



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, appearing to read 'José Damiani'.

José Damiani
President

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

With the ♠K onside, diamonds and hearts three-two, and nothing unpleasant happening in clubs, N/S can take 10 tricks in hearts. The E/W maximum is eight tricks, and at this vulnerability it pays for E/W to outbid their opponents through the four-level. With the points divided close to evenly there will be realistic opportunities for both sides to equal or beat par, which is N/S +300 vs 4♣ doubled.

Where North opens 1♦, not every East will overcall, as their hand is imperfect for a somewhat constructive 2♣ or a weak 3♣, but human nature being what it is, I expect pass to be a minority action. After a pass by South, West will advance 2♣ with 2♠ but will pass a jump overcall of 3♣. Though North is strong enough to bid again over 2♠, he lacks the fourth heart for a takedown double, and the full club stopper and overall playing strength for a natural 2NT, so if he does take action he's likely to bid 3♦. While South has some useful assets, he will be reluctant to jeopardize the likely plus in 3♦ to introduce hearts, especially as the nature of 3♥ is not something any partnership has had time to discuss: forcing one round, perhaps with a penalty double of clubs; corrective; stopper-showing with some previously unbidable values. West has fair defense against a diamond contract and might pass out 3♦, but some will take a shot at 3♠ or perhaps reopen with a double intended as cooperative but open to mis-interpretation. East might pass a double of any stripe with no other landing spot especially attractive, and finish -470 (best defense is for East to lead clubs at every opportunity, which

will allow West to discard both his hearts to good effect) or -570, but if East takes out a double to 3♠ or West has reopened with 3♠, that might end the auction. However, as South expects to have equity of +110 or so in 3♦ and North knows nothing about any useful values opposite, South might double 3♠ on that basis and improve his side's score from +50 to +100, which might save a few matchpoints. While finding hearts at this late stage is probably too difficult, South might compete to 4♦, which has a real shot to return +130 as the best defense against diamonds is far from routine.

Where East passes over a 1♦ opening, West will overcall 1♠ or 2♠ over South's 1♥ response. Now North can show three-card heart support directly (via a support-style double) or indirectly (by first showing a strong balanced hand and waiting for South to check on secondary support). Not every N/S pair will find their heart fit or reach game in one of these spade-overcall scenarios, but +420 will be much more common at these tables than +170 in hearts or +110, +130 or -50 in diamonds or anywhere between +490 (no club lead or switch in 3NT after a spade overcall) and -100 in notrump.

The possibilities are many on this deal, the first of the session, but if N/S can reach 4♥ and be left to play there they should be very pleased with their score.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

Left to themselves, N/S will reach 3NT on some variant of 2NT in fourth seat, raised to 3NT, with Stayman making an appearance at

some tables but not others. Many Easts will open 2♦ or 3♦, which on another day might inconvenience their opponents, but here 3♦ will usually lead to North reopening with 3NT. Some Norths will prefer to double 2♦ or 3♦, but they will bid notrump over South's spade response and finish in the normal contract from the normal side.

If East leads a diamond, declarer can take at least nine tricks with ease: three clubs and two of each; and a tenth is within reach, as West is going to come under pressure in three suits. If declarer finds a line that involves knocking out East's ♠K efficiently (including a heart to the ace and spade to the nine), he can either endplay West or squeeze him, depending on whether East takes his ♦A or ducks it. It's quite a fascinating deal to declare, and there are many ways for declarer to mis-judge the play.

East might not lead diamonds, however, and his most likely alternative is the ♥10 or ♥9, according to systemic agreement. The only route to a tenth trick is probably too obscure to consider (♥A, ♠A, ♣AK, ♠9 to endplay East to concede a second diamond trick or a third heart trick. If East gets out with either heart, declarer wins cheaply, gets the third heart and ♠Q out of the way, and offers East the ♦K; East wins and plays another diamond, but declarer ducks, and on the third round of diamonds West succumbs to a black-suit squeeze. If instead East exits with a middle diamond, declarer cashes his black winners, exits with a diamond, and East, who has to keep two hearts, can duck and watch West get endplayed with a black suit to lead from the ♥Q; or wins the ♦A and plays a diamond to see West succumb to a triple squeeze. As it happens, the only lead to hold declarer to nine tricks at double dummy is a most unlikely club.

All this talk of 10 tricks is lovely, but the declarers who get a heart lead with diamonds never mentioned will have their hands full planning a good line to piece together the nine they need to make 3NT, and their first decision will be which heart to play from dummy, though it doesn't matter on the actual layout. As long

as he leads a diamond to dummy's queen and builds his second spade winner relatively early, he can reach one of the favourable end positions to force a third heart trick or a second diamond trick, the successful variation turning largely on the play to the first trick.

Although this is a complex deal, I believe 3NT will make much more often than it fails, and that a precious 10th trick will materialize a bit more often than the degree of difficulty would suggest.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

The vulnerability is right for N/S to sacrifice at 5♦, which costs only 300 and might cause E/W to misjudge by continuing to 5♣, where they are bound to fail by a trick. If E/W could make 5♣ it would pay for N/S to save at 6♦, but it's usually right to let your opponents try to fulfill an 11-trick contract higher-ranking than yours and it would be exceptional to see more than a handful of contracts other than 5♦ and 5♣, doubled or not.

There will be differences of opinion among the East players about their initial action after pass-1♠-2♦, but all of them will commit to 4♣ sooner or later. Similarly, South might raise diamonds in a number of ways but will always commit to 5♦ if North has not already done so.

West will always wonder whether his partner can contribute enough defense to defeat 5♦ and whether his side's hands fit well enough to make 5♣, but he will often believe he has to make a decision himself as he won't have a forcing pass available over 5♦ unless East has made some sort of game-forcing raise,

such as a splinter or strong cue-bid. From our vantage point we can see that bidding 5♠ is wrong against par by three tricks, but West won't expect to fare that well against 5♦ and will often risk 5♠ rather than settle for what he believes normally will be no better than +100 against 5♦ doubled. North has good defense against 5♠ but can't count on South for any defensive tricks for his 5♦ bid at this vulnerability, so won't be keen to double 5♠, particularly because his side rates to score very well if 5♠ is going down. The risk in doubling what might be a relatively normal and cold contract is simply too great.

Any E/W pair fortunate enough to buy the contract at 4♠ or to double N/S in a phantom over-save of 6♦ will score mightily, but just achieving par for +300 vs 5♦ doubled should be well above average.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Can E/W find a route to their cold 25-point grand slam in spades? West's 1♠ opening is a good start, but finding a sensible initial response with the East hand won't be easy, even in an era that features literally dozens of ways to raise a major.

East would like to know about West's diamond holding and whether West is strong enough to make a Blackwood adventure safe, say after West shows diamond shortage. Although East's diamonds are weak for a two-level response, there might be an advantage in starting with 2♦, especially in strong two-over-one systems in which East can support spades cheaply at his next turn. Imagine: 1♠-2♦; 2♥-2♠; 3♣-3♠ (all

natural); 4♣ (cue)-4NT; 5NT (2 key cards and a void, known to be diamonds here). Now East could just bid seven, of course, but he can't be sure of 13 tricks if the opening lead is a trump, and so might wish to look for a side king, which might do by continuing with 6♣. For some, this would ask for the trump queen, which would lead to 6♦ (♠Q plus ♣K; 6♥ would show the ♠Q plus ♥K)-7♠.

For others, 6♣ would ask for something extra outside trumps, typically a side king. If East jumps to 3♠ over 2♥ to show at least four trumps and slam-suitable values, West might unsheathe Exclusion RKCB and bid seven.

I suspect that many more East players will set spades immediately, either with an artificial 2NT or 3♣ forcing raise, or via a hopeful ("Perhaps I can show my other singleton too") splinter raise of 4♣ (or less often) 4♥. Some of these raises will reveal that West is short or very short in diamonds, and if the partnership doesn't lose patience by jumping to a terminal 6♠ it should be possible to reach 7♠ with some confidence. Where West opens a strong club and East responds with a spade positive, most pairs will have enough asking machinery to get the job done, so where E/W have the auction to themselves I expect 7♠ to be reached rather often.

But South has a takeout double of spades at most levels and we will be hearing from South at plenty of tables. N/S can't make anything and are in -800 territory at the four-level, but it's tough to imagine E/W defending a doubled contract below 4♠, and N/S won't get higher than that very often; however, if it starts: 1♠-pass-4♠-double, North might pass, and that could add E/W +1390 to the frequency sheet, giving N/S a surprise superb matchpoint score, but if someone redoubles, North will surely run, and it would not pay E/W to stop to double any contract that isn't going down eight (none of which occur on this deal).

