



# Commentary for the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs 2025, and for your continued support for the Association.

The funds that you contribute via these Simultaneous Pairs will help the Association in its ongoing development work – training new teachers and new TDs, promoting the game and trying to attract new members, developing junior bridge, and so on. Many of our input costs, like costs generally these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this event, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the CBAI, is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the chance to test yourself against your fellow players across Ireland (and for those still playing online, maybe overseas as well). As always, the hands (which are randomly generated by computer with no manual intervention whatsoever) provided plenty of difficult decisions. Many thanks to our expert commentators Fearghal O'Boyle (Monday), Paul Delaney (Tuesday), Thomas MacCormac (Wednesday), Brian Senior (Thursday), and Enda Glynn (Friday) for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. For Wednesday's game, Thomas has done his commentary in a series of videos rather than as a written text, which is a new innovation begun in the IBU Simultaneous Pairs in November; we hope you'll like it, and would welcome your feedback.

Don't forget to check your standing in the national results at [www.ecatsbridge.com/sims](http://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims). You'll find the daily commentaries there too.

**Catherine Byrne**

**President, Contract Bridge Association of Ireland**

Board 1	♠	A852	Dealer N
	♥	AJ6	Vul: None
	♦	J96	
	♣	AQ4	
♠		1073	♠
♥		532	♥
♦		7532	♥
♣		K105	♥
	♠	KJ964	♦
	♥	K9	♦
	♦	KQ4	♦
	♣	763	♣
			♣
			♣
			♣

If North opens a strong NT, South will transfer to spades. Some may be tempted by their four-card support to break the transfer and jump to 3♠, but I don't think a 4-3-3-3 hand with a couple of jacks justifies a transfer break. South will jump to 3NT over the simple completion to 2♠, and now North elects to play the spade game.

If North opens 1♠, South may respond 2NT, constructive game raise, and North bid 3NT, 15+ balanced. South will bid 4♠ over that to

show a minimum game raise, and that will be that.

Say that East leads a club, North winning and drawing trumps. He should play king of hearts then low to the jack as when the queen is onside he gets a discard for the third club so 12 tricks in all. In practice, the heart finesse loses, but the club loser still goes away on the ♥A, but this time for 11 tricks.

The lucky declarers will be those who receive a heart lead round to their ace-jack. That will provide the twelfth trick as declarer can draw trumps then take the club finesse and a club discard on the third heart.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	4	2	5	5
S	3	4	2	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-
	=====				

Board 2      ♠ A653      Dealer E  
                  ♥ J1074      Vul: N-S  
                  ♦ 10873  
                  ♣ 10

♠ K10      ♠ QJ  
 ♥ Q962    ♥ 5  
 ♦ K62      ♦ QJ5  
 ♣ 7642     ♣ AKJ9853

♠ 98742  
 ♥ AK83  
 ♦ A94  
 ♣ Q

Board 3      ♠ 653      Dealer S  
                  ♥              Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ 96532  
                  ♣ J7432

♠ A102      ♠ J87  
 ♥ KQ10432   ♥ J965  
 ♦ Q8          ♦ J74  
 ♣ A5          ♣ K109

♠ KQ94  
 ♥ A87  
 ♦ AK10  
 ♣ Q86

East opens 1♣ and it would be taking a good idea too far for South to overcall in that five-card suit rather than double. West will probably bid 1♥ and now North has just enough to bid 1♠ freely. East should rebid clubs, South support spades, and West compete to 3♣.

Will anyone find another bid over that? I think that even though he is vulnerable and has a minimum take-out double, South should appreciate the benefit of having the ninth trump and so compete to 3♠.

Though there appear to be five losers, 3♠ can always be made if declarer reads the hand correctly, an endplay against whoever wins the third diamond meaning that there is no heart loser – declarer will have to cash one top heart before conceding the third diamond, and now if it is East who wins he trick he will be obliged to give a ruff and discard, the thirteenth diamond taking care of the other heart loser. If West wins the diamond he has a choice between giving a ruff and discard or leading away from the ♥Q.

