



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.

This year sees the biggest of the World Tournaments – the World Bridge Series Championships, which will be held in Philadelphia, USA.

There will be no less than 11 World Championship events, all Transnational and open to all players who are members of their own Federations.* In addition to this, a US Regional Tournament, also open to all, will be held alongside the event. We have arranged excellent rates at the Headquarters Hotel, the Marriott Philadelphia Downtown, and look forward to welcoming several thousand bridge players to Philadelphia.

Do give some thought to joining us: because of the Regional Tournament there will be events for players of all abilities, and being part of a great Championship is an experience not to be missed. Please see the websites, listed below for more information about this fantastic event.

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

* the only exception to this are the Youth Team Championships which are for national, qualified teams only

The Websites for the World Bridge Series Championships are:

www.worldbridge.org

www.usbf.org

www.ecatsbridge.com

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, connected strokes.

José Damiani
President

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

The bidding won't be exciting, the most common sequence being 1NT by South in third seat, 3NT by North. Weak notrumpers and 14-16 notrumpers in natural systems will open 1♣ and rebid 1NT (15-17) or 2NT (17-18) depending on national grounding, and finish in the same 3NT. Strong clubbers, however, will often declare 3NT from the North side after a 1NT positive by response.

Anyone can come to 10 tricks, but it will take 11 tricks for N/S to score well. Where North declares against silent opponents East will often lead a heart with unpleasant consequences: declarer will knock out the ♦A and ♠K and take the club finesse for +460. At some of the tables where North declares 3NT, West will have overcalled 1♠, getting East off to the best lead, but after winning the ♠K West will have to switch to hearts and continue this suit upon winning the ♦A, else declarer might divine the layout in hearts and clubs and arrange to squeeze East in those suits; to do that he might have to win a belated heart switch from West with the ace and maintain a spade entry to the North hand to keep communications fluid. As declarer could easily go wrong in various ways, the second overtrick will prove quite elusive.

The position is virtually the same where West leads a spade against South's 3NT and soon regains the lead on the third round of diamonds; West does best to switch to hearts but declarer can still prevail by winning the ace; though he's in the wrong hand to get the ♠A (his squeeze card) out of the way he has

a different route to success. He cashes the ♦J, parting with the ♠9 as East releases a heart perforce, and plays on clubs, East covering the first, second, or third honour from North at his discretion. In the endgame declarer will cash the ♠A and exit with the ♣8 to endplay East with the ♣9 to lead from the ♥Q10 into declarer's split tenace. That will be an exciting way to begin the session for the successful declarers on what at first glance appears to be the dullest of 3NT contracts.

The only non-3NT contracts will be doubled spade contracts by E/W, with -300 producing a top and -500 a bottom. Let us not reflect too long on the vagaries of the play in 1S or 2S doubled.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

E/W have the values for game, and will do best against optimum defense to reach 4♠, which will yield +420 or +450. 5♦, which is off two aces (declarer can establish the ♣K for a spade discard) and 3NT, which is vulnerable to a club lead, can be held to 11 and 9 tricks respectively, for +400, though 3NT will often be treated to a heart lead, after which a winning approach to the spade suit will bring in 11 tricks (12 if North does not switch to clubs), +460 (or +490), for superlative scores.

The simplest way to find the five-three spade fit is for East to raise 1♠ to 2♠, but many Easts will prefer to rebid 2♦. When West continues with 3♣, East will have to decide whether to support spades with better-than-acceptable support or bid 3NT with two sure stoppers in the unbid suit. Although proponents of both

actions might see their choice as clear-cut, it's easy to see how either action might work well or badly on different realistic layouts. There will be many more pairs in 4♠ and 3NT than in 5♦. If East tries 3NT, not every West will pass with their diamond support not yet shown. Over 4♦ East will again have to choose between 4♠ (last-minute support) and a 4♥ control bid, cooperating with a slam try. At some of these tables, the final contract will be 5♦ or perhaps an undistinguished, doomed 6♦.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

4♥ is a good contract for E/W on their combined 22 HCP, and they will certainly reach game if West opens in second position as East's hand increases in value facing length in hearts. North will pass, double, or perhaps try an imaginative 1♠, according to his beliefs. If North remains silent, East will respond 2♣; whether West rebids 2♠ (as some 2/1 Game Force pairs advocate) or a mark-time 2♥, East will support hearts directly or perhaps volunteer a delayed splinter raise of 3♠ (over 2♥). If North doubles 1♥ for takeout East will redouble, bid 2♣ where the partnership treats that as forcing, transfer to clubs in more scientific partnerships, or raise hearts to an appropriate level, perhaps using an artificial treatment. Flannery aficionados might reach 4♥ from the East side, which jeopardizes their overtrick as South can lead a trump with profit where North could not do so against West.

If West does not open, North will start with 1♣, 1♠ or INT. 1♣ might lead to: 1♣-pass-

1♠-pass; 2♠-all pass, or 1♣-pass-1♦-double; INT-dble-2♦-dble (or INT doubled might be passed out). As long as N/S don't go for 800 they will score very well as most E/W pairs will be chalking up +650 or +620. If North opens 1♠, South will compete with 2♠ or 3♠ (pre-emptive) over East's 2♣, making it tricky for E/W to get together in hearts and reach their optimum level. For example, if West tries a responsive double of 3♠, East must choose between 4♣, 4♦, 4♥ and an imaginative penalty pass ("I have three tricks, maybe you have a few"); if East does not choose 4♥ in this scenario, West might convert 4♣ or 4♦ to 4♥, but then again, he might not, so unhappy E/W contracts of 4♣ and 4♦ might grace the frequency sheets, neither of them returning a plus score.

Where North opens INT East might not have a way into the auction, and if South can use a Stayman variation with his weak hand, N/S will reach 2♠. Even if E/W can compete at this stage, they may not find hearts and are unlikely to reach game. Passing as dealer with hands like West's just doesn't work well enough in practice to justify such a super-sound approach.

If North does not lead a trump honour against a heart contract, declarer can arrange three spade ruffs in dummy and will lose only two trump tricks for +650 or +200. Should North start with the ♥K or ♥Q, the play can be very interesting: declarer gets only two spade ruffs and can't cash a third diamond trick en route, but he can play loser-on-loser on the second round of clubs, discarding his remaining spade as North wins (this may involve leading the ♣10 if North unblocks a club honour under the ace). Now declarer will be able to make three of his four remaining trumps and cash his third diamond winner in the end. If instead declarer keeps his last spade as he goes about his business, North can cross to the ♠K to get a diamond ruff with his small trump.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

This deal will normally feature a battle between hearts and spades. On the lie of the cards, N/S can take 10 tricks in hearts (even on a trump lead and continuation declarer can establish a club trick for his tenth winner), E/W nine in spades (thanks to the position in the minors); so absolute par is 4♠ by E/W, doubled by N/S for down one, -200. How likely is it that this will be the most popular result? Or that E/W will score reasonably for -200?

West does not have the suit quality and overall strength to justify a textbook weak 2♠ opening, but that will not prevent a vast number of Wests from starting with that aggressive action. Their partners will choose from among 3♣, 4♠, a 2NT inquiry and a hopeful pass, and those who do not bid 4♠ immediately are unlikely to do so later, after (perhaps) jockeying N/S into 4♥ under some pressure, so N/S +620 will be a fairly common result. Typical sequences:

- 2♠-pass-3♣-4♥/;
- 2♠-pass-3♣-dble; pass-4♥/;
- 2♠-pass-2NT-3♥; pass-4♥/;
- 2♠-pass-2NT-dble; pass-3♥-3♠-4♥/;
- 2♠-pass-pass-dble; pass-3♥-3♠-4♥/;
- 2♠-pass-pass-dble; pass-3m-3♠; 4♥/.

