



Message from
José Damiani,
President, World Bridge Federation

Dear Bridge Friends

Once again I am delighted to be able to thank you for coming and playing in the World Wide Bridge Contest, an event which we hope you find challenging and enjoyable. This event represents a slightly lighter side to bridge, where you have been able to play at your own club, amongst friends, while still competing with players all over the world – a world that has become smaller over the years as communication has developed faster than perhaps we ever dreamed possible.

Scoring the event overall used to take weeks, now it takes hours – indeed only minutes. And the speed at which all the information becomes available – the statistics surrounding the event – would have seemed impossible just a decade ago.

The same happens at our World Championships – we can provide enormous amounts of data in seconds, publishing it across internet, with vu graph presentations of the major matches, and all the Bulletins being made available even before they are printed for the players on site. It all enhances these events and makes them even more interesting.

I hope that, in October, you will watch as youngsters from your country compete in the Junior Championships being held for the first time alongside the Open and Women's teams in the First World Mind Sport Games in Beijing. The Senior International Cup will also be played and the World Transnational Mixed Teams will be held during the second week. Full details about the event are on the WBF Website at www.worldbridge.org

Once again, thank you for taking part in the Contest, competing across the world and showing once again that we all follow the spirit of the WBF Motto ...

Bridge for Peace

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'José Damiani'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

José Damiani
President

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

If East settles for merely modest intervention, N/S will have no trouble reaching their cold 6♥ and take 12 tricks; it's most unlikely that West, in the cases where he is on lead, will lead a club to concede a thirteenth.

Where East jumps to 3♣ over a 1♦ or INT opening, it will be more difficult for his opponents, though hardly impossible. While E/W don't figure to get as high as 4♠, there will be a handful of N/S pairs that misjudge and double E/W prematurely, for 300 in 3♣ or 500 in 4♠. While 500 will beat the 480s, +980 will be popular enough that +500 should be well below average.

In practice, the most effective of East's realistic choices over 1♦ or a weak notrump opening will be a jump to 3♣. If South guesses to gamble on 4♥ or a quirky 3NT, he will play right there for +480, +430 or +490 (playing clubs successfully on a spade lead in 3NT). The winning action after 1♦-3♣ is an atypical negative double: if North bids 4♥, South will drive to slam for better or for worse. If North converts to 3NT instead, South may well pass; and passing the double of 3♣ would be another losing option for North. After INT-3♣, methods will be crucial: if South can transfer to hearts and bid clubs, his side will probably reach 6♥, but otherwise South will have to choose from among 4♥, double, 3NT, or a hopeful, obscure but forcing 4♣ (gambling on sorting out the relative club and heart lengths later).

Here are some of the auctions that are bound to occur:

	West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♠	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass	3♠/4♣
Pass	4♣/4♦	Pass	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass	6♥///

Or, with 14/30 replies to RKCB, 5♣ from N, 5♦ by S, asking for the ♥Q, 5♠ (yes, plus the ♠k); 5NT to ask for more, 6♣ to show the ♠K, 6♦ Last Train seven try, 6♥.

	1♦	2♠	3♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠/4NT,
etc///			
	1♥	2♥ (S+m)	4♦ (Spl)
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♥///
	INT	2♠ (S/S+m?)	3♦ (TRF)
Pass	3♥	?	4♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	6♣
Pass	6♥///		
	INT	2♠	3♥ (FG)
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠/4NT,
etc			
	1♦/INT	3♠	Dbl
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠/4NT,
etc			
	1♦/INT	3♠	4♥///
	INT	3♠	4♦ (♥)
Pass	4♥	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♥///		

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

West	North	East	South
3NT///		1♣	Pass
1♦	1♠	1♣	Pass
3NT///		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	1♣	Pass
2♣	Pass	Pass	Pass
3NT///		2NT	Pass
1♦	1♠	1♣	Pass
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
3NT///		2NT	Pass
1♦	2♣	1♣	Pass
Dbl	Pass	Pass	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
		3NT///	
1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
		3NT///	

Nearly every E/W pair will find a route to 3NT, as the temptation to explore for a thin 6♣ will be minimal. Whether West bids notrump at his first or second turn, or tries to determine whether East is short in spades will depend on personality, partnership philosophy, available bidding space, and perhaps to a degree -- system. If East suggests an unbalanced hand by bidding two suits, West might be more inclined to shy away from notrump, but will certainly think twice before going past 3NT at Matchpoints. Another possibility is for East to pass a reopening competitive double of 2♣, which would work very well, netting his side 500 or 800.

Where West declares, North will most often lead the jack or ten of spades. If declarer plays dummy's queen, tests clubs and starts on hearts, South will win the second round and switch to diamonds. If Declarer divines the position, wins the ♦A, and runs clubs, coming down to ace-low of spades and king-jack of diamonds, North can't escape. When he reduces to two spades and queen-low of diamonds, declarer plays ♠A,

spade, and collects two diamonds at the end for a delightful +460. Declarer has lots of ways to go wrong, however, including a further heart play, taking the diamond finesse, or playing low from dummy on the spade lead, and +430 will be a much more common result.

At the tables where East declares 3NT, any lead but an unlikely heart will prevent declarer from coming to 11 tricks. It's not quite as simple as that, however: if East ducks to the ♠K, North must switch to a heart; if he plays a black suit instead, declarer can play all his winners in those suits, forcing South to discard two diamonds and a hearts; now ace-king of diamonds and a heart to the queen endplays South to lead from the ♥J. If you got that one right, you deserve to see your achievement described in someone's bridge column.

Board 3, E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

With hearts behaving and the ♠K inside tripleton, there are 13 tricks available to N/S in hearts but only 12 in notrump. As slam is a less than even-money proposition, it's not particularly desirable at single dummy to reach six, and indeed, most of the field will stop in game, 4♥ being much more popular than 3NT.

While some will open 4♥, the South hand, with its gappy suit and defensive strength elsewhere, doesn't fall within the textbook parameters for an opening bid that purports to be relatively weak, especially first seat at favorable. North has a good hand facing a long heart suit of some quality, but to have a good play for slam he will usually need to find South with shortage in spades and a perfect mesh in the minors, e.g. x, AQJxxxxx, Qx, xx; or x, AQJxxxx, QJxx, x.

Looking for perfection is not a sound strategy under normal circumstances, and most Norths will pass a 4♥ opening.

Where South opens more normally with 1♥ and rebids 2♥ over a 1♠ response, North would like to buy some time before choosing a strain (hearts or notrump) and a level, but in standard methods the best he can do is force with 3♣ or 3♦, both of which will attract a third heart bid from South. If North continues with four of the other minor, South should interpret this call as a slam try agreeing hearts, although the precise nature of North's controls outside hearts will be somewhat murky. South has a superb spade holding for slam on such an auction, respectable hearts, and a possibly useful diamond control, so despite his modest high-card strength he should cooperate in a slam venture, with a 4♠ control-bid his best option. If the auction gets this far, North will lean towards bidding 6♥ to simplify matters for South.

Many will conservatively raise 2♥ to 4♥ while others will prefer a jump to 3NT, particularly if they believe South will interpret this as showing a balanced hand with roughly strong-notrump strength rather than a fast-arrival misfit. Although defining a 2NT continuation by responder as a one-round force (facing a known long (six or more cards) suit is not yet a popular treatment, those who believe in the idea are able not only to slow the auction down with 2NT but also to use a jump to 3NT as a "power raise" in hearts, typically with two- or three-card support, a difficult hand to describe otherwise. For example:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♥
Pass	2NT (F1)	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4NT, etc///		4♠
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT*	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	4NT, etc ///		

*3NT = ♥+ If 2NT is not forcing:

Pass	1♠	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♣	Pass	3♥
Pass	4NT, etc ///	Pass	4♠

Unless declarer leads a heart to the ten for personal reasons, scores will turn on whether N/S are in game or slam and in hearts or notrump. RKC will reveal that the ♥Q is missing but 5 keys ought to suffice for 6♥.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

When the points are nearly evenly divided and no one can make much of anything, there is often considerable variety in the auctions, final contracts and results. This is particularly true when both sides are vulnerable and enterprising players will consider a close penalty double in search of +200 to beat all the partscores. Some of the more likely auctions:

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	INT///	
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
INT	Pass	Pass/2♥///	
1♠	Pass	INT///	
1♠	Pass	INT	Pass
Pass	2♦	2♥	Dbl///
		(or 2♥-Pass-Pass-Dbl///)	
1♠	Pass	INT	Dbl
Pass	2♦///		
1♠	Pass	INT	Dbl
Pass	Pass	2♥	Dbl///
1♠	Pass	INT	Dbl
Pass	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	3♦///		

INT	Pass	2♥///	
(or 2♦ (TFR)-Pass-2♥///)			
INT	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl///		
INT	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2♦	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠///		

With perfect play and defense N/S can take seven tricks in either of their seven-card fits, hearts or notrump, but with West very likely to open the bidding with 1♦, 1♠ or INT and East certain to get his side to INT or 2♥, N/S will most often be defending INT or 2♥, which is their optimum strategy on this deal. Even if North leads a spade against INT, accurate defense thereafter will hold declarer to six tricks. If East declares INT, he's more likely to come to five tricks than six unless South leads a third heart after East ducks two honors. Where E/W declare 2♥ or 2♥ doubled, the most likely outcome will be six tricks. Thus, the most common results for E/W will be -100, -200, and -500, and -100 might not be too bad.

