



**Message from
José Damiani,
President, World Bridge Federation**

So we reach the end of the 19th WorldWide Bridge Contest — I do hope you found the hands interesting and enjoyable, and that you will now have fun as you watch the results come in to the website at www.ecatsbridge.com from all over the world. A time where we can enjoy the benefits that our technology gives us, in allowing us to provide this service for you, the bridge players from so many countries.

The 2005 World Teams Championship comprising the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and Seniors Bowl, together with the World Transnational Open Teams Championship will be held in Estoril Portugal from 22 October - 05 November, with the Open Teams being played in the second week. This great event gives players the chance to play in a prestigious and enjoyable championship while at the same time soaking up the atmosphere and excitement of the final stages of the Bermuda Bowl. The Estoril coast is charming, with a wide variety of hotels, and many restuaruants ranging from the simplest to the most sophisticated. Play will take place in the Estoril Congress Centre, an ideal very modern complex designed to host events with class and the welcoming atmosphere that is the trademark and the image of quality characteristic of Estoril.

Full details are on the WBF Website at www.worldbridge.org and also on www.ecatsbridge.com or we can send you the information — just contact Anna Gudge on +44 1787 881920 or fax her on +44 1787 881339 or email her at anna@ecats.co.uk. We would love the chance to welcome you to Estoril!

Now I would like to thank you — the bridge players, who come and play in this event, and enjoy what might be called the "lighter" side of bridge — not a major Championship but a light-hearted and fun event, played amongst your own friends at your own club but competing against the rest of the participating clubs world wide! It just proves that we can all enjoy ourselves while indulging in our wonderful sport of Bridge ... and at the same time, show that we all follow the spirit of the WBF Motto -

Bridge for Peace

José Damiani
President



Commentator: Eric Kokish

Born: Montreal, Canada May 19, 1947

Married Beverly Kraft, his childhood sweetheart, in 1986.

Son Matthew, two dogs: Lady (Golden Retriever) and Jackie Robinson (Black Labrador) and a kitten - called Kitten!

Residence: Toronto

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. He served in administration, as president of Unit 151 (Montreal); as District 1 judiciary chairman in the Seventies and Eighties, as a Canadian Bridge Federation board member and as a member of the ACBL Goodwill Committee.

Eric is a former editor of the Unit 151 newsletter; author of a weekly bridge column in the Montreal Gazette from 1977 to 1997, has been a principal contributor to most world championship books since 1979, directs the Master Solvers Club and Challenge the Champs for the

Checking your Scores

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Bridge World magazine, has been editor of the *World Bridge News* since 1994 and has contributed to bridge magazines and bulletins around the world as well as doing VuGraph commentary at many World and International events.

Kokish is also the author of several conventions, including the Kokish Relay and the Montreal Relay. In 1980, he won a Bols Brilliancy 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 international play – 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. His latest success was as coach of the Nick Nickell squad, which won the 2000 Bermuda Bowl in Bermuda and the 2003 Bermuda Bowl in Monaco. In the past year Eric has coached the Russian and Chinese teams and members of the Egyptian team and this year is coaching teams and pairs using the excellent play records from Bridge Base Online, which provide for a new and effective coaching environment.

In 1997, after several working visits to Indonesia, he was invited by the Indonesian government to coach the national teams in Jakarta, following which he and Beverly settled in Toronto.

fact that he's vulnerable, but at matchpoints, more will double than pass. East, with good defence against North's 2♠ but also a good hand for hearts facing likely shortness in spades, will not have an easy decision. Perhaps regretting that he hadn't tried for game initially, he is more likely to compete to 3♥ than pass or double for penalty: there is really no way to invite game at this late stage. The same scenario develops after a Multi 2♦-Pass-2♥ (pass or correct), South doubling for takeout and North responding 2♠.

Where West passes and East opens 1♣ in third seat, South might overcall 1♠ on his chunky four-card suit. West will introduce hearts, then compete to 3♣ over North's 2♠. Unless West's passed-hand competitive two-over-one response strongly suggests a six-card suit, East will probably pass 3♣, reaching a (theoretically, at least) lower scoring strain than most of the E/W field. While there is no heart loser in 3♣ and +150 is possible, that will be a good result for E/W only if a significant number of declarers in hearts mis-guess diamonds for +140 or -100.

It's the presence of the big club fit that makes 4♥ a decent contract, and if South bids declarer will surely play the diamonds successfully. As South will nearly always cover the ♥Q, the defenders will normally get a spade, a trump and a diamond. There will be many +170s and a few +620s, so the E/W pairs in club partscores figure to be out of luck in the scoring.

Although N/S will rarely buy the contract in spades, rarely isn't the same as never. A trump lead and subsequent trump continuations will hold spade contracts to seven tricks, but even one high club (to retain the lead after seeing dummy) will be fatal to the defence, assuming declarer gets the diamonds right. If N/S get beyond 3♠ East might well double, and +200 or +500 will be very good scores.

If you bid the E/W cards to 4♥ for the right reasons, you've done beautifully. Nice way to end the session. For those of you who have had a difficult session, please stay positive. Your next bridge adventure is just around the corner; it just won't have quite as many tables as this one. Best wishes.

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WBF Simultaneous Pairs

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Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

It is fair to say that the North hand is not ideal for a 3♣ opening as dealer, neither side vulnerable. After all, North has only six clubs, a prime card on the side, a balanced hand, and a particularly suitable dummy for spades. Nonetheless, many will pre-empt because they believe that there are two opponents who might be inconvenienced and only one ally. If 3♣ is passed around to West (indeed, South might raise to 4♣ first), he'll have to choose between a takeout double and 3NT, both sensible actions. The former will lead to 4♠ while the latter will end the auction. Should South raise to 4♣, West will have no real choice but to double and East might think about trying for slam but will almost always settle for 4♠. As it happens, the winning option would be to pass the double as 4♣ doubled costs 500 or 800, depending on whether West permits declarer to reach dummy with the ten of trumps on the second round if the defenders stay off spades.

Where North passes, some will open the East hand, and with such a handsome fit for diamonds, might provide West with just enough encouragement to drive to 6♠, which will make if South doesn't find the essential club lead (North might not come in with 3♣ after West's 2♦ response).

Where East passes, only a handful of Souths will indulge themselves with a psychic 1♥ or a cowboy weak two, and West will start with a strong no-trump, 1♦, or a strong club. Not every North player will have a convenient way to enter the auction over INT, and if E/W are left alone they will most often reach 4♠ from the West side on a transfer sequence. Where East declares 4♠ (via 2♦ as game-forcing Stayman, for example), there will be some Souths who do not lead a club. Another

possibility where North passes over INT is that East will use Stayman and jump to 3NT, treating his weak suit as a four-card holding.

After 1♦ or 1♣, North will certainly bid his suit, and clubs will be led against 4♠. Very few pairs will reach 3NT after this start.

As spade contracts will yield +450 on a club lead and +480 otherwise, the pairs in no-trump who are held to +400 or +430 will beat only the pairs going down in slam.

There is, however, an outside shot at +460 and a very good score. If West wins the first club, runs diamonds, and plays hearts for three tricks, he reduces to an ending in which he has three spades and a club in each hand. If North has kept two spades and two high clubs, declarer can exit in clubs and score the ace-queen of spades at the end. To prevent this North must keep one low club and South must retain his ten to take North off the endplay.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

The E/W hands fit beautifully and produce 12 tricks in hearts or clubs (if N/S don't find their heart ruff), and at this vulnerability, N/S can save profitably at 6♦ over 6♠ (800 vs 920) but not at 7♦ over 6♥ (1100 vs 980). Although spades would often be a profitable strain for a sacrifice, the five-one break that permits E/W to make slam means that a forcing defence will make even 4♠ doubled far too expensive (declarer must not draw trumps if he is to come to an eventual sixth trick, an extreme example of maintaining trump control!). As it will not be easy for E/W to reach slam, the primary battlefield is much more likely to be the five level.

While it's standard practice to open the longer suit with six-five when it's lower-ranking but

non-touching, as in this case, there are many who believe in starting with the five-card major, ostensibly treating the suits as equal in length. Where West overcalls a 1♦ opening with 1♥, North will raise to 2♦ or 3♦ according to style and system. East, having passed originally, will not be shy about bidding aggressively, either by cue-bidding or splintering in diamonds or perhaps by making a fit-showing bid in clubs. If East can show his length and strength in clubs West will surely drive to 6♣ or 6♥ regardless of whether South competes to 4♠ or 5♦, but otherwise there will be more guesswork involved. Over 4♠, for example, West might try for slam with 5♣ or 5♦; however, over South's more realistic 5♦ (as it's sure to be difficult to buy the contract at 4♠ when that's best, there's much to be said for concealing the spades and settling for the likely 11-card fit), West might just settle for 5♥.

Where South starts with 1♠ and West overcalls 2♥, East will again have options: raising to game, cue-bidding, splintering in diamonds, or showing clubs with heart support (depending on partnership agreements). South will not be keen to show his second suit at the five level even though it's longer than his first, and E/W might well reach slam where East has shown a good hand.

Where E/W elect to defend against a high diamond contract, West must lead a black suit to extract the maximum penalty. On a spade lead, East should follow with the deuce, suit preference for clubs. West wins the first trump and East should give count in either hearts or clubs. West will shift to a count club and East should cash a second club because he knows that trick is living, then give West his spade ruff. That's the best E/W can do: 500 against 5♦ doubled, 800 against six. Plus 500 will be fine if there are lots of +480s and no big penalties against spade contracts or higher-level sacrifices, but that's difficult to predict with any confidence.