Where East raises 2♠ to 4♠ South will more or less be obliged to double. North will often pass as his best guess at achieving a plus, which is the best he can do in this scenario: par for everyone. If instead North takes out the “cooperative takeout” double to 4NT (at least two places to play) South will have to cater

to North holding a minor two-suiter and he might well finish as declarer in 5♣, which will go down at least two tricks, probably more. Even if N/S find their way into hearts they can't go plus and E/W will score very well indeed.

Where West passes as dealer, East will open 1♦, 1♣, or INT according to system. South can overcall 1m with 1♥ easily enough, but many will consider their hand too strong for a simple suit overcall and will prefer a takeout double or INT overcall. 1♥ will (or should) attract a raise or jump raise from North over a spade bid by West, and N/S will reach their game whether or not East supports spades. If East raises spades West might well compete to 4♠, achieving a probable good result whether N/S double or continue to 5♥. Where South doubles 1m, North won't bid freely over 1♠ or 2♠ and South will have to double (East might bid INT or raise spades) again or introduce hearts; reaching game might be problematic.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

With the club honours divided, N/S will have no trouble coming to 11 tricks in hearts for +650 by taking two club finesses. E/W, who enjoy favourable vulnerability on this potentially competitive deal, have a profitable save through the five level in diamonds or spades, and with so much distribution around the table it is unlikely that the bidding will conclude any lower than 5♥. For E/W, then, the main task will be to locate their spade fit and continue to 5♠ over 5♥.

North will open 1♥, 2♥ or, more eccentrically, 3♥ or 4♥. East will overcall in diamonds and

later double some number of hearts to get spades into the picture (or simply bid spades). South will be thinking of slam after a 1♥ or 4♥ opening and will move in that direction where possible with a splinter bid in diamonds and/or cue-bids in the black suits. A few pairs will get too high in hearts and while it's unlikely that they would not get a killing diamond lead, we can see that a spade lead would eliminate declarer's diamond loser and let the slam slip home.

In diamonds, East will run into two spade ruffs as long as North does not try to cash a heart after the first spade ruff, and finish with eight tricks; but the discussion may be largely academic as E/W will virtually never buy the contract at 5♦ or judge to bid 6♦ over 5♥. In spades, East can manage nine tricks, but if West declares, the defense can negotiate an extra trick by starting clubs immediately, threatening declarer's entries and control by establishing a second tap suit.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

This could be a very sad deal for N/S if they learn enough about their combined holding to bid 7♣, a contract that requires only three-two trumps or jack-fourth in East (declarer needs to ruff a heart in North for his thirteenth trick). Or if artificial system vagaries get them to a spade contract from the short side and they run into a club ruff.

Or it could be a very sad deal for E/W if N/S misjudge slightly and reach 7♠ from the (normal) North side; declarer will get the clubs right and run his black winners to squeeze

East in hearts and diamonds for his thirteenth trick). As the hand will more or less play itself, knowledge of advanced squeeze technique will not be a prerequisite for taking all the tricks in spades. As there won't be many in 7♠ or 7♣ and some who miss slam altogether, 6♠+1 should score well.

Easts who employ weak two-suited openings will start with 2♥ and West might well boost to 3♥. Most Norths will consider their hand too strong for a simple overcall in spades and choose between double and a jump to 4♠. Where North doubles 3♥ South will choose between a penalty pass (-200), 2NT, 3NT, and perhaps a constructive 3♣ (where Lebensohl advances are employed). N/S are still some way short of bidding their cards to slam after this start.

Where East passes as dealer, some will open the disgusting South hand because of the vulnerability or because their systems endorse opening balanced two-control eight-counts. This little nudge will often convince North to drive to slam after learning that South has a balanced hand with some club length and not too much honour strength in hearts. East will often overcall in hearts or show both red suits after passing originally and E/W might compete to 3♥ at these tables, albeit with less success than the pairs that were willing to open the East hand.

There is every chance that this deal will be the source of some animated discussion in the post-mortem.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

E/W belong in 7♠, a strain in which they can establish West's diamonds by ruffing (even if the suit is five-one, West's ♠7 is a vital extra entry) and those who contract for 13 tricks will not be disappointed with their score. Although there are also 13 tricks in notrump (or diamonds) with the ♦Q inside tripleton, it would take poor or carefree bidding to finish in notrump.

After 1♦-2♠, E/W should have no difficulty reaching seven whether West rebids diamonds or raises spades, but these days the strong jump shift has become an endangered species in many countries. If West rebids 3♦ after 1♦-1♠, and cue-bids 4♥ over East's 3♠, East can Blackwood himself into seven easily enough but will be giving serious consideration to 7NT if West might have the ♦Q for in addition to his three aces and ♦K for his jump rebid. If West rebids a conservative 2♦, East will have to dabble with 3♣ if a jump to 3♠ is not forcing in the partnership methods. Now West, with a heart guard, will bid 3NT more often than he will bid 3♠, and the ensuing auction might be complicated, not to mention convoluted, as 4NT over 3NT would be natural and bids like 5♠ and 4♥ would not be crystal clear to West.

In 2010 nearly everything is a notrump opening and many will deem this quasi-balanced West appropriate for a 15-17 or 14-16 INT. That would simplify matters as East could set spades and check on key cards; West would bid seven himself once East confirmed that his side held at least eight combined spades, all the keys, and the trump queen. Again, however, the possibility of running diamonds would loom as an important issue at pairs scoring. If West could check on the ♦Q, perhaps by jumping to 7♦ over a specific-king ask of 5NT, E/W might avoid notrump on this combination. Another way to look at it is that in order to use Blackwood missing ace-king of diamonds East would normally have a singleton in the suit.

Despite some possible difficulties arising largely from system constraints, 7♠ will be the most common contract and will score well despite the luck that will accrue to the 7NT bidders.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

If E/W can diagnose their spade weakness and adequate mesh in the red suits, they should be able to avoid a silly notrump contract and find their way to the cold 6♦. In these cases, the key for N/S will be to cash their spade trick before it goes away on a high club – probably not too tall an order from either side.

Some sample uncontested auctions:

- (a) 1♣-1♦; 1♠-2♥*; 3♣-3♥; 4♦-4NT; 5♦-6♦/
- (b) 1♣-1♦; 1♠-3♥ (6/5 FG); 4♦-4NT; 5♦-6♦/
- (c) 1♦* (Precision; 2♣ opening=6+♣)-1♥; 1♠-2♠*; 3♠-4♦; 5♠-6♦/
- (d) 1♦*-2♦; 3♠-3♥; 4♦-4NT; 5♦-6♦/
- (e) 2♣ (various strong 1♣ systems)-2♦*; 2♠-3♦; 4♦-4NT; 5♦-5♦/

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

This time N/S can make 7♥ or 7♣ and E/W are too vulnerable to save against either grand slam with profit, although East will do what he can to give his opponents a difficult time.

Over North's 1♥ East will bid 3♠ or 2♣ according to style and degree of respect for

the adverse vulnerability. If South can show his spade void or use Exclusion RKCB for hearts he will often do that if his appropriate action is 4♠, and some will take a chance on finding at least one minor-suit ace even if he has to jump to 5♠ to get the job done. Others will settle for a simple cue bid or a forcing bid in clubs. As South knows precisely what he needs for seven: ♣A, ♦A, ♥Q or at least six hearts, he would like to take charge of the auction rather than try to offer information about his own hand. Even so, he may be forced to do some guessing, say after: 1♥-3♠-4♣-Pass; 5♣-Pass-5♠-Pass; 5NT, where North tries to suggest the ♦A and sound values below the level of 6♣ – sort of a Last Train effort. That should get South to bid seven, but it's not mama-papa stuff.

Where East bids only 2♠, N/S should have an easier time regardless of whether South jumps to 4♠, cue-bids 3♠, or bids 3♣ or 4♣ (where the partnership agreement is fit-showing).