Where N/S misjudge and buy the contract in 2♠, 2♦, or even 3♦, it's hardly automatic that they will come to seven tricks as there is scope for unfortunate approaches to both trump suits. While any N/S minus figures to be quite poor, -200 or -300 will be particularly repugnant.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

With the cards lying well for N/S, they can scramble eight tricks in any of their seven-card fits, but will often find it too risky to enter the auction, sell out to INT or 2♦, and go -90 or +50.

Defeating INT takes some doing: North has to be on lead and start with a low heart; declarer must play the five or jack and South must win and switch to spades; North wins the third round and switches to a club honor. As East will usually declare INT and N/S will not often get the defense right when West declares, E/W +90 will be quite common.

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	INT///	
	Pass	1♣	Pass
INT///	(or, where E/W play a strong club: Pass-1♦*Pass-INT///)		
	Pass	INT///	
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	INT	Pass
2♦///			
	Pass	1♦*	Pass
3♦*///	(another strong club variation)		

To make 2♦ or escape for -50 in 3♦, West must get a club lead or switch before the defense attacks hearts; then he must build a second club trick and guess hearts right to enjoy a discard on the ♣9.

To get into the auction North will have to double after Pass-1♣-Pass-1♦, or protect with a major-suit takeout bid of his partnership's choosing when East's INT opening or rebid comes around. While both those scenarios are either reasonable or frivolous according to whom you ask, there is no doubt that E/W will have the auction to themselves more often than not. The case for taking action with the North cards is weakened to an extent by the prevailing vulnerability, but another way to look at it is that E/W are not vulnerable and if they go one or two down not doubled they'll do better than they would defending 2♥ or 2♠ by N/S when one of those contracts makes. Furthermore, if E/W had alighted in 2♦, N/S's competing to two of a major might push them to an unsuccessful 3♦. While I promised not to write, "It's a bidder's game" more than once in 72 deals, perhaps I should blow my quota right here.

Pass Pass 1NT Pass
 Pass 2♣* Pass 2♦*
 Dbl Pass* Pass 2♥
 Pass Pass 3♦/Pass///
 (2♣*=♥+♠; 2♦=which is longer?; Pass* =
 neither)

Pass 1♣ Pass
 1♦ Dbl Pass 1♠///
 (or if E or W compete further, 2♥ by South,
 leading to 2♥/2♠/3♦)

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

West	North	East	South
		1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♦	Pass	?	

At this point East must choose from among 3♥, 3♠, and 3NT, each a reasonable action if you focus on spade quality, two honors doubleton in partner's suit, and two likely club stoppers, respectively. 3NT will end the auction, but 3♥ and 3♠ will create a decision for West. As East's 3♥ suggests two-card support and either no club stopper, a thin one, or a hand oriented towards suit play, West will begin to suspect that there may be no good game for his side. In a strong 2/1 system, where West could have forced with a stopper-sensitive 2NT over 2♠, he might risk 3NT over 3♥ if he believes East will not expect much in clubs. Else, West will raise himself, somewhat hopefully, to 4♥. Where East bids 3♠ over 3♦, 3NT would be a bit more presumptuous, though some will choose that call; others will continue with 4♦, but many will consider their prime values more suitable for play in spades and raise to 4♠.

4♠ doesn't look terrible at single dummy,

but declarer can't avoid losing two trumps, a diamond and a club, or a third trump and not a diamond. A few might go two down.

3NT is going to make from either side unless South leads a low diamond against East and declarer plays low from dummy. Even an unfortunate heart lead by South won't allow a tenth trick, and +600 should be a fairly common and decent result for E/W.

Most interesting is the play in 4♥. It is far from clear that declarer can find a route to 10 tricks. North will usually lead a club honor. Say that declarer wins and leads the ♦9. South takes the ace but has no attractive play (you might say that should have convinced him to follow low to the diamond from dummy, and indeed, declarer would go down if he ran the nine to North's ten -- unless North returned a diamond or a low club). If South plays a second club at trick three, North can play a third round or switch to spades, but declarer will cross-ruff safely for 10 tricks.

If South switches to trumps at trick three, neutralizing North's jack, declarer wins and has several winning options, one of which is to cash the ♥Q and lead a club to the jack. If North ducks, declarer can draw trumps and make an overtrick by smothering North's ♦10; however, ducking the ♣Q does give declarer a chance to go down if he gets the diamonds wrong, so it's a high risk/high reward investment. If North takes the club and continues the suit, declarer can play low and ruff in hand to finish trumps. South, under pressure, can't keep enough protection in spades and diamonds; if he reduces to king-queen-low in spades and queen-low in diamonds, declarer leads a spade to the ten and South must give him one hand or the other (declarer finesses the ♦J in that variation and makes all his diamonds); if South comes down to king-queen of spades, declarer goes to the ♠A and cashes the ♣10. South must discard a diamond, and declarer gives South his spade winner but finesses at T12 on the forced diamond return. On an initial trump lead, declarer might achieve a winning position similar to the one developing after a trump

switch, but he might succeed also by playing South for both spade honors; South wins the $\diamond A$ and plays a second trump to dummy's queen; $\spadesuit A, \spadesuit J$, South covering; declarer ruffs and finishes trumps, South keeping his fourth diamond, third club or the $\spadesuit 8$ as he prefers; declarer plays a club and North can split or not, but as long as declarer plays him for both club honors he will get home; if North splits, declarer wins and plays a spade honor, discarding the $\clubsuit J$ as South wins; the defense soon will have to give declarer dummy or his hand after taking its club winner.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

<p>\spadesuit 9 6 \heartsuit J 8 \diamond K 7 3 2 \clubsuit A J 8 4 3</p> <p>\spadesuit Q 7 5 3 \heartsuit K 10 9 7 6 4 2 \diamond Q \clubsuit 7</p>	<p>\spadesuit A J 8 4 \heartsuit Q 3 \diamond A J 9 8 5 4 \clubsuit 5</p> <p>\spadesuit K 10 2 \heartsuit A 5 \diamond 10 6 \clubsuit K Q 10 9 6 2</p>
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Although a handful of West players will pass over a $1\clubsuit$ opening by South, most will risk $1\heartsuit$, $2\heartsuit$ or $3\heartsuit$ with different degrees of concern (remorse would be too strong a term on this occasion). North will raise clubs at the two or three level, perhaps via a limit-plus cue-bid over $1\heartsuit$, but not everyone will compete to the four-level over a bounce to $3\heartsuit$. East will raise $3\heartsuit$ to four and perhaps do the same after a vulnerable weak jump to $2\heartsuit$, but otherwise will compete in diamonds or via responsive double to get both his suits into the picture. The latter strategy might work best as West, despite limited assets, will like his hand for play in spades, a strain that offers a legitimate play for 10 tricks.

Club system aficionados will start with $2\clubsuit$, which will usually (definitely not always) silence West. If North jumps to $4\clubsuit$, that might end the auction, but East is more likely to come in with $4\diamond$, which in turn might end the auction, down 200 if North can arrange his spade ruff. West might convert to $4\heartsuit$ whether or not $4\diamond$

is doubled, and N/S might not double that . . . or beat it, of course.

Heart contracts can be held to nine tricks if the defense arranges for North to lead a spade before declarer can get around to trumps. The defense can then arrange a spade ruff, the $\spadesuit K, \heartsuit A$, and a club. In spades, declarer need only avoid losing to the $\heartsuit J$ and weakening West's trump holding on repeated club leads.

In clubs, N/S have four losers but might be permitted to avoid a second diamond loser if West doesn't get around to that suit in time. For example, if West leads a spade and East plays the ace (the "impossible" play of the jack saves the day, however, as West can win the next spade and switch to the $\diamond Q$), declarer strips the black suits and plays $\heartsuit A$, heart; West must win to play the $\diamond Q$, but declarer refuses to cover and is presented with a ruff-and-discard for a valuable tenth trick.