Where E/W reach 6♣ from the West side South would like to double to suggest an unusual lead, but trying to secure his heart ruff risks driving E/W out of clubs into hearts. Where East declares 6♣, South would need to be very brave to underlead his spade honours to try for his heart ruff. There is no law against bravery and anyone finding this defence will definitely earn his spectacular result.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Where South opens the bidding North will drive to slam, probably in no-trump but possibly in diamonds if South's first bid was 1♦ and his second 2♣. Although there is no eight-card fit, there might appear to North to be some advantage to playing in diamonds on a strong four-three fit, as a ruff might be required to establish clubs, or there might be a dummy reversal if diamonds break and declarer can ruff hearts in South. Whether these possibilities materialise in the auction is far from certain, as some will open 1♣ and others will not open at all.

Where South passes and North opens 2NT or a forcing bid that segues into no-trump, this will be an opportunity for N/S to test their constructive bidding, even if the choice of final contract doesn't prove much. If the ♠K is wrong, declarer needs either all the clubs or both the ♣Q and ♥K onside. If the ♠K is right but the suit doesn't produce four tricks there are fair chances to make up the shortfall in clubs without resorting to the heart finesse, but if the whole spade suit comes in, declarer can take both the other finesses if necessary, needing only one to succeed. It's one of those slams where you don't mind bidding it or staying out of it but it's also one where you'd like to be with the field. In responding to 2NT South would like to have a method that permits him to show at least five-four in the minors with short hearts, or one that involves checking for five-three spades but still being able to find a minor-suit fit. Any of those methods is likely to lead to a high no-trump contract, but whether N/S reach slam or stop in 4NT or 5NT after trying for six is far from clear.

Those in no-trump are favourites to take 12 tricks and those who reach 6♦ will have

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

This might prove to be one of the least exciting deals of the session, although there is definitely some subtle potential for someone to achieve their long-awaited 15 minutes of fame. At nearly every table, N/S will coast into 3NT uncontested. North might not use Stayman over a strong no-trump because he has plenty of high cards and values that seem best suited to no-trump. Where system calls for South to open 1♣ or 1♠, the auction is likely to provide the defenders with more information, but none that figures to be relevant.

A diamond lead from West simplifies play, but even on a heart lead, declarer is likely to win in dummy to lead a diamond towards his hand. When the jack comes up, declarer can win the ace and knock out the ♦K and ♣A for +460. A club or heart lead from the other side shouldn't make any difference. There will be vast numbers of +460s on the frequency charts.

So, what can happen to affect the number of tricks that declarer takes? Well, actually, a few different things. Say that declarer plays the ♦Q from dummy on West's low diamond lead. Then he leads the ♣Q, and if East ducks, a second club. If East takes his ace, declarer has 11 top tricks and West will be squeezed in the red suits on declarer's last black winner for +490. If East ducks the ♣A twice, declarer again has 11 sure tricks; he abandons clubs and cashes his spades. West can afford two diamond discards but the last spade forces him to release his remaining club. Now declarer plays four round of hearts, discarding his remaining club. West wins his jack but must lead away from the guarded diamond king around to declarer's ace-ten. Note that where declarer wins the first round of diamonds with

the ace and returns the ten, West must take his king immediately or he will lose it. If he ducks, declarer attacks clubs. It won't matter whether East takes the ace or not; with two club tricks secured, West will suffer the same fate as in the variations discussed earlier in this paragraph. The same positions will develop where North declares (say, on a club lead), wins the tricks, and plays on diamonds. West must take the king as soon as possible.

Where West leads a heart, declarer can (but probably won't) make life very difficult for him by making his first diamond play the ten or deuce from hand. West will be hard pressed to rise with the king. Perhaps +490 isn't so unlikely after all. Let us not speak of +990 in 6NT!

While we're speaking of the unspeakable, let me leave you with this parting shot. After INT-Pass-2♣, you wouldn't double to direct a club lead, would you? No, of course not. But if someone were to fall from grace and do that, N/S could redouble, scoring +560 on a spade lead and continuation, +760 otherwise. And E/W have nowhere to run (nowhere to hide either, baby).

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Last dance. Last chance (for love).

Most Wests will open 2♥ or a Multi 2♦ or a weak "hearts and another" toy. I confess that I would pass instead with the West hand, and would also pass non-vulnerable, but then I'm fussy about weak two-bids. Style and bitter experience will affect East's decision to pass, raise, or try for game. I suspect that passing 2♥ will be the popular choice. South will hate his heart holding, minimum point count, and the

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Where South passes North's 1♦ opening West will reopen with a double. Whether or not North tries 1♥, East's INT should end the auction.

But these days it's become increasingly popular, when non-vulnerable, to respond to one-bids with virtually nothing, especially with a four-card or longer major to mention. If South responds 1♠, North will have an awkward rebid: 2♠ is an underbid, 3♠ a trump-short overbid, a reverse to 2♥ a bit short on high cards, 2♦ a misdirected underbid. I believe the stretch to 2♥ will be the action that attracts the most support in this somewhat obscure situation. It might occur to North that it would have been better to open an off-centre INT to spare himself this very problem. South will pass 2♥ (even though it's theoretically forcing) and both partners will prepare their apologies, which won't be necessary this time. Although 2♥ can be beaten with careful defence, going one down should be an excellent score for N/S as their opponents can take eight tricks in no-trump. Plus 110 will be even better, of course. INT by North would go one down on a low diamond lead, two otherwise, and getting to no-trump first will pay a handsome dividend.

South will probably manage five tricks in a spade contract, but even not doubled that will be a top for E/W. Will that stop South from responding on air? Not this year!

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

The popular auctions on this one will be: Pass-Pass-1♦-Double; Pass-2♥-Pass-4♥, and, after the same start, 3♥ by North-Pass-4♥-All Pass. Enterprising Easts might achieve something by raising to 2♦, a favourite Zia ploy. If South bids only 2♥ and West passes, North will pass too. South is worth 3♥ over 2♦, but not everyone will see it that way.

4♥ is an excellent contract as it makes when hearts play for no loser or the ♠Q drops singleton or doubleton, but in this case everything turns on declarer's handling of the trumps on the lead of the ♠K. If East hasn't bid it's more likely that he isn't short in any suit but diamonds or he might have taken some action. Where East raises to 2♦, clearly with very little in high cards, declarer might consider playing him for heart shortness. It's interesting to see how much an innocuous bid like a gentle raise to 2♦ can influence the bidding and play.

An E/W sacrifice in 5♦ should be beaten four tricks with a club ruff, while a club sacrifice has different but equally difficult problems, so E/W will do best to defend against 4♥ and hope declarer will guess the trumps incorrectly.

As there's no way to tell how the declarers in 4♥ will fare, the N/S pairs who stop in a heart partscore and record +140 or +170 will be at the mercy of their more aggressive counterparts in the scoring.

several choices in the play, as will West with his opening lead. It's possible that declarer will run into a club ruff and go set, but there are several productive lines that will fare better and I believe 6♦ will make more often than it fails. 6♠, which South might select in order to take advantage of heart ruffs in the short hand, is doomed on a club lead, but is likely to handle well enough otherwise.

Declarer's communications are somewhat tenuous in no-trump and East might create some difficulties by ducking without giving the show away when declarer leads a spade to the ten after four rounds of diamonds. As declarer can envision complications even if the ♠K is right but with the suit four-two, he might give up on king-low outside and lead the queen to start the suit. That can gain when the nine is doubleton and will usually let declarer know in time whether he needs one additional finesse or two . . . unless East ducks the ♠K twice on this lie of the cards. Now declarer might concede a heart and then play ♣A, ♣K, intending to take the marked spade finesse a third time. Down two! If that should happen we'll have the first great story for the session.

+990 will be very good for N/S, of course, and -50 or -100 unspeakably bad. Plus 980 or 920 might be respectable, but +490 will probably be well below average and +460 quite a bit worse. A handful of colour-blind Wests will offer their opponents an 1100-point penalty, but in practice will live to fight another day.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

After 1♣-1♦; 1♠ (uncontested), East has an awkward rebid, INT and 2♦ being the main candidates, with 2♠ a possibility for matchpoint hounds whose partners have learned to be on the look-out for (only) three-card support

in this situation. Indeed, those who favour a major-first response philosophy with less than game-forcing values will expect only three, although better ones would make this raise much more attractive.

Over 1NT, West will raise to 2NT or jump to 3NT, or perhaps jump to 3♣, converting to 3NT over 3♦ by East.

When East rebids 2♦ over 1♠ West will continue with 3♣, 2NT or perhaps a fancy 2♥. 3♣ will get 3♥ from East and lead to 3NT; 2NT will catch a comfortable raise; 2♥ is more interesting, but whether East bids 2♠ (ugh!), 2NT or 3♥, the partnership should end in 3NT. Might West pass a rebid of 2♦? While that could be the winner, it's not the sort of action that seeks the middle ground; 2♦ would be held to two on normal defence (cash spades, switch to hearts, or lead hearts, continuing the suit if declarer ducks), for +90 and a poor score.

Where East raises to 2♠, the bidding might continue: 3♣-3♦; 3♥-3NT, or 3♣-3♥; 3NT. However, if West expects four-card support he might bid less carefully and commit to 4♠. Declarer will have to play carefully to get out for one down on a heart lead, but -100 will be dreadful.