Because of the potential difficulties in reaching seven, with confidence or as a gamble of sorts, those who stop in six will have some company (indeed, a few will miss slam altogether) and the grand-slam bidders will score well.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

Although the North hand is neither a classical takeout double nor an overcall in a black suit, few seasoned tournament players will consider the obvious flaws sufficient to silence them after a third-seat 1♥ opening by West. East will choose a number of hearts between two and four or employ an artificial raise of

some sort, perhaps showing club values via a fit jump or transfer over a takeout double. Though South will compete to the two level or perhaps the three level if North's intervention was a 1♠ overcall or a takeout double, West will get his side to 4♥ by bidding it, showing his diamonds en route to game or by trying to muddy the waters with a game try in clubs; East will cooperate with any game try. Very few N/S pairs will overbid fatally in spades, but I would be mildly surprised to learn that none of them did.

Declarer can take 12 tricks in hearts but will need to finesse against the king-ten of clubs to do so because diamonds are five-two and two ruffs in dummy will not establish the long card in the suit. Say that North starts with ace-king of spades; declarer ruffs, cashes the ♥A, and leads the ♣J, covered; now ♦A, diamond ruff, ♥K, ♦K to learn about the bad break; as there is only one trump left in dummy, declarer needs a third club trick and the finesse against the ten is a better play than trying to ruff out the tripton ten in South (or drop it doubleton). If declarer goes wrong in the play and holds himself to 11 tricks he will hate his score.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

On a trump lead and continuation, with South saving his ♣A to cover the king, West can be held to six spade tricks and two red aces in a spade contract. As both East and West have sound values for their likely early actions, they might well get higher than 2♠ on their own steam.

East will respond 1NT or 2C to 1♠ and if West rebids 2S East will often raise to 3♠, which will

in turn often convince West to take a shot at game. If West instead rebids 2D, East will choose between preference to 2♠ or a three-level bid in clubs. West might pass 2♠ but many will try for game or simply bid it. West will hate passing 3♣ when East attempts to sign off there, but might do so; if he converts to 3♠ East will generally raise to four. 3♣ will go one down, but spade contracts will produce different numbers of tricks, yielding anywhere from -100 to +420.

If North does not lead a trump, declarer will take nine tricks in spades, and if the defense does not switch to trumps upon gaining the lead in diamonds, declarer can take a tenth. As getting around to trumps early should not be very challenging, I believe that any E/W pair stopping safely or going plus on softer defense should score well on this deceptively difficult combination.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

East will always open the bidding in third seat, but his action of choice will vary according to style or system to include 1♣, 1♦*, 1♠ and INT. West won't take part in a competitive action other than to arrange an escape from INT doubled to 2♦ or perhaps to raise 1♣ or a nebulous 1♦ opening to two. As E/W are in trouble and likely to be doubled anywhere except a low club contract they will do best to be out of the auction as soon as possible, and should manage this except where East starts with a weak notrump.

South will choose from among 1♥, double and INT where East starts with 1♣ or 1♦.

The heart overcall will catch a raise to 2♥ and South, with soft values, should at least attempt to reach 3NT while offering North a chance to stop short of game. While North might raise 2NT to three on the strength of his intermediates, he might also pass 2NT where that is non-forcing, or retreat to 3♥. Different continuations by South (3♣, 3♦, 3♥, 2♠) will invoke different degrees of enthusiasm from North and will result in contracts of 3♥ and 4♥ much more often than 3NT.

Where South doubles 1♣ or 1♦ for takeout he will not have an accurate rebid over a 1♠ response, but will try 2♥ or INT more often than he passes 1♠ or raises to 2♠. Facing a strong hand (usually stronger than this one), North should drive to game with his maximum non-jump response. Over 1♣ or 1♠ South will often overcall INT and North is likely to pass at pairs scoring.

We can see that declarer can bring in the whole heart suit by leading the jack from North and dropping the ten next if East covers, but will often lead low to the queen and cash the ace for nine winners in hearts, notrump or spades.

In addition to a few +500s and 300s for N/S, there will be quite a few 620s, 600s and 630s, but +170 might well be above average for N/S as many will be +140 or +150, or perhaps a handful of +100s (vs 2♣, not doubled).

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

If North remains silent, E/W will coast into 4♠, sometimes by West, sometimes by East on a transfer sequence after a notrump

opening or after a transfer response to 1♣. Most North players will get involved, however, either by opening a weak 2♦, an off-centre 3♦, or a featherweight 1♦, or by overcalling in diamonds or perhaps by showing both minors with a two-suited 2NT. It's unlikely that N/S will compete to a level where they can be doubled for a penalty greater than the value of E/W's game, so the main issue figures to be the number of tricks taken in a spade contract.

Where West declares, North can lead a club with profit and the defenders can arrange one trick in each side suit for an excellent score. Indeed, the club lead will be quite common. If East declares, South must lead a low club to give his side a chance. If declarer misguesses by playing low from dummy, playing South for the jack and North for the king, N/S will get back to even with those who are able to lead a club from the North side. Plus 650 will be superb for E/W, of course.

As the play of the heart suit will normally pose no problems for declarer and there's no reason for E/W to get too high, it's difficult to envision a scenario in which E/W will go minus, although the play might be a bit uncomfortable for a moment when hearts are trumps.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

Over West's third-seat 1♠ opening North normally will overcall 2♥, though a few will try 3♥ instead, peculiarly treating their hand as either "weak" or "intermediate" according

to their tactical perspective. As South doesn't figure to raise hearts any higher than to the three level, E/W will rarely be offered the opportunity to double with profit - there are six losers for N/S in hearts, so 4♥ doubled would cost 500 points, too high a price to pay as E/W are entitled to no more than +450 in spades.

If East settles for a simple raise to 2♠ in the appropriate scenarios, his side will miss game if West does not volunteer a trial bid, but many will think enough of the 5431 shape to make a move towards game and East will accept the invitation. Where East raises more vigorously and shows his fourth trump or limit-raise values West will always bid 4♠.

Will anyone other than the odd graduate of the rabbinical school drop the stiff king of trumps? Well, yes, because there are always a few souls who have had a vision to inspire them (intermediate jump overcallers beware; bridge logic might not be the most relevant factor here). We can dare to hope that you were not one of the N/S players to suffer this fate. E/W +420 will be by far the most common result.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

N/S figure to have the auction to themselves and will virtually always reach either 4♠ or 3NT. South will rebid 2♠ or 2♥ according to style and North will rebid 2NT, 3NT, 3♦ or 3♣ based on system and judgment. The slower auctions will often offer North the opportunity to show two-card support for spades and lead to 4♠. The few N/S pairs to climb to 5♠ will need to play with inspiration

and luck to go plus, but the (even fewer) 6♠ bidders will need to get this one back on some other deal. If declarer in spades gets a trump or diamond lead he can neutralize East's trump holding and play hearts for two losers (♥A, low heart) to make five, though he is unlikely to follow that line unless West's lead was the ♠8 or East played the ♠J at trick one. It's much more likely that West will lead a club and now declarer will need to play accurately just to get home. Say that declarer tries the ♣Q from dummy, taking the king with the ace to cross to the ♥A and discard clubs on the ace-king of diamonds. A heart from dummy is good enough, and that is the natural play; East wins the queen and does best to force declarer with a diamond rather than a club. If declarer cashes ace-king of trumps he will lose only a trump and the ♥K in addition, but if instead he ruffs a heart, trying to bring down the king, East will over-ruff and play another diamond. To make 4♣ now declarer must ruff with the ♠10. There are several variations possible in the play of 4♣ but declarer will come to 10 tricks far more often than nine (or 11).