As there won't be that many E/W pairs that bid and make a game, N/S pairs going -200 or more figure to fare poorly in the scoring, and even -100 might be below average if there are too many E/W pairs going minus in $4\heartsuit$ or a fairly high diamond contract.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

<p>\spadesuit K 8 5 3 \heartsuit 3 2 \diamond Q 8 \clubsuit K Q J 7 4</p> <p>\spadesuit J 10 4 \heartsuit 10 6 5 4 \diamond K 2 \clubsuit A 10 6 3</p>	<p>\spadesuit A Q 9 7 6 2 \heartsuit A \diamond A 10 7 6 \clubsuit 9 2</p> <p>\spadesuit \heartsuit K Q J 9 8 7 \diamond J 9 5 4 3 \clubsuit 8 5</p>
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West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	$1\spadesuit$	$3\heartsuit$
$3\spadesuit$	Pass	$4\spadesuit$ ///	

Not all six-five hands lend themselves to a two-suited treatment such as Michaels or a version of Ghestem (pinpointing the second suit). This South hand looks enough like a heart one-suiter that many of its holders will

prefer to overcall 2♥ or 3♥, especially at this vulnerability. Wests playing five-card majors, will not mind raising at the three-level under duress, but four-card majorities should bite the bullet and do likewise rather than pass or stall with an atypical negative double. Whether or not North gets involved with a natural 2NT, 3♣, or raise to 3♥ after a 2♥ overcall or a lead-directing 4♣ after a 3♥ overcall, East is going to bid 4♠ and buy the contract.

In 4♠, declarer should be able to hold his losers to two by taking two diamond ruffs in West with high trumps. If North over-ruffs at either opportunity, declarer will lose only a club trick in addition. If North does not over-ruff, declarer will elope as many trumps as possible with heart ruffs; North will either have to discard all his clubs or ruff in front of declarer, and in either case declarer won't lose a third trick. Declarers losing their way and taking only 10 tricks in spades will not be pleased with their score.

As heart contracts should be held to seven tricks, those N/S pairs who reach the four-level will offer E/W a chance for a near-top by doubling 4♥ for 500. That won't happen often. Souths who overcall 2♥ without their partners twigging to their proclivity for unsound actions, may do worst of all when North doubles 4♠ for 690 or a careless 590.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ 2 ♥ A Q J 4 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ K 10 9 5 4</p> <p>♠ K 10 9 7 5 4 ♥ 10 ♦ 5 3 ♣ A Q 8 6</p>	<p>♠ Q J 3 ♥ K 9 8 7 2 ♦ Q 10 9 7 6 ♣ ---</p> <p>♠ A 8 6 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ K J 2 ♣ J 7 3 2</p>
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Not every East will overcall 1♥ or ignore the vulnerability to show his red two-suiter wholesale, but at the tables where East bids, one of the following auctions is likely to develop:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♥	2♣
2♠	3♣	3♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl///	(or 4♣ by North///)	
	1♣	1♥	Dbl/1♠*
<i>(denying as many as four spades)</i>			
1♠	2♣	2♠	3♣
3♠	Dbl///	(or 4♣ by North///)	
	1♣	2NT*	Pass
3♦///	(or 3♦-Pass-Pass-Dbl///)		

North has enough to at least consider bidding 5♣, but will usually have no room for a trial bid at a point where he knows of genuine support. In such cases the best one can do is gamble on a level or double to show extra values in the hope that partner can make a more informed decision. The latter strategy is particularly attractive when the opponents are vulnerable, and it would not be surprising to see a significant number of N/S pairs collecting 200- or 500-point penalties by staying off the unfortunate lead of a club, which would allow declarer to come to no fewer than nine winners, +930 in 3♠ doubled.

Where East does not enter the auction:

	1♣	Pass	INT
2♠	3♣	3♠	Pass
Pass	Dbl///		
<i>(where INT suggests 3334 or 3343 shape)</i>			
2♠	1♣	Pass	2♣
	3♣	3♠	Dbl///
1♣	Pass	1♦*	1♠
Dbl*	2♠	3♣	3♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl///	

(1♦ = hopeful stall: maybe notrump is better by North; Dbl* = extra values, no clear direction)

In all these cases either North or South might double 3♠, or one of them might bid 4♣ or even 5♣, much depending on style, methods and judgment.

Norths whose system calls for a 2♣ opening may buy the contract at 3♣ without hearing from E/W, but if West risks a 3♠ overcall after a raise to 3♣, East may well raise to 4♠, giving N/S a chance for +800.

It's best for North to lead his trump against a spade contract, but unless he leads a club

there will be time to switch to trumps to hold declarer to eight tricks. Doubling 3♠ for at least 200 will beat all the club partscores (and club games that fail due to the bad break in trumps), but even +100 for N/S might not be bad if there are many pairs going minus their way.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♦	Pass
4♥!!!		3♥	Pass

This will be by far the most common auction with E/W very unlikely to reach slam or miss game. If East overbids by roughly the ♥Q and offers a splinter game raise, West might give some thought to going past game, but East should not cooperate in a non-Blackwood auction and as 11 tricks are secure, even an adventure that peters out at 5♥ should not lead to a minus score.

If North leads a spade and declarer ducks, South might allow a 12th trick or even a 13th by putting in the nine, playing North for the jack rather than the king. Ouch! If South judges accurately and puts up the queen, however, declarer can secure three spade tricks by passing the jack later to pin the nine, with the eight coming into play. That would mean he needs only one club ruff in dummy (one club goes on the ♦K, another on a spade winner) and can play any way he likes in trumps. As he is unlikely to have an early indication about the distribution, he will usually play off the top hearts and make only five. But declarer might not rely on a second spade finesse, instead discarding a spade on the ♦K and taking three

club ruffs. That will only work if the defense has allowed declarer to get the ♣A out of the way before South gets in to lead a trump. In those variations, declarer uses a high trump to ruff a club, and in the course of cross-ruffing, when North can't ruff up in front of dummy with the ♥Q, declarer can play South for it, exiting with the second round of spades to score the king-ten of trumps in the two-card ending when South has to play one after winning with the ♠Q.

Although there will be a few +1430's for E/W, slam figures to fail more often than it makes. With everyone else in 4♥, those who score the ♠J at T1 and find a line that picks up the trump queen will score beautifully for +710, but +680 will also be very good. If there aren't many going down in slam, the declarers who finish with a "normal" 11 tricks will be very disappointed with their score.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	?	Pass

East's rebid will depend on the level of sophistication of the partnership but where East does not settle for a jump to 4♥, he will start with a game-try move that might glean some information that could be useful for evaluating slam prospects. If West can indicate a minimum, balanced four-trump raise, East will choose between 4♥ and 3NT, avoiding an ambitious slam adventure.

			Pass
INT	Pass	2♦*	Pass
2♥	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♥/Pass!!!			

INT Pass 3NT/// Pass

1♥ Pass FGR* Pass

3NT Pass Pass/4♥/// Pass

(where FGR is an artificial game-forcing heart raise)

E/W can take 11 tricks in hearts (even on a club lead by South) or notrump if he reads the position correctly, as North can be stripped/end-played in the minors, but there will be plenty of E/W +420s and +430s recorded, ensuring that the +450s and +460s produce excellent scores.

The pairs fortunate enough to declare 4♥ from the West seat after a 1♥ opening or a weak notrump opening and Transfer or Stayman sequence, will usually get a high-club lead from North and an easy road to 11 tricks. Indeed, if North carelessly discards his two low clubs on the second and third trumps, declarer can cash ace-king of spades and exit in clubs to collect a twelfth trick when North has to break diamonds or concede a ruff and discard.

Where East declares 4♥, South will do best not to lead the ♦9, perhaps recognizing the Curse of Scotland when he sees it. In that variation, declarer covers with the ♦Q and later finesses against the ten. With careful timing he can ruff West's fourth diamond, eliminate the majors en route, and come to 12 tricks by passing the ♣10, leading low to the eight, or leading low to the jack and guessing to put up the ten on North's low-club return.