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

East will open 1♦ or 1NT (range not much of an issue these days) and E/W will usually have the auction to themselves. A common uncontested start will be 1♦-1♥; 1NT-2♦/ or an equivalent where West puppets to 2♦ via 2♣. Where East might conceal a four-card spade suit to rebid 1NT, however, some Wests will risk an overbid to look for a spade fit, either by asking East if he has them or by using a sequence that shows four-four in the majors with invitational strength. Some Easts will raise a 1♥ response to 2♥ and play there, and some Wests in strong-club systems will pass the 1NT rebid as East could easily be 3=3=2=5. Where East opens a 14-16 or 15-17 notrump, West will use Stayman and judge whether to pass 2♦, advance with 2NT, or wriggle with 2♥ where that sequence suggests both majors with no interest in game. West might well pass a weaker-range notrump, but might also use Stayman with the intention of finishing in 2♦ or two of a major (as above).

Notrump is conspicuously unsuccessful for E/W as South has a normal club lead and the defense will take four clubs, the ♦K, and two spades for -50 or -100. In diamonds declarer's fate will often turn on his play of the heart suit; technically, it's better to finesse through North, as the finesse can be repeated to pick up queen-fourth, but the entry position is fragile and declarer is likely to ruff a club to pass the ♦J, simply coming down to a straight 50-50 guess in hearts. Alternatively, declarer might play on spades, intending to use a long spade for a heart discard to avoid the heart guess. That will work particularly well for him

as long as he doesn't lead to the jack and then to the king, but even if he goes wrong this way (not unreasonably), he can still develop a spade winner for his third heart. And, as South will quite often lead a spade, declarer won't be mis-guessing spades under those conditions and will come to +130 in some comfort.

Where E/W finish in hearts they will have the potential for nine tricks and a huge score, but to do that they will need to play South for the ♥Q soon after being forced once in clubs: ♥K, pass the ♥J, concede a diamond without cashing the ace; East retains a trump to take a club force and the ♦J is an entry to draw the last two trumps, and it doesn't affect the outcome if South exits with his remaining trump. In fact, declarer can take 10 tricks in hearts by passing the ♥J at trick two after winning the club lead: the play just times out a trick better than it does after making a spade play first.

N/S can't do well in clubs despite their 10-card fit and they will find it awkward to enter the auction in any case; they're in -200 territory at the two-level if E/W can double.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

The auction will often be short and sweet: 2♥ by East-pass-4♥ by West, all pass, and with one spade honour aside there are 11 unassailable tricks for +650.

N/S can take 10 tricks in clubs and nine in diamonds (where there are two club ruffs available to the defense) so they have a paying sacrifice through the six level. If North boldly doubles 4♥ in the prototypical weak-2♥ auction South will be pleased to bid 5♣ or 4NT

to bring diamonds into the picture (probably the right idea as North might not always have perfect pattern for his under-pressure takeout double. In those scenarios West will have a tough decision because he might not be able to defeat 5♣ or 5♦ if there is no heart trick for his side, but if North has the king-jack of spades for his takeout double, 5♥ might be at least one down when there is a small plus available on defense. West can choose from among 5♥, double or a cautious pass (which is right only if 5♥ doubled is two down and 5♣ or 5♦ is cold), but if he bids 5♥, the most pragmatic choice as it gives his side a chance to tie the E/W pairs who buy the hand at 4♥, N/S will very rarely compete to the six level.

Where East passes as dealer, West will usually be left to open 1♥ or a Flannery 2♦ in third position. Not every North will double 1♥ with only 8 HCP and no aces, but at this vulnerability the light takeout double has become increasingly popular. At these tables, South is likely to compete to the five-level, and will do well not to double 5♥ if E/W bid on.

Though there will be some +100s and +300s for E/W along with a few +500s and +50s, the +650s will outnumber the others combined by a wide margin.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

♠ Q 7 6 3 ♥ 10 5 ♦ A 10 8 6 ♣ A 9 8 ♠ A J 5 2 ♥ Q J 9 8 2 ♦ 2 ♣ K 10 4 ♠ -- ♥ A K 7 ♦ K Q J 9 7 5 4 ♣ J 7 5	♠ K 10 9 8 4 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ 3 ♣ Q 6 3 2
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E/W, despite their major-suit length and nine-card spade fit, are outgunned in high cards and N/S have enough shape and trump length to drive to their cold 5♦.

South will open 1♦ and West will double for takeout or overcall 1♥ according to current partnership preference.

After double, North will bid 1♠ or redouble, again according to partnership style. That might affect East's willingness to compete as far as 3♣, but should not keep N/S out of 5♦. However, there is a possibility that that 1♠ by North silences East altogether and that N/S finish in 3NT to try for a superior matchpoint score; East will not be reluctant to lead spades, however, so 3NT will fail if West wins the ♠A and returns the ♠J. Ouch!

Over a 1♥ overcall, North will double or bid 1♠ according to system dictates, and East will raise to 2♥. South will bid 3♦ or 4♦, with the former creating the dread losing option of 3NT: North continues with 3♥ and South looks only at his heart stoppers. Ouch!

I don't see it happening often, but at a few tables E/W will buy the contract for 3♣ or 4♣ doubled, -200 or -500. Neither of those plus scores is big enough to compensate N/S for the 600 available in 5♦, but if there are enough minus scores in 3NT (or perhaps in a pushy 6♦) N/S might salvage something in the scoring.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

♠ 9 8 ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ J 9 7 4 ♣ 10 4 3 2 ♠ Q 10 7 6 5 3 ♥ 10 8 5 ♦ A Q ♣ J 9 ♠ 4 2 ♥ A K J 6 ♦ 10 5 3 2 ♣ K Q 8	♠ A K J ♥ Q 9 4 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ A 7 6 5
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A 2♠ opening won't appeal to everyone holding West's cards, but it will be a popular choice. East has an interesting bidding challenge: he's going to bid game and wants to make the right choice between 4♣ and 3NT; if both produce the same number of tricks he wants to be in notrump, but if both make with no overtricks or 4♣ makes while 3NT fails, he wants to be in spades. It's not clear he can obtain the information he needs to make an enlightened decision by asking West to describe his hand with an artificial inquiry

(usually 2NT) unless West could show specific shortage below 3NT. Here West would show either a diamond feature (for notrump) or a good hand with a poor suit (where Ogust responses are employed), but neither would reveal whether hearts or diamonds might be a problem in notrump. The winning decision is to bid 3NT because there are 10 fast winners and East's ♠Q is protected if he declares, which he invariably will. On several different layouts of N/S's hearts the defense could take four or five fast heart tricks but 4♠ would be cold, so anyone claiming to know what's best is probably talking through his hat. Listen politely, but escape quickly.

We can see that the N/S should take three tricks against either game, but once in a while the defense will err either early (cashing a-cing of hearts) or late (keeping the wrong cards and allowing declarer to build a heart trick). Those who allow an eleventh trick will fare wretchedly, but it's more difficult to predict just how badly +420 will score. I suspect that there will be plenty of +430s so the 4♠ bidders will get much the worst of it.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

E/W can make 4♠ without raising a sweat, but N/S have a paying save at 5♥ doubled, which can be set three tricks with a club ruff for -500 vs the -620 they'd get for selling out. Will E/W be pushed to a losing 5♠? Not often, by my lights.

If East opens 1♠, South will overcall 2♥ and West will show his limit raise in spades in a variety of ways, including an old-fashioned jump raise, a cue-bid, a transfer, and an artificial 2NT. Whether or not North shows his heart

support East's six-loser hand merits a game bid. Where North has raised hearts or doubled a 3♥ bid to show something resembling a raise to 3♥, South might go on to 5♥, although he has a balanced hand with a smattering of defense and insufficient evidence to indicate that 4♠ would make or that a 5♥ sacrifice would pay (500 does seem likely, however, if the ♠K is a trick and North can supply one winner).

Some Easts will open a specialized 2♠, showing 5+♠ and a 5+-card minor, about 8-11 points. West might not bid 4♠ over South's 3♥, and if he settles for a competitive 3♠, North will probably raise to 4♥, which might end the auction, although East might bid 4♠ unsolicited or double to say that he'd like to bid 4♠, or West might double 4♥ with more hope than confidence.

Others will pass with the East hand in second seat, but come in with 2♠ or a lead-directing 3♦ after North raises 1♥ to 2♥. What would happen after that is anyone's guess, as South will bid 3♥ or 4♥ and West or East (after 3♦ at his second turn) 3♠ or 4♠. A Bergen-style Mixed Raise in hearts might silence East if he can neither bid 3♦ nor double an artificial 3♦, and introducing those topless spades might not appeal to him.

That "normal" +620 might not be so easy to achieve and I suspect it will score very well, given all the things that could lead to a different result.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

If East opens that balanced 11-count, his side, if left to its own devices, will sail into a makeable

3NT or 5♦ unless they misjudge the quality of their heart fit and black-suit stoppers and find a route to a potentially less successful 4♥.