Where North declares 3NT, East will most often lead a club around to the queen, giving declarer the opportunity to take 11 tricks by double-finessing against East's spade honours, a line much more comfortable if East follows low in front of dummy's awesome spade holding. If East splits his honours, however, declarer would have to cross to the ♥A, cash the high diamonds and lead a second spade, intending to finesse the ten, a highly risky line that would jeopardize the likely average-plus available by playing as safely as possible for 10 tricks. As it's free for East to play high from honour-doubleton declarer can't safely proceed on the basis that he's split from QJx; indeed, declarer must also be concerned about singleton honour in East, West ducking if a low spade is led from dummy at trick three. As playing for four-one spades is very complex (declarer will need to play for queen-third or ten-third of diamonds if his ♠9 is allowed to win the second spade trick) it's more practical to play for the suit three-two.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Most will open the soft West hand with 1♦ though it's not much of an opening bid, vulnerable or not. East will think about slam in the early going but will discover that West is reluctant to cooperate. Unless East either has experienced life with his glass always half full or has succumbed to a sudden death wish, he should be able to stop in 4♥.

At first glance, 4♥ looks easy enough. At second glance, it looks as if South can defeat the contract by cashing his red aces and exiting with a trump, tucking declarer in hand to concede tricks to the ♠Q and ♣K. But life is all about third glances. Even if South does his best, as recommended in Glance #2, declarer can prevail by running as many trumps as he sees fit (but not all of them) and continuing with ace-king and a third spade; because South was dealt only three spades, he must give declarer dummy's ♦K or the club finesse for the game-going trick.

Can declarer go wrong? Yes, if he believes the ♠Q is accompanied by three low spades; he can cash one high spade and continue with ace and another club; if the hand with the ♣K has the ♠Q he must give declarer a trick with the ♠J (or a club trick), but if South wins and leads a spade declarer could play him for the ♠10 and not the queen, in which case it would be right to play low from dummy, so there is potential for a losing guess. Add to this the possibility that a defender could blank the ♣K, and the ending can be even more complex. Those who get that deep into the hand and

pay attention to the potentially accurate and therefore revealing discards will get this one right nearly every time.

Of course, South will more often simply lead a club and North will have to avoid covering dummy's honour ("underlead the ♠A? not me") to prevent the overtrick. Or South might lead a spade, which would let declarer make five by playing dummy's jack, or four if he plays low from dummy but guesses the end game correctly.

Declarers who run into a tough defense and judge the ending incorrectly to go down in 4♥ will score wretchedly, but as there will be a significant number of +650s, those who do well to take 10 tricks in 4♥ might be disappointed with their score.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

There are 21 total trumps on this big-fit deal, but 22 total tricks; both sides can take 11 tricks with their best suit as trumps and absolute par is for N/S to sacrifice at 6♣ doubled, -100. I suspect that we won't see the bidding reach the six level very often and that the more realistic challenge will be for E/W to compete to 5♠ over 5♣ rather than double for -550. And if E/W accomplish that mission, N/S will have to judge extremely well not to double; even if they do not push on to 6♣ over 5♠, they will save a significant number of matchpoints for -450 vs -650.

After 1♣-1♠, South will choose between various numbers of clubs and an array of artificial raises, including simple cue bids, mixed

raises and splinters. Whether West has room to splinter in clubs and/or prefers that action to a big bounce in spades will turn on circumstance and personal/partnership style at each table, but if North learns of five-card support and spade shortness, he will nearly always go on to 5♣ as a two-way action: it might be cold or it might be a good save.

Strong-club system players who start with 2♣ on the North cards might silence East, as a 2♠ overcall on that balanced cheese is hardly routine. If South raises 2♣ to 5♣, even the most intrepid West will not enter the action. Whether +400 proves to be a great score or merely a good one depends on too many intangibles to merit a convincing prediction.

Perhaps more than any of the deals we've encountered so far in this set, Board 17 is the poster child for the hackneyed cliché: "it's a bidder's game."

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this "partscore" deal is that on the remarkable lie of the cards E/W are cold for 3NT with their combined 16-count and rather fragile red suit stoppers!

In the real world, East will open 3♣ at a significant number of tables, whether or not his hand fits neatly into his partnership's box of expectations; such is the attraction of favourable vulnerability, first in hand. South will overcall 3♦ and North will bid a forcing 3♥ or jump to 4♥; if 3♥, he will continue with

4♥ over South's 3♠. Or East will pass in first and South will open 1♦; North will respond 1♥, 4♥ or a carefree strong 2♥; East will mention clubs if the auction is low enough to suit him, but that won't affect N/S's plans as they find a route to 4♥.

If E/W defend perfectly they can take two clubs, three spades and a slow trump trick, but that involves (at least in theory) East switching to the ♠10 (so West will know he has it) after one high club; West wins cheaply and returns a club for a second spade through dummy; three down and a handsome score for E/W. If East cashes both high clubs and switches to spades, West will be endplayed after winning his first spade trick; even if he exits safely in clubs, declarer ruffs and plays three rounds of hearts. A trump exit might work as declarer might decline a finesse he could not take by himself; now when West wins his trump trick he can exit in clubs and wait for two more spade tricks.

In these variations where East cashes both high clubs West will base his defense on his view of the diamond position, looking at 11 of the 13 cards in the suit: if East started with one diamond he might have led it or switched to it; if East were void he would have led his club honours "out of order" to send a wakeup call to West. If West can rely on these inferences, he will place declarer with no diamonds and refrain from both cashing the second high spade and exiting in diamonds.

Should anyone happen to sacrifice at 5♣, N/S can set it three tricks by cashing one high diamond, then having South lead a low (preferably) diamond for North to ruff so he can play three rounds of hearts to promote a trump trick. If instead North ruffs the third round of diamonds high, declarer over-ruffs, cashes the ♣A, eliminates spades and diamonds, and exits with a trump to endplay

South to concede a ruff and discard. Not that -300 is any triumph for E/W for their poorly-judged save, but it will at least beat the other 5♣ phantom sacrificers who concede 500.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Although the South hand doesn't look anything like a textbook weak 2♠ or 3♠ opening, I am confident that both these undisciplined actions will appeal to some of our most vulnerability-conscious participants; both will convince North to raise to game where there are four inescapable losers. How bad will -50 be for N/S? As E/W can make +130 in diamonds and can compete to 4♦ over the cold 3♠, perhaps the smallest possible minus won't be so bad for N/S. That's the theoretical conclusion, at least.

At most tables, South will pass as dealer. If West also passes, North will start with a 15-17 or 16-18 INT, or 1♣ (natural, or strong and artificial) where out of range. After a strong notrump, South will transfer to spades, giving West the opportunity to double 2♥. If North settles for 2♠, West might well reopen with a takeout double; whether East can offer a choice of minors with a scrambling 2NT may play a role in determining whether E/W alight in 3♦ or 3♣ (which rates to go one down), but in practice N/S are likely to compete to 3♠ and buy the contract for +140. Where North starts with

a natural 1♣ some intrepid Easts might risk a 1♦ overcall but most will pass; these days very few Souths will pass 1♣ and if they respond 1♠ West will double to show the red suits or overcall 2♥ on his modest five-card suit. Double works best as it locates the diamond fit and might (barely) convince East to compete to 4♦ after N/S are pushed to 3♠. Where South has a weak jump response of 2♠ available (not a common treatment by a passed partner), West might not act and the trick for North will be to resist driving to game, something he should manage as South did not open 2♠ or 3♠ at favourable vulnerability. After a strong club opening and negative 1♦ response, West will overcall in hearts and E/W might not find diamonds: much will depend on whether N/S get together in spades at one- or two-level, allowing West a cheap takeout double that will involve East in further competition.

West might open a light 1♥ in some strong-club systems and East should double North's 1NT overcall. South will retreat to 2♠ either directly or via a transfer and it won't always be easy for E/W to take further action, let alone get together in diamonds. There might even be a few N/S pairs doubled in 2♠ (+570) or 3♠ (+530), so there could be some life in this seemingly quiet partscore deal.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

♠ 10 9 8 4 ♥ 7 2 ♦ Q 6 4 3 ♣ J 4 3 ♠ A K Q J ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ A 7 5 ♣ A 7 6	♠ 6 5 ♥ 9 4 3 ♦ J 9 8 ♣ Q 9 8 5 2 ♠ 7 3 2 ♥ A K J 10 6 ♦ K 10 2 ♣ K 10
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The empty West hand adds up to 20 HCP and almost no one downgrades strong hands in the 21st century, so 2NT will be a popular opening.