A black-suit lead should be more popular for South, with the ♠J the most likely start. Declarer's strategy is to take three diamond tricks and so avoid having to play clubs for only one loser. His best play for four diamond tricks is low to the jack, hoping to find king-ten or king-nine doubleton onside, leading to a third round finesse against South's nine- or ten-fourth. To start diamonds that way (rather than low to the ace, intending to later lead low towards the jack) is slightly inferior for securing three tricks as it pays off to singleton king in

South, but leaves open some other important possibilities sacrificed by playing the ace first. If no nine or ten come up on the first round and the jack holds, declarer can give up on king-low in North, return to dummy and lead the queen, picking up doubleton nine or ten in South: after North covers the eight-seven will be equals against North's (here) ten. The possibility of South ducking the jack smoothly from king-ten- or king-nine-fourth has to be taken into account, but that's not an easy play to find in a suit contract. If instead declarer plays ace and another after the jack holds, declarer can eliminate everything and pass a club to North, losing only if he finds a line in clubs that allows him to mis-guess on the second round. In the elimination ending, ♦J, ♦A, club to the jack, can also work, as North will have to give declarer a trick in one minor or the other.

The play in notrump is not as comfortable because of the threat in spades, but when declarer runs the hearts, pitching a club from West, North must give up his fourth diamond or a second club, and if declarer reads the ending accurately, he can build an eleventh trick in the minors no matter how North discards.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West

	♠ 9 6		
	♥ K 8 5		
	♦ A J 10 9 5 2		
	♣ 6 3		
	♠ 10 7		♠ A K J 4 3
	♥ A J 3 2		♥ Q 10 7 6
	♦ 8 7 6 4		♦ ---
	♣ J 7 5		♣ K Q 4 2
	♠ Q 8 5 2		
	♥ 9 4		
	♦ K Q 3		
	♣ A 10 9 8		
West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦	Dbl/2♠	3♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
3♥///			
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
INT	2♦	2♥	3♦
3♥	Pass	4♥///	
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
INT	2♦	Dbl*	3♦///

(where Dbl is for takeout)

Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	2♦	Dbl*	3♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass

3♥///

(where Dbl is for takeout)

In the auctions where E/W sell out to 3♦ or stop in 3♥, it's easy to imagine them doing a bit more. As N/S can make 3♦ for +110 and the most likely result for E/W in hearts is nine tricks, competing over 3♦ and finishing +140, -50 or -100 in 3♥ or 4♥ will be the winning strategy for the travelling pairs. With no singletons and about half the high cards, few N/S pairs will be tempted to compete to 4♦ at the prevailing vulnerability, and while -200 (when someone doubles 4♦) will be dreadful, even -100 might turn out badly if too many E/W pairs go minus in 3♥ or 4♥. It's become quite popular in the modern game to treat opener's double of an overcall of a 1NT response as takeout rather than penalty, with the corollary that responder's reopening double is treated as cooperative takeout, typically 2=4=2=5, 2=5=2=4 or 2=4=3=4 in this scenario. As opener's double suggests extra values, it's not so clear for him to reopen 3♦ with a second double, and if he does, it's not clear West shouldn't jump to 4♥. That's one of the reasons it pays to compete with a long suit and a fit: even if the opponents find their best strain they may not be able to judge the level accurately.

With only the ♥K and the ♣A as certain losers, it might seem that 10 tricks in hearts shouldn't be out of reach, but two losers don't translate into 11 winners, or even 10, and declarer faces control problems on a diamond lead from either side. Not that 4♥ is a terrible contract, but it needs some racing luck and at Matchpoints it doesn't pay to push too hard for 21-point games with only eight combined trumps. Even if 10 tricks can be made, +170 should produce a decent score. On the lie of the cards, perhaps East's best shot when he declares is to lead towards the ♠10. If South follows low, as well he might, declarer wins the ten and has several ways to get home, including a diamond ruff followed by ace-king of spades to pitch a diamond, but as both the ♠Q and the

♥K might be onside it's not especially attractive for him to adopt such a line. If instead he tries the ♣K, South does best to win and return a club. Declarer won't be able to ruff enough of West's diamonds or develop his spades without allowing the defense to take two trump tricks and at least one trick in the wash, and there will be declarers who play the hand wide open and take only eight tricks. Plus 140 will be an excellent result for N/S as +420 should be quite rare and -100 quite common.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
Dbl	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥///			
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	4♣*	Pass
4♥///			
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1NT	Pass	2♦*	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥///	
	Pass	Pass	1NT
Dbl	2♠	3♥/3♦**	Pass
4♥///			

(*where 2♦ is a transfer; **where 3♥ is forcing or 3♦ is an invitational-plus transfer)

There may be some variations in which North mentions his spades, but E/W will nearly always find a route to game in hearts and take 11 tricks for +650. If South takes the ♣A, declarer has three diamond discards from the East hand. If South ducks the ♣A, declarer can play ace and another diamond, losing only one diamond and the ♠A.

There won't be more than a handful of E/W pairs in 3NT, and as their theoretical maximum in notrump is 10 tricks from the East side and only nine from the infinitely more plausible West side, justice will be served in the scoring.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

	♠ A K 10 8 2		
	♥ J 9 5 4		
	♦ J 10 3		
	♣ K		
♠ Q 4		♠ 7 3	
♥ K 8 7		♥ A 6 3 2	
♦ K Q 7 6		♦ 8 5 4	
♣ J 8 4 3		♣ Q 9 6 2	
	♠ J 9 6 5		
	♥ Q 10		
	♦ A 9 2		
	♣ A 10 7 5		
West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	Pass	Pass
Pass	2♥	Dbl	2♦
		Pass	3♠///

Sure, someone might bid 4♣ with either the North or South hand, but there's no persuasive argument for doing so. With the ♠Q doubleton onside, all roads lead to 10 tricks, but +170 will be far more frequent than +420.

On a diamond lead from East, declarer ducks and will have time to get the ♣K out of the way and discard a diamond on the ♣A, losing only two hearts in addition.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

South will most often open 1NT, strong, and North will arrange to play 4♣ via a natural response or transfer at the four level. Some other scenarios:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♥*	Pass	4♦*
Pass	5♣*	Pass	4♠
Pass	6♠///	Pass	5♥*

(2NT = 17-18; 3♠ forcing, 6+ spades; * = various control bids)

Pass	1♠	Pass	1♣
Pass	4♣*	Pass	1NT
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	5♠	Pass	4♠
		Pass	6♠///

(1NT = 17-18; 4♣ = long spades, short clubs)

Methods will determine whether N/S play 4♣ from the North or South side; judgment will determine whether they stop in game or reach slam. It will take several optimistic views to propel N/S to slam, but some will get there because that's the way of the world.

6♣ isn't a good contract, but it will take a club lead from West to beat it; else declarer can get the hearts right after drawing trumps to discard North's club, and play West for the ♦K. The ♣K, then anything but a diamond will do for West, but on a more normal low club lead to the ace, East must switch to a diamond, or West can be caught in a trump squeeze: declarer wins a major-suit switch (a second club would be immediately fatal as declarer plays the ten) and runs all his trumps but one, discarding diamonds from South, then cashes hearts, pitching a diamond; the last of these forces West to blank the ♦K (declarer cashes the ♦A, ruffs a club and cashes the ♦Q) or blank the ♣K (declarer ruffs a club, returns to the ♦A, and cashes the ♣Q). With East on lead against 6♣, the same conditions apply: he must lead either an unlikely low club to West's king, or cash the ♣A and switch to a diamond.

Of course, the same considerations apply to spade game contracts, though the drama of making or defeating a slam with accurate play will be lacking.

If you're not going to take 11 tricks in spades, why not opt for a hair-raising 3NT, with 11

winner on a club lead, accurate guess on a club return, and a successful view in hearts, 12 on a reasonable diamond lead from West? Why not? Because it's simply too unilateral and the sort of action you might consider only if you're desperate for a huge Board.

Remarkably, while N/S have only 11 tricks in spades, there are always 12 in hearts! A club lead or neutral lead allows a club ruff in North for the twelfth winner. And if North somehow becomes declarer and is treated to the most challenging lead of a diamond, he must take the ace, draw trumps and run spades, throwing clubs. In the three-card ending West must reduce to one club and two diamonds or declarer simply ducks a diamond to the king. Now declarer ruffs the ♣9, removing West's club, and leads towards the ♦Q. No problem!

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	INT	Pass	2NT///
(or the equivalent)			
Pass	INT	Pass	3NT///
Pass	1♠	Pass	INT///
Pass	1♠	Pass	INT
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT/Pass//		
Pass	1♠	Pass	INT
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT///
Pass	1♠	Db!?	INT
2♥?	Db!	Pass	3♣/Pass///

There's no good reason N/S should climb to the giddy heights of 3NT, though the favorable

lie of the red suits and an often-forced winning play in spades (an early heart play will otherwise cut off the South hand) will see them home.

