts where EW improbably sell out to 2♥ in relevant scenarios.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

N/S can take a lot of tricks in hearts – 11 unless declarer goes wrong in clubs or trumps or the defenders manage some razzle-dazzle in the spade suit.

North will usually be left to open in fourth seat, and will choose INT if within his partnership range. South might reasonably pass INT, and North will usually come to 10 tricks one way or another, +180. If South decides to try to improve the contract with a Stayman probe, he will locate the heart fit and face another decision: at IMPs South might well bid 4♥ as he could not describe his hand well with a game try and the mesh will so often be critical.

At Matchpoints, however, it doesn't pay to

jeopardize a sound plus score by pushing too hard for a thin game, especially when others might be in an inferior strain; some will pass 2♥ while others will invite game and a smaller group will raise to 4♥. In some bridge communities, opener is expected to rebid 2NT and/or 3♣ to Stayman when four-four in the majors, and for them opener can separate his minimum and maximum hands, sparing responder a decision when he has a marginal game invitation. Where North is out of range for 1NT, the bidding is more likely to end in game: 1♣-1♥; 3♥-4♥/ or 1♣-1♦; 1♥-2♥; 2NT-4♥. There will be enough game bidders that even the best of the NS partials figure to be below average.

Although ace-king combinations rate near the top of traditional lists of desirable opening leads, it is quite often wrong to lead from this three-card holding when there is no indication that partner will be short or that fast tricks will disappear. The spade lead will speed up the play a bit, especially if East switches to clubs at Trick Two.

Declarer will usually cash a second high trump when the ten falls on his right, and in many cases will not need three-three diamonds to take all the rest but one. If East clears spades, declarer could go wrong in the play if he takes two club ruffs in South before testing trumps: now East will take a trick with the eight of trumps. If East stays off spades altogether, declarer has some work to do. Unfortunately for the defense, if East does not lead a high spade he is likely to lead a club, and unless he leads a high spot card, West might put up the king; now declarer could pick up trumps without loss, ruff out diamonds, and discard two spades from South on high clubs for +480 or +230. A trump lead might work best for the defense as declarer, relatively early in the play, might try the ruffing finesse in clubs, discarding a spade from South.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

<p>♠ K 9 4 ♥ A 7 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A K J 5 3</p> <p>♠ A J 10 8 5 ♥ 10 8 ♦ J 10 8 6 ♣ 6 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 3 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ A Q 7 3 ♣ Q 9 8 7</p> <p>♠ 7 6 2 ♥ Q J 9 6 3 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ 10 4</p>
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Where North is left to open 1NT in third seat, South will transfer to hearts and pass. Most experienced Wests will protect with 2♠, a contract that will make if it concludes the auction. More often, however, North will take the push to 3♥ or South will reopen with a competitive double or 2NT (leading to 3♥). At these tables, East would do best to compete to 3♠, but he has limited offense and excellent defensive prospects, and bidding on might relinquish any gain West might have achieved by refusing to sell out to 2♥. With the pointed-suit aces well placed for NS, 3♥ can't be defeated: even if East leads over to West's ♠A for a trump switch and continuation, declarer gives up on a diamond ruff in hand, draws the remaining trumps, and concedes a club.

At favorable vulnerability, some Wests will open a weak 2♠ or a Polish-style two-suited 2♠, taking North out of his comfort zone; should he overcall 2NT or 3♣, double for takeout with flawed diamond support, or go low with a conservative pass?

Perhaps 2NT is closest to the mark. If that is passed out, the defense should prevail on any lead but a club, and EW will score very well. South might transfer to hearts and watch North chalk up +140, but East might well compete to 3♠ directly over 2NT or after South's transfer to hearts is accepted. It won't help NS much to double 3♠ as both +100 and +50 won't be adequate compensation for their +140.