East has no idea whether the clubs will be worth much in notrump, and will either pass or raise, according to his views on matchpoint strategy. At IMPs East should raise because if clubs come in 3NT may be as easy to make as 2NT, but at pairs the extra undertricks are more important and if nine tricks are possible with good play it may not be essential to be in game to score well. South might think of doubling 2NT or 3NT, hoping to get North to lead from relative shortness to find his partner's long, strong suit, but most will pass.

If West opens a natural 1♣ (where 2NT=21-22), East will hate to pass with such strong support, but where a weak raise to 2♣ or 3♣ is either inappropriate or not available and imaginative responses of 1♦, 1♥ or 1NT do not appeal, pass would be the inevitable solution. South will introduce hearts at the one- or two-level, and probably at the three level if it comes to that. As N/S can be held to six tricks in hearts (East must ruff West's third high spade to switch to a trump to get West off an eventual endplay), there is some jeopardy in over-competing even if N/S escape undoubled, but you can imagine that West will drive to 3NT if East has responded to 1♣. Where West's opening bid is a forcing, artificial 1♣, West might be able to describe his balanced strength range without getting past 1NT and E/W might stop there or at 2NT or 3♣.

North's best lead against notrump is a diamond. Even if declarer gets the clubs right (ace and pass the seven, an application of the Principle of Restricted Choice: South might play either the jack or ten from J10 doubleton, but have no choice with K10 doubleton) the defense can take three diamonds, two hearts and a club to hold declarer to seven tricks. Where South has bid hearts, however, North will lead that suit and declarer, after being given a heart trick relatively early, will have some choice in the play of the club suit if his goal is a modest two tricks in the suit. On a blind auction, North will most often lead a spade, and declarer need only guess clubs correctly to come to nine or 10 (where South gives declarer a heart trick)

tricks and an excellent score. Indeed, that will be quite a common scenario.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

South will drive to game after North starts with 1♠, but is too strong for jump to 4♠ in standard systems. Some will start with 2♣, others with an atypical (stiff king) 4♦ splinter or an artificial forcing raise.

Although E/W can take a prodigious number of tricks in hearts (10) at favourable vulnerability it will not often be obvious for West to enter the auction and it will be rare for E/W to sacrifice at 5♥ doubled or for N/S to be pushed to 5♠, where they can be defeated.

The central issue on this deal will be the play of the club suit. Considering the suit in isolation, if declarer had the ♣7 in either hand, he might simply play for honour-ten-(others) outside, but the actual combination, taken on its own, presents more options. Fortunately for declarer, at least to a degree, he will often be able to eliminate trumps and both red suits before attacking clubs. He can succeed against any singleton or doubleton honour combination in West (the most notable being K10 and Q10) and K10/Q10 doubleton in East by cashing the ♣A before leading the second round, preferably towards dummy; unblocking the king or queen will not help the defense on these layouts. In addition, declarer's elimination succeeds when East is asleep and does not get his honour out of the way from Kx or Kx, as here; if the player winning the second round of clubs can't cash the third he must give declarer a ruff and discard. Declarer should lead the

first round of clubs through East because he might split from KQx or KQxx and will nearly always split from KQ10+.

Where E/W find their five-level sacrifice, or where N/S go down in 5♠, E/W will score magnificently. But apart from those dramatic results, E/W will salvage what they can by securing their two club tricks, so East must play his ♣K on the first round of the suit regardless of who attacks clubs initially.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

Few Easts will decline to open the bidding, but most Souths will exercise that option in second seat at favourable vulnerability. West will overcall 1♣, a Precision 1♦, or a four-card-majors 1♥ with 1♠, but where South starts with a weak notrump West will rely on his systemic countermove, generally to show a two-suiter rather than just spades, but some will pass, and at some of those tables East will reopen, again more often with some two-suited method. There will be too many variations to cover comprehensively in this space, but let's look at a few of the more common ones.

Say that West overcalls 1♣ with 1♠ and North passes. Many will advance with 2♥, especially where there is a strong inference that East's suit won't be very long due to his failure to open 2♥ or 3♥. That will mean different things in different partnerships, especially as 2♥ or 3♥ at unfavourable vulnerability might require a suit of genuine quality. However, even where West might expect only a moderate five-card suit for 2♥, the space-consuming "one-under" nonforcing new-suit bid will often leave

West without a sound option: retreating to 2♠ suggests a longer suit and by inference a decent hand where weak jump overcalls are employed, while 2NT and a new suit at the three level are forward-going moves; thus, West will have to pass 2♥ (or should pass) with minimum misfitting hands, perhaps on this deal. My preference is to define two-level new-suit bids as “playable opposite minimum hands that have no better action than to pass.” The ideal method and one that has gained in popularity in recent years is transfer advances: East would bid 2♦ to show his hearts and continue with 2♠ over West’s (“I would pass a nonforcing 2♥”) 2♥, suggesting a fair hand with five hearts and two-card spade support. Many would convert a 2♥ advance to 2♠ without getting too deeply into the issues, of course, so some of those 2♥ bidders will survive with +140 (rarely +110) where others will go minus in 2♥. I would rather advance with 1NT on the East cards, leaving West more room to develop the auction. Here West might well pass 1NT to try for higher-scoring tricks, but as his spades can stand a preference he won’t mind continuing with 2♦. East will convert 2♦ to 2♠ or try 2♥ on the way if he believes West will play him for spade tolerance. 2♠ will be the most common contract. If North finds the best lead of a trump declarer must start clubs immediately and establish dummy’s long club before the ♥A is dislodged; if South switches to diamonds, declarer ducks and North won’t be able to switch to hearts and continue trumps all at once, so declarer will get a diamond ruff or a second club trick for +140.

Where East buys the contract in 1NT, South does best to lead a diamond or neutral spade, but is much more likely to lead hearts, which gives E/W +150 and a huge score.

Not many E/W pairs will finish in a club partscore, but that could happen where East reopens with 2♣ to show clubs and a major and West goes quietly; clubs plays remarkably well and declarer might piece together as many as 10 tricks, but +130 won’t be good for E/W if 2♠ is the popular final contract across the field.

Where South’s weak notrump opening ends the auction, the fate of the deal will turn on the third undertrick, with declarer a big favourite to escape with -100 if West leads a spade, not that any other lead will have much appeal.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

Whether North opens 2NT, 2♣, or a strong 1♣ his side is more likely to finish in 3NT than 4♥, though Puppet Stayman fans might back into 4♥ after North describes a strong balanced hand with his first or second bid.

E/W won’t take any action in the bidding and East often won’t have much to go on in selecting his opening lead against 3NT; a low club will be a popular choice, but those who believe in passive defense unless something stands out might start with a heart. On a low club lead declarer might try dummy’s nine, which would secure a third club trick if East has led from the ten, but the queen is more likely to win the trick and declarer might choose this option, intending to lead a diamond to the jack with the ace-jack of clubs intact and leaving East in doubt, perhaps, about the location of the jack (declarer can always lead a spade to the king later with the ♥Q as the entry). Declarer’s play of the ♣Q creates an important signalling issue for the defense: those who believe in giving count when they can’t beat dummy’s card will not have the relevant information about the ♣J at trick one and West’s ♦7 might not send the desired “Smith” signal information at trick two. If East continues clubs when he wins the ♦Q, declarer can choose between clearing diamonds and leading towards the ♠K for his

tenth trick and a fine score. Those who prefer an attitude signal about the jack will discourage in clubs at trick one so East will know declarer has the ♣J.