Nor is there any good reason for E/W to enter the auction and compete to the two-level at this vulnerability, but a handful of them will do so and create the possibility of -200 and a big score for N/S.

The most common score figures to be N/S +150 in a notrump partial, with some 120s and 180s for variety. Forcing and semi-forcing INT afionados will finish in 2♣, 3♣, or 3NT more often than INT or 2NT, adding +110, +130, +400, +430 and -50 to the frequency sheet. As is so often the case, taking all your tricks in the best strain will produce a good score; bidding game is not as important.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

After 1♠-2♣, South will choose between 2♠, 3♠ (weak, where that's available) and 4♠. West will have an easy club raise over 2♠, a mildly uncomfortable club raise over 3♠, and a difficult decision over 4♠. As it happens, East has enough to bid again even if West remains silent over 3♠ or 4♠, but whether East's second call is a heart-flawed takeout double, a natural 4♦, a club rebid, or a descriptive, artificial 3NT or 4NT to show long clubs and shorter diamonds (perhaps a shorter *red suit* for some partnerships), West will get his side to 5♣, the top spot.

Where South bounces to 4♠, there is some chance that E/W will reach an undignified 6♣: East raising himself to 6♣ if West volunteers 5♣ over 4♠, or West boldly/foolishly committing to slam if East reopens 4♠ with 4NT. Although we

note that E/W would make 6♦ if East's hearts were ace-low and diamonds broke three-two, or if East were 0=2=4=7 or 0=2=5=6, playing him for one of the perfect hands is far too ambitious in a scenario where N/S won't often be tempted to take a phantom sacrifice.

Apart from the "unlucky" E/W slams, there will be a few missed games, including some tables where N/S buy the contract for 3♠, +140, or 4♠, -50. Although N/S can save profitably (-300) at 5♠ doubled, it's difficult to envision anyone getting that high at equal vulnerability. Curiously, perhaps the final contract will virtually never be 4♠ doubled, because if either East or West doubles to show a good hand in context, his partner will surely take it out.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

	♠ A K 10 7		
	♥ K 8 7 5 4		
	♦ 6		
	♣ J 4 2		
♠ Q J 8 6 4		♠ 5 3 2	
♥ 6		♥ A 2	
♦ 7 5 4		♦ A K 10 2	
♣ Q 10 8 3		♣ A K 7 6	
	♠ 9		
	♥ Q J 10 9 3		
	♦ Q J 9 8 3		
	♣ 9 5		
West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1m 2NT///	Pass
1♠	Pass	1m	Pass
3♣*	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♣*///		3♦*	Pass
(where 3♣ puppets to 3♦ to permit a signoff in 3♦/3♥/3♠)			
Pass	Dbl	1♦	Pass
2♣	3♥	1NT	2♥
(or 3♠-4♥-Pass-Pass-Dbl///; or 3♠-Pass-Pass-Dbl///)			
1♠	4♥	1m Dbl///	1♥
1♠	2♣	1m	1♥
Pass	4♥	Dbl Dbl///	3♥

		1♣	2NT*
3♣	4♥	Dbl///	
(*2NT = 5+♥/5+♦)			
3♣	4♥	1♣	2NT*
Pass	Dbl///	5♣	Pass
(*2NT = 5+♥/5+♦)			

These projected auctions do not constitute a comprehensive list of what might happen on Board 18, but should include the most likely developments. If N/S defend 2NT or buy the hand in hearts below the four-level, they will go plus.

It's easy to see how E/W can manage nine tricks in clubs, but not as obvious that they can also come to nine tricks in spades, with four apparent trumps and a diamond to lose. One of the reasons the winning line for declarer is difficult to spot is that it requires forming an opinion about the lie of the trump suit. Say that North leads his singleton diamond against West's 3♠. Declarer wins the ♦A and tries a trump to the nine, queen, and king. North switches to hearts. If declarer wins to play a second trump he will fail because there will come a point where North can ruff a club, cash the high trump, and exit in hearts; South will get a diamond trick. If West has been tipped off from the auction (perhaps a penalty double) or is appropriately inspired, he can ruff a heart and lead a diamond. North doesn't want to ruff a loser, so discards. Now declarer plays on clubs. If North ruffs, he can sacrifice a trump trick or concede a ruff-and-discard to eliminate declarer's diamond loser. +140 and +530 will not be common results, but they will certainly appear with some frequency.

If N/S can escape a double in 4♥ they will salvage some matchpoints despite, but -200 figures to be a poor result for them.

Should South come in with 1♥ over one of a minor? Or with a two-suited (two lowest unbid) 2NT over a 1♣ opening? That's really a matter of philosophy. The bidders will explain that taking action usually works well for them. The passers will tell you that it's anti-percentage to enter the auction at this vulnerability with

a hand that is unlikely to buy the contract profitably. Where do you fit in that spectrum of aggressiveness?

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Left alone, N/S will coast into 4♣ or 3NT after starting: 1♣-1♠; 2NT. Some North players will check for three-card spade support while others will consider their balanced hand with a fair doubleton in opener's minor better suited to notrump even if South were to admit to three spades. These players will raise 2NT to 3NT or offer 3NT after learning that opener has spade support, letting South choose the strain. Given the option, South should normally choose spades as diamonds might be a problem in notrump or it might take a ruff or two to develop the clubs.

Some hyper-aggressive E/W pairs might wander into the auction for a moment and survive, but as E/W's theoretical maximum on offense is seven tricks in diamonds, anything more than a peep might be hard done by at this vulnerability.

The only lead to give South a legitimate chance in 3NT is a club, but even then, declarer will have to win in dummy and lead a spade to the nine (or the equivalent); that's not so farfetched once East shows out of clubs. Why won't passing the quack work? Because East will play low, and can play low again on the second round, allowing declarer three spade winners but not four. Declarer can come to three spades, two hearts, one diamond, and two clubs, but West can avoid an endplay in clubs by keeping his red cards. If East plays the king or ten on an early round of spades, declarer can manage the

four tricks in that suit needed to come to nine in all. On a diamond lead declarer is likely to start with a club towards the jack, reserving his options in spades until he gets a handle on the club distribution. That will achieve a position like the one where West leads a club, and again the handling of the spade suit by both sides should determine the fate of the contract.

There is just too much work to do in 4♣ and declarer will go one or two down in a variety of different ways.

The most common result figures to be N/S -50, and those who suffer an extra undertrick will be treated shabbily in the scoring.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

For the third deal in a row, Dealer has a balanced 18-point hand (though this one is much less rich in controls than the last two). This time, however, his side can make something significant.

At many tables the bidding will be simply quantitative, in the family of: 1♣-1♠; 2NT-6NT, or 1NT-6NT. As there could be an easy grand slam, however, there is not that much to recommend such simplicity; if 6NT is the right contract, there will be plenty of opportunity to bid it.

In standard methods, casual partnerships might not be on firm ground about continuations over the 2NT rebid, with various club bids potentially natural, artificial inquiries, or ace/key card asks.

In Acol-influenced partnerships, East will prefer a force of 2♣ over 1♣, an excellent start. Say that West stalls with 2NT to protect

his diamond tenace and see what East has in mind. East continues with 3♣, West with 3♠, and East with 3NT, a fine description of his promising 5=2=2=4 hand. West can try 4♦ to see whether East can show the ♥A, and when he does not, it's easy to close out the auction confidently at 6NT.

While this does not appear to be a fiercely challenging deal, there will be some E/W pairs in 6♠ and a few in 6♣. It's tough to see anyone missing six or bashing seven.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

	♠ A J 6 5 2		
	♥ A 2		
	♦ 8		
	♣ A K Q 7 2		
West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠///		
	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣*	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♠/// (* Drury-Fit)		
	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♦*/4♦*
Pass	4♠/// (*diamond shortness, game raise)		

This N/S combination is worth bidding to slam only if you happen to make it. Bob Hamman's definition of a good slam is one that makes, so if you adhere to that point of view, 6♠ is a lovely contract. With trumps impossible to mis-guess, even the challenging heart lead doesn't defeat the contract because North has just the right number of clubs and hearts to permit declarer to dispose of North's heart losers; the ♦A is the only loser.

North won't like his hand much if he learns South is short in diamonds, and even if that

information does not come to light, North won't feel he has much to contribute once he shows some strength in diamonds. The slam is reasonable because of North's fourth trump, the ♣J, and his holding only six cards in hearts and clubs combined.

To reach slam, South will usually have to continue over 4♠, with 5♠ perhaps the best move. Blackwood remains one of the world's most popular conventions and South will look no further at many of the tables where slam is reached. Key-card versions will reveal that one key card and the trump queen are missing, unless North, when asked about the latter, considers king-to-four roughly equal to holding the queen.