3NT can be held to 10 tricks as long as South hangs on to his diamonds where that is necessary. North should be able to indicate that he will hold his spades by playing his clubs in descending order, so it shouldn't be too tall an order for South to part with all his spades to keep a heart and four diamonds. Even if the East hand is concealed and declarer teases the defence with a diamond discard, he shouldn't be permitted to get away with his deception. Having said that, there will be more than a few +660s and +690's to go with the much more common +630s.

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The website has a wealth of other information, so do have a look round!

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

In fourth seat some West players might prefer to open with a heavy flawed strong no-trump to avoid having to rebid 2NT on the third round of bidding (1♣-1♠; 2♥-2♠; 2NT) with their 2=4=2=5 minimum reverse. Most, however, will open 1♣ and worry later if necessary.

North, with some trepidation, will generally overcall 1♣ with 1♠ and East will try INT more often than 2♦ or an off-centre negative double. There are players who would consider it craven not to raise to 2♠ with the South hand. This would be a good time for some healthy cowardice, however, as West can double to show a strong relatively balanced hand (after East's INT) and any sensible lead (including an unfortunate-looking club) should lead to at least a 500-point set. If South remains silent, West will raise INT to 3NT, or reverse into hearts over 2♦ and carry on to 3NT over 2NT. Where East thought a negative double his most flexible move (angling for West to declare no-trump with a holding like queen-low or jack-third), West might get his side to 4♥. That's an interesting contract that might have yielded a promising +450 on a good day, but here West will have to play with some skill to bring home +420.

At most tables, the contract will be 3NT with East declaring more often than West. Declarer will win the first, or second spade (very occasionally the third) and take some time before making his next move, as there are possibilities in all the suits. His line of play will surely be affected by North's overcall on a mediocre suit, which strongly indicates that he will hold the ♣K, but even if he decides not to go after clubs, it's not completely straightforward to go after diamonds before hearts, as (a) declarer will need four heart tricks for his contract if diamonds don't run,

and (b) declarer will often want to take the heart finesse at matchpoints to play for the maximum number of tricks. Taking the first-round heart finesse (South does not cover) is essential to bring in the whole suit when South started with queen-nine-fourth or -fifth, as here. Should declarer play on diamonds first, finessing through North, he will have nine sure tricks when the suit lies favourably, and it's certainly possible to cash out for +400, hoping others will fail by taking the losing club finesse. But if declarer credits North with the ♣K he might have opened if he held the ♥Q in addition to his proven honours, so most seasoned declarers will risk the heart finesse eventually. Some will cash the ♥A before broaching diamonds to cater to singleton queen in North and deprive him of a free discard. In this variation South can cover the second equal heart honour to hold declarer to three heart tricks and +430. If declarer intends to take the heart finesse later he might well lead the ♥J when he wins the ♠K. South might cover and now the communications are fluid to take four tricks in the suit after North shows out on the second round. If South does not cover or give away the position by considering covering, declarer can continue with the ten, queen, ace. Later, after running diamonds, declarer has a proven finesse against the ♥9 for +460 and a superb score.

It's rare that a contract offers the logical possibility for so many different numbers of tricks, but Diversity R Us on this one.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

It's hardly ideal for West to overcall 2♠ with 2NT with his thin stopper and spotless hand facing a passed partner, and an off-shape takeout double looks even worse. Although it's also dangerous to pass with three aces and 15

declarer plays the ten, and clearly, East can't lead a heart with profit, while a club play allows declarer to ruff in hand and discard dummy's heart loser. There is a defence to defeat 4♠ but it involves leading a diamond on the go, without cashing a club winner. Should declarer guess spades correctly? It's a very close decision and he'll have to decide whether East would double a second time with a spade void and about 15 points in his suits. I believe that 4♠ will make more often than it goes down as the club lead is virtually automatic and the hand more or less plays itself once declarer does the right thing in spades. So, on that basis, E/W will do well to compete to 5♣. Once in a while that might push South to 5♠, so there's a little extra kicker in taking the plunge.

For better or for worse, however, I don't think many West players will try 5♣ over 4♠. Those who reach 5♣ are more likely to do so if East risks a second takeout double and West decides not to defend, on the strength of his fits in all three of East's suits. It's usually bad for offensive purposes when both partners are short in the same suit, and that's the case here, where there are no useful discards. In order to get out for down two declarer must not lead a heart to the king, and is rather more likely to suffer a third undertrick. That won't matter much as there won't be many sacrifices against 4♠ and all will depend on how many N/S pairs make 4♠.

Although it doesn't matter in this case, consider how West should card at trick one on East's ace-king lead. From West's point of view a switch to either red suit could be fatal to the defence, so he'd like to encourage a club continuation or have East switch to a trump. Here he can follow with the ♣Q to announce possession of the jack and leave the rest to his partner, but it's important to realise that there is no count aspect to this signal. West is merely stating that he's happy to have East continue clubs. Those who believe that this is suit preference situation with the singleton in dummy should ask themselves whether an honour is a suit preference card or simply announces possession of the card immediately below the one played. Furthermore, it must be recognised that third hand will not always a sufficient number of cards in the suit led to both encourage a continuation and suggest a

particular switch. Note too that those who believe in playing count throughout will generally avoid conceding a ruff and discard but will not be able to send any other potentially useful message.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

After 1♥-Pass-1♠, South will overcall 2♣ or 3♣. West will either cue-bid clubs or simply raise to 4♠, the latter being particularly attractive in partnerships that define this as a balanced high-card game raise. Once East knows that his partner is 4=5=2=2 he will need perfect cards for slam, so he should not go past game, particularly at this form of scoring.

With trumps three-two and hearts as friendly as can be declarer can always come to 11 tricks, but three rounds of clubs might give him an anxious moment. In which hand should he take the ruff, for starters? As the cards lie, he will succeed no matter what he does as long as he draws trumps and takes the heart finesse or takes a heart ruff before releasing the ♦A. In practice, he's likely to take the ruff in West to leave himself the chance of picking up jack-fourth trumps in North. When both follow to the ace-queen of trumps (South might try following with the jack), declarer must avoid testing diamonds. Starting hearts is the best chance as it succeeds with hearts three-three, with the queen doubleton in either hand or when neither of those things happen but diamonds are three-three or when the third round of trumps squeezes North in the red suits.

As E/W +650 will be an extremely common result, those taking only 10 tricks or going down in slam will surely despise this deal in the post mortem.

in vogue) to indicate moderate hands with five spades and at least four hearts. West is likely to mention clubs in this scenario so if N/S contract for game from either side they're likely to fail.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

While many will open the East hand, a few would open the disgusting South hand, and the busy school will open the West hand in third seat, it's not out of the question that North will be left to open 1♠ in fourth position. Should that happen, East will double for takeout or overcall in hearts. South will redouble in the first case but will have an awkward problem in the second, choosing from among a natural 2NT (if available), a hopeful pass (optimistically aiming to pass North's reopening double), an imperfect negative double, an equally imperfect penalty double, and a tactical 2♣. Where it will end at these tables is far from clear.

If East opens 1♥ and West responds 1♠, North will be reluctant to compete with a natural 2♣ even if he has that club in his bag. If North passes, East will rebid 2♣ and West will give preference to 2♥. With the auction threatening to die, North might try 2♠ now, which will in turn allow West to reopen with 3♦. South will do well not to double 3♦, which can't be beaten, and if he tries 3♠, that will probably buy the contract.

2♥ (either a weak two-bid, or a moderate two-suiter including five hearts) will be the opening choice for some East players. North will protect with 2♠ and South will try for game with 2NT, passing a retreat to 3♣ but perhaps doing too much if North tries 3♣.

Where East passes and South feels he must open 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, or INT, North will usually drive to 4♠ unless West overcalls 1♠, as

some aggressive matchpoint hounds will feel compelled to do. At some of these tables N/S might defend 1♠ and set it two tricks. Declaring 4♠, N/S might go three down on a likely club lead from East or West, losing two aces, ace-king of trumps and two club ruffs.

Left to open in third position, some Wests will pre-empt in diamonds while others will try the effect of a lead-directing 1♠, the latter silencing North at least temporarily. If East responds 2♥ he's likely to play there, down one. The auction could take many different turns after the 1♠ opening, of course, and N/S might still finish in spades or perhaps in clubs (where they can't quite make three).

As N/S are rather more likely to go minus in spades than anything else, E/W will do well not to get too busy. If they can find a way to 3♦, however, they'll do very well indeed.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

<p>♠ A Q J 10 9 ♥ Q 10 9 ♦ A 10 8 ♣ 5 2</p> <p>♠ 8 ♥ J 7 4 2 ♦ Q 7 5 ♣ Q J 9 8 4</p> <p>♠ 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♥ A 8 ♦ 9 6 4 2 ♣ 6</p>	<p>♠ K ♥ K 6 5 3 ♦ K J 3 ♣ A K 10 7 3</p>
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E/W have a profitable 300 or 500-point save against N/S's 4♠, but that is true only if N/S are making their game contract. First of all, declarer must get the trumps right in 4♠, but even if he does there would appear to be two diamonds and a heart to lose unless East switches to a heart away from the king or fails to cover the queen should North lead it from the closed hand. If this first-take analysis is correct E/W should be taking their chances on defence against 4♠.