Where East opens 1♦, he will raise a 1♥ response to 2♥ or rebid 1NT according to his beliefs. It's the raise to 2♥ that will need some sorting out. If West continues with a forcing 3♦ East can hardly bid 3NT with two low spades and a minimum, but will not be keen on going past 3NT (or past 3♦ for that matter!). If he retreats to 3♥, West can try 3♠ and East will gratefully convert to 3NT. Many three-card raisers use either 2NT or a cheap-step 2♠ to check on strength and the number of trumps, opener's first-step reply generally being used to show three trumps and a minimum raise; some incorporate short-suit trial bids. Pairs using these methods should reach 3NT or 5♦ but in any case will stay out of 4♥. I hesitate to say "the losing 4♥" because North must lead a club to defeat the four-three game contract: declarer cannot survive a forcing defense. On any other lead, however, declarer can take 10 tricks with careful play for +620 and a superb score, as 3NT and 5♦ should be held to +600. Where East opens 1♣ West will respond 1♦ and E/W will most often reach 3NT.

North might overcall 1♠ or 2♠ and while East might raise to 2♥ or use a Support Double over 1♠, he will have to pass over 2♠. South has some cards but neither a diamond stopper nor genuine spade support, but some will advance 1♠ with 1NT or 2♠ whether East passes or doubles; now E/W will need to sort everything out in a potentially crowded auction to find a making game contract. Where North overcalls 2♠, South might boost to 3♠ obstructively, making it even more awkward for E/W. Doubling 3♠ nets E/W only 500 points, which will be a good result for them only if many of their counterparts go minus or miss game.

Where East passes as dealer, North will overcall West's 1♦ with 1♠ or 2♠ and East will cue-bid or try an atypical negative double, the latter having the potential to get West to bid 4♥; whether East converts to 5♦ or shoots it out in 4♥ is an intangible, as is the opening lead

against 4♥. There are lots of possibilities on this one, but +600 E/W rates to be the most common result.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

E/W will usually have the auction to themselves (exceptions might occur when West passes in second seat, North opens a carefree 1♠ "for the lead" and to cause general mischief in third seat and South competes to 2♠) and will invariably reach 3NT or 5♣.

Most Wests will open 1♣ (or a club-system natural 2♣) and East will respond 1♠, 2NT or 3NT, according to system and personality. Slam is not out of the question from East's point of view facing a sound opening bid with long clubs and short spades, and after 1♣-1♠; 2♣, he might not be so anxious to get to 3NT without further investigation. However, as that investigation will often involve bidding a three-card suit with a balanced hand, East might well jump to 3NT to avoid complications. Those who do not jump to 3NT will force with 2♦ and over 2NT show club support economically (unless that would not be forcing in the partnership methods). West should retreat to 3NT in that sequence.

Those who can bid a forcing 2NT (a treatment that has gained some expert support in recent years, facing what is expected to be at least a six-card suit) over West's 2♣ rebid certainly will avail themselves of this option to give West a chance to show extra shape or strength at a low level while establishing a base in notrump.

A natural, limited 2♣ opening might convince

East to give up on slam early, but some will investigate for spades or a club slam and might finish in 5♣.

There are bound to be a few pairs in a poor 6♣, which requires stiff ♣K in North or stiff ♣J in South, but even if one of these layouts exists, declarer would have to guess which one to play for.

Assuming that declarers in game will not lead the ♣Q or low to the eight to start the suit, there will be only a trump and a spade to lose in 5♣, or a club and three spades in notrump (much better to stop in 3NT than 4NT). Where South leads a red suit against East's 3NT and declarer plays ace and another club, North needs to send a strong message about spades with his discard on the second club. However, some defenders will slip; if South does not switch to spades, 3NT will produce 11 tricks and E/W will score well.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

E/W will usually remain silent on this game deal for N/S, though West will hate to take no action at this vulnerability with his weak distributional hand; just as well for his side, as it's tough to take many tricks with a combined 14 points and only an eight-card fit. In response to North's 1♥ South might bid 1♠, a natural limit 2NT, or (most often in five-card major systems) use his partnership sequence to describe a three-card limit raise. If given the choice between 3NT and 4♥, North might well choose notrump with extra high-card strength and honours everywhere, and facing a balanced limit raise he might suggest notrump himself, but in practice 4♥ will be the more popular

contract.

In hearts, declarer is likely to receive a club lead. He can ruff his club loser more or less at leisure, but would also like to try for a spade discard by establishing dummy's ♦Q and draw trumps for safety, so he has some timing issues to consider. He is not intending to play anyone for queen-third of trumps, so he might win the club lead in hand and try the ♦8, a play that might slip past the ♦K where East started with four or five diamonds and feared allowing declarer to build an "impossible" diamond trick when West was dealt Ax, AJ, or AJx. East goes in with the ♦K and let's have him find the challenging spade switch. Declarer wins, crosses to the ♣A, back to the ♦A, and ruffs his club loser. At this point it would be natural to play a trump, but that won't work as East's small trump will come into play to ruff the ♦Q. To come to an eleventh trick declarer must try to cash the ♦Q before playing any trumps, discarding the spade loser. East ruffs low, and exits with a black suit, but declarer can ruff and lead a trump to the ten, cash the ace, and ruff himself in to draw East's last trump for a rather spectacular +650. A spade lead (to the ten and ace) looks best for the defense, but declarer can still negotiate his overtrick by staying off trumps and going about building a second spade trick to discard his diamond loser. If East wins the second spade trick, declarer has a ruffing finesse against the queen (in fact, if declarer takes his club ruff first East is endplayed when he wins the ♠K), while if West wins the ♠Q on the second round to switch to diamonds declarer takes the ♦A, leads a heart to the ten, ruffs out the ♠K tripleton, returns to the ♥A and discards his diamond loser on the ♠J as East ruffs; declarer ruffs the next trick and extracts the ♥Q. Essentially, declarer needs to play East for the ♥Q and do so late in the play to make the maximum, and there won't often be clues from the bidding to point him to one of the winning lines; +620 will be "normal."

If most of the declarers in hearts are taking only 10 tricks, the notrump declarers can post a big score by taking 10 tricks themselves.

However, if hearts produce six tricks on the normal play of the ace-king, the declarers in hearts will take 11 or 12 tricks, so the declarers in notrump need to play someone for queen-third or fourth of hearts as the best chance for both contracts to yield precisely 10 tricks. If West has four hearts, low to the ace will work, but if East has all four hearts, it won't work to start with the ♠K or to lead low towards the king; declarer must take a first round finesse against East (leading the jack is the easiest way to repeat it). There's something artistic about playing East for the heart length, and declarers who fancy themselves "flair" players might get the suit right for that reason. Note that cashing a high honour first doesn't matter in this case because declarer does not want to see the queen drop singleton (or doubleton); he needs to do better than the declarers in hearts and must play on the assumption that the queen is tripleton or has three little brothers.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

N/S have the values for game, and while nearly everyone will reach 4♣ or 3NT, they won't always have an easy auction. It starts with North having to find a descriptive rebid after a 1♠ response to his 1♣ (whether or not East throws in a featherweight vulnerable 1♥ overcall). A 2♥ reverse would be a mild overbid in terms of high cards and the quality of the club suit; 2♠ an underbid; 3♠ a trump short, 2♣ too despicable for words even if a raise "guarantees" four trumps. In the Master Solvers' Club I suspect that 3♠ would attract the most votes, with 2♥ a close second. Where North reverses, methods will come into play as South would like to keep spades in the picture

but does not want to under-state the quality of his diamond stoppers; some will jump to 3NT and North will pass because he was not asked to correct to 4♠ with three. Others will be able to force with 2♠ or 2NT, or have to resort to a fourth-suit 3♦, in each case discovering that North has spade support. At these tables, 4♠ is more likely to be the final contract.

Against 4♠ West will lead a trump or perhaps a heart. Declarer can piece together 11 tricks as long as he passes the ♦J when he gets around to that suit and starts on clubs soon enough where West prevents him from taking two diamond ruffs in dummy. Declarers who do not manage that eleventh trick will score very poorly.

Even if the defense helps declarer in 3NT with a low diamond lead to the jack, queen, and king, or (where North somehow declares) a low heart to South's jack, the defense always has time for two clubs and the ♦A or perhaps two diamonds and one club. Notrumpers who score +630 won't score well because most of the pairs in hearts will manage +650; they will beat only those who hold themselves to +620 and those who miss game.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

N/S will usually find a route to 4♠ after 1♥ or a Flannery 2♦ by South. North might have to check on South's trump length before choosing spades over notrump, or might offer a choice of games by jumping to 3NT after being raised, but South will choose spades at those tables.

East has a natural diamond lead, and declarer can win and start hearts. The defense can't

lead trumps and diamonds and a club through declarer all at once, so declarer will have time to establish hearts and draw trumps or to switch to a partial cross-ruff where the defense plays diamonds at every opportunity ruffing a diamond high, then one club low and another high. There might be some other variations, but declarer should come to 10 tricks on any sensible line for +420.