While I believe that more pairs will stay out of slam than bid it, I concede that I could be very wrong.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

	♠ J 9 7		
	♥ Q 8 2		
	♦ 9		
	♣ K Q 8 7 6 2		
West	North	East	South
		1♥	3♣
Dbl*	5♣	Dbl///	
1♠	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♠///		3♠	Pass
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠///	
		1♥	Pass
INT	Pass	2♦	Pass
		2♦*	Pass
2NT*	Pass	3♦*	Pass
4♠///			

(where 2♦ is Flannery: 4♠/5♥, 11-16
2NT=Inquiry; 3♦=more diamonds than clubs)

Even if declarer in a spade contract loses a trick to the ♠Q, he will make 4♠ with modest care in the play. Those who ruff out hearts early and duck a round of trumps will come to 11 tricks. Reaching game on this occasion will be important, as there will be plenty of 650s and 620s. Two of the auctions that will not propel E/W to game are included above, and this deal will not make the highlight reel for suppressing weak four-card spade suits in response to 1♥; sure, East might continue with 3♠ after being raised to 3♦, but that won't be interpreted as 4=5=4=0; E/W might reach 4♥ after that, with some chance of making it – heart to the ten is the natural way to broach that suit, picking up queen-doubleton and queen-third in South.

Where South has the courage to mention his clubs, North may well jump to 5♣ early, forcing a decision on his opponents before they can limit their hands and confirm their fit(s). As 5♣ doubled costs only 500 and it's likely that more than half the E/W pairs will secure their vulnerable game bonus, those who find the sacrifice should fare reasonably well in the scoring.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

	♠ A 9		
	♥ A K Q 6		
	♦ A 8 7 3 2		
	♣ 7 4		
♠ J 10 3		♠ 7 6 5 4	
♥ J 10 4 2		♥	
♦ K J 9		♦ Q 10 5	
♣ 10 8 5		♣ A Q J 9 6 2	
	♠ K Q 8 2		
	♥ 9 8 7 5 3		
	♦ 6 4		
	♣ K 3		
West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	2♣	Pass
3♣	DbI*	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥///		
Pass	1NT	Pass	Pass
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♣
			4♥///
			(or a conservative raise to 3♥ by South, North accepting the invitation)

	1♦	3♣	Pass
Pass	4♥///		DbI*
Pass	1♦	2♣	Pass
3♣	4♥///		DbI

With some room for variation, it's barely possible that N/S will not reach 4♥, but E/W can't do much to impede their opponents' constructive progress and the vast majority of stationary pairs will get to their best contract.

Despite the four-nil trump break, the cards lie extremely well for the declaring side, and careful play should bring in 11 tricks. Say that the defense starts with ace and another club, as good as anything, declarer wins, leads a trump to the ace, and ducks a diamond. The best defense is to play a third club, but declarer ruffs high in South, plays a high trump, covered, plays ♦A, diamond ruff with South's remaining high trump spot, finesses the ♥6, draws trump and claims, +650. Declarers managing only 10 tricks will not be pleased with their score. If declarer had needed four spade tricks, the fall of the jack-ten tripleton would have made a winner of the eight.

It's that very spade position that permits N/S to make 3NT with only three heart tricks, but +600 would be just about a zero, and virtually no one will be in that inferior strain.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

	♠ A 5		
	♥ A 8 6 5 3		
	♦ Q 5 4		
	♣ J 7 3		
♠ 9 7		♠ K Q J 10 6	
♥ 4		♥ K Q J 7 2	
♦ A K 10 8 6 3 2		♦ J	
♣ 6 5 2		♣ 10 9	
	♠ 8 4 3 2		
	♥ 10 9		
	♦ 9 7		
	♣ A K Q 8 4		
West	North	East	South
3♦///			
4♦///			
2♦	Pass	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT	DbI///	

Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♦///			
Pass	1♥	1♠	2♣
2♦	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	1NT	2♣*	3♣/2NT*
3♦///			

(*2♣=majors; 2NT=lebensohl, puppet to 3♣)

As N/S can take eight tricks in clubs and, miraculously, eight in notrump, and E/W eight in spades or seven in diamonds, this is not a deal for lofty ambitions.

Much of the previous paragraph is of merely academic interest as, at most tables, West will declare a contract in diamonds. The defense will get all six of its tricks if North leads a club, or the ♥A, followed by a club switch, with South switching to trumps after one or two high clubs. The lead of the ♠A, however, will cost the defense a trick (whatever the defense does, declarer can play two further rounds of spades with profit), and that might well be North's choice if South does not mention clubs.

Fairly common E/W scores will be +90, -50, -100, and -150, with some +50s and +100s. E/W +110 and N/S +90, +120 will be rare. The only reason that 120 is possible is West's holding of two spades and one heart: if declarer ducks the first spade as a matter of course, and cashes the ♥A before finishing clubs en route to taking his seven winners, he will discover when he exits with a diamond that West has nothing but those remaining and must present North with the ♦Q.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT*	Pass	3♥*	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠///	
(where *2NT is a FG spade raise and *3♥ indicates heart shortage)			
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠///	
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥*	Dbl
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠///	
(*where 2♥ is a transfer to spades)			
	Pass	Pass	2♥(!)
Dbl	4♥	4♠///	

With a wide variety of artificial forcing major-suit raises and attendant infrastructure on the market, E/W will enjoy plenty of options in developing the auction. Whether East opens or passes, South and/or N/S get(s) involved, or East gets to show his heart shortage, the final contract at nearly every table figures to be 4♠; the rare exceptions will occur where N/S get too frisky in hearts and concede an 800-point penalty.

As the diamond suit is "frozen" for the defense (i.e. if they lead the suit declarer can play for split honors if he has to and can avoid a loser there), the critical suit for declarer is clubs. If he can take three club winners and lose only one trick in the suit, he can discard one diamond from East on a club, and another on the ♥Q, after conceding the ♥A, coming to 11 tricks and a fine score.

If the task were to take only two club tricks, lose one, and not worry about the fourth round of the suit, taking two finesses towards the ace-ten would be the indicated line (low from West first in case North were to show out); declarer would lose two tricks with the king-jack in South but win in all other cases and, more importantly, avoid having to guess which honor North held. Here, however, the objective is three winners, so the fourth round of the suit matters. Although the two-winner line is not far behind the optimal three-winner

line, and happens to work beautifully on this layout, the technical play is ace first, then low, intending to play the nine if South follows low. If the nine holds, declarer leads towards the queen next time, succeeding against all king-jack combinations in South, jack third, doubleton jack, and king-nine doubleton or singleton king in North. If South plays the king on the second round and follows low to the third round, finesse against the jack (the assumption should be that South would have followed low to the second with king-third, expecting declarer to go wrong on the actual East/West combination). Once declarer plays the ♣A, he can no longer make five, and will take small consolation from having played the suit correctly.

There will be plenty of +620s, of course, and the relative numbers of 10- versus 11-trick results will turn not only on declarer's handling of the club suit, but also on the opening lead. Best would be a heart or a trump, but some will lead a "passive" club from South or an aggressive club from North, much to their chagrin. And some will lead a diamond, giving declarer the option of playing for no diamond loser and discarding a club from East on the ♥Q for a different route to 11 tricks.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

West	North	East	South
5♣/Db/lll		Pass	5♣
		Pass	4NT*
Db/lll	5♣*	Db/lll	Pass
(*4NT = a 5♣ or 5♦ opening; *5♣ = pass with clubs, else bid 5♦)			

		Pass	1♣
1♠	Db/lll*	4♣	5♣
5♠/Db/lll			
		Pass	3NT*
Db/lll			
(*3NT = a long solid suit, no side ace or king)			
		Pass	3NT*
4♣	Pass	Pass	5♣
Db/lll	Pass	5♣	Pass
Pass	Pass/Db/lll		

When someone is dealt a solid nine-card minor at equal vulnerability, anything can happen. We can talk about the Rule of 500 (or 800), maintaining discipline by not bidding again unsolicited after choosing a number of clubs or an extreme Gambling 3NT, partnership trust, and various tactical approaches, but in the end South will be governed as much by his personality, mood, and estimate of his session in deciding on the care and feeding of his "special" hand. The auctions above are only some of the ones that will occur.