It's a good thing, then, that there's time for a more thorough investigation. As long as declarer gets the trumps right he can make 4♠ on the lead of a high club. He strips the black suits, takes the ♦A, and exits in diamonds. Neither defender can escape after winning the third round of diamonds. If West leads a heart,

HCP, that looks like the prudent action. If West passes, so will North and East, and declarer will come to 10 tricks, losing only to West's three aces... unless West leads two rounds of clubs before his trump ace is knocked out. If he defends this way he can lead a third round of clubs upon winning the first trump (low to the nine and jack) and East can upper-cut with the ♠Q to promote a second trump trick for West's seven: +140. On other lines of defence, West might duck the first round of trumps, but it won't do him any good as declarer will continue with the ♠K to smother the queen: +170. Curiously, East does better to play the ♠Q on the first round. Now, when West ducks the king, declarer is bound to play East for ace-queen doubleton and exit with a low trump. East's nine is sure to be a big disappointment for declarer: +140.

If West overcalls 2♣ with 2NT, East will have to pass unless he has a method to get his side to 3♦.

2NT on a spade lead from North, can be held to three tricks: -500, not doubled. 3♦ fares considerably better (-200) if it is not doubled, but facing a sound weak two-bidder, an enterprising North might double 3♦ and collect 500 points. If North doubles 2NT for the same reasons (his partnership treats weak two-bids as fairly constructive openings), he will also double the run-out to 3♦, so perhaps there will be more 500s than we expected.

Where West doubles 2♣ for takeout (not an action for the squeamish) he will catch East with a six-card suit which offers an acceptable strain, but at these tables North is quite likely to double and collect his penalty.

Perhaps it's a bit random that the technically sound pass over 2♣ works so much better than the double and 2NT overcall, but I'd like to think of it as a manifestation of justice.

Where South starts with a Multi 2♦ and West doubles to show general strength North will often declare 2♠ and it will be somewhat more attractive for East to start with the ♣J, leading to the third-round upper-cut.

South players who do not open the bidding will either defend a diamond partscore for a significant plus score or buy the contract in 2♣ or 3♣ when they enter the auction later.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

<p>♠ 9 ♥ A 7 5 3 ♦ A 10 9 8 4 3 ♣ 3 2</p>	<p>♠ A J 6 4 3 ♥ J 8 6 4 ♦ J 2 ♣ 10 5</p> <p>♠ 8 7 ♥ Q ♦ K Q 7 6 ♣ A Q J 8 6 4</p>
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With the strength evenly distributed it's not surprising that this is a competitive partscore deal. E/W can make 2♥, but it's extremely difficult to find the four-four fit and they can't legitimately make either 2♦ or 2♠. Perhaps the most common contract will be 3♣, which South will make unless West leads the ♦A, gives East a ruff, gains the lead in hearts, and gives East an over-ruff in diamonds; the defender's spade trick won't go away.

West will overcall 1♣ with 1♦ or perhaps 2♦. Over 1♦ North will try 1♠ or a negative double, according to his beliefs on this issue. East will wonder why he has such a good hand and might well pass to give his opponents a little rope with which to hang themselves. Alternatively, he might try INT over 1♠, 1♠ or redouble over a negative double. When South rebids his clubs West won't bid again unless East has shown some values, but even then, it's not particularly attractive to bid 2♦.

Where West overcalls 2♦, North is very light for a negative double, but many will risk it. If South takes out to 3♣, he will buy the contract, perhaps doubled by an aggressive East looking for a big result. As the double might direct West to find the winning defence it's an action with an upside. Alternatively, South might pass North's negative double, perhaps for the same reasons that East might double 3♣. As long as North doesn't lead the ♦J (not completely out of the question), the defenders can defeat the contract, and declarer might go two down after two rounds of clubs and a heart switch if he doesn't play ace and another trump. If North passes over West's weak jump overcall, 2♦ is likely to end the auction, giving N/S a plus score, perhaps even 200 when declarer goes two down.

Souths playing strong club systems will start with a natural 2♣, which might end the auction, but North might risk a 2♦ inquiry, leading to 3♣. If West comes in with 2♦, North might compete with a double and now the auction will develop as described in the preceding paragraph, but East is unlikely to go quietly. Here West might play 3♦ and score poorly even if N/S don't double. If both West and North pass 2♣, East might protect with 2♠ and play there, occasionally doubled. This obscure contract might play remarkably well, declarer scrambling seven winners. And should South happen to lead the ace of clubs, 2♠ might even make.

It's barely conceivable that South will declare 2NT (perhaps after an eccentric sequence like: 1♣-2♦-double-Pass; 2NT-all Pass). This even more obscure contract will produce nine tricks unless West finds the unlikely lead of the ♠9 or the ♥A. On a middle diamond lead declarer can win the jack, pass the ♣10, then knock out the ♦A and use the spade entry to dummy to repeat the club finesse for +150 and an almost indescribable wow!

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West

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

After 1♣-pass-1♦, South will usually jump to 2♠ or 3♣. If West has a penalty double available, he will strongly consider making one, but even if he exercises that option, East might not sit for it. If West leads the ♦A against a spade contract, declarer can come to seven tricks, but the better lead of a high spade permits West to switch to hearts or clubs, which nets the defence another trick. At these tables, E/W will be +100, +300 or +500. Even the humble +100 could be a good score for E/W as most pairs who reach 3NT or 5♦ with their cards are favourites to go minus. Even 4♦ will often fail.

West might well bid 2NT over a 2♠ overcall

and some will try 3NT over a jump to 3♣. East might be willing to play in 3NT, but many will prefer 5♦ and some pairs who have a method to wriggle into 3♦ or perhaps 4♦ will choose that strategy.

Although 3NT can be made at double dummy on a spade lead (win cheaply, cash the ♦A to see whether an honour drops, knock out the ♥K, go up with the king on a low club switch, cash hearts and one high spade, exit with a club or a diamond), it's far more likely that declarer will play ace and another diamond, duck the low club switch and finish three down. If you made 3NT, you will be a member of a very exclusive group and your agent can set up a schedule for autograph signings.

East might come to 10 tricks in diamonds even on the best lead of the ♦3, declarer ducking or playing ace and another. When it comes time for North to break a suit, he can play a low club, but declarer plays the king and discards his remaining clubs on high spades. Or North can play ace and another club, but declarer can guess correctly by playing the king to fell the queen, and now he can discard two hearts on high spades. Or North can switch to a low heart, but declarer throws one heart and one club on high spades and guesses clubs correctly. If South leads a heart on the go, declarer must win the ace, discard hearts on the ace-king of spades, take the ruffing finesse in hearts, cross to the ♦A, cash a heart to discard a club, club to the king. Not too shabby!

Apart from penalties against spade contracts, plus scores will be rare for E/W. If you achieved one, you've done well.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

Even with clubs four-one and even if the defenders don't present declarer with a spade trick, twelve

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Where West opens light, his side is likely to come to rest at 2♥ and it will not be attractive for either North or South to take any action.

Where West passes, East will open 2♥, a Multi 2♦, or perhaps 3♥ in third position at this delicious vulnerability. It's possible that North will protect against 2♥, a takeout double getting his side to 2♠, a contract that has lots of losers but that might yield seven tricks if declarer doesn't touch trumps, leads a club to the king, and lets the defenders have their side-suit tricks. Minus 100 should be very good for N/S as 2♥ E/W, making two, +110, will be by far the most popular result.

Where West declares 2♥ after a Multi 2♦ by East, a club lead from North provides declarer with an opportunity for an overtrick: he can win dummy's queen and drive out the ♦A, discard a club from dummy on the high diamond, and lose only two spades, the ♦A and the trump ace for a delightful +140.

The Easts who open 3♥ and go minus will not be pleased, but those who catch a big fish (+200, +300, 500, or 800) when North reopens with a double and South takes out to 3♣ will be expecting a pat on their back from their grateful partners.

Bridge is a game of inches.

Teaching Bridge

The World Bridge Federation has a website to help Bridge Teachers, especially those teaching in schools.

The Teaching Program is free and can be found at: www.wbfteaching.org

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

West, with a strong no-trump of his own, will often be able to show his main feature by doubling South's Stayman response to North's more-or-less equal-range no-trump. North will pass or show his hearts, his choice sometimes systemically related to possession of a club stopper. 2♥ will get him 4♥ from South whether or not East slips in a 3♣ "raise," but if North passes and East does likewise, South might settle for a non-forcing 2♥ or 2♠, or continue with 3♣ but pass North's 3♥. With West on lead or having directed a club lead and with the ♥K offside, N/S will be held to nine tricks in hearts or eight in spades, +110, +140, or -100.

Where South starts with a transfer to one of the majors and West doesn't mention his clubs, East might be on lead against a heart contract and start a diamond, allowing declarer to discard both South's club losers and make five, +200 or +650.

Where North opens 1♥ and South raises to 4♥, E/W are in real danger of conceding 650 as East won't always find the inspiration to lead from his only honour card.

Weak notrumpers who favour five-card majors will start with 1♦ and now West will overcall 2♣ or perhaps 1NT over South's 1♠ response. If North passes and East raises to 3♣, South might not be willing to try 3♥ if North will treat that as forcing, and 3♣ could very well be passed out for one down, -100. Whether that turns out to be good or bad for E/W will depend on how many N/S pairs go plus, something that's impossible to predict.

N/S pairs that use Reverse Flannery responses to minor-suit openings will respond 2♥ or 2♠ (there are several variations of this treatment

scoring an intermediate trump. Down to king-jack-nine of trumps, he exits with the jack or nine. West, with queen-ten small, wins the trick but must give declarer a marked trump finesse at trick 12.