To score well, E/W will need to take the push to the cold 4♣. It will surely have to be East who finds the 4♣ bid, and some will be discouraged by their soft spade holding, which may make it seem that there will be two spade losers in a club contract.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	2	3	-
S	-	1	2	3	-
E	4	-	-	-	2
W	4	-	-	-	2

=====

Acol players will open the South hand with 1♠ and West will overcall 2♥. After a pass from North, how many Easts are going to raise to 3♥? After all, they have four-card heart support and will be expecting a reopening double on their left if they pass, so why not try to shut South out with a raise to 3♥?

There is nothing wrong with that logic, but the 3-4-3-3 shape, loose jacks, and vulnerability, all suggest caution.

If East does raise to 3♥, that will indeed silence South, but there is a danger that West will go on to 4♥ – he does hold a sixth heart and 15 HCP – and that is doomed to failure. Of course, an inspired West might try 3NT to offer partner a choice of games. With his actual hand East should certainly pass that and E/W will be delighted to find that it provides an easy nine tricks and a lot of matchpoints.

If East does not raise to 3♥, E/W are likely to stop in partscore.

If South opens 1♣, West overcalls 1♥ and, at favourable vulnerability, North should be happy to raise pre-emptively to 3♣ – assuming that the 1♣ opening promised at least three clubs. That should shut East out for now, but West will double for take-out and East convert to 3♥, over which West has no reason to bid on.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	3	-	-	-
S	2	3	-	1	-
E	-	-	3	-	2
W	-	-	3	-	3

=====

Board 4	♠ 10	Dealer W
	♥ K6	Vul: Both
	♦ Q97542	
	♣ Q643	
♠ Q964		♠ AKJ7
♥ AJ543		♥ 872
♦ K3		♦ A106
♣ 107		♣ A95
	♠ 8532	
	♥ Q109	
	♦ J8	
	♣ KJ82	

There will often be two passes to East, who opens a strong NT. West will use Stayman, perhaps intending to rebid 3♠, Smolen, over a 2♦ response. However, when East responds 2♠, West can raise directly to game.

South will often lead a trump as nothing else is particularly attractive. Declarer should play on hearts immediately and should have 10 easy tricks, losing two hearts and a club.

If East opens 1♠, West may raise to game rather than leave the decision to partner by making only an invitational raise.

A 1♣ opening from East sees West respond 1♥ and East rebid 1NT – I'm not a fan of rebidding 1♠, as I strongly believe in bidding balanced hands as though they are just that, while to bid two suits shows an unbalanced hand. It doesn't matter, as West will use Checkback and find the four-four spade fit.

A lot of people will be put off opening a weak 2♦ on the North cards due to the weakness of the main suit when vulnerable. However, six-four in the minors, hence not much defence against the majors, suggests that this may not be a bad time to open. However, it should not matter. East will overcall 2NT and West look for a major-suit fit then bid game on finding one. Again, Sayman followed, when necessary, by Smolen, is the most efficient way to achieve this.

Makeable Contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	-	-	4	4	2
W	-	-	4	4	2

=====

Board 5	♠ Q42	Dealer N
	♥ A3	Vul: N-S
	♦ J104	
	♣ KJ942	
♠ K75		♠ A103
♥ KQ765		♥ 82
♦ Q53		♦ A92
♣ 85		♣ AQ1076
	♠ J986	
	♥ J1094	
	♦ K876	
	♣ 3	

It is possible to bid and make 3NT on the E/W cards, though nine tricks are a long way from being assured. The likelihood is that, even if North opens 1♣, most Souths will lead the jack of hearts, after which declarer can establish three heart winners. With the missing minor-suit honours kindly placed for declarer, the defence is powerless.

Getting to 3NT requires someone to upgrade their hand, probably East, who has a promising club suit and two outside aces. It would be perfectly reasonable for East to treat the hand as being worth 15 HCP and bid accordingly.