If West doesn't set up the ♠K for declarer in a club contract, there will be only one way to play hearts for one loser when the ten comes up – cover with the jack. Curiously, it's better for West to try to cash the ♠A, because now declarer has a discard on the ♠K and needs only to guess whether West holds the ♥A or ♥Q to go with his ten, and he could guess wrong. The same situation develops where North declares 5♣ and East leads a spade: declarer discards the diamond from South and later needs to play West for either the ace or queen of hearts. There will be plenty of +750s and -200s in 5♣ doubled.

We can see that spade contracts can be held to 10 tricks if South switches to a heart when he gains the lead, or if North ruffs with the ♠K on the second round of clubs and exits safely in trumps or diamonds. If the defense proceeds differently, however, declarer can cash the ♠A, strip diamonds (and clubs) and exit in trumps to force a heart lead or obtain a ruff and discard to eliminate the heart loser. There will be a nice selection of +990s, +850s, +790s, +650s, +620s, -100s, and -200s in spade contracts.

When South is doubled in his Gambling 3NT opening and North gambles a pass, South should be delighted to go along with North's opinion. West should cash two high diamonds and then decide how to proceed. If East plays up the line, West should treat the second diamond as suit-preference. All well and good, but West would know about the ♠A anyway. Perhaps, then, East should play low-ten in diamonds to show something useful in spades. Remember that West doesn't know how many club tricks South has, but assuming at least seven means that there is no advantage to clearing spades. West should take his remaining diamond, cash the ♠A, and lead a heart. Declarer will guess right as South would not underlead the setting trick, but that will be -200. N/S will then have to hope there some mis-guesses in 5♣ doubled and plenty of spade contracts making for E/W.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South,

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

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♣///			Pass
2♣	3♣	Pass/Db///	Pass
2♦*	Pass	2♠*	Pass
Pass	3♣	Pass/Db///	Pass
(*2♦ = weak 2M, etc; *2♠ = pass with spades, else describe)			
Pass	1♣	1♥	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Db/* (4♠)
3♦/Pass///			Pass
Pass	2♣*	2♥///	
(*2♣ = 11-16: 6+♣, or 5♣+4M)			

Pass

Pass 3♣ 3♥///

Lots can happen on this one, as West or North might start with a bid at the two- or three-level. East, with the best hand at the table, may not be in a position to take any action. East can make 2♥ against any defense, but won't play there very often. If West resists the urge to preempt, E/W will find their diamond fit and will take nine (if declarer loses a heart trick) or 0 tricks. Plus 130 will be excellent, +110 above average.

Seven tricks are the limit for E/W in spades unless South conspires to lose his fourth trump trick and, as the contract figures to be higher than the one-level, -50 in 2♠ will be typical.

Other E/W minus scores will occur if they reach the three-level in hearts or game in diamonds, or sell out to 2♣ and lead a black suit. It's more likely that if E/W defend against a club contract, it will be at the three-level, but they will get only 100 unless East leads ♥A, heart, or a diamond, hardly obvious. Whether E/W +100 turns out well is difficult to predict, because so much will depend on whether West opens the bidding.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West,

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	1♠	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠/4♦
Pass	3NT/4♥	Pass	4♥/Pass///
Pass	1♣	2♠	3♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	6♥///

Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦*
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♥/// (*2♦ = transfer to hearts)		

Pass	1NT	2♠	3♥ (F)
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT, etc

	1♦	Dbf	1♥
1♠	2♥///		
	1♦	Dbf	1♥
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥///
	1♥	Pass	2♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT/4♥///

Slam in hearts is playable for N/S, but fails with the ♦K wrong, so the ambitious pairs will fare poorly, as justice would dictate. Slam is worse than 50% as there might be a spade ruff or a bad break in either red suit; and even with the ♦K onside, declarer might need to guess whether to ruff a diamond high or low.

South will either place some value on North's failure to make an advance cue-bid over a forcing 3♥, settle for a cue-bidding auction and respect a signoff, or unleash his favorite version of Blackwood. E/W will be at the mercy of their opponents, who will rarely produce a score other than +650 or -100.

It's not likely that N/S will gamble on the extra 10 points by trying for the same number of tricks in notrump, but if they do they're likely to succeed because East will usually lead a low spade, allowing +660. The ♠A or a red suit lead will give the defense time to switch to clubs and hold the contract to 10 tricks. Those E/W pairs will beat all their colleagues except those who defeat a slam.

4♥ is the normal contract for N/S, with 25 combined HCP, good trumps, and a smattering of spot cards. Strong notrumpers will generally reach game on a quantitative auction, either by South raising 2♥ to four or by North accepting an invitational raise to three.

Weak notrumpers are more likely to stay out of game if East comes in over a 1♦ opening (five-card majors) with a mildly flawed takeout double. If E/W compete in spades, South will devalue his ♠Q and might not even try for game if North raises to 2♥ (four trumps, either distributional or 15-17 balanced). Where North opens 1♥ (four-card majors), East is more likely to pass, and South will have no reason to think badly of his assets; most will reach game after this start.

The four-one trump break creates some handling problems for declarer, but he can overcome them as long as the defense (from either side) does not lead trumps. East, with all the entries, can play trumps at every opportunity, and although declarer has time to build a second spade trick, duck a diamond, discard a diamond on the ♠A and ruff out the diamonds, East will gain the lead in clubs and play his remaining spade to force out North's last trump; East's long trump will be the setting trick.

Some will try 3NT, but that contract can be beaten as long as the defense gets around to spades relatively early and East stays off diamonds.

As trumps will not be led against 4♥ at many tables, there will be quite a few N/S +620s. Those going set in 4♥ or 3NT will expect poor scores and will be correct in their estimates.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

	♠ A 8 2		
	♥ K 10 9 6		
	♦ A 4 3 2		
	♣ K Q		
♠ 10 9 5 4		♠ K J 7 3	
♥ J		♥ 8 5 3 2	
♦ 8 7 5		♦ K Q 9	
♣ J 10 4 3 2		♣ A 5	
	♠ Q 6		
	♥ A Q 7 4		
	♦ J 10 6		
	♣ 9 8 7 6		
West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥///		

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

♠ 9 5 ♥ A 10 9 6 ♦ 9 2 ♣ Q 9 7 6 4			
West	North	East	South
		2♦	Pass
2♠	3♣	4♠	5♣
5♠	Db///		
		2♦	Pass
2♠	2NT	4♠///	
		Pass	Pass
1♠	2♣	2♠	4♣
4♠	5♣	Pass	Pass
5♠	Db///		

There will be variations, of course, including some where West mentions hearts, but once West gets raised in spades he is unlikely to sell out to 5♣ if it comes to that.

North, with a surfeit of high cards, ought to lead a spade honor. Declarer wins and will plan to establish hearts, hoping to hold his losers to two. His best move will be to lead low hearts from hand twice, ruffing the second in dummy; if an honor appears he will try to draw trumps and concede a heart with the queen-jack equals against the outstanding high honor; else he will need the N/S hearts to divide three-three. South wins the first heart cheaply and returns a spade and declarer must guess whether to finesse the ten; if he does, he's down. If North has suggested a balanced hand in the auction, his chances for spade trick are more or less zero, but North will be reluctant to bid notrump with known spade length on his right. The same position will be achieved on a neutral club lead. Declarer ruffs, loses a low heart to South, wins the trump return, ruffs a heart, felling the king, and leads dummy's last trump with the fate of the contract turning on his decision on this trick.

There will be lots of +650s for E/W, some +590s and +690s, and a fair number of -100s. If West sells out to 5♣ (who will double that?) declarer will lose two spades and a diamond for -50 or -100. With so much potential for scoring up a doubled game, a small plus against 5♣ might seem like small potatoes to E/W, but if enough of their line-mates mis-guess the play in 5♣, going plus might produce a fair score.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

♠ K Q 8 6 ♥ 7 3 ♦ A 8 5 ♣ K 10 9 8			
♠ 10 5 ♥ K Q 8 6 ♦ Q 9 6 ♣ Q 7 6 2			
West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠/3♠///	
			Pass
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠///			
			Pass
1♦*	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	Db
Pass	3♣	3♠///	

(where *1♦ is the system opening in some strong-club systems)
 (North might bid 3♣ for the lead, 3♥ in case it makes, or 2NT = choice)

			Pass
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠///			
			Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠/4♠///	

Although the strength is evenly divided, at most tables it will not be easy for N/S to enter the auction, and even if they do, E/W will usually outbid them in spades. N/S can make 2♥, but expose themselves to a sharp penalty double

and dreadful 200-point penalty if they reach the three-level.

With spades and diamonds three-two, there's not much to the play in spades: E/W can take nine tricks and not 10, even if the defense does not lead or switch to hearts.