As there will be pairs going down at 4♣, 5♣, 5♠ and 6♣, +620 will be a good score, and +650 nearly off the charts.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

E/W can take 11 tricks in hearts, resorting to the club finesse if the defenders force the East hand to ruff a diamond. As N/S can be held to five tricks in spades with perfect defence and six tricks with more normal defence, it seems fair to say that the deal belongs to E/W, who are the captains of their fate. However, that would be an oversimplification, as South goes first and N/S will locate their spade fit early enough to give their opponents a potentially hard ride in finding hearts and obtaining a significant plus score.

The South hand is not a mandatory opening bid but most players prefer to bid than to pass, and a 1♦ opening makes a statement that might be important. Although those players whose systems dictate a 1♣ or INT opening will have less reason to open the bidding, in practice they will usually open because they are not vulnerable. After 1♦-Pass-1♠, East will choose between a 2♣ overcall, focusing initially on the long suit, and a takeout double, getting both suits into the picture. Over 2♣, some South players will be content to pass, but others will raise to 2♠ or show three-card support with a conventional double. If South can open and bid again voluntarily with that cheese, North should do no more than invite game. Nonetheless, some who approve of South's bidding will simply jump to 4♠,

hoping for a make or a good save, avoiding a penalty double when the second arrow in that quiver is the relevant one. Expecting West to be short in spades, East might well double 4♠ to suggest his six-four shape without committing to offence, and West will have no losing option in this scenario: E/W will be +450 or +650 (doubled) in 5♥ or +800 defending 4♠ doubled. But if East doesn't bid again over 4♠ and West doesn't try a speculative double, hoping to obtain club ruffs, E/W will have to settle for +200 or so for 4♠ down four. Where North bids only 3♠, East really should double for takeout, and West will declare 4♥, perhaps doubled, for +420, +450, +590, or +690.

Where East doubles the 1♠ response for takeout South might raise to 2♠ or show three-card support via a conventional redouble or perhaps by some other artificial means; some will pass, however. Where West is able to bid hearts voluntarily, East will raise to game and will take some action if the opponents compete to 4♠. A raise to 2♠ might silence West, and at some of these tables N/S will steal the pot at 4♠ not doubled.

Where South's systemic opening is 1♣, East will rarely have a method to show hearts and clubs over North's 1♠ response. He will have to settle for a natural overcall in clubs (and some won't even have that option, I'm afraid) and hope to show his hearts later. The same scenarios will develop at these tables as after 1♦-Pass-1♠-2♠, with the spoils going to the brave.

After a weak no-trump from South, North will pass, transfer to spades, or use Stayman. It won't be easy for E/W to reach 4♥ or 5♥ or double 4♠ when North takes some action over INT, particularly for partnerships whose doubles of 2♣ or 2♥ don't show the suit doubled but rather the strength to double a weak no-trump in the direct position. N/S might even buy the contract at 3♠ at some of these tables.

In order to hold spade contracts to five tricks with North declaring, West must gain the lead twice in hearts. While this can be done (low heart from East to West's ten) it won't be. With South declaring, it's easier for the defenders to get the hearts right, but West might also lead a diamond, or switch to a diamond if his lead of the ♣J is permitted to hold.

tricks in hearts can be made because South will be squeezed in the black suits. Unfortunately for those E/W pairs who try 6♣, there is no way to avoid a trump loser. But why should E/W contract for 12 tricks? If left to themselves they're most likely to finish in 4♥, those managing a twelfth trick scoring fairly well.

If North passes throughout (which is most unlikely), E/W might bid: 1♣-1♥; 1♠-2♦; 2♥-3♥(forcing); 4♥-Pass. Or West might support clubs over 2♥, then bid 4♦ over 3♥, and quit if East returns to 4♥. However, East has a fair hand for a balanced minimum, and might show one or both of his black-suit controls, after which West might drive to the poor slam. Another possibility after a 1♣ opening is for West to force with 2♥, a treatment that might appeal to players raised in the Acol tradition. It's not clear how far the partnership will be propelled after that start, but reaching slam would not be out of the question. Where East opens a weak no-trump, 1♠, or a Precision 1♦, 4♥ figures to be the final contract.

All of that will often be of mere academic interest because North will open the bidding, either with a weak two-suited 2♠ or with an imaginative natural weak 2♠ or Multi 2♦ (hey, you do what you can to be a tough opponent, even if it's sometimes ugly). That will get by East and South will raise to 3♠ or even 4♠ when he knows North has length in that suit but will generally settle for a pass-or-correct 2♥ in response to a Multi 2♦. West will do what must be done to get his side to 4♥ and East will rarely go past game. However, where South jumps to 4♠, West will have a difficult call. While a conservative pass could be the winning action (South needn't be weak to jump to 4♠), it's natural to think positively when holding a long suit, controls, and a void in the enemy suit. West will either commit to 5♥ or double for takeout, the latter catering to a penalty against 4♠ and to contracts in both minors. East might raise 5♥ to six, giving West a chance to shine in the play, but is likely to pass a takeout double, collecting an 800-point penalty.

Our game is played in many different ways and this deal will highlight the geographical differences as there will be countries or even continents in which virtually every North will open the bidding, and others where most will pass.

Even if North passes as dealer, he will invariably come in over a 1♥ or 2♥ response to 1♣, with a no-trump bid or cue-bid to show his two-suiter. If East is willing or able to indicate three-card support early, West will be thinking of slam if South bounces in spades. If East doesn't show his heart support, West, under duress, might pick a number of clubs -- six more likely than five -- and East won't know that it's best to correct to hearts. While 5♣ making is a better result than 6♣ down one, both figure to be poor scores.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

Where East opens 1♥, South will overcall 2♦ and West will raise to 2♥ or compete with a negative double. Over the single raise North might compete with a responsive double, an action that is more attractive facing a sound overcaller. E/W might well sell out to 3♦ at these tables as East's assets are defensive in nature and West has weak three-card support for hearts. Where West doubles initially, East will rebid 2♥, 2♠ or 2NT according to his beliefs, and South really isn't worth another call, although many will try a hopeful 3♦. Where East has rebid 2♥ or 2NT, West will compete to 3♥ with concealed support, suggesting a hand slightly too good for a competitive single raise (a matter of judgement), but where East has rebid 2♠, West might even raise to four, a distinct overbid if East could have only three spades and a minimum. As 4♠ will go two down unless South leads the ♦A or a heart, North may not have to double to secure a good score. If North does not show some values over West's raise to 2♥, South might not protect against 2♥, but most will consider it too "soft" to sell out when holding a reasonable seven-card suit. Again, E/W might not compete further.

Where East opens INT (pick a range, almost any range), South might jump to 3♦ if he has no cheaper way to get his suit into the picture. It's far from obvious how West would cope with that, particularly if East's no-trump includes 17-point hands and final contracts after this start will include 3♦, 3♦ doubled, 3♥, 4♥, 3♠, 4♠, 4♠ doubled, and 3NT. If South can overcall 2♦ or start with an artificial bid to show a one-suiter, West should be able to introduce his spades and limit his hand and E/W will usually compete to 3♠ over 3♦.

N/S can make 3♦ because their hands fit well and the diamonds lie reasonably well. E/W can take nine tricks in hearts but it's not quite as obvious how declarer will do that, and the winning line will vary according to the defence. For example, after a spade to the ace, a spade ruff, and a club exit, declarer can cash one high trump, unblock spades, and exit with a diamond. Eventually, he'll be able to finesse against North's guarded ♥Q.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

At many tables North will open a strong no-trump and everyone will pass. Very aggressive West players, expecting their partners to have roughly an opening bid, might protect with a bid that shows two suits, perhaps specific ones. That will get his side to 2♦ or 2♠, but South will compete to 2NT or 3♣, or perhaps double (meaning different things to different Norths). Where N/S reach 3♣ at these tables, East might be tempted to bid one more for the road, something his partner will not appreciate but his opponents will, as they can double for a 300-point set, beating all the N/S partscores.

Where North opens 1♣, East will double for takeout and West will compete to at least the two-level. Whether N/S buy the contract at

3♣ is impossible to predict, but after this start to the auction, Wests who compete further might not be doubled, and getting out for -100 should be a good result.

In no-trump North can come to nine tricks and +150 on a low diamond lead by guessing hearts correctly, or on an unlikely low heart lead by developing a diamond trick. However, many Easts will sensibly prefer to defend more passively and lead a spade, which is the winner here: North will have to guess hearts for +120 or settle for an inadequate +90. Easts who believe it's best to lead diamonds might well start with an honour to avoid conceding a needless cheap trick. West will encourage, discourage, or give count in accordance with his signalling agreements and his assessment of what might happen if he gave a different signal, say by discouraging diamonds. If East finds a switch to spades he can hold declarer to eight tricks.

As the defence can't attack hearts with profit, the declarers in clubs will take nine or 10 tricks after building a diamond winner for a heart discard, East's double helping him to guess hearts correctly if he opened 1♣. However, where North opened INT and West made the first defensive bid for his side, declarer is more likely to get the hearts wrong. It's difficult to predict how N/S +110 will score, but +130 should be a sound result.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Where East opens 2NT, silences South, and gets raised to 3NT, a heart lead will give him 10 tricks, and an eleventh will materialise if he guesses clubs or North discards a couple of them. Even if South has an agreement about how to show majors over a 2NT opening, the vulnerability might well cow him. Should he have the moxie and methods to compete,

North's 3♠ as he would without interference. Indeed, as E/W might not enter the auction, the central issue at those tables will be North's willingness to jump to 3♠. If North settles for a heavy raise to 2♠, South is likely to pass. Even if West protects against 2♠, and North goes on to 3♠, South will be reluctant to change horses in midstream and judge his hand worth a game bid after stopping in a partscore.