While +400 should be a decent result for E/W, it will not be the best result achieved. That will occur when North opens a weak NT and East scrapes up a double. There is nowhere to go that doesn't cost at least -500.

If North opens 1♣, many Easts will make their well-placed club suit justify the upgrade and overcall 1NT. West then has an easy transfer followed by jump to 3NT – just as he does when East opens a strong NT. Actually, I'm betting a lot of Easts will open a weak NT, and a lot of Easts will open a strong NT – it's just one of those hands.

Makeable Contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	1	3	2	3
W	3	1	3	1	3

=====

Board 6      ♠ 9632      Dealer E  
                  ♥ AJ6      Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ 87  
                  ♣ KJ94

♠ J54      ♠ AQ107  
 ♥ K109      ♥ Q43  
 ♦ Q109632      ♦ A5  
 ♣ 8      ♣ AQ53

♠ K8  
 ♥ 8752  
 ♦ KJ4  
 ♣ 10762

E/W may have a classic Acol auction. East opens 1♠ and West raises to 2♠ with only three trumps because of the ruffing value. East rebids 2NT, 17-19 balanced, and West takes it out into 3♦, which shows exactly what he has got – six diamonds, only three spades, and a hand that is happy to stop short of game. East might go on to 3NT with a diamond holding that suggests it may be possible to run the suit, but not with ace-doubleton. East passes and makes 10 easy tricks for +130.

Those playing strong NT and five-card majors will have to open 1♣ then decide on a rebid over the 1♦ response. I can live with 1♠ as the hand does contain genuine clubs, but I still like the jump to 2NT which describes a balanced 18-19. Responder should have bid 1♠ with four the first time if not worth a second bid, so nothing will be missed. Is a 3♦ rebid over 2NT forcing for your partnership or a suggestion to play there? Many years ago it would have been to play, but nowadays more people seem to play it as forcing, which may lead to 3NT.

A club lead against 3NT is best for the defence but many will pick a heart, and now the defence is powerless if declarer gets the play right. If the heart goes to the nine, jack and queen, declarer will have a heart entry to dummy after establishing the diamonds, and should make his game. North needs to duck at trick one to prevent this happening, but now declarer still plays on diamonds and can lead towards the jack of spades to get to dummy to cash the diamonds. With the ♥9 already in the bag for his ninth trick, he cannot be stopped.

It will be interesting to see how well the safe +130 will score if much of the field is in 3NT.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	4	1	4	2
W	1	4	2	3	2

=====

Board 7      ♠ 532      Dealer S  
                  ♥ KQ73      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ A843  
                  ♣ J8

♠ AJ4      ♠ 986  
 ♥ 84      ♥ A109652  
 ♦ QJ1072      ♦ K95  
 ♣ A104      ♣ 3

♠ KQ107  
 ♥ J  
 ♦ 6  
 ♣ KQ97652

Only 11 HCP including a stiff jack, but the South hand is well worth an opening bid and while the occasional person will fancy an off-centre pre-empt, 4/5♣, 1♣ is the normal choice with a chunky four-card major on the side.

West will overcall 1♦, North bid 1♥, and East compete with 2♦. That leaves South with an awkward choice. He would like to bid with his shapely hand but if he bids either 2♠ or 3♣ how will partner ever play him for so little high-card strength?