To get home in 4♥ requires some special play on the likely trump lead, but declarer will probably win in dummy and lead the ♣Q, playing for the ♣K and ♠A onside or something wonderful in diamonds otherwise. As long as the defense stays relatively passive after this start, declarer will lose a spade, two diamonds and the ♣K for one down. The successful line is considerably more complex and far less attractive: Draw two rounds of trumps, leaving the queen in dummy, and lead the ♠K (that might win the trick on this layout, though that in itself wouldn't help declarer; East wins the second spade and clears trumps, but declarer leads the ♠J to ruff out the ace and pin the ten and leads a low club); say that West takes the ♠A and leads a club, declarer wins the ♣A and leads a second spade, and uses the ♥Q to reach the jack-nine of spades for two diamond discards.

If instead West switches to the ♦7, declarer ducks to the queen and East clears trumps, but declarer wins in dummy, finesses the ♦J, cashes the ♦A, and exits with a spade to endplay poor East. There is great beauty in this line of play and it's not impossible to find it, but it's just that there is rarely enough time at the table to envision a lie of cards that would mesh with it, let alone to determine whether it makes sense to spurn the simple "two black finesses" line. But it's fun to consider it in the post mortem.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West

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

Though N/S have a preponderance of the high cards, the highest makeable contract is 2NT by E/W. That's interesting in a bizarre way, but that will never be the final contract on this planet.

West will usually open 1♦, though a few will prefer 4♦ or 3♦ for tactical reasons, perhaps because other examples of their tactics have left them in desperate need of a good result. North has a classic weak jump overcall of 2♥ if his side employs them. East would like to mention his clubs, but 3♣ would be a serious overbid and a spades-flawed negative double would be an eccentric gamble. Unless East can transfer to clubs his most accurate move would be to pass. With hearts sure to be a good trump suit, South should not get involved with spades unless it's part of a plan to invite game in hearts at his next turn unless he catches genuine spade support. Furthermore, casual partnerships will rarely have an agreement about whether 2♠ is forcing. Raising to 4♥ would hardly be outrageous and doing just that might catch a big fish if an impetuous West or East bids his long minor at the five level and offers N/S 500 or 800 respectively.

One reason the game raise in hearts is so attractive is that there is no convenient game invitation available that will enable the partnership to make an enlightened decision about level. A popular treatment is to use a 2NT advance to check on shortness (bid it unless woefully weak with long hearts and spade shortage) and/or suit quality/strength (rebid 3♥ or 4♥, or "raise" to 3NT with a strong suit). 4♥ should be the popular contract.

After East's singleton diamond lead, West will need to switch to clubs for the defense to get all its tricks against a heart contract; if he does, East comes in on the first trump and gives West a club ruff. Now West must lead a low diamond for East to ruff and exit with his last trump; East gets a club trick in the end, the fifth trick for the defense. 4♥ down two, though hardly unusual or especially

difficult to achieve, should be a good score for E/W. There will be some -50s for N/S to go with a number of 140s, a few 110s and a selection of 170s and 420s where West defends by continuing with $\diamond A$, diamond after winning the first trick: declarer ruffs high, plays $\clubsuit A$, spade ruff, starts trumps, and eventually establishes spades, draws trumps, and uses a late club entry to take the rest.

Spade contracts can be held to seven tricks but -50 in spades might not be dreadful.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

3NT is the normal contract for E/W, though some will reach $5\diamond$ and a few will stop in a diamond partial.

The East hand is not perfect for a weak $2\diamond$ (seven-card suit) or $3\diamond$ at unfavourable vulnerability (topless suit, lots of defense) but many will choose one of those actions and West will bid 3NT sooner or later. Where East passes South will open $1\clubsuit$, $1\spadesuit$, INT or a Precision $1\diamond$. West will double $1\clubsuit$ and perhaps and will overcall INT over $1\spadesuit$, and choose one of these actions over a Precision $1\diamond$; he will double a weak notrump but might not have a penalty double available over a stronger notrump (14-16 or 15-17, to which South might well upgrade in third seat at this vulnerability) or be willing to double for penalty with this type of hand. Where West doubles $1\clubsuit$ for takeout, North might raise to $2\clubsuit$, but whether East settles for a jump to $3\diamond$ or cue-bids $3\clubsuit$ E/W will nearly always finish in 3NT; East might jump

to $5\diamond$, however. Where West overcalls INT, East will jump to 3NT or get involved with diamonds, perhaps with a view to avoiding a poor 3NT when West is weak in spades.

Where West passes over a INT opening, North might try to escape via a Stayman $2\clubsuit$ if his system permits him to bid $2\heartsuit$ over a $2\diamond$ reply to show a weak hand with length in both majors. Whether East comes in with $2\diamond$ over $2\clubsuit$ or reopens INT with a natural bid in diamonds or an artificial action that allows him to show a one-suiter, West will nearly always take a shot at 3NT. Curiously, in hyper-aggressive partnerships game might be missed, as West will give East plenty of leeway for a protective action.

West can take at least 10 tricks in notrump on any defense, but will finish with 11 when North leads a club (generally after a $1\clubsuit$ opening by South) by taking the single spade finesse. On a spade lead to the king and ace, declarer knocks out the $\diamond K$ and gets a spade continuation; to ensure +630, he must exercise care and win the queen to play a club; if instead he finesses in spades, North wins the jack and switches to a heart; declarer has 10 tricks (three spades, a heart, and six diamonds) but can't quite take them because his internal entry to both hands is the third round of diamonds – how revolting!

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

E/W belong in a club partial and many will accomplish that mission via uncontested

auctions like: pass-1♣; 1♥-2♣; 3♣-pass, or pass-1♣; 1♥-2♣; 2NT-3♣; pass. Or West might pass 2NT. Some Easts will open, however, and most of them will reach 3NT.

We can see that in notrump the defense can take four diamond tricks after winning the ♣A if South hasn't led diamonds earlier; but I have no doubt that 3NT will be made a number of times, with overtricks.

Say that South leads a spade and does not select the "attitude" eight to indicate a weak holding; if the lead was the ♠2 or ♠3, North might continue spades, especially where East's bidding suggested a diamond stopper (Precision 1♦ openers have an even better chance to bring this one home), and declarer will soon claim 10 tricks, or play it out and perhaps come to an eleventh when the defenders mess up the discarding. 2NT, +120, should be a good score for E/W, though there will be some 150s and 180s in notrump partials.

North might well lead the ♦K against a club contract and the defense will take four easy tricks, but if North leads a major suit, declarer has time to discard two diamond losers on high spades before starting trumps and will chalk up +130 for a fine score; it would take a particularly greedy declarer to take the heart finesse in this scenario to try for +150 at the risk of going down in 3♣ on a possible trump promotion, but it is reputed that the guy who said that greed is good has a lively congregation in the matchpoints community.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

N/S can outbid their opponents in the majors, but their main assignment will be to stop short of game as the ♦A lies over the king.

That's a simple synopsis, however, as to hold a spade contract to nine tricks the defense needs to arrange to get West on play at some point to lead through the ♦K; in hearts this is not necessary as declarer's diamond losers aren't going anywhere.

Though South has a side four-card major, poor heart intermediates, and a minimum, few experienced tournament players will not open 2♥ or 3♥ for better or for worse. They will tell you that good things happen for them much more often when they start with a pre-empt.

You can believe them, or not, but what matters is that they believe the hype. North has a collection of slow values that adds up to a strong notrump though it looks a lot more like a weak notrump. As a major-suit pre-emptor is quite likely to be short in the other major, North will have good reason to downgrade his hand and might well pass 3♥, and should not do more than invite game after a 2♥ opening.

Where North passes 2♥ or 3♥, East will not enjoy reopening with a double with his square 13-count, but will bite the bullet and do so, hoping some of his tens will be useful. Where West takes out to 3♣, North will consider doubling, but might well prefer to try for +140 rather than aim for +300. Where West is in 4♣, however, North's decision is closer; he expected to have a good chance for +140 and does not expect to make 4♥, and he expects 4♣ to go down one or two with a shot at making; unless he can get 300 the difference between +100 and +50 might not matter whether or not 3♥ was making, and it's not clear that it's worth the risk in doubling what might be a cold and fairly normal contract. As West can take nine tricks in clubs, North's analysis turns out to be right, and a penalty double would not do much improve N/S's score; any small plus will not be as good as +140, +170 or +420, but will be better than the minus scores incurred by the pairs that fail in 4♥ or 4♠.