Where South responds up-the-line with 1♦ and raises North's 1♠ to 2♠, North will probably pass. A raise to 3♠ will get his side to game.

Although the trumps are four-one, declarer will have no trouble in 4♠ on a heart lead, ruffing two hearts in South, cashing ace-king of trumps, and playing club winners. If the defence leads two rounds of diamonds with the ace taking the first diamond trick, declarer puts in the nine on the second round and has a winner in that suit. He ruffs away the king, takes one heart ruff, discards his last heart on the ♦K, cashes one high trump and starts clubs. East can ruff the second but declarer maintains trump control. If the defenders somehow divine to start diamonds the other way (king and another) the position is different. Declarer takes the force, plays ♥A, heart ruff, diamond ruff, then two high clubs. Say that East ruffs and forces South with a heart. Declarer ruffs the last diamond, and plays another club. East is caught in a curious squeeze: he can't afford to discard his last heart or the club winner will be declarer's eighth, with the ace-king of trumps to come, so he ruffs in. Now, if he leads a trump, declarer has two high trumps and a good club, and if he leads his remaining heart, a club is discarded from South as North ruffs with his last trump. The ace-king of trumps take the last two tricks. After the same start, declarer can also make the contract by discarding a heart on the second diamond and allowing East to win the ace to switch to hearts. Declarer must play East for queen-jack-fourth of trumps (with or without the nine) to get home from here, and he might well do that if East has doubled 1♣ for takeout. The ten of trumps is led and covered. South wins, throws North's last heart on the ♦Q and leads a trump to the eight and nine. Now any red card can be ruffed in North with the ♠7 and declarer leads the ♠5 to South's six to pick up East's guarded queen.

Although it's probably not very relevant, E/W pairs who buy the contract in hearts (perhaps after something like 1♣-Double-1♦-2♥; Pass-Pass-Double-3♥; All Pass), a diamond or low trump lead holds declarer to eight tricks. As most N/S pairs will be +420 or +170, collecting 100 against 3♥ or allowing it to make will both be dreadful results. Doubling 3♥ and setting it one for +200 will probably salvage a fair result.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

Where East does not open with a weak 2♦, N/S will often bid: 1♣-1♠; 2♥-2♠ (forcing); 2NT-4♠; All Pass. If 2♠ or preference to 3♣ would not be forcing, North will jump to 3♣ or 4♣ or turn to the fourth suit to create a force. In any case, N/S will usually find a route to 4♠, avoiding the five or six level in a black suit.

Where East opens 2♦, South has an imperfect hand for a takeout double or a 2NT overcall, the two most logical options. North might entertain some hope for slam in both cases, but won't get any cooperation from South if he employs a slam-try sequence. A 2NT overcall works particularly well as North can transfer to spades and that strain handles better from the South side: any plain-suit lead costs the defenders a trick. 4♠ by North can be defeated on a heart lead, which is not particularly unlikely.

Where South declares and suspects that trumps might be four-one, he can shorten his trumps on any lead but an "impossible" low trump from West and arrange to score six trump tricks for an overtrick. Say that West leads a diamond to East's ace and a heart comes back. Declarer wins, cashes his high diamonds to discard a heart and a club, ruffs a heart, takes ace-king of clubs, ruffs a heart, crosses to the ♠A, and leads a heart or a club,

take some fancy footwork to slide into 4♥, or perhaps into 4NT.

Where West starts with a weak or mini-no-trump, North should pass as direct action should be defined as constructive. West will declare 3NT at these tables.

If West passes as dealer, many Norths will do the same, but others will open 2♠, a Multi 2♦ or even a wild and reckless 3♠. East will usually overcall 2NT if sufficient, 3NT otherwise, but some will prefer to double 2♠, focusing on finding a heart fit. If South raises to 3♠, West might go past 3NT to show his clubs and some will finish in the unpleasant contract of 5♣. To save the day in that scenario West would have to double 3♠, allowing East to pass or convert to 3NT, both producing favourable results. Where North starts with a Multi 2♦, East's defensive arrangements might require him to double to show a balanced hand in this range. That should lead to East declaring 3NT in most variations.

Where East declares 3NT, 11 tricks are possible unless South finds the inconceivable lead of a low club and when declarer plays the queen (as he must) and later leads a second club, South must play the king. It's a complicated position and you can try it for yourself, but declarer can't quite manage that vital eleventh winner. Say that South leads ace-jack of spades, North overtaking. Declarer wins, and leads clubs towards dummy twice, playing the queen if South follows low, ducking if South accurately plays the king on the first or second round (if South keeps the ♣K, a third round of the suit endplays him with that card. If South wins the first or second club he can get off play safely with his remaining club, but declarer cashes ace-king of hearts, crosses to the ♦A and finishes clubs, discarding a spade and the two small hearts to squeeze South in the red suits, the ♥J in dummy and the fourth diamond in the closed hand being declarer's menace cards.

On a low heart lead the jack wins, but to come to 11 tricks now declarer must develop a strip squeeze ending after playing clubs the same way to keep North off lead for a damaging spade play. Declarer must unblock dummy's ♦10 under an honour from hand and reduce to this three-card end position:

	Q109		

73		K	
---		---	
4		K9	
---		---	
	A		

	J8		

A spade from dummy nets declarer two diamond winners in the end. The three-card ending on a diamond lead is also a strip squeeze but in this variation West has one spade and jack-low of hearts, East the ♠K and ace-low of hearts, South the ♠A and queen-ten of hearts. There's an exotic symmetry to all this.

We've seen that declarer can always keep North off play by broaching clubs in this particular way, but consider what might happen if East ducks the second round of spades and on the third South discards ... the ♣K!

Where West starts with a weak no-trump, North will lead a spade against 3NT and declarer's theoretical maximum will be 10 tricks.

As declarers will surely be taking less than their potential maximum number of tricks in 3NT on different leads while some of their counterparts are landing in unrewarding contracts, a confident prediction of the scores for some of the most likely results seems like a daunting task. Colour me daunted.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 10 8 7 5 ♥ A 9 6 ♦ J ♣ A K Q 10 9</p> <p>♠ 4 ♥ Q J 7 4 3 ♦ K 7 5 2 ♣ J 8 4</p>	<p>♠ Q J 9 3 ♥ K 8 5 2 ♦ A 10 4 3 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ A K 6 2 ♥ 10 ♦ Q 9 8 6 ♣ 7 6 5 2</p>
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The bidding might well start: 1♣-Double-1♠-3♥; 3♠-Pass-? Should South go on to 4♠? The answer is definitely in the affirmative if he treats

however, North will bid 4♠, leaving E/W with no legitimate positive options. The best they can do is save in 5♦ for one down (4NT is two down off the top), as 4♠ is quite cold. It's hard to imagine E/W selling out without doubling, so the N/S pairs in spades at these tables will invariably be +790.

Where East starts with 1♣ or 1♦ South will overcall in hearts or show a major two-suiter with his partnership's preferred conventional bid. The former is likely to lead to his side defending 3NT on a spade lead, the latter to North declaring 4♠ doubled or East failing in 5♦. At some tables where South overcalls 1♦ with 1♥, North might (barely) try a light responsive double to get the black suits into the fray, and South will compete to 4♠ ... but perhaps also to 5♠. And if North remains silent and East jumps to 3NT, South might not give up, competing with 4♦ to show secondary spades. Why yes, that would be very aggressive indeed at this vulnerability. Where East opens 1♣ and West passes after South's 1♥ overcall, North might try 1♠, and that will make it easy for South to bid 4♠, which might not be doubled.

The declarers who receive a heart lead against 3NT will be delighted but not so delighted that they will claim their 10 top tricks. They intend to run diamonds and form an opinion about clubs and to avoid the embarrassment of losing a finesse to the jack, declarer will want to cash a high club before finishing the diamonds. The downside in doing that is revealing the club position to North. If declarer sees North discard one painless club on the fourth diamond and a high spade on the fifth, he will suspect that the second-round club finesse will win, but whether he has the courage to take it is another matter.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 10 8 4 ♥ A K 2 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ J 9 4 3</p> <p>♠ 9 6 2 ♥ Q J 6 ♦ K J 8 3 2 ♣ K 8</p>	<p>♠ J 7 5 3 ♥ 10 9 ♦ 10 6 4 ♣ A Q 10 7</p> <p>♠ A K Q ♥ 8 7 5 4 3 ♦ Q 9 ♣ 6 5 2</p>
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Where North opens 1♣, a Precision 1♦ or 1NT and the five-three heart fit comes to light, South should do no more than invite game and North should decline the invitation at matchpoints, a form of scoring that rewards plus scores. Where North rebids 1NT and can show a minimum with three-card heart support over an inquiry, or when South can describe an invitational hand with five hearts ending at 2♥, N/S will be headed for a decent score, as +110 is their theoretical maximum in hearts. However, as West might lead a diamond or manage to get endplayed in trumps after a couple of rounds of clubs and no diamond switch, there will be some +140s. There will be plenty of N/S pairs going -50 in 3♥ or -100 in 4♥ when East leads a relatively early diamond to simplify the defence.