If the hand belongs to N/S, North will bid again over 2♦, and best is for South to pass and see what happens. If instead he bids freely, North is likely to commit to game. South might not leave 3NT in, but there are no plus scores available beyond that level. If, however, South passes over 2♦, North can double for take-out and pass South's 3♣ response. And if E/W compete to 3♦ over that South can compete with 3♠, having already limited his hand by passing over 2♦. Yes, 4♣ should go down, but 3♦ is making so 4♣-1 is the best N/S can do, unless someone finds a risky double.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	-	-	1	-
S	3	-	-	1	-
E	-	3	3	-	1
W	-	3	3	-	1

=====

Board 8

♠ Q9	Dealer W
♥ AK105	Vul: None
♦ 10876	
♣ A52	
♠ A107652	♠ J84
♥ 83	♥ J972
♦ Q	♦ 95432
♣ QJ63	♣ 10
♠ K3	
♥ Q64	
♦ AKJ	
♣ K9874	

West opens a weak two and North has a borderline decision whether to double or to pass. While the hand is worth a double of 1♠, I think it is just short of having the strength to double 2♠, forcing partner to respond at the three level. North's spade holding is a poor one, the queen often being of little value.

Say that North does pass over 2♠, if East also passes South will overcall 2NT and North raise to game, probably via Stayman. A spade lead should hold declarer to 10 tricks.

If North doubles 2♠, South will be tempted to go past game to invite a NT slam. If he does so, North will show no interest and they should stop in 4NT – still a secure spot.

There is one more possibility, namely that East raises the weak two bid to the three level to make life more difficult for South. It will be a brave South who will overcall 3NT looking at a tenuous spade holding and no obvious source of quick tricks. If he instead doubles, North will respond 4♥ and, while that contract should be made, there are only 10 tricks so anyone who plays the heart game will lose out to all those in 3NT. It may seem scary to bid 3♠ with the East hand – just two jacks – but it will be very hard for E/W to take a penalty, and even if they do it is only -300. Meanwhile, on a different deal N/S could even

have a slam on and find it much easier to reach if given more bidding room.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	4	4	-	4
S	5	4	4	-	4
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

=====

Board 9

♠ J5	Dealer N
♥ 765	Vul: E-W
♦ K85	
♣ 108653	
♠ Q94	♠ A863
♥ 104	♥ AQJ32
♦ A64	♦ QJ7
♣ AQ974	♣ 2
♠ K1072	
♥ K98	
♦ 10932	
♣ KJ	

East opens 1♥ and West will respond 2♣. When East rebids 2♥, not being strong enough to reverse into spades, West should bid 2NT, whether or not the 2♣ response set up a game-force.

I would be quite comfortable if playing Acol to bid a merely invitational 2NT with the West cards – there is no premium on getting to thin games at matchpoints – but East will go on to game anyway with his sound 14 HCP hand. If playing two-over-one game-forcing, I would respond 2♣, even though I would only follow the afore-mentioned invitational sequence if I had that option, because the West hand is close enough to a game-force that I would not like to respond 1NT and see that get passed out.

A diamond lead would hold 3NT to nine tricks if played by East, but the contract will normally be played by West, and now an overtrick is possible, just losing to three kings.

Those who play in 4♥ will be pleased to have it played the natural way up, by East, as just the same three kings should be lost. Were the heart game to be played, rather oddly, by West, a spade lead would set up a subsequent ruff

and the contract would be defeated.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	3	4	3	3
W	2	3	3	3	4

Board 10      Dealer E  
Vul: Both

♠ Q2	♠ 3
♥ QJ7	♥ AK92
♦ KQ9732	♦ 106
♣ K7	♣ AQ8642

  

♠ AJ654	♠ K10987
♥ 53	♥ 10864
♦ AJ84	♦ 5
♣ 109	♣ J53

When East opens 1♣, South is too weak to overcall, and will no doubt be pleased that this is the case when West responds 1♠. North will presumably overcall 2♦ and East introduce his hearts. Note that this is not a reverse, though it does show a hand a bit better than a minimum opening – it is only forcing as far as 3♣. West has extra values over and above what was required for his initial response, so can afford to try a natural and invitational 2NT rather than merely give club preference.

It isn't clear what East should do over 2NT. Three Clubs would show the sixth club but would not be forcing – fair enough, East has already shown a sound opening so doesn't really have anything to spare, but does East want to play in a minor at matchpoints or would he prefer to say in NT, perhaps a less secure contract but potentially higher scoring?