Where North opens 1♣, East will have to pass, but West will come in with 1♠ over

1♥. Whether North rebids INT, 2♥, or uses a support double, East should compete to 2♠ sooner or later; and if NS do not go on to 3♥, EW will go +110 for a superb score.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

♠ K J 8 7 5 2 ♥ 4 ♦ Q 4 ♣ K Q J 6 ♠ 10 9 ♥ A J 8 6 5 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ A 10 3 ♠ Q 4 ♥ Q 10 9 7 ♦ K J 9 8 6 ♣ 8 4	♠ A 6 3 ♥ K 3 ♦ 10 7 5 2 ♣ 9 7 5 2
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Even if the defense leads trumps against a NS spade contract, declarer can come to nine tricks by using South's two entries (♠Q and a diamond) to lead clubs; if West ducks twice, North can lead the six to catch the ace on the third round. 3♠ is the highest contract anyone can make.

After 1♥-1♠, East might pass, but most will bid INT, or try a negative double. Even if South does not act at his first turn, he will compete to 3♠ if it continues, fairly normally: 2♥-2♠-3♥. Though neither East nor West has a gilt-edged penalty double of 3♠, either might feel the chance of making 3♥ good enough to double and protect their equity in case NS were speeding a bit. There is merit in that line of reasoning and EW do have all four aces, but none of their intermediate cards come into play on defense, and 3♠ will usually be made. On two rounds of hearts, there are several very interesting variations in the play and defense. Perhaps the most interesting is this one: West takes the ♣K with the ace at Trick Three and switches to a spade; declarer must play high from hand or he will run into a late uppercut that establishes the ♠6 for the setting trick; East withholds his ace, and declarer can cash one high club and play a diamond, or play diamonds immediately; West must duck the first diamond, but now declarer can cash both high clubs and ruff the ♠6 with the ♠Q;

he can survive because West's remaining spade is the ten and there is neither a trump promotion nor an uppercut.

If North does not bid his spades again over 2♥, South might reopen with 2♠ anyway, but he might not, and EW will score very well for +110. While the bidding might end at 3♥, that's not likely, as EW won't reach 3♥ unless pushed by NS spade bidding, and if North shows at least six spades or South two, his partner will usually compete to 3♠. Unless, of course, South doubles his vulnerable opponents in 3♥ to try for +200 to protect his side's likely +110 or so in 2♠.

EW plus scores will be golden.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

♠ K ♥ K 2 ♦ Q 7 4 2 ♣ A Q J 9 5 2 ♠ Q 9 7 6 2 ♥ Q J 9 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ 8 4	♠ 10 8 4 3 ♥ A 8 7 6 ♦ 10 ♣ 10 7 6 3 ♠ A J 5 ♥ 10 5 4 3 ♦ K J 9 8 6 ♣ K
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NS can be held to nine tricks is notrump if West switches to a high heart when he gains the lead in diamonds, securing three heart tricks for the defense. NS can't make 5♣ or 5♦ against accurate defense, so notrump is their money strain. Meanwhile, EW can take eight tricks in spades and can sacrifice profitably at 4♠ (doubled) over 3NT, which is in theory absolute par on the deal.

Let's see how the bidding might develop.

1♣-Pass-1♦-1♠, 2♦/3♦-3♠-3NT/ is going to be a popular auction. At this vulnerability East won't be keen to jump to 4♠, and facing a weak jump raise to 3♠, West really has no reason to think that 4♠ will be cheap or that 3NT will necessarily make.

Strong clubbers will start the North hand with 2♣, and South will force with an artificial 2♦ or make a value bid in notrump; at these tables, West is unlikely to enter the

auction, and the main danger for NS is that they will have room to find their diamond fit and that South, knowing North has at most three cards in the majors, might bid 5♦. If South declares 5♦, West will most often lead a heart and shorten the play, -50. But where North is declarer (much less often), East must lead his singleton trump to set the contract – West can win and switch to the ♥Q; in practice he will usually lead a spade and his second choice would be the ♥A, both fatal to the defense (declarer has time to discard a heart on the ♠A after a spade lead).