Whether East leads a diamond or a club, North won't be able to come to 10 tricks in notrump before the defense takes four; the four-four fit is superior this time and the scoring will reflect that.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

Though N/S have the values for game, a 10-card diamond fit, only one spade stopper facing shortness, some will fetch up in 3NT rather than 5♦, and will fail by one trick on a spade lead, two on a red-suit lead, and rather more on an inspired club lead and spade switch. 3NT will only be a possibility where West contents himself with 3♣ (or a lesser bid in spades) over South's 1♦ opening: North might try a negative double and pass South's direct or eventual 3NT bid.

Where West jumps to 4♣, however, North will choose between 5♦, a "cards" negative double, or an impulsive 6♦. South might well pass a double and West will go down two (on three rounds of hearts) or perhaps three (if North leads a trump and declarer plays on hearts and misguesses in a position where the defenders can communicate in diamonds to take a club, a diamond and three hearts). N/S +300 will be a fairly common result, but 5♦ will be the most popular resting place.

If West leads the ♠A, as many will, declarer

need only lead a club to the king to make his contract, as one of dummy's clubs can be discarded on the ♠K. The busy lead of the ♣Q won't work this time, but the more imaginative lead of the ♣10 will almost surely lead to West scoring the ♣Q at trick two when East wins the ace and returns the suit.

West is perhaps more likely to lead a heart, however. Declarer can still make the contract, by playing for the actual club position: he gives up a spade and eliminates that suit, hearts and trumps and at some point leads a club to his king; in the elimination ending a second round of clubs leaves the defense with no winning option: East can overtake or eat West's queen and set up declarer's jack, or leave West on play to concede a ruff and discard, eliminating dummy's second club loser that way. As this is a very specific club position, declarer might sensibly play for the ace-queen of clubs onside, a 25% shot that offers a better a priori mathematical chance for success. Against that, though, is the fact that West will count out for 7=3=1=2 and West will be a favourite to hold a club honour, especially where he has overcalled 4♣. Ace and one does not help declarer, but queen-and-one does, so once West is known to have exactly two clubs it boils down to playing one hand or the other for the ♣Q as East must have the ace for declarer to succeed. There are three "empty spaces" for East to have the ♣Q, only two for West, so if declarer gets thos one right it will be because he thinks West is more likely to have the queen for his bid; +600 will be very good indeed.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

4♣ is a good contract for N/S, as declarer will usually have time to try for jack-ten of diamonds onside as well as just the king. They don't have much in high cards, however, so they are going to get to 4♣ on distribution, perhaps when E/W force an early decision on South via: 2♣-pass-4♥. South must bid 4♣ for better or for worse and here it's "for better" . . . if they are left to play there. But as both West and East have an eight-card suit, the bidding won't always end at 4♣ despite the E/W misfit. If opener's side goes on to 5♣ or 5♥ North will surely be tempted to bid 5♠, which turns out to be the winning decision as East cannot gain the lead in time to cash a heart or give West a ruff, and declarer can develop a third trick in diamonds to discard his heart loser for +450, or +650 if E/W double 5♠, or +850 if West doubles and leads a hopeful low club. If you don't think this will happen, check the frequency sheets carefully.

If N/S stop to double 5♣ it takes only a timely trump switch to net the defenders two spades and two diamonds for +500. In hearts the defenders have only one spade trick, but they get a two trump tricks for +800. Both those penalties will be better for N/S than their +450 in spades, but it's tough to predict how often E/W will double 5♠ or allow six. It's possible that +450 will be below average.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

<p>♠ A J 7 6 ♥ 9 7 6 5 ♦ J ♣ A K 9 4</p> <p>♠ 10 2 ♥ Q J 4 3 ♦ Q 7 6 4 3 ♣ 10 2</p>	<p>♠ K 9 ♥ 10 8 ♦ A 10 9 5 ♣ J 8 7 5 3</p> <p>♠ Q 8 5 4 3 ♥ A K 2 ♦ K 8 2 ♣ Q 6</p>
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Unless N/S overreach to 6♠ – more difficult since the invention of Key Card Blackwood -- this will be one of the flattest Boards of the session at N/S +450.

After 1♣-1♠, North will settle for 2♠ or jump to 3♠ according to style and system. Some will have a mini-splinter 3♦ available to get the playing strength across early.

The simple raise might lead to a signoff in 4♣, but where North might have as much as: K10xx, xxx, Ax, AKxx, an aggressive South might try for slam if his methods allow him to learn of a four-trump maximum at an early stage.

A raise to 3♠ will often convince South to launch into Blackwood, and in most modern versions South will learn that there are two aces or one ace and the ♠K missing, and on this layout 5♣ presents no problems.

If this is a typical hand for a mini-splinter, South should be able to stop safely despite his wealth of high cards, decent controls, and potentially valuable ♣Q; with the ♦K devalued by North's shortage bid, South should not drive to slam without checking on the key card situation.

Because a few pairs will fall from grace and reach six, the routine +450 will be slightly over average.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ Q 10 8 ♥ A 9 6 3 ♦ J ♣ Q 10 4 3 2</p> <p>♠ K J 7 6 ♥ K 8 4 ♦ 9 8 6 5 ♣ K 9</p>	<p>♠ A 4 3 ♥ J 7 ♦ A K Q 4 2 ♣ J 8 5</p> <p>♠ 9 5 2 ♥ Q 10 5 2 ♦ 10 7 3 ♣ A 7 6</p>
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West will raise East's strong or medium notrump to 3NT, or raise his INT rebid (after 1♦-1♠ in a weak notrump environment) to 3NT, so there won't be many tables where East is not declaring 3NT. I suppose it might

start: 1♦-1♠; 2♠ or 3♠ or a hopeful 2♣ or a misguided 2♦, but all those sequences are too complicated to be sensible choices; the stopper-insensitive INT rebid, if it gets the strength across, might lose on occasion, but it gets back to even with the strong notrumpers and facilitates constructive bidding.

South will most often lead a heart, declarer playing low from dummy. There are positions where it is essential for North not to play the ace, so he will generally put in the nine. Even if declarer expects hearts to be four-four because South's lead was the deuce, playing fourth-best leads, he still has choices in the play: he can lead towards the ♣K, or he can take the spade finesse relatively early (to avoid squeezing dummy on the fifth round of diamonds and to keep the ♠A as a late entry to the fifth diamond; the suit is hopelessly blocked when it divides three-one). The advantage of playing on spades is that North might have both aces, in which case both dummy's kings are protected, and if spades are three-three there is a chance for an overtrick. The disadvantage is demonstrated on this layout, where North wins the ♠Q and crosses to the ♣A for South to lead the ♥Q or ♥10 through the king.

Where West declares and gets a club lead (or where South finds a club lead) and wins the second or third round of clubs, it would appear that the defense is set to prevail, but if declarer is out to get himself featured in someone's Bridge column, he might play North for the ♥A, the ♠Q, and five clubs. On the run of the diamonds, North is squeezed in those suits, and if he keeps his spade guard he can be thrown in with a heart or club to lead into the king-jack of spades after taking his remaining winners.

It would be silly to predict whether 3NT will make more often than it fails, but declarers who go down more than one when they mis-time the play and blank one of dummy's kings in the endgame won't have much company.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

At the prevailing vulnerability, after two passes, a few enterprising Norths will open 1♣ "for the lead" (which doesn't mean as much in five-card major systems as he would like listeners to believe, third seat notwithstanding) or a nebulous Precision 1♦. Neither 1♣ nor 1♦ will do N/S much good in the auction, as East will overcall INT or double and West will either go out of his way to show his fifth spade or he won't, as his hand is suitable for notrump if that is what East has in mind. Where East is left to open in fourth seat, he is too strong for most modern INT openings and will start with 1♦ or a strong 1♣ and rebid appropriately in notrump to indicate his range. If West can offer a choice of games that confirms a five-card spade suit he will do that, and with no ruffing value and all suits stopped in a hand with positional value East will more often choose 3NT than 4♠.

South would normally lead a heart against 3NT and declarer will take 10 tricks if he loses to the ♠Q and South continues hearts, but 12 if he starts spades by cashing the king and elects to treat the ♠10 as a forced play rather than the mandatory falsecard from the remaining doubleton ten after South follows low twice. Low towards dummy, intending to play the jack if South follows low, picks up stiff queen in South with a finesse against the ten on the way back, but loses to stiff queen offside. But Souths who believe in defending passively rather than lead from a stronger broken four-card holding like South's hearts might lead a club, as will those whose partners opened 1♣. Now, if declarer goes wrong in spades, the defense will take four tricks, else just two. So 3NT will yield

+600, +630, +660, and +690; though South can do something about his side's fate by choosing an effective lead, N/S's fate will really turn on declarer's approach to the spade suit.