The optimists will raise to 3NT, the pessimists go back to 3♣, and the group who pass out 2NT will consider themselves to have taken the middle of the road action.

Double dummy, nine tricks is the limit in NT, but after a diamond lead a tenth trick will be very likely. Meanwhile, 10 tricks are available in a club contract. The big winners are therefore

those pairs who bid to the NT game, and the big losers those who play a club partscore.

Perhaps the simplest way to reach 3NT is for West to stretch a little and bid it over 2♥.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	2	2	2	3
W	4	3	3	2	3

Board 11      Dealer S  
Vul: None

♠ Q107	♠ 52
♥ 86	♥ AQJ107
♦ AJ63	♦ Q754
♣ AJ94	♣ 107

  

♠ J84	♠ AK963
♥ K5432	♥ 9
♦ 98	♦ K102
♣ KQ6	♣ 8532

Say that North opens 1♣; East overcalls 1♥ and South bids 1♠. West may jump all the way to 4♥ with his five-card support and, after two passes, South can double to show extra values. Will North convert to 4♠, assuming that 1♠ showed five, as is a popular style, or will he think that, holding a weak NT and facing a passed partner, it will be easier to go plus on defence?

If North opens a weak NT East should overcall 2♥ and now South is worth an invitational bid in spades. As a passed hand, he could probably just jump to 3♠, but the other alternative is to use Lebensohl, bidding 2NT then planning to follow through with 3♠, which shows invitational values with a five-card or longer suit. If South follows the Lebensohl route, his plan will have to change if West jumps to 4♥. Probably South will bite the bullet and bid 4♠, hoping that, even if this fails, it will be cheaper than leaving 4♥ to make.

Four Hearts will, of course, lose five top tricks, and it should be easy to cash them. However, what about 4♠?

If declarer gets both minors right he can make no fewer than 11 tricks in a spade contract; get both wrong and he could be held to nine.

It's normal to get the clubs wrong, leading low to the nine on the first round, so creating two club losers. However, if West errs by splitting his honours on the first round of the suit, declarer will more often than not hold his losers to one.

As for the diamonds, if declarer pays clubs before diamonds he will see that East has only four black cards, so should be at least as long in diamonds as is West. The odds are therefore to play East for the missing queen, quite apart from the fact that West might have opened the bidding had he held 11 HCP.

So, normal play usually gets 10 tricks, but 11 if West gets the defence wrong.

#### Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	3	-	5	2
S	5	3	-	5	2
E	-	-	2	-	-
W	-	-	2	-	-

Board 12	♠	QJ95	Dealer W
	♥	A543	Vul: N-S
	♦	QJ9	
	♣	A10	
♠	K64		♠ A87
♥	92		♥ J8
♦	K1053		♦ A82
♣	Q654		♣ KJ932
	♠	1032	
	♥	KQ1076	
	♦	764	
	♣	87	

If North opens a weak NT South will transfer to hearts then pass the completion. If North opens 1♣ or 1♦, East doesn't have a great hand for an overcall – essentially a weak NT. No doubt some will bid 2♣ over a 1♦ opening, but a 1♣ opening should silence the East hand.

N/S should make eight tricks in their heart contract – the defence has plenty of time to set up and cash its club trick. Meanwhile, E/W

are down one if they compete to 3♣. It is essential that they do so, as leaving N/S to chalk up an easy +110 should score poorly for E/W. Minus 50 in 3♣ will be a big improvement, but better still will be +100 on defence to 3♥, and N/S will often take the push to 3♥ – North if South has transferred, South because of his fifth trump if North has made a four-card raise.

There is also the possibility that North will break the transfer and go to 3♥ voluntarily, thereby going minus – not a good time for a transfer break.

#### Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	2	2	-
S	-	-	2	2	-
E	2	2	-	-	1
W	2	2	-	-	1

Board 13	♠	Q643	Dealer N
	♥	872	Vul: Both
	♦	Q93	
	♣	Q93	
♠	82		♠ A107
♥	AQ95		♥ 1043
♦	8652		♦ AKJ107
♣	765		♣ K8
	♠	KJ95	
	♥	KJ6	
	♦	4	
	♣	AJ1042	

If East opens a strong NT, South may have no way to show his hand-type – the most popular defence these days caters to five-four with a five-card major but not with only four cards in the major. Defences in the Asptro family can show spades and another suit, which may see North declare 2♠, while there is also the Raptor-style double, showing a four-card major and longer minor, but both of these are minority preferences currently.

Two Spades can be beaten but I fancy it to make quite often.

If East opens 1♦, South has an easy double, West bids 1♥ and North 1♠. The free bid here suggests about 5-8 points, not enough for a



jump to 2♠. East will rebid INT and South compete to 2♠. As already suggested, that will sometimes make and sometimes be down one. Better for E/W is to compete the partscore, as they can make no fewer than 11 tricks in a diamond contract by way of a trump finesse and the double finesse in hearts, and can also make, though surely never bid, 4♥.

Should West compete to 3♦ over 2♠? Probably yes, as long as the 1♦ opening promised a genuine diamond suit. Of course, West would not have the problem had he simply raised to 2♦ instead of bidding the hearts. Having given partner the news about the diamond support and limited strength, West could then leave any further move to East and, on the actual hand, East would surely compete to 3♦.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-		-
S	-	-	-		-
E	-	5	4	-	4
W	-	4	4	-	2

=====

Board 14

♠ KQ743	Dealer E
♥ Q75	Vul: None
♦ Q10	
♣ 652	

  

♠ J102	♠ A86
♥ A6432	♥ KJ108
♦ J4	♦ 965
♣ A87	♣ Q43

  

♠ 95
♥ 9
♦ AK8732
♣ KJ109

If South opens 1♦, West will usually overcall 1♥ and North bid 1♠. East will do what his system tells him to do to show a constructive heart raise, and that may be sufficient to silence South, E/W alighting in 3♥, which should be defeated after the defence starts with three rounds of diamonds.

However, down one, or even down two, need not be so bad for E/W as N/S as making 4♦, and a fair number of Souths will have rebid the diamonds at their second turn. If South shows

six diamonds, North may compete to 4♦ over 3♥ with his strong doubleton support.

Any plus score should be good for E/W, but the size of a plus score will matter to N/S.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	4	-		-
S	2	4	-		-
E	-	-	2	-	-
W	-	-	2	-	-

=====

Board 15

♠ QJ96	Dealer S
♥ 872	Vul: N-S
♦ A82	
♣ K64	

  

♠ A8743	♠ 105
♥ A9	♥ KQ10543
♦ QJ1075	♦ K4
♣ 7	♣ 1095

  

♠ K2
♥ J6
♦ 963
♣ AQJ832

Most Souths will open 1♣ and West, unless his methods include a way to show a spade/diamond two-suiter, will overcall 1♠. One No-Trump from North, 2♥ from East, and perhaps 3♣ from South, despite the minimum point count.

If South does not compete to 3♣, East's 2♥ may buy the contract. If South does compete, many Wests will bid 3♦ and East will have to decide where to play out of the three suits bid by his side. But perhaps better is for West to double 3♣ for take-out? This loses the fifth diamond, but keeps hearts in the picture, which West should want to do facing a free 2♥ bid.

On this occasion, it is important that E/W settle for the heart fit, as either 3♦ or 3♠ should be down a trick, while 3♥ cannot be beaten, though a spade lead puts some pressure on declarer. As he can always be prevented from ruffing two clubs in the dummy, it is important that declarer play on diamonds as soon as he gains the lead.



Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	-	-	-
S	2	-	-	-	-
E	-	2	3	2	-
W	-	2	3	2	-

=====

Board 16	♠	KQ5	Dealer W
	♥	KJ8	Vul: E-W
	♦	6	
	♣	A109863	
♠	J864	♠	A1073
♥	A5	♥	7432
♦	1075432	♦	AKJ8
♣	J	♣	Q
	♠	92	
	♥	Q1096	
	♦	Q9	
	♣	K7542	

The string of partscore deals continues.

After a pass from West, North will open 1♣ and East has a classic example of a double. South is likely to bid 1♥ and West 2♦ – this is a better prepared bid than 1♠ as it shows the longer suit and West can bid spades later unless the bidding gets very active, after which partner can pick the better trump suit.

Most Norths are likely to rebid 2♣ if that is an option, but if West bids 2♦ then North will have to settle for showing their heart support, and East will compete to 3♦. That may end it at some tables, but if N/S may go on to 4♣, and 4♣ is an easy make for N/S. Will someone go on to 4♦ for E/W? They need to do, because that contract too is cold unless declarer finds a way to lose two spade tricks. The difference between +130 and -130 should be huge.

We can see that E/W can make +140 in spades, which of course beats all the 130s, but in a four-four fit it will be harder for E/W to compete as far as they need to do and they may defend 4♣ too often, thereby scoring poorly.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	4	-	2	-	-
S	4	-	2	-	-
E	-	4	-	3	1
W	-	4	-	3	1

=====

Board 17	♠	Q9	Dealer N
	♥	1087632	Vul: None
	♦	AKJ	
	♣	76	
♠	A64	♠	K852
♥	QJ4	♥	A5
♦	653	♦	4
♣	AJ54	♣	Q109832
	♠	J1073	
	♥	K9	
	♦	Q109872	
	♣	K	

This is a very messy hand. North appears to have an example of that rare hand that is suitable neither for a 1♥ nor a 2♥ opening. Some will choose one of those bids but many will pass.

Knowing his side is outgunned, South might open with a diamond pre-empt – the side four-card major is a plus rather than a minus for such an action when our prime concern is to make life tough for the opposition, who probably own the deal.

Three Diamonds probably silences everyone, while 2♦ gets a raise from North. Unless West has made a pretty dubious take-out double of 2♦, that should be that.

It turns out that 3♦ is making for N/S – for a handy result – while 4♣ is making for E/W – also for a handy result.

The oddity, which is sort of irrelevant as this will never actually be the contract, is that East (holding only two trumps, and with only six held by the partnership) is the only player who can make 1♥. A diamond ruff can only be prevented at the cost of South's trump trick, and if you run through the play you will see that there are seven tricks – declarer's second club trick can again only be prevented at the price of South's trump trick.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	3	-	-	-
S	-	3	-	-	-
E	4	-	1	2	1
W	4	-	-	2	1

=====

Board 18      ♠ 8543      Dealer E  
 ♥ Vul: N-S  
 ♦ KJ109  
 ♣ AK854

♠ 762	♠ KQJ109
♥ QJ10943	♥ A75
♦ 4	♦ AQ5
♣ Q62	♣ 107

♠ A  
 ♥ K862  
 ♦ 87632  
 ♣ J93

If East opens 1♠, West will normally raise to 2♠ even if playing four-card majors. That catches North with the wrong shortage for a take-out double, yet his spade length tells him that partner must have support for at least one of the minors. With double all too likely to collect a heart response, North may opt for a 3♣ overcall.

West will surely compete, possibly with 3♠, possibly with a mildly optimistic 3♦ as a game try, and possibly with a double to suggest a strong balanced hand in context of the 1♠ opening. That last will no doubt get 3♥ from West, to show long hearts and only three spades.

Three Hearts will suit East just fine but, for all of East's 16 HCP and chunky spades, and West's long hearts, if the defence get it right the contract can be defeated. Indeed, a heart contract can be held to seven tricks, though that requires that North lead a spade and give his partner three ruffs, which is not all that likely. Some will even make 3♥ after a top club lead.

Spade contracts are also in jeopardy if the defence can take heart ruffs. One again seven tricks are the limit at double dummy though, once again, most will make more.