Where North declares 1NT or 2NT, all leads are possible from the East hand, although there's no particular reason to make the winning choice of a diamond, which will hold declarer to his six top tricks, or five if he clears hearts. A club lead is unattractive but works well as East has time to switch to diamonds, but major suit leads allow declarer to play on hearts for eight winners. Plus 120 will be very good.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ K 6 5 4 3 ♥ - ♦ 7 6 5 4 ♣ K Q 6 2</p> <p>♠ A Q ♥ Q J 10 ♦ 10 3 2 ♣ A J 10 5 3</p>	<p>♠ J 9 8 7 ♥ 8 7 4 2 ♦ K Q J ♣ 9 8</p> <p>♠ 10 2 ♥ A K 9 6 5 3 ♦ A 9 8 ♣ 7 4</p>
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After South opens 1♥ in second seat West will be tempted to overcall 1NT on his promising 14-count, an action that "feels" much cleaner to me than a 2♣ overcall on a five-card suit and much more positive than a "wait and see" pass. What should North do over 1NT? While pass is a possibility, it's human nature to take some action if it's at all reasonable. Some will double for penalty while others will pin their hopes on their five-card spade suit. East will be delighted to play in 1NT whether doubled or not, and will double 2♠ for penalty (and set it one or

two tricks) or compete to 2NT. Because North has no heart to lead, INT is a favourite to make, so there will be some E/W +90s and +180s on the frequency charts. To have a shot at making 2NT, West will need to be treated to an unlikely club lead from North.

Where West overcalls 2♣, everyone might pass, although South might reopen with 2♥ or an even hungrier takeout double, hoping that North was trapping with a penalty in mind. Some North players will try a negative double, intending to convert 2♥ to 2♠, while others might risk 2♠ in systems where that would not be forcing.

Best defence against 2♣, doubled or not, is a diamond to the ace, two high hearts (north discarding diamonds), and a spade switch. No matter how declarer squirms from this point he will find himself losing a third trump trick to North's six, either when South upper-cuts with the seven on the third spade or when declarer shortens himself, concedes a diamond ruff, or suffers a promotion coming off dummy: -100 or -300. If South gives his partner a third-round heart ruff, North will be endplayed to concede a black-suit trick soon thereafter for just one down, -50 or -100.

Thanks to the favourable heart position, South is cold for eight tricks in hearts and will not get higher than two: +110. There are lots of possibilities in 2♠ but most practical sequences of play will lead to one down: -50.

West players who pass over 1♥ will not find a way into the auction later and will defend 2♥ after 1♥-1♠; 2♥, passed out.

With many ways to go minus in both directions, plus scores of any size will probably be reasonable, but I'm not betting the ranch on that prediction.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

All roads should lead E/W to 3NT, but West will declare after opening 2NT while East will be at the wheel if West prefers to start with 1♠. In strong club systems, vagaries of follow-up decisions and methods will determine who will declare.

Auctions featuring some Stayman variation will dissuade North from leading West's spades or East's implied (or confirmed) hearts, so a club lead is very probable at those tables. That should hold 3NT to nine tricks: +400. If North does lead a heart, declarer can duck a spade, win the heart continuation, cash as many black winners as he chooses, and come to a diamond trick for +430, an excellent score.

South will generally lead a diamond where East is declarer. When the defence wins its spade trick and continues diamonds, South must win the ace and switch to the ♥J, hardly an obvious play. He will know from North's diamond cards that cashing the ♦J will set up a diamond winner for declarer, but it could be right to cash it anyway, or to switch to clubs instead. Here a clubs switch allows declarer to win in hand and drive out the ♦J. There will be plenty of +430s at these tables.

This is one of those deals that will turn on random factors for both sides. That's not pleasant, but it's a part of the game that we can't avoid.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

If N/S are left alone they will usually reach 3NT, often in two bids: INT-3NT. Where North starts with 1♥ and South responds INT, the systems that endorse this start will have North rebid 2♣. South will try 2NT, 3♣, 2♠ (stronger club raise) or perhaps an artificial 2♦, but all of them should finish in 3NT. In less structured systems North might pass a INT response, missing game unless East protects

In 3NT, the normal spade lead should hold declarer to six clubs and two aces.

As there are several ways for N/S to go minus, +400 should be a decent result, +920 a spectacular one, and +150 or +170 might be close to average.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

This is a normal 6NT or 6♥ for N/S that at first glance appears to be doomed, with the hearts foul and the ♦K offside.

While that is true as far as it goes, slam will be made easily enough from the North side on the opening lead of the ♠Q, allowing declarer to finesse the ten on the way back later if necessary. And slam can be made on any lead if declarer concedes a heart, spurns the finesse on a diamond return, and plays to squeeze East in spades and diamonds. Furthermore, where East mentions his spades, as most will, the squeeze line becomes much more attractive; East is vulnerable, after all.

Where South declares 6NT (or more rarely, 6♥), slam can be beaten on a diamond lead, but declarer can still prevail on the more likely spade lead. He must play with care, however, winning the first spade trick with the king. If West continues spades after being given his heart trick relatively early, declarer must finish hearts before running clubs to reach the proper matrix for the squeeze ending. In contrast, if West switches to diamonds, declarer must win the ace and cash clubs before finishing the hearts to achieve the winning position.

Where South is able to indicate that he holds 18-19 HCP and a balanced hand North will surely drive to 6NT, but it will be difficult for South to convey this information uncontested

without bidding no-trump first and exposing the partnership to the killing diamond lead. Where East risks a 2♠ overcall, however, South might jump to 4♥ to suggest the sort of hand he has, and now North can drive to 6NT. If South opts for the slight overbid of 4♥ over a 1♠ overcall, North will know what to do, but if South settles for 3♥, North won't know whether South's hand is balanced in this range or unbalanced with a fair amount less. If he can ask about hand type with 3♠ the normal reply structure has South bidding no-trump with the strong balanced type, so it will be difficult to reach 6NT from the right side. As West is so likely to lead a spade in any case, this won't often matter.

First glance notwithstanding, I think you will agree that both 6♥ and 6NT are much more likely to make than fail at the table, where it matters.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

With such strong clubs and two aces, most Wests will open the bidding at matchpoints, non-vulnerable, especially if their 1♣ openings actually say something about clubs. Whether West starts with 1♣ or a Precision 1♦, most experienced tournament players holding the North cards will risk a weak jump overcall of 2♠ if that option is available. East will employ a negative double and continue with 3NT over 3♣ and perhaps also over an imaginative 3♥ by West if the negative double guaranteed four cards in hearts. Another possibility at these tables is that South will compete to 3♠, which East might double in the reopening position. That would work beautifully for E/W if West were to pass the double (+500), but otherwise it would be much better for East to bid 3NT. Where it would end if West takes out a double to 4♣ is anyone's guess, but it would

As few declarers will find a way to 11 tricks and more of them will settle for just nine, +630 should be comfortably above average.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

Followers of the credo of the legendary Barry Crane and many club-system aficionados will open the North hand, vulnerability be damned. These players will be driven to game -- usually 3NT -- by their partners, and their success or failure will be determined by the choice of opening lead. If East leads a low club against 3NT, declarer will have time to knock out the ♥A for 11 tricks, +660, and a hot result. However, if either defender leads a spade, or if West leads a club and East switches to spades, or if East leads the ♣A and finds the winning switch, 3NT will go one or two down. Clearly, defeat is more likely where North opens with a natural 1♣ rather than 1♥ or a Precision 1♦. At the tables where North opens 1♥ (there won't be many of these) N/S might find their way to 4♥, which can't be beaten with accurate play, even if East leads a spade, ducked, and West switches to a club, East reverting to spades: East can duck two trumps but it doesn't help him.

My first thought was that the adverse vulnerability would most often silence North, the dealer. However, with strong participation in China, Poland, Central Europe, and Scandinavia, perhaps those who open the North hand will outnumber the passers.

Where North passes, East will open 1♣ and South will overcall 1♦ or an intermediate 2♦. The latter will surely lead to 3NT by North, but after a 1♦ overcall North might try INT rather than 2NT, and South might take a conservative view and settle for a quiet 2♦,

+130. If South jumps to 3♦ over the INT advance, North is likely to convert to 3NT, but if he's worried about spades and tries a delicate 3♥ instead, South might not bid 3NT, but even if he does, East is more likely to lead a spade and defeat the contract.

As 3NT figures to produce +660 more often than -100 or -200, those cautious +130s will probably be treated harshly in the scoring. And as there won't be many +130's, the rare +620s in hearts figure to be slightly below average.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

N/S will have the auction to themselves and in standard systems will start 1♣-1♥; 2♦-2♥. Where South bids 3♦ to indicate at least five-six, North should jump to 5♣, as simple preference to 4♣ would not be deemed forcing. It's not clear whether South will raise himself to 6♣ in this scenario. Some South players will fear a serious misfit and content themselves with a non-forcing 3♣ over 2♥. North might pass that, expecting a trump lead, but as it happens the dread trump lead is the only one to defeat slam; game is cold with diamonds four-four.

If N/S employ weak jump responses, North might reply 2♥ to 1♣, but over 3♦ he should drive to 5♣. In strong club systems North will limit his hand with his first response, sometimes indicating a long major suit at the same time, but North will like his hand for a club contract and should make a positive move toward game even if South doesn't have the room to show at least 11 cards in his long suits.

Pairs who wander into 4♥ won't make that as the defenders can arrange either two spades and two hearts or one spade and three hearts, depending on whether declarer ruffs a spade in South.

and concedes a number larger than 400-odd in 2♠ doubled or defending INT redoubled. An old-fashioned light two-over-one response by South will work well on this combination, getting his side to game.