Say that West leads a normal spade against South's 3NT. East, with no spade honor, should discourage a continuation. East's signaling problem would be more difficult with jack-fourth of spades, but here West has an easy heart switch and the defense will take what it has coming unless East misreads the position and reverts to spades after taking the ♥K with the ace.

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

East would like to do something obstructive with only two cards in the majors and promising distribution at favorable vulnerability, but not everyone has a conventional opening to show a weak minor two-suiter or a natural weak 2♦ opening, and not everyone will feel that an off-center 3♦ is a reasonable gambit. If East passes, South will open 1♠, a strong club, or perhaps an eccentric 2NT. North should respond INT rather than pass 1♠ with an ace, a couple of spades, and some potential for a profitable contract in hearts or clubs. East will come in with an Unusual

2NT or perhaps simply make a start on his suits with a 2♦ overcall. Whether South proceeds slowly by doubling 2NT or forces to game by cue-bidding 3♣, or South takes an immediate shot at 4♠, 4♠ is likely to be the final contract. An enterprising East might double that and if West finds a heart lead, the defense can take the first four tricks with two heart ruffs and two diamonds. Even if East does not double or if West leads a high diamond, East should be able to send the right sort of message with his diamond card where he is known to have a large number of cards with which to signal (a common method is middle to encourage, high and low as suit preference).

Curiously, NS are cold for 4♥ on the five-three fit even with trumps five-zero because West has to follow to three rounds of spades. It's difficult to construct a realistic auction that lands NS in 4♥, other than Pass-2NT-Pass-3♦; Double-3♥ (3+ hearts)-Pass-4♥/.

As it happens EW have a 300- or 500-point save in 5♦, though it's not likely that they will get that high, and they really don't want to sacrifice against a game that they can and probably should defeat. The main upside in taking this save is that it could push NS to 5♠ (or 5♥), but again, that doesn't seem probable. Those EW pairs who do bid up to 5♦ might salvage a few matchpoints if there are enough Wests who either lead a club rather than a red suit against spade contracts (allowing declarer to take 12 tricks) or fail to negotiate two heart ruffs.

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

After 1♥-2♣, South will rebid 2♥ or 2♠ according to system and style. Over 2♥, North, fearing a misfit, might settle for a nonforcing 3♣ where permissible, but South, with a good fit for clubs and more than a minimum, will continue with 3♠ and pass North's 3NT. If North's 3♣ rebid would be forcing, he will choose between that (reaching 3NT as above) and 3♦ (over which South will bid 3NT. Where South rebids 2♠, North will continue with 2NT (where forcing), 3NT, 3♠, or 3♦, again based on system and style. Flannery aficionados might bid: 2♦-3NT/ and leave EW in the dark about the nature of the North hand. Though a few pairs will finish in a club partial (generally +130) and a few will reach 5♣ (generally -50), a healthy majority will land in 3NT and take nine or 10 tricks.

Where South declares, it's clear that a heart lead should hold declarer to nine tricks, and the same result could be achieved on a diamond lead and switch to the ♥J, West ducking declarer's honor; declarer needs to play on spades for a tenth trick, but East wins and continues hearts and declarer must follow low to make three. It is not as obvious that a club lead by West will also hold 3NT to nine tricks because it does terrible things to declarer's communications: say that declarer wins in hand and plays on spades; East ducks once, wins the second, and can play a heart or ♦A, then a heart; in these variations West takes the first heart to exit with the ♦J, and declarer is in effect locked out of one set of winners or the other – how diabolical!

Where North declares, East will most often lead a low diamond, fatally: declarer wins cheaply and knocks out the ♠A – East does best to win immediately while the suit is blocked to return an unlikely club – but declarer's combined diamonds and spades are just good enough to hold the defense to just the two red aces after that. To hold North to nine tricks legitimately, East must lead the ♥J (West ducking dummy's honor), or the ♦A, followed by a switch to the ♥J, or ... an insidious club (for the reasons outlined above).