If South passes as dealer, North will open INT in range, or 1♣ or 1♠ out of range for INT. After INT, South will most often transfer to hearts and pass, but some will start with Stayman and then decide whether to continue when North bids spades. Where North opens 1♠, South will have an interesting bidding problem; he might settle for 2♠ but might prefer some sort of artificial mixed or limit raise or even a bold raise to game.

Where North opens 1♣ East might double, and North will rebid INT or 1♠ over 1♥ according to his partnership style (followers of the legendary Edgar Kaplan would consider INT an abomination, for example). These pairs will finish in 2♥ or some number of spades.

The best that the defense can do against spades is for East to duck the trump ace once and for West to play low-high or high-low as a suit preference signal for clubs or diamonds, respectively. However, as West could hold the ♥A or no ace at all this is hardly a 100% solution. If you got this right for the right reasons even with the reliability of the evidence at issue, pat yourselves on the back. +170 should be very good for N/S.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West

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

Although there's a lot of junk in that North hand to get it up to average in high cards and the main suit is weak at the lower end, it's far more fashionable in 2010 for North to overcall 1♥ with 1♠ than it is to pass. East

will pass, raise to 2♥, or perhaps try a weak jump in clubs where that option is available, but South will drive to game in spades regardless, choosing a direct jump, a simple cue bid, or some specialized artificial raise that keeps slam in the picture. Although the vulnerability is ideal for E/W to sacrifice, the price would be too high (-800 in clubs or hearts or clubs against best defense) and neither East nor West has the sort of hand to think seriously about a five-level adventure. Besides, the fate of 4♠ won't be clear to anyone.

On a passive heart lead declarer must bring in the trump suit without loss and has the time to play for the drop or to finesse through either opponent; most will do the right thing and come to 10 tricks, West cashing the ♣A when he wins the ♦K to confirm whether to continue clubs or revert to hearts; in many cases, however, East would have led the ♥9 (high from three in a raised suit) to clear up the honour position as early as possible. Where East leads the ♣K, West can overtake and continue the suit for East to lead a third round. To get home now, declarer must ruff with the ♠A and finesse against West's ♠Q; while that doesn't seem too challenging for declarer, imagine that West's hand was: xx, QJ10xx, Kxx, Axx. Fortunately for declarer there are so few high cards outstanding that once East turns up with the king-queen of clubs, West is an overwhelming favourite to hold the ♠Q to give him 12 points rather than that balanced 10-count (when it matters).

Where North does not overcall East will respond 2♥ or INT and South will usually double whether or not he can convert clubs to diamonds without showing extra values. West will bid 2♦ where East has responded INT, but N/S will reach 4♠ whether North simply bids it or invites with a jump to 3♠.

N/S pairs who miss 4♠ or find a line to go minus will not be pleased with their scores as N/S +620 will be a very common result.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

If East does not come in over North's strong notrump, N/S will finish in 3NT after a transfer or Stayman sequence when no eight-card major fit materializes. Where East does enter the auction, it will more often be via a relatively cheap (double, 2♣, 2♦ or 2♥) conventional one-or two-suited call than a natural 2♦.

South might not get involved in seeking a penalty and go about finding the best vulnerable game, but those who go after the vulnerable interloper won't have to do anything exceptional to extract at least 800 for their enterprise.

Does that mean East has done something reckless by daring to intervene over a strong notrump? Not at all; on a different day E/W might make a significant partial in a red suit or nudge their opponents into an inferior contract.

Weak notrumpers will start the North hand with 1♣ or 1♠, and East will overcall in diamonds. South will consider it too soon to look for a penalty and E/W will be off the hook as their opponents tread their way to 3NT.

There are 11 tricks available in notrump as long as declarer finesses in both red suits (and clears hearts) and does not permit the defense to win a spade trick (should they

attack that suit). N/S +660 will be the most common result.

Only a few N/S pairs will misjudge their combined assets and fetch up in 4♥, where the defenders can arrange an early diamond ruff to hold declarer to +620, but even if the diamond ruff is not found, N/S won't enjoy +650 much more than +620.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East

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

Taken in isolation, N/S have just enough combined diamond length to make their thin 3NT a worthwhile contract, but where East opens 1♦, the possibility of losing the first five tricks in that suit becomes a greater concern, and this 23-point game becomes less desirable.

After 1♦-2♣-pass, North will cue-bid 2♦; if South contents himself with 3♣ (the only real alternative is an aggressive 3♦), North might well let that go, as his only realistic alternatives are a repeat cue-bid of 3♦ and 3♥ (where 2♥ over 2♣ would have been forcing for his partnership, 3♥ now would suggest something like this). If North does try again with three of a red suit, South may consider his partial diamond stopper adequate and bid 3NT, but it's all rather tenuous after that 1♦ opening. Note that Precision 1♦ openers (2+ cards) might find that their opponents have limited respect for that initial action and are willing to bid 3NT without a secure diamond guard.

If East does not open, N/S will start: 1♣-1♥; 2♣, and North will choose from among a conservative pass, 3♣, 2NT, and perhaps 2♦, where that is played as a somewhat amorphous

one-round force. South might pass 3♣, but some will continue with 3♠ (stopper) or 3♦ (where that is treated as “asking” rather than “telling”) or 3NT. Though South might pass 2NT at pairs, trying for a magic +120 to beat all the +110s, most will simply raise to 3NT because of the strong club suit and fast side tricks.

South will cash his diamonds, of course, to hold 3NT to nine tricks, but where West is on lead with diamonds unbid, he might well lead a spade or an aggressive (very reasonable) heart, giving declarer the option of taking the heart finesse for a tenth trick with diamonds wide open. As +400 should be an excellent score, declarer should decline the heart finesse not only at trick one but also in the endgame, unless the discarding convinces him that it’s safe to finesse in hearts or exit in diamonds for an endplay (legitimate or otherwise).

The defense can take three diamond tricks against a club contract, but if they don’t do that early, declarers desperate to beat all the pairs who stop short of game could resort to the double finesse in hearts for +150. Well, maybe.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

East will most often be left to open in fourth position; too strong for most modern INT openings, he will start with 1♣, natural or artificial. Where West can raise systematically to 2♣ or 3♣ he will do so; else he will

respond INT, a “convenient” or “negative” 1♦, or choose a cautious pass. Whether East bids 3NT over 3♣ or insists on game after a natural 2♣ raise will depend on method, style and judgment, but if given a choice between 2NT, 3♣ and 3NT, there will definitely be votes for each action.

North might come in over a raise to 2♣ with a takeout double or perhaps even a bold pre-balancing 2♥ despite the vulnerability and risk that South has a strong hand with relatively short clubs. N/S have a safe haven in 2♦ or 2♥, so a penalty double of one of those contracts won’t be profitable for E/W if West sits for it, but these dynamic scenarios won’t materialize often.

North might open 1♥ in third seat if he’s of that persuasion, and East will overcall INT (or double, intending to bid notrump next to show a bigger hand). South should double INT and North will run to 2♦ if West sensibly passes. Now there is some chance that N/S will buy the contract in 2♦ or 2♥, as West will need to compete with 2NT, 3♣, or a “cards” double to realistically get his side back into the auction.

If West runs to 2♣ over the double, however, East will compete to 2NT or 3♣ if he has to. If South eschews the penalty double of INT and raises to 2♥, that could end the auction, although either West or East might find a bid.

E/W can be held to eight tricks in notrump if N/S cash their diamonds early or when North comes in with the ♠A, but that won’t always happen after the lead of the ♥Q when declarer attacks spades immediately and his club length has not been revealed.