The play in spades has plenty of interest, too, particularly where West declares and North finds a heart lead (expecting him to lead the jack or nine is unrealistic). At IMPs declarer might play low from dummy, but at Matchpoints he can't afford to pass up the heart finesse and a chance to take as many as 12 tricks. When the defense continues hearts, declarer is in danger of going down even with the ♣A onside if he loses an early finesse to the ♠Q; rather than risk that he might cash ace-king of trumps and try to run diamonds to pitch his heart loser before someone can ruff in with the ♠Q if it hasn't dropped. When the ♠10 appears on the first trump, that line will have plenty of appeal, and will produce 11 tricks where taking the second-round spade finesse would have led to a dismal -100. Where North leads a diamond instead, declarer will have the timing to take the spade finesse without risking the contract, and will finish with 10 tricks if he chooses that line. Where system vagaries (transfer responses to 1♣, for example) lead to East declaring 4♠, South is more likely to avoid the costly heart lead, so declarer will take 10 or 11 tricks much more often than 12. With -100, +620, +650, and +680 all possible in spades, the frequency sheet for Board 19 will include a long column of results, and you'll need some good luck to score well, or rather, to avoid scoring poorly.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

N/S have the values for game, but no eight-card fit and only one stopper in their shortest suit in two misfitting hands, so their bidding figures to be a bit strained.

North will open 2♠ if he has a weak two-suited opening available, but most will pass in second seat. A 2♠ opening might lead to 4♠ after South mentions hearts, but 3NT and 4♥ might be reached too.

East might be cowed by the vulnerability but some will open in third seat, with all four suits getting the nod according to system dictates and personal preference. Imagine how the bidding might proceed after a 1♥ opening by East: pass-pass-1♠ seems likely, but if North thinks South might have a heart trap a reopening double caters nicely to that and might not lead to an awkward scenario when South has some other hand type; West would run to 2♣ and N/S might defend that doubled (probably down 500), reach 3NT, or miss game (getting to 4♥ or 4♠ would be more complex). After a minor-suit opening by East, South will overcall or jump-overcall in hearts, or double where he is too strong to overcall. Where West raises a 2+ cards 1♣ opening, North can compete with a responsive double after a heart overcall, and South, with a tough call, will usually settle for a jump in hearts; if that jump is to 3♥, North will pass, bid 3NT, introduce spades, or raise to 4♥.

Left alone, N/S will most often start: Pass-1♥; 1♠; 2NT or Pass-1♥; 1♠-3♥. Over 2NT North will either bid diamonds naturally or use his pet method to check on five-three spades; 3NT will usually be the final contract. Over 3♥, North will pass, raise, or bid 3NT. Whether +140 in hearts turns out to be a good score is going to be pretty random, with so many other contracts and outcomes possible. Declarer can't make 4♥ unless the defense attacks trumps at trick one or two (after a club lead, ducked) or East underleads in diamonds at trick two after winning a club trick; these defenses allow declarer to score the ♥J, unblock spades, and clear trumps, after which he can enjoy a third spade trick and lead towards the ♦K. In spades,

declarer can survive the four-two trump break by winning the club lead, taking ace-queen of trumps, discarding a club on a high heart, and starting diamonds from dummy. East can force declarer once with a club and later with the ♠Q, but will have to give dummy the ♠J in the end if it comes to that. In the very fortunate 3NT, declarer wins the second club, finesses the ♠J and clears the suit, overtakes the ♠Q on the first round (easiest), and leads towards the ♠K to take five hearts, two spades, a club, and a diamond. My best guess is that +600 will be just fine and +620 superb for N/S.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

South will usually open a weak 2♣ in third seat. West has a strong hand, but no accurate way to describe it: 2NT is a slight underbid, 3NT an overbid (not to mention possible positional issues relating to spade stoppers); double, which looks easy enough, will leave West a difficult choice after any minimum response, and today, where a lebensohl 2NT advance to show weakness is so popular, West can anticipate frequently being faced with this scenario: should he bid the expected 3♣, which would end the auction when East is weak with clubs, or should he hope for a maximum six or seven points and risk 3♠ or 3NT over 2NT? As other responses would be natural and constructive West would have far less concern in these cases, but being prepared for the worst is always a good idea, and West should be thinking ahead when he chooses his initial action over 2♣.

If West settles for 2NT, East will either pass, transfer to hearts, or use some variation of the

Gladiator convention to try to sign off at 3♥; if he does introduce hearts, West might super-accept (with 3♠, 3NT, 4♥, or four of a minor, according to agreement) and 4♥ should be reached. Where West jumps to 3NT over 2♣, East will certainly pass, as West needn't have any viable heart support. Where West doubles 2♣, East has a useful hand for suit play facing a classic takeout double, but only 5 HCP. Some will deem it a perfectly acceptable constructive 3♥ after which West will raise to 4♥ or stall with 3♣ in case East can bid 3NT. Where lebensohl is in play, others will prefer a potentially weak puppet to 3♣, and follow with 3♥ where West "accepts" with 3♣ – now West should really pass to stay consistent with his decision to stop in a partial, but some will change their minds and continue with 3♠ and also reach 4♥. Should West consider his hand too strong to risk playing in 3♣ he will be pleased when East turns up with an excellent hand in context.

There's nothing to the play in hearts with the ♣K onside and no bad breaks: declarer loses two hearts and a spade for +170 or +420. 3NT is more interesting. Though North might lead a club because he has two likely entries to develop the suit, the normal lead is a spade, and declarer must duck the first round. To defeat 3NT, South must resist clearing the spades and switch to clubs, a line that leads to two down: the defense gets three clubs, two hearts and a spade for -100; if South perseveres with spades, declarer should win, play three rounds of diamonds ending in dummy, and work on hearts, succeeding not only on this layout but when South started with the short ♠Q: +430.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

Everything plays a trick better; at least in theory, from the North side, as the defense can't lead a diamond with profit. With a combined 31 HCP, no eight-card fit, and no five-card suit(s), N/S don't belong in slam, but some will get there when North indicates 22-24 HCP, South invites slam, and North thinks highly enough of his two four-card suits and controls not to pass the invitation. I can imagine N/S stopping at 5NT on a natural quantitative auction like: 2♣-2♦; 2NT-4NT; 5♣-5♥; 5♠-5NT; pass, but it's more likely that N/S will stop at 4NT or forge on to six.

Where North declares with no suit-length information revealed, East will lead a spade more often than anything else, allowing declarer to take four spade tricks by finessing the ♠9 on the way back. Even with this favourable development, declarer isn't quite home with 12 tricks. Sure, he's fine if he cashes the high clubs before knocking out the ♥A as he would know that he doesn't need the diamond finesse once clubs go three-three, but if someone shows out on the third club, declarer will lose a club trick if the hand with the ♥A has the club winner. And if he goes after hearts after two rounds of clubs, he'll encounter this position: West switches to a diamond through the ace. Now he must guess whether to take the 50% diamond finesse or rely on the 36% chance of three-three clubs, perhaps with some squeeze chances (communication problems preclude playing East for four clubs and the ♦K if West takes the third heart). We might conclude, then, that to take 12 tricks on a spade lead declarer must take an anti-percentage line by relying at one point or another on clubs coming in.

If East leads a heart or a club and West holds off until the third round of hearts to take his ace and switch to diamonds (preferably a low one to help declarer think positively about finding the king inside), declarer can still take 12 tricks by taking the ♦A, finishing clubs, and crossing to dummy with the second round of spades (having unblocked the nine earlier) to cash the last heart: East will be squeezed in spades and diamonds. It's a Vienna Coup. This would require a good view by declarer; of

course, but no great expertise; it's a squeeze that plays itself – if the ♦Q is not high the long spade must be good if the squeeze has worked.

Where South declares, perhaps after 2♣-2NT, West's normal lead is a diamond, so declarer's maximum is 11 tricks. You might consider yourself unlucky if this happened to you, but having the weak hand respond in notrump does come with a price, and this is just an illustration of the downside in that approach.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

<p>♠ 8 6 ♥ -- ♦ A J 5 4 ♣ K Q 8 7 6 5 3</p>	<p>♠ 5 4 3 2 ♥ 7 5 4 3 ♦ 9 8 2 ♣ 9 4</p> <p>♠ K J ♥ A K J 10 6 ♦ Q 10 6 3 ♣ A J</p> <p>♠ A Q 10 9 7 ♥ Q 9 8 2 ♦ K 7 ♣ 10 2</p>
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With diamonds three-two and the ♦K in South, E/W can take 12 tricks in diamonds, notrump, or clubs, but only if East declares to protect his spade holding. That sounds interesting, but will anyone get to slam after an opening 1♠ bid by South?