Some aggressive Easts will double 1♥ for takeout. Even 1♠ doubled can be set 500 points if N/S elect to play for penalties, but even if South settles for INT rather than a redouble, West could be forgiven (at least from where I sit) for thinking of competing to 2♠, where he's in -800 territory.

As those windfalls won't happen very often, the main battle will be over an eleventh trick for N/S in 3NT. Where South declares on the lead of the ♠J, East must withhold the ace in order to hold the contract to 10 tricks. If he wins and switches to a high club declarer can arrange to take five hearts, three clubs, two spades and the ♦A for +460, and if he wins and makes a neutral return, declarer will instead take three diamonds and only one club for 11 winners. Letting declarer win the first spade trick deprives him of the flexibility to untangle his winners: if he plays ♦A, diamond after winning the first spade, East wins and switches to the ♣K while he still has the ♠A. From the other side a low spade achieves the same favourable position for the defence, while a high club or a red suit lead (followed by a timely switch to a high club) will be equally effective.

The more attractive low club lead will almost certainly give East a chance to build a club winner later, but there is one way North can come to 11 tricks after winning the first club with a minor honour in dummy: he must lead the ♥Q and overtake it to lead a spade, which East must duck (else we're in the matrix described above); now declarer finesse the ♥10 and runs the suit, putting pressure on East in three suits, discarding clubs from dummy. East will either have to allow declarer to take three diamonds or succumb to a black-suit endplay to lead from the ♦K to let declarer score a second spade in addition. That's the sort of play you might find in a par contest in which the contract is 5NT after East showed some strength in the auction, but it's not a line of play that should appeal to anyone participating in the world's largest matchpoint contest.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

There are several possible starts to the auction, with East very rarely passing in second seat, opening INT or any of the four suits, according to system. A 1♥ opening would get his side to 4♥ in a hurry, West choosing a heavy game raise, a 2♠ cue-bid, splinter in spades, a fit-showing jump in clubs, or a different artificial raise such as 2NT or 3NT. Everyone will have a pet treatment. South is unlikely to compete to 4♣ on his own but if the bidding is only at the three level at his second turn, he might well bid 3♠ or double (where diamonds is the unbid suit) and now North might go on to 4♣ over 4♥.

Where East starts with 1♣ or 1♦ West will choose between a free 2♥ and a negative double over 1♠. Where it ends after that will depend on everyone's strategy and judgement. A 1♠ opening (a Bob Hamman favourite) will silence South, and if West responds with an uninhibited 2♥ the bidding might even just conclude uncontested in 3♥: 1♠-2♥; 3♥-Pass. Where West responds INT to 1♠, however, East will generally pass, although some will see it through with 2♥. South might enter the fray in both these scenarios, and here too it's possible that E/W will buy the contract at 3♥.

If East starts with a weak NT, South will show a one- or two-suiter naturally or conventionally, or double to show a sound hand. West may have to focus on one suit rather than two and here too there will be pairs in 3♥, 3♠ (perhaps doubled), 4♥ and 4♣ doubled.

Assuming that South will not go down in 3♠, par on this deal is 4♥ doubled by E/W, down one. I don't expect to see that result as often as 4♥ not doubled, down one or two (when declarer runs into a club ruff after taking the

trump finesse), 3♥ making three or going one down, and 3♠ making. The best N/S scores will be +530 for making 3♠ doubled, while the E/W top will be +140, the latter happening much more frequently than the former.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

After East opens 1♦, South will overcall 1♠, double for takeout, or show a major two-suiter in a variety of ways. West might raise to 2♦ while the price is right, but not everyone will find this an attractive action over 1♠, especially in five-card major systems. North might risk a responsive double after a 1♠ overcall and diamond raise, hoping to hit a fit for one of his suits, but after a takeout double or two-suited action he is perhaps more likely to bid 4♥ than three. That will really put it to East, whose hand improves significantly after being raised. He can envision a play for game opposite as little as a doubleton spade and some length in clubs headed by ace-nine or king-nine, and at the same time he has reason to fear that his side won't take many tricks in diamonds or that North will be short in spades. It's rather more likely that he will bid 5♦ to make rather than pass 4♥ or double for penalty. As E/W can make only 4♦ for +130 and can double 4♥ for +200, East's decision over 4♥ will swing a large number of matchpoints.

Where West doesn't raise diamonds, there will be auctions like these:

- 1♦-1♠-Pass-Pass; INT-all Pass
- 1♦-1♠-Pass-Pass; INT-Pass-2♦/3♦/2NT/3NT (each of those choices by West making sense)
- 1♦-1♠-Pass-Pass; INT-2♥-3♦/2NT/3NT-4♥; Pass-Pass-Double-All Pass
- 1♦-Double-Pass-1♥; Double-Pass-INT/2♦/3♦ - more hearts by North until someone doubles

- 1♦-Double-Pass-2♥; Double-Pass-2♠/2NT/3♦ - more hearts, etc (possibly some clubs)
- 1♦-Double-Pass-3♥; Double-Pass-3♠/3NT/4♦ - here North might not bid again
- 1♦-Double-Pass-4♥; Double-Pass-4♠/Pass/5♦ simplest solution for West is to pass the double

1♦-2♦-Pass-4♥; Double-Pass-5♦/Pass: Passing the double works better this time

1♦-2♦-Pass-3♥; Double-Pass-3NT-All Pass, but you just know that someone who bids only 3♥ with the North hand is planning to bid 4♥ later!

Where West bids 1♠ over South's double, East might commit to 4♠ over a jump in hearts, a contract that figures to go two down. If instead, East doubles a jump to 3♥ to show a good hand two-way hand, West might pass and go concede -730, or try 3NT, which will go one down on a heart lead or a club lead followed by a heart switch.

There will be East players declaring 3NT who will receive a spade lead, call for the jack, and later make a heart trick for +400. And some who receive a low heart lead from South, which will run to the jack. These declarers might conceivably make four: just wait and see!

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

3NT is excellent for E/W, and they're likely to get there despite South's opening bid of 1♣, 1♦*, 1♥ or INT.

After 1♣, West will overcall 1♦ and rebid 1♠ over East's advance of 1♥. If East jumps to 2NT, West has an easy raise. If East prefers a gentle INT, however, West's trick-taking potential justifies a raise to 2NT or perhaps an invitational jump to 3♦. Even if West settles

for 2♦, East might raise to 3♦ and West will convert to 3NT. It's fair to say, though, that in this scenario there will be pairs in 2♦ scoring +130 for a poor result.

Where South starts with 1♥, West will overcall 2♦, double for takeout, or use a conventional treatment to describe a hand with four spades, a longer minor, and two-level-overcall strength. East will either drive to 3NT or invite game, and West will not decline an invitation. Where East passes a takeout double of 1♥, South will do well to stand his ground, as he can come to four tricks for -500, a better result than the common -600s and -630s defending 3NT. Should South manage to wriggle into 2♣ and run into a double, the same sort of good fortune will accrue to his side, but at these tables E/W are much more likely to find a way to 3NT.

Where South starts with a weak no-trump, West really should double to show strength, and that would invariably get his side to 3NT unless N/S make the bold decision to stick it out in INT doubled, theoretically down 800. Others will, instead, prefer to show their long suit or use a two-suited treatment (spades and another, or diamonds and a major) and might miss game, perhaps landing in 2♠, for +170 or +140, beating only those who finish in a diamond partscore.

A Precision 1♦ opening might silence West if 2♦ is a two-suited cue bid in his methods, but some will overcall 1♠. Any direct action should get E/W to game, although the 1♠ overcall might lead them to 4♠, which can be made with trumps three-three for +620 and almost certainly a very good score. Where West passes over 1♦, East will reopen with 1♥ more often than with INT. West will not have an easy time of it over East's 1♥, but is likely to steer his side to 3NT rather than try to stop on a dime in 2NT or perhaps 3♦.

Where East declares, only a club lead holds 3NT to nine tricks (from the other side, either a club lead or heart lead and club switch will accomplish this), but that's the suit South is most likely to lead. If North leads a spade, for example, declarer has time to drive out the ♦K and also to build a third spade trick, unless South concedes a tenth trick earlier by switching to hearts.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Unless East throws in a wild vulnerable overcall in spades, N/S will bid uncontested and virtually universally to 3NT. Although the bidding is of little interest, this is one of the more fascinating declarer play deals of the session.

South can manage +630 on a likely diamond lead if he can arrange to lose a spade honour to West, typically after establishing his three club tricks. He can later end in dummy after cashing his spade trick by crossing to ♦K to throw West in with the high heart (West has been forced to discard one earlier) in the three-card ending to lead from jack-low of diamonds around to the queen-nine. In practice South, despite some anxious moments, will usually come to at least 10 tricks on any lead.

North can also come to +630 on the lead of the ♠J by reading the ending correctly, as West will come under pressure in three suits on the fourth round of clubs. In both these scenarios, declarer can succeed even if he plays on hearts relatively early, but not if he allows West to score the ♣K before giving West the lead to take a second heart trick. In some instances declarer will have to trust his assessment of the rather fragile spade position, and it is the perceived danger in this suit that will usually lead declarer to work on clubs first.

South can actually develop 11 tricks for +660 on any lead but a heart by playing on clubs without bothering to lead low towards the queen-jack twice, as can then keep his entries fluid. Furthermore, declarer will have to lead a spade to the king and duck a spade on the way back and retain a heart entry to his hand, eventually squeezing West in the red suits on his fifth black-suit winner. From the North side, a heart lead from East won't help the defence as long as declarer reads the spade position accurately.