E/W plus scores will include 120, 130, 150, 400 and the occasional 100 or 200. N/S will more often go plus on defense vs 3NT than by declaring, but there will be a few 90s and 110s and a smattering of 470s and 180s.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

With hearts a problem for notrump, E/W will do best to play in 4♣, where there are 10 easy tricks available, or 11 with well-judged play.

Where West opens 1♣ or a Precision 1♦, North will overcall in hearts, and many Souths will jump-raise pre-emptively to 3♥ (or even 4♥) over East's 1♠, though some will settle for 2♥ or an ultraconservative pass. While West can show his spade support directly or via a Support Double if the bidding is low enough, he will have to pass over 3♥ (or 4♥). East will reopen 3♥ with a double unless his partnership treats that as a strong penalty suggestion, in which case he will have to settle for 4♦ or 4♥. Where South or North has bid 4♥ East will have little choice but to double. As long as West shows his spade support at some point E/W will reach their best game. If N/S do compete to 4♥, E/W will have an opportunity for a top by doubling and leading a trump (best) or a diamond (obscure, but fine if a trump switch follows at trick two) to hold declarer to six tricks and -800.

The play in spades is complicated by the four-one trump break, as a heart lead and continuation reduces declarer to the same trump length as North before a third club winner can be established. If declarer just takes his tricks after a club to the jack holds, the ♣K won't drop doubleton and diamonds won't produce a fourth winner, so the result will be 10 tricks, the most common one across the field.

Where South has indicated four-card heart

support and leads an "attitude" high spot card, declarer will have a good read on the honour position very early in the play. Later he will learn that North's shape is 4=5=1=3, and can arrange to take three diamond tricks finishing in dummy in a three-card end position where dummy has the ♥9 (declarer needs to envision the endgame to leave that losing heart in dummy) and ♣Q8; North can't fool declarer by blanking his ♣K as declarer knows his distribution, so must keep a high heart and ♣K10; now declarer can exit with the ♥9 to force North to lead from the ♣K into declarer's split tenace. That eleventh trick will make a significant difference in the scoring. Where South leads a low heart, however, declarer won't be able to read the position with complete confidence; if South keeps one heart of unknown rank and two diamond winners in the endgame, there will be some risk in exiting with the ♥9, but South will often discard a heart and that "idle" fifth diamond early and be marked with one heart, one diamond and one club at trick 11, so declarer will know he won't lose his ♣A if he doesn't cash it.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

With the cards as friendly as they can be for E/W, there are 13 tricks available in notrump, spades or hearts. No one will bid seven, of course, and even 6♠ – the best of the small slams on a club lead – is nothing special. Those who reach slam will score fabulously as most will be content with game.

Where North passes East will open 1♥, 1NT, or a strong club. Though some South

players will overcall 3♣ (more likely over a strong club), more will pass at the prevailing vulnerability, and E/W will probably enjoy a free run. After 1♥-1♠, East has an awkward rebid, which is the main reason the INT opener chose their otherwise ugly initial action. Some will jump to 2NT, others to 3♠, and another group will vote for 2♣ whether natural and non-forcing (standard), natural and forcing (Australian-style and in some Kaplan-Sheinwold variations), or artificial (the Cole or Gazzilli conventions).

2NT might lead to 6♠ when West tries for slam after learning of three-card spade support and East likes his controls, ♠10 and trick source enough to cooperate. A raise to 3♠ (Flannery aficionados can choose this option more comfortably as a 1♠ response implies at least five cards or four strong ones because a 1♥ opener won't have four spades unless strong enough to reverse or four-six and minimum-range strength) will often lead to 4♦-4♥; 4♠-pass, but if 4♦ denies a club control, East's return 4♥ control-bid must guarantee a club control, so West might make a second slam try. A "natural" 2♣ rebid leaves room for West to investigate with 2♦, catch spade preference or jump-support and perhaps move towards slam, but some Wests will jump to 3NT, giving East a headache: East might pass, try a forward-going 4♠ or raise to 4NT, with the final landing square at issue. Where East's 2♣ rebid is artificial, potentially quite strong, East will be able to describe his hand accurately at his next turn, so West will recognize that slam is within reach. Whether he gets that far will turn on the same sort of judgment and evaluation as the other variations will present.

The issues in 6♠ on a club lead are not quite the same as those in game, where declarer will normally play for the maximum by taking the trump finesse. In slam, declarer might try to combine his chances by playing three high hearts to discard the club loser before

breaching trumps; if South ruffs the third heart low, declarer can over-ruff and fall back on the trump finesse with some residual chances to make seven (where South has ruffed in from three low trumps); if North ruffs behind declarer there is still the trump finesse, but declarer also needs to do something with his fourth diamond, so will need a modicum of luck in the majors.

Some Norths will open a weak 2♦, others an aggressive 3♦. East will double or overcall in hearts. To reach slam West will need to keep spades in the picture with a forward-going move despite holding an impressive array of stoppers in the enemy suit; East will cooperate in a slam move where he has bid hearts and can expect West to have at least five spades, but will not be as optimistic if his initial action was a takeout double. I expect few E/W pairs to reach slam after a diamond pre-empt.

Where South overcalls 3♣ West will introduce spades and East will usually cue-bid 4♣, but might have a rebid problem over West's 4♦, as 4♥ might be natural, too strong for 4♥ directly over 3♣. However, if East merely retreats to 4♠, West might bid again.

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

N/S can make 3NT with both the ♣A and ♠K onside and diamonds coming in, but can't make 4♠ on their four-four fit if East covers a spade honour from North. It's hardly automatic for N/S to reach game after East opens the bidding, but if they find their spade fit they probably won't be able to stop short. The bidding will be more interesting than the play.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

This deal belongs to N/S for a spade partial that yields nine tricks against best defense. That's the (very) short version of what might turn out to be quite an interesting deal.

West has a classic vulnerable 3♦ pre-empt and most will look no further. After two passes, South will choose between 3♠ and a takeout double. North will raise 3♠ to four or take the low road by passing, both actions having merit. North will respond 3♠ to South's double, and despite his excellent trump support, South would be stretching to raise to game, even if he makes the sensible tactical assumption that North will have 6-8 working points.

It's difficult to find a sound reason for West not to lead a high diamond, but if he does, he can no longer hold declarer to nine tricks. Say that he switches to hearts (best); declarer ducks the first round and takes the next, East retaining his ♦Q; declarer draws trumps, leads a club to the jack, cashes the ♣K, and runs spades. To keep his protection in hearts and clubs, East must part with the ♦Q, but in the three-card ending, declarer exits with a heart and East must lead from his guarded ♣Q around to North's ace-nine. Similarly, East can't lead a diamond against a spade contract with profit. For the defense to prevail, the opening lead must be a heart, and the defense must continue hearts when declarer ducks the first round; now East can

safely release a diamond on the last trump as he only needs one of those to reach his partner's diamond winners.

That's all very pretty, but undoubtedly of merely academic interest. Perhaps East will introduce his hearts over 3♦ with a degree of theft on his mind, but even so, both partners are huge favourites to lead diamonds.

Another possible variation involves West switching busily to the ♣10 after cashing two diamonds; now declarer can win the ♣J, take two trumps ending in dummy, and run the ♣9 to take four natural club tricks and 10 tricks in all.

See you all tomorrow, I hope.

Results can be found at:

www.ecatsbridge.com

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

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

Son Matthew, one old dog Jackie Robinson (Black Labrador); Kitten - called Kitten!

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

Eric learned bridge at High School and has been fascinated by the game ever since. He has made his mark on bridge in several areas:

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

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

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

Kokish is also the author of several conventions, including "Birthright" (2C - 2D; 2H = BAL 25+ or H/FG),

"Reject" Trial Bids; "Flags and Scrambles," and "Montreal Relay."

In 1980, he won a Bols 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 WBF events — in the World Open Pairs in 1978 and the Bermuda Bowl in 1995 and has finished third three times in the Rosenblum Cup.

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

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