West will overcall 2♣ or 3♣ and the simple overcall will leave more room to investigate. If East can force with 2♥ he should prefer that to a cue bid. If West introduces diamonds East might well take a shot at 6NT, expecting no less than this from his partner, but West might retreat to 3♣. East would like to invite slam with a natural 4NT, but might not have that club in his bag; some will settle for 3NT where others will cue-bid, then support clubs or despair of learning everything he needs to know and take a shot at one slam or another. It would be useful for East to bid diamonds before West, but only if East intends to finish in a minor suit. Note that Key Card Blackwood would keep E/W out of slam as two key cards are missing, but this generally excellent method does not shine when one of

the missing keys is the trump king, which rates to be with the opening bidder and vulnerable to a finesse; admittedly, such opportunities are rarely available to the side that did not open the bidding, but this happens to be one such layout.

As East has far too much strength to consider playing in five of a minor at Matchpoints, he will need to time his first notrump bid well to create the option of stopping below slam in the highest-scoring strain. That is not at all easy to do in standard methods, where 2NT over 2♣ is not forcing and 4NT at any point in the auction might well be interpreted as Blackwood. I suspect that there will be quite a few pairs in 6♣ or 6♦ by West, going set, but more in 3NT and 6NT, enjoying the spoils of triumph for reaching the best strain (even at the “wrong” level).

Where a simple new-suit advance is not forcing, the auction might proceed along these lines: (1♠)-2♣-(pass)-2♠; 3♦-3♥; 4♣-4♦; 5♦-6NT. Could West hold less than this? Well, perhaps 2=1=4=6, but that doesn’t make 6NT any worse.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

E/W have a fairly lucky game, but it’s not five-of-a-minor, at least against perfect defense. It’s tough to bid 3NT but if you get there, you can make it by ducking two rounds of spades, winning the third, and playing ♦K, diamond, ducking to North, who can do no better than take the ♥A; most would have led hearts initially, of course, giving declarer his ninth trick early.

North will overcall 1♦ with 1♥ or 2♥, the availability of a weak jump overcall not always being the deciding factor (poor suit, balanced hand, a monopoly on jacks). Over 1♥, East can bid 1NT, which might convince South not to bounce to the three-level, settling for 2♥ or a “constructive-plus” 2♦ cue-raise or transfer raise. West will introduce clubs or double for takeout, and if N/S have reached 3♥, E/W have the opportunity to double and collect 300, which will beat all the partials and the unsuccessful minor-suit games.

Where North overcalls 2♥, East has no good bid so will usually pass. South will raise to 3♥ and West will double or bid 4♣, with the former bound to work better as East can pass or bid 3NT. Over 4♣ East will bid 5♣ and the spotlight will turn to North. A spade lead sets 5♣, but any other lead lets declarer make an overtrick by conceding a diamond (there will be two trumps left in dummy to ruff West’s spade losers after throwing two spades from dummy on declarer’s diamonds).

As 3NT yields only +400 at best, the overtrick in 5♣ will be worth a bundle of matchpoints. As 5♣ will be reached more often than 3NT, the opening lead will be the central issue at many tables, and anyone finding the killing spade lead will be well rewarded in the scoring.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

If North passes as dealer at favourable vulnerability, East will open a maximum weak 2♥ or a defense-thin 1♥. As most would treat a jump overcall or game bid over a weak opening as strong actions, the South hand

would not qualify for 3♣ or 4♣ over 2♥, leaving these players to choose between, pass and an atypical 2♠; not everyone will have those constraining agreements, however, and will feel free to jump to 3♣ or 4♣ to take advantage of the vulnerability. West will generally raise 2♥ to 4♥ without investigating whether 3NT would be better, but if South has not yet entered the auction, he will reopen with 4♠. Even if East has the prototypical king-queen-sixth of hearts and a minor-suit king for his weak 2♥ at unfavourable vulnerability, West can't be sure his side can take 11 tricks in 5♥, and East might not have such a suitable hand, so West will probably double 4♠, which is booked to go down two for -300 if declarer plays for the ♠Q onside if put to that guess early (♥A, ♦A, diamond). However, there's more to it than that: North might believe South's delayed entry at the four level might ought to be based on a two-suited hand with only moderate spades (else why not risk 2♠ on a long suit?), and so take out to 4NT to identify South's "expected" minor. Whether N/S finish in 5♠ doubled, -500, or (sigh) 5♦ doubled (down a lot more) is something we'd rather not consider. Where East opens 1♥, South will overcall 4♠ far more often than 3♠. In this scenario, West will expect to have a chance to make something at the five level as East has opened with a one-bid, but suits may be breaking badly, and if E/W have only an eight-card fit it might be better to take whatever is available from 4♠ doubled. Add to that the possibility that the best strain for E/W is a minor suit and that there is no way to cater to that with confidence, and double (primarily "cards" at this level will have even more appeal than a speculative 5♥ or takeout (emphasis on the minors initially) 4NT. Here double will end the auction.

Some Norths, unwilling to pass up the first strike at the delicious vulnerability, will open 3♣ whether or not it meets the partnership's expectations. East doesn't have enough to overcall at the three level, though that might not stop everyone from taking the plunge, and South will bid 3♠ or 4♠ rather than pass. West has no security in any action facing a

silent partner and should probably go quietly, but many will double and that will lead to a different variation on the "pass or defend 4♣ doubled" theme. We can see that E/W can't make 5♥ (and might need to play carefully to make four: on a diamond lead, for example, it might come down to a loser-on-loser endplay on the fourth round of diamonds) so taking the push will be bad for E/W; this time the money lies in accepting 300 for 4♠ doubled.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

It might be difficult for E/W to finish in a diamond partial after South opens a "five-card majors" 1♦, but diamonds is the strain in which they can take nine tricks with a very good view in hearts. In their four-four heart fit, a spade force will develop a trump winner for the defense and hold declarer to eight tricks. That's potentially interesting, but for it to be relevant E/W have to find a way into the auction, which may be a challenge. West will have to pass over a 1♦ opening and unless N/S are constrained by their system, they should be able to reach 3♣: possibilities are a direct 3♣ response, 2♣ followed by 3♣. However, those system issues may force North to respond 1NT where 3♣ would be invitational and 2♣ game forcing (a fairly common treatment in America). Over a 1NT response, East might risk a takeout double with his support for both majors, and North will be able to compete to 3♣ over West's 2♥. West might reopen with 3♦ or 3♥, but I expect 3♣ to end the auction much more often.

Where South opens 1♣, West might try a 1♦ overcall, but most would wait for a better suit or a better hand to overcall vulnerable

with a bid that consumes no bidding space. Whether North lets South out in 3♣ with all those trumps, a side prime card, and a singleton is tough to predict, but some will get too high. Many Souths will be in range for a 1NT opening (11-14, 13-15, 14-16) and North will either sign off at 3♣ using his systemic method, use an invitational sequence, bid 3NT, or show short hearts and long clubs and the values for game. Some will open 1♥ or 1♠ and if North can't show his long clubs directly he might finish in 1NT or 2♠, though West might protect in both cases and give North the chance to get to clubs after all. 3♣ is cold, and the defense must cash its red winners accurately to prevent an important overtrick. If the defense leads hearts or diamonds against a notrump contract, declarer will be held to five or six tricks. E/W plus scores will be very good, but -100 will be fine too as most N/S pairs will be +110 or +130.

Say that East leads a spade against 3♣ and dummy wins to pass the ♣Q. West has something good in both red suits so even if his partnership uses a lot of suit preference (here in spades and clubs), West would really like to send a neutral message. When East wins the ♣K he can cash the ♥A, but will not know the complete heart position. What he'd like to do next is switch to the ♦K and get a count card from West, and on this layout he would know that a second diamond is cashing. Here there is no second heart trick and no third-round diamond ruff, but on another layout there might be a problem. This type of cash-out situation is difficult for everyone and well worth discussing.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Although N/S have a nine-card spade fit, they have two balanced hands, a plethora of soft values, and stoppers in all suits, so playing game in notrump rather than the major is far from outrageous. Here there are the same 10 tricks available in both strains with spades coming in comfortably, but the danger in playing in notrump is that a mis-guess by declarer on a low heart lead (where North declares) or a switch from East (after a club lead to the king where South declares) will lead to -100 in notrump while an eventual mis-guess will lead to only -50 in spades.

Will N/S reach 3NT, and if they do will they rest there? After a raise to 2♠ by North, South has a lot of junk, but it adds up to 16 points and the sixth spade improves the hand enough to merit serious consideration of a move towards game. If South does bid again, his most natural trial bid is 2NT. North, with a near-maximum in high cards, no ruffing value, a fast trick outside spades, a high trump, a couple of potentially valuable jacks and the ♣9 as a kicker, has an easy raise to 3NT. Despite some reservations about having the time needed to develop tricks with those slow honours, South should pass 3NT because there will often be too many fast losers playing in spades.