The greatest danger for E/W is reaching game, but that might happen only where West opens 1♠ and East takes a shot at 4♠ on the basis that he won't be able to show his singleton in time for West to evaluate the degree of fit accurately.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	3♦*	Dbl
Pass	Pass/3NT///		
1♦	Pass	2♦	Dbl
3♦	3NT///		
1♦	Dbl	2♦	3♦
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠///
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♣*
Pass	2♦*	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠///

(*2♣ = majors)
(*2♦ = which is longer/better?)

As E/W have seven losers in a diamond contract and the vulnerability is against them, they must be careful not to create a scenario in which North might legitimately pass a takeout double for penalties. As even 2♦ doubled costs 500 against a problematical game for N/S, there is real danger for even fairly conservative Easts.

N/S pairs that do not try for a penalty against 2♦ or 3♦ will invariably reach 3NT or four of a major. There is less threat of a significant number

of undertricks playing in spades, but in each of the three possible game contracts success or failure will be determined by declarer's handling of the club suit. The winning line is to run the jack and later lead the ten to smother West's nine. Playing in spades, declarer has the best chance of obtaining a fairly reliable inferential count: if diamonds are five-five, West will have two clubs once he shows up with three-three in the majors, and that information should lead declarer to do the right thing in clubs. A mis-guess of the clubs in 4♠ (or in the much less likely 4♥) will lead to one down. In 3NT, declarer will have to time the play precisely to get out for one down if he gets the clubs wrong; say the defense leads two round of diamonds; dummy, already under pressure, releases two clubs; declarer crosses to the ♥J to lead a spade through West, who must duck; now declarer must *not* try for ace-low in spades; instead he must pass the ♣J, succeeding only if East started with queen-low or queen-nine doubleton of clubs. That's a pretty obscure line of play, even for the Unlucky Expert, but hey, you never know.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	2NT
3♠	Pass	4♣	5♣
Pass*	Pass	Dbl///	

(2NT=hearts and clubs)
(*where West's pass is forcing)

Some would treat 3♠ as non-forcing, showing a good suit of at least six cards, more or less invitational values; they would bid 3♣ (or 3♥) to force with spades, reserving the other cue-bid for a good diamond raise.

It's easy to see that if South competed to 5♣ someone might go on to 5♠, which can't be made unless the defense does not get around to hearts early enough; in that scenario, declarer can build a third diamond trick for a heart discard. 5♣ doubled, meanwhile, is only one down. From that you may deduce that 6♣ doubled is only two down, still a good save against 4♠, but a marginal misjudgment over a fragile 5♠. Whether anyone will actually go on to 6♣ after pushing E/W to 5♠ is a question that can't be answered with any confidence.

2♠	Pass	1♦	2♣
4♠	Pass	3♠	4♥
5♦	Pass	Pass	5♣

3♠	Pass	INT	2♣*
	Pass	4♠	5♣/4NT**

Dbl/Pass, etc

(*various meanings: natural, clubs and another; hearts and a minor, etc)

(**where 4NT would depict long clubs and a shorter red suit)

3♠	Pass	INT	2NT*
	Pass	4♠	5♣

Dbl/Pass, etc

(*minors or a strong two-suiter)

Anyone finishing in hearts will have to deal with the issue of control after being forced early in spades. To come to as many as nine tricks, declarer will have to allow the defense to score a diamond trick, ruffing or discarding appropriately whether East, after taking the second trump, switches to the ♦K or a low one.

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

West	North	East	South
Dbl	2♦	Pass 3♠///	1♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
2♥*	Pass	1♠ 2♠	Pass Pass
Pass/3♠///		Pass	INT///

As 4♠ or 3NT are easy to make but not obvious to bid for E/W, those who sell out to a weak notrump opening by South and collect 200 (heart lead) or 300 (spade lead) should score rather well, beating all the E/W pairs who make a partial.

In the auctions above where South opens 1♦ or 1♥ and E/W climb to 3♠ in search of four, he who is invited might accept, particularly in the "1♥" scenario, where West invites opposite a passed hand that signed off in reply to West's 2♥ strength-showing cue-bid.

E/W +170 will be the most common result, with +420, +150 and +400 on offense considerably less likely. In a field where the weak notrump is heresy, E/W +200 and +300 won't be in the mix. Elsewhere, however ...

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣*	Pass	Pass
Pass	2NT	Pass	2♦*
			3NT//
Pass	2NT	Pass	Pass
			3NT///

N/S will rarely move past 3NT with their 30 combined HCP and two balanced hands, but if

they were to reach a slam they would almost surely make it. There are 12 tricks in notrump thanks to the drop of the $\diamond Q$, the location of the $\spadesuit Q$ and presence of at least one heart honor in West (allowing declarer to win one of two heart finesses).

In more complex systems that exchange both strength and distributional information at low levels, N/S might locate their diamond fit and push to $6\diamond$. Despite the four-one trump break, declarer can (though he might not) take all 13 tricks, cashing the $\diamond AK$, all five black winners (with the aid of the spade finesse), ruffing a club low in North, and ruffing one heart low and one high in South. Needless to say, anyone bidding a slam and making it will score spectacularly, and anyone taking less than 12 tricks in notrump at any level will not wish to discuss this deal in the post-mortem.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

\spadesuit Q 8 7
 \heartsuit K J 9
 \diamond 10 9 5 3
 \clubsuit 10 9 6

\spadesuit A K 10 2
 \heartsuit 10 6
 \diamond J 7 2
 \clubsuit K Q 4 2

\spadesuit J 4
 \heartsuit A 8 5 3 2
 \diamond A 8 4
 \clubsuit A J 8

\spadesuit 9 6 5 3
 \heartsuit Q 7 4
 \diamond K Q 6
 \clubsuit 7 5 3

West	North	East	South
1 \clubsuit	Pass	1 \heartsuit	Pass
1 \spadesuit	Pass	2 \diamond^*	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT///	
(*2 \diamond = fourth suit forcing)			
1 \clubsuit	Pass	1 \heartsuit	Pass
1 \spadesuit	Pass	2 \diamond^*	Pass
2 \heartsuit	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT///			
(*2 \diamond = fourth suit game-forcing)			
1 \clubsuit	Pass	1 \heartsuit	Pass
1NT	Pass	2 \diamond^*	Pass
2 \spadesuit	Pass	3NT///	
(*2 \diamond = game-forcing inquiry)			
1NT	Pass	2 \diamond^*	Pass
2 \heartsuit	Pass	3NT///	
(*2 \diamond = transfer to hearts)			

1 \spadesuit	Pass	2 \heartsuit	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT///	
1 \diamond^*	Pass	1 \heartsuit	Pass
1NT	Pass	3NT///	
(*1 \diamond = Precision style, 2+ \diamond)			

It's difficult to see why anyone would land in a contract other than 3NT with the E/W cards. There are only nine tricks available in notrump against accurate defense, but there are ways for N/S to go wrong: if North leads a low diamond (rather than the ten), ducked to the queen (seven from West), South might play North for the jack or ten-to-five and continue with the $\diamond K$. With a second diamond trick in the bank, declarer can lose to the $\spadesuit Q$ and chalk up +630 for an good score. Or, where West opens a Precision 1 \diamond and rebids 1NT, an aggressive North might lead a disastrous spade from queen-third to concede 630 in a different way. In fact, if declarer wins the $\spadesuit J$ and leads a heart to the ten, North has to switch to diamonds to avoid -660 (declarer wins a different return and splits out the hearts).

In fact, the only defense to hold West to nine tricks is a diamond from North, South switching to any suit he chooses after he wins the first trick. Where East declares 3NT, South must lead a diamond honor or a spade to save the overtrick. Depending on how declarer plays, the defense has a counter. If East ducks the spade lead to North, he can do more or less what he pleases at T2, but if declarer ducks a heart next the defense must switch to diamonds. The same is true if declarer wins the first spade to duck a heart. If South leads a diamond honor and declarer wins to return a diamond, South wins and must switch to hearts; when declarer ducks North's card, North must clear diamonds to leave himself with a winner if declarer clears hearts; if instead declarer cashes clubs, North must discard a heart on the fourth round; keeping the long diamond is essential.

For a seemingly dull final deal there are enough possibilities in the play and defense to keep your attention just a little bit longer.

We'll catch you tomorrow, folks.



Eric Kokish married Beverly Kraft, his childhood sweetheart, in 1986.

Son Matthew, two dogs: Lady (Golden Retriever) and Jackie Robinson (Black Labrador); 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 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 whole 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.

Results can be found at:

www.ecatsbridge.com

as can details about the World Championships in Beijing, together with a lot of other information about the World Bridge Federation and its work.

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