NS +430 is sure to score very well, but +400 figures to be below average.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

With spades three-two and the ♦J capitulating, EW can't be prevented from taking 10 tricks in spades, and those who bid their 21-point game will be well rewarded for their aggressive approach that leads to +620.

After 1♦-Pass-1♥, some South players will risk an unsound INT overcall rather than pass or commit a repulsive takeout double with four cards in neither unbid suit. Many different scenarios will follow with final contracts of 1NT doubled (NS), 2♣ and 2♠ doubled (NS), 2♦ (EW), and spade partials or games (EW) among the possibilities. If EW defend accurately (and it's far from clear that they will), they can take the first 10 tricks against 1NT doubled and there will indeed be a handful of +1100s on the EW side of the frequency sheet. If the defense does not get around to its suits in time, 1NT might yield NS +180 or +380, and yes, there will be a few of those too. EW can defeat 2♣ (doubled or not) by getting the ♦K out of the way, taking two rounds of spades ending in West, two more diamonds for East to discard spades, and finally, a third spade from West to promote a trump trick for East's J94. It's more likely, however, that at these INT- overcall tables, EW will finish in a diamond partial for +130. If EW do find spades they might not reach game (+170).

But many more Souths will pass on the first round. West will rebid 1♠ and East will

choose from among 3♠, 4♠ and a gentle 2♠. Some Souths will think it worthwhile to double 4♠ on the strength of their well-placed hearts and 15 HCP, but unless declarer plays for bad breaks and tries to cut his losses by trying to single in his trumps separately, the double will work poorly. However, as -620 wasn't going to be a good score for EW, -790 won't be all that much worse.

If West does not open, most East will open 1♥ in third seat. West will double a 1NT overcall and the same possibilities for subsequent developments as we broached above will come into play. If South passes 1♥, West will choose between 1♠ and 2♦, both of which might end the auction, though East might raise 1♠ to 2♠ or South could reopen 1♠ with 1NT. If East starts with an ugly Flannery 2♦ in third seat, West might just bid 4♠, but if he invites game East will decline.



Eric Kokish married Beverly Kraft, his childhood sweetheart, in 1986. Son Matthew, one old dog Jackie Robinson (Black Labrador); Kitten - called Kitten!

Residence: Toronto, where they moved in 1997 via Jakarta and Montreal.

Eric learned bridge at High School and has been fascinated by the game ever since.

He has made his mark on bridge in several areas:

(1) He has held several local, national, and WBF administrative positions;

(2) A long-time member of IBPA, Eric was editor of "Melange de Bridge," (the Montreal Bridge League newsletter), author of a weekly bridge column in the Montreal Gazette from 1977 to 1997, and a daily column for the Toronto Star Syndicate 1999-2000), has been a principal contributor to most world championship books since 1979, directs the Master Solvers Club and Challenge the Champs for the Bridge World magazine, has been editor of the World Bridge News since 1994 and has contributed to bridge magazines and bulletins around the world;

(3) Has been a VuGraph commentator at many World and International events.

Kokish is also the author of several conventions, including "Birthright" (2C - 2D; 2H = BAL 25+ or H/FG), "Reject" Trial Bids; "Flags and Scrambles," and "Montreal Relay."

In 1980, he won a Bols Brilliance prize and the ROMEX award for the best bid hand of the year. Although he has not played frequently of late, Kokish is still among the top all-time Canadian players. He has won two North American championships - the Vanderbilt Knockout Teams and the Men's Board-a-Match Teams.

He has earned two silver medals in WBF events - in the World Open Pairs in 1978 and the Bermuda Bowl in 1995 and has finished third three times in the Rosenblum Cup.

As a coach, Kokish has earned a reputation as one of the best. In his tenure with the Nick Nickell squad, the team won the 2000, 2003, and 2009 Bermuda Bowls. Eric has worked with teams representing more than 20 different federations, and finds this aspect of his bridge activity the most gratifying.

He and Beverly are grateful to Fred Gitelman, creator of Bridge Base Online for providing a medium that has created a remarkable environment for coaching and effective bridge communication.

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