If West leads a heart, East will have to switch to clubs to hold 3NT to +430, and that will be too difficult for mere mortals, especially when the ♥J appears under the ace. If West leads a club and East plays the king, declarer should play the ♣6 to create the impression that West has led from a five-card suit. While a low heart switch is not out of the question, it would be a big play and a risky one at Matchpoints, for declarer might well play the king for +460. Furthermore, if East does not cash the ♥A, West might duck the second club to retain communications, and declarer will again have 11 tricks.

Against 4♠, West is likely to lead a heart, sparing declarer that guess, and East will have to switch to clubs to deny N/S +450.

On a deal where some N/S pairs will miss game, some will go minus, and many will take 11 tricks, it's difficult to estimate how +420 will score; +430 should be good, regardless.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

You might not think the West hand looks anything like a 3♣ opening bid because ... well, it doesn't. But this is 2010, and the world has been exposed to a lot more reporting of major bridge events than ever before: it's apparent that this sort of tactical opening bid in first or third position at favourable vulnerability is much more common than it once was, especially at Matchpoints, where frequency of success is much more important than the size of a swing. I'm not saying that many Wests will open 3♣, but that you shouldn't be shocked if someone chooses to do so against you. Here, a 3♣ opening might end the auction and West would finish -100 or so, which is not best for E/W on their cards (they might score 140 in spades, for example) but as N/S will often play the hand in hearts and take nine tricks for +140, a small minus might turn out well for E/W.

If West (the craven coward) passes, North will open 1♥, catching East with a good hand but no attractive initial action. Few will pass, however, the positive votes being divided among 2♦ 1♠, double, and 1NT. If West takes no part in the proceedings, as long as South does no more than invite game, North will not get his side too high, and unless East breaks diamonds, the defense will come to two spades, a club and a slow diamond trick.

However, where East's initial action was 1♠ or a takeout double, we might hear from West despite his dearth of high cards. Where East has overcalled in spades, South will often raise hearts via a cue bid of 2♠ and West might raise to 3♠ or even 4♠; where East has doubled 1♥

and South has redoubled (not everyone uses an artificial 2NT or a transfer to raise opener's suit), West might bid 2♣, 3♣, 1♠ or 2♠, with the spade bids having the potential to attract a raise. Where E/W reach 3♠, N/S are in a tough spot because they will go -100 or 200 if they bid on to 4♥, which they (correctly) do not expect to make, and are likely to go -140 or -530 if they defend 3♠. Their only chance for a good score is for West to be declarer at 3♠ doubled and for North to lead a low trump, which should defeat the contract. Frankly, Scarlett, I'd rather be E/W.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

Though the central question on this deal is "can N/S stay out of 4♠?" which they can't make, but for their opponents there is also an important issue: "can E/W cash their four top tricks against a spade contract?"

The bidding will usually start: 1♠-pass-2♠. Where West passes, North will try for game with 3♦, a conventional (or natural) 2NT, or a more imaginative 3♣; South, despite a minimum in high cards, might well accept a game try on the strength of his fourth trump, golden diamond holding (opposite a 3♦ try) and combining values in the black suits. However, West might not pass 2♠: some will try an unsound 3♣ for the lead, others will double, more with the hope of pushing N/S to 3♠ than to find four clubs or a five-card red suit. West's intervention might play a role in convincing N/S to stop at 3♠, but might instead convince North to bid game himself as the ♦K is likely to be on his right if South doesn't have it. Where West has doubled 2♠, East will bid

3♥ over 3♦, and that should influence South to bid 4♠ as he will consider a singleton heart likely for North.

A heart lead should simplify the defense against a spade contract, and after a club lead West should cash the ♥A after the second club winner; East, with nothing useful in trumps, should encourage hearts as vigorously as possible. Once in a while, after the lead of the ♣Q, West will err by playing a third club before cashing two hearts, allowing declarer to ruff high, draw trumps, and discard two hearts from dummy on diamonds for +170 or +620.

Where E/W compete to 3♥, N/S can do something good for themselves by doubling for a 200-point set, thus beating their theoretical par of +140, but they'd need to see their opponents cards to do that sensibly as there is no reason that two spades and three diamonds should be cashing on the auction (where West doubles 2♠).

Some South players will respond at the three-level with a Bergen-style four-trump raise, silencing West. Whether N/S can stay out of game will depend on North's judgment and whether South's response has left North room for a general game try.

My best guess is that +140 should be a good score for N/S despite some +170s and +620s as there will be plenty of -100s.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

With spades coming in for E/W, there are nine top tricks in 3NT. On the lie of the cards there are also 10 tricks available in spades, but the

play might be far more complex.

E/W don't really have the assets for game and we might not expect them to reach game very often, but in practice, if North passes over 1♠, East's technical action is to pass, but with an ace and a doubleton ten in partner's suit and a good dummy for hearts or clubs, I expect more Easts to bid than to pass. Over a 1NT response, West is a bit strong for 3♠ but not quite strong enough to drive to game, especially as his spades lack the internal solidity to insist on that suit as trumps and the alternative is to jump-shift in a three-card suit with only 17 HCP. Scientists might try a hopeful 2♦, intending to continue with 3♠, 3♥, or a slightly pushy 4♠ if East gives preference to 2♠; others might raise to 2NT, but there will be plenty of votes for 3♠, and some for game bids in spades or notrump.

North won't always pass over 1♠, of course, and many will double for takeout, eliciting a 2♦ reply from South. West will choose from among 2♠, 3♠ and double (intending 3♠ over 3♣) depending on partnership and personal style. One of the strong actions is likely to attract a raise to 4♠.

If North does not lead a trump, declarer can arrange a diamond ruff in dummy and pick up the trump queen for +170 or +620. On a trump lead declarer wins wherever South dictates, crosses to the ♣A if necessary, and leads a diamond to the nine and (say) king. North must continue trumps and if declarer leads a diamond to his jack, playing for honour-ten-others outside, he will take only nine tricks, not unreasonably (though with an honour-ten holding South might have played second-hand high on the first round). To achieve the maximum, declarer must lead a heart from dummy; if South follows low, so does declarer and North can exit as he pleases, but declarer will run trumps and North will have to keep parity with declarer's four red cards; West exits in hearts to collect the ace-jack of diamonds in the end. It's more interesting if South puts up the ♥K on the first round. Declarer must take the ace, else a diamond comes through,

and again, declarer runs trumps. Thanks to the blocked club position (switch the eight and nine and North could keep a low club in the end and discard a heart winner) North is helpless.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

This is a respectable 6♣ for E/W, but those who do not contract for slam will do best to stop in 3NT or 4NT, where there are 10 top tricks once clubs come in) for +430 rather than 5♣, which delivers only +420 for its 12-trick total. That's all very nice, but first E/W must get to some game with their combined 23 HCP before contemplating slam.

After East opens 1♥ in fourth position, South might risk 1♠ though it's fraught with danger at this vulnerability. West, after passing initially, should be willing to bid 2♣, but many will prefer a negative double. After North raises to 2♠, East will love his hand opposite a long club suit, but will have no attractive action where West has doubled 1♠. Over a 2♣ bid East can place West with at least six clubs if his opponents can be counted on for eight spades, as West will have no more than one spade and two hearts (else he could not afford a non-forcing bid as a passed hand without running the risk of missing a heart contract) and with five-five in the minors he would have doubled. In fact, East knows West will have some diamonds to ruff in dummy, and should be willing to commit to at least 5♣. A 3♠ cue bid might induce West to cooperate with 4♦, and East could take a shot at slam in that scenario. Could E/W reach 3NT after the opponents intervene? Not very likely, as East would have to bid 2NT over

North's 2♠, or 3NT after first cue-bidding 2♣ and hearing a 3♣ or 3♦ rebid by West.

South might not overcall, however, and Wests using a version of Drury won't have a 2♣ response available; others, who deem the hand inappropriate for a passed-hand two-over-one, will also respond 1NT, non-forcing or semi-forcing. Standard bidders will have an awkward rebid, but might choose the "three-plus-cards 2♣" that would be the norm for the semi-forcing 1NT group. That would light a fire under West, who will choose from among 3♣, 4♣, a 3♠ splinter, an artificial "strong-club-raise" 2♠, and an atypical fit-showing 3♦. Where East can pattern out with 3♠ and chooses to do so, West's diamond holding will lose some of its lustre, and any slam-drive decision will usually have to come from East.

East players who start with a Flannery 2♦ might finish in 2♥ when West offers cheap preference, adding E/W +140 to the realistic variations on this difficult deal for E/W. As there will be very few pairs in 6♣ or 3NT, I believe +420 in 5♣ will produce a good score. Give yourselves a mutual pat on the back if you and your partner found your way to 6♣ and made it.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Flannery aficionados will have another opportunity to use their not-so-secret weapon, and that would not inspire a rosy glow in East, who has an awkward responding hand as a natural 2NT is not available; 2♠ would be the popular choice and West will have to pass. Though E/W will miss a so-so 25-point game, spades will prove a congenial strain; on three

rounds of trumps, for example, declarer can come to 10 tricks by winning the third trump in hand and starting clubs, South covering an honour, and declarer leading to the nine next to establish the suit with a ruff; declarer cashes the \diamond K before crossing to the \heartsuit K or leaves it in dummy, depending on which red suit South keeps. In the endgame, the defense can't prevent declarer from scoring all his red winners for +170. There are many variations possible in the play of a spade contract, but most will lead to 10 tricks. Unless a significant number of E/W pairs bid and make 3NT or an obscure 5 \clubsuit , those 170s will turn out to be good scores, and +140 might be respectable if the notrumpers finish with eight tricks and the club crew with only 10.

E/W using five-card major systems might reach 3NT via: 1 \heartsuit -1NT; 2 \clubsuit -2 \spadesuit^* ; 3 \spadesuit -3NT/ where 2 \spadesuit is a strong raise to 3 \clubsuit and 3 \spadesuit shows extra values with diamond shortage. Or West might jump to 3NT (a mildly aggressive move with the \diamond K a questionable value) over 2 \spadesuit ; or West might try 2NT over 2 \spadesuit , which East might then raise to 3NT. Alternatively, East might settle for a raise to 3 \clubsuit , which West would pass. Or West might pass a standard 1NT response. Or East might have a natural 2 \clubsuit response available and consider his hand suitable: if West raises to 3 \clubsuit , it might continue 3 \diamond -3NT. Or East might have a natural 2NT response available, reaching 3NT.

On a normal low-diamond lead from South, declarer will need to play South for the singleton king of clubs to come to nine tricks, but it much less obscure to cross to the \heartsuit K to lead a club honour and play South for the doubleton king without the ten. After that, his maximum will be eight tricks even if he takes the right view in clubs by leading the seven from dummy – North covers and he can't back to dummy to take the final club finesse he needs to run the suit. The play in clubs is quite uncomfortable and though declarer can succeed by leading a club honour first he will have to take the deep trump finesse on the way back to come to 11 tricks, and even then the play is complex and could boil down to a trump coup in certain variations.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

The normal contract is 3NT for N/S, usually with South the declarer after showing a balanced hand in the appropriate range. If West leads his best suit, declarer will have no trouble negotiating four club tricks to go with two spades, two hearts, and three diamonds for +460 and an excellent result.

Though declarer can negotiate the same four club tricks on his own after the more daunting lead of a spade, he would need to lead the \clubsuit Q from hand to start the suit and later pass the seven when it mattered. Though that line gains not only on the actual layout but also when East has singleton eight or jack and doubleton jack-nine or jack-eight (vs starting with a low club to the ten), it is not the intuitive play and many more declarers will either lead low to the ace (to simplify the play when East started with king-low or jack-low or singleton king) or low to the ten to pick up king-jack-low, king-low or jack-low without a further guess), or cross to the \heartsuit K to lead low towards the queen, reserving his options for the second round of the suit. Though this last variation retains chances to pass the \clubsuit 7 later, it's more likely that if declarer starts this way he will lead low to the ten on the next round and so hold himself to nine winners with the diamond finesse producing three tricks (it would be a serious error for East to discard a diamond or cover the ten if he keeps all his diamonds). If declarer starts clubs by leading

low to the ten, he can come to 10 tricks by cashing the ♣A (or not) and clearing diamonds, but if he carelessly leads a low club from dummy after the ten holds, West can win and drive out declarer's last spade guard while the defense stops both minors, and the result will be just nine tricks,

So, will West more often lead a spade or a club? Where North uses Stayman, West might be more inclined to avoid a marginal major-suit lead for fear that he'll hit dummy's length, but there isn't much to support this reservation, especially where 3♣ was Puppet Stayman and dummy might have only one or two three-card majors. Where North simply raises 2NT to 3NT, West will tend to lead a major rather than a minor; whether or not there is a solid basis for this line of reasoning.

Another way to look at this issue is that West needs less from partner in clubs to develop fast tricks, which might be critical at Matchpoints. Furthermore, if the club lead catches dummy with the queen, declarer might have had two club tricks regardless and there might still be time to develop two winners in the suit. I'm not trying to sell you the club lead, but whichever suit you choose you will want to reach an informed opinion about why you make that choice. I suspect that there will be more +430s than +400s and +460s, but any ratio of those results is perhaps just as likely.

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

If N/S are left alone this will be another of those choice-of-games (here 3NT vs 4♠) deals. Though it might not be readily apparent, with

best play and defense the winning contract for N/S is 4♠, which offers 10 tricks vs only nine in notrump.

But East might start with a "modern" 3♦ or a light weak 2♦. In both cases, South would overcall in notrump or perhaps double for takeout. A 3NT overcall of 3♦ would end the auction and a takeout double of either opening will lead to 4♠, but after 2♦-2NT, North will offer a choice of games and South might vote for 3NT.

If East passes and South starts with INT, West will generally take some action, especially when he can pinpoint his suits but also when he can show one if them with a non-specific second suit. N/S might try for a four-trick set and a top by doubling E/W in 2♥ if they find their best fit, but even best defense (three trumps, two spades, ♦K, diamond) won't get the job done: declarer discards a club on the second diamond and North must finally break clubs; his ten is ducked to the queen, but declarer exits with his last low club and the defense must give him a second club finesse or surrender to a dummy replete with winners. Down 500 is the best the defense can do, but accepting a penalty will be good strategy if a plurality of the N/S pairs go down in 4♠ (3NT has nine tricks on a heart lead by conceding a spade, 10 if West leads clubs).

Say that North declares 4♠ on a club lead (which makes it as tough as it gets): declarer ducks to the jack and West switches (say) to a diamond; declarer wins the ace, plays ace-king of trumps and the high hearts, throwing a club, then ducks a club to West, who must either establish dummy's ♣K for a diamond discard or play a heart, allowing declarer to ruff in dummy and discard a diamond from hand. With adjustments for the opening lead and timing, South can make 4♠ the same way when he declares from his side. Where East has shown long diamonds this line becomes much more realistic, but anyone who makes 4♠ will have to play well to earn his +620.

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

The normal contract for E/W is 4♠, which will generally produce 10 tricks, 11 if declarer divines the heart position or the defense breaks the suit.

Unless North opens cavalierly in third seat (1♣, 1♥, or 3♣), trading on the vulnerability, East will open a strong notrump, 1♦, or a strong club and the five-three spade fit will come to light early or after East describes a balanced hand of appropriate strength. We can't predict accurately whether East or West will declare 4♠ more often across the field, but there is some chance that either North or South will lead a heart rather than a club or diamond.

Where West declares, the singleton diamond will be a popular opening-lead choice, and it won't hurt declarer to finesse on this layout as North's ruff will come with what proves to be a natural trump trick (assuming South covers the ♠Q or ♠J on the first round of trumps). Once declarer discovers that North has three spades and one diamond and remembers that neither opponent pre-empted or overcalled in clubs, he might place North with 3=4=1=5 shape, which makes him a favourite to hold any specific heart; here, if declarer backs his judgment and plays ♥A, ♥J, he will bring in the suit without loss for a delightful +650.

E/W can make 5♦ without the heart guess, but I can't construct a logical auction that leads them there, or to 4♥, which would require that fancy play in hearts.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

E/W can take 12 tricks in spades thanks to the fortunate spade position and with an inspired view in clubs, but no one will reach slam while only a handful will miss game. This is not the most exciting deal of the session.

North will overcall West's 1♣ with 1♦, and over East's 1♠, South might risk a pre-emptive raise to 3♦, though many will prefer a gentle 2♦ or a gentler pass. West has a sound raise to 2♠, but most will risk 3♠ over 3♦ if put to the test. If West passes over 3♦, he will jump to 4♠ after East reopens with a competitive double. N/S just don't have the horses to contemplate a vulnerable sacrifice, and it's tough to imagine more than a few heroic types offering their opponents 800 and a top. E/W would not take the push to 5♠ this time, though East might give it some thought where West has raised to 3♠ and is marked with no more than one diamond.

Assuming that South does not lead a club or that North does not switch to hearts at trick two after winning the ♦A, declarer's best chance for a second overtrick in 4♠ is the club finesse, which is superior to trying to ruff out the queen tripleton: bad luck this time, I'm afraid. Actually, declarer would like to try for queen-jack doubleton in hearts before falling back on the club finesse, but really can't afford a second high heart if an honour drops under the king (from a sly North) without risking the eleventh trick he has in the bank. But I fear I'm off on a tangent at the end of a long day. Please forgive me.

We hope you've enjoyed the session and look forward to seeing you again next June.



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

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

R e s i d e n c e :

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.

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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