The deal actually belongs to N/S, who can

make 10 tricks in a diamond contract, if they can get to one, or nine in clubs.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	4	-	-	1
S	3	4	-	-	-
E	-	-	1	1	-
W	-	-	1	1	-

=====

Board 19      ♠ 642      Dealer S  
 ♥ A10952      Vul: E-W  
 ♦ 7  
 ♣ QJ96

♠ AQ95	♠ K3
♥ KQ43	♥ 86
♦ 104	♦ J98532
♣ 1042	♣ A75

♠ J1087  
 ♥ J7  
 ♦ AKQ6  
 ♣ K83

If South opens a weak NT North will transfer to hearts then pass the completion. East might balance with 3♦, but the suit is weak and he is vulnerable, so most are likely to pass. Two Hearts can always be made, but four rounds of spades may well beat it – not that such a defence is very likely with West on lead.

If South opens 1♦, West is just about worth a double with two good four-card majors. Not that this will help his side to win the auction. North will respond 1♥ and East will have to either pass, and pass again at his next turn, or try INT to get his high-card strength into the game. One No-Trump would run round to North, who will compete with 2♣ which, as the cards lie, should always be made – it's tough here for South to give false preference to 2♥ because North's suit lengths could be the other way around.

E/W can make 2♦ if they can get there – maybe if South has to open 1♣ in his methods? N/S can make 2♣/♥ or, best of all, 2NT.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	2	1	2
S	2	-	2	1	2
E	-	2	-	-	-
W	-	2	-	-	-
=====					

Board 20	♠	10654	Dealer W
	♥	96	Vul: Both
	♦	10	
	♣	A105432	
♠			♠ QJ873
♥ QJ1083			♥ 754
♦ KQ97			♦ J85
♣ KJ98			♣ Q7
	♠	AK92	
	♥	AK2	
	♦	A6432	
	♣	6	

N/S can make 11 tricks in spades, despite the horrible trump split – but will they ever bid the suit and, if they do, will declarer know how to play the hand?

The problem is that West is the dealer and opens 1♥, and most Easts will respond 1♠. Now, how do N/S get to 4♠? South overcalls 2♦??? and that goes round to East, who may bid 2♥. Still South has no good bid with his 18 HCP all in aces and kings.

If 2♥ ends the auction, a diamond lead should defeat it by a couple of tricks, with both defenders getting their ruffs – but if South doesn't read the ten of diamonds as a singleton and tries a top spade at trick two, declarer will suddenly have a chance.

Meanwhile, the North or South who does get to declare a spade contract should take the top side-suit tricks and crossruff, not touching trumps until the end of the play. If the timing is right, East just gets two trump tricks at the end.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	2	-	5	1
S	3	2	-	5	1
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-
=====					

Board 21	♠	K10876	Dealer N
	♥	AQ982	Vul: N-S
	♦	6	
	♣	107	
♠ A			♠ J9543
♥ K7			♥ J6543
♦ AQJ975			♦ 42
♣ AJ95			♣ 6
	♠	Q2	
	♥	10	
	♦	K1083	
	♣	KQ8432	

N/S can make 2♣ but will never be allowed to play there. Meanwhile, the E/W limit is 2♦, and they will do well to stop in time with West's potentially powerful hand.

North is a bit short of what is required for a one-level opening in a standard system so passes, as does East. South may well open either ♣, or perhaps a frisky 3♣, imagining that the hand belongs to E/W. Well, he is right – it does – but not at the level forced upon West by the pre-empt. Too strong for a simple 3♦ and the wrong shape for a double, West is likely to try 3NT, which will end the auction. The bad diamond split should ensure that the defence doesn't let this make.

A 1♣ opening is less effective in that West can double then bid diamonds to show a good hand. If left in 2♦ it should be made, while 3♦ can be beaten but may not be. In theory, at least, even 3♦-1 is better than getting to 3NT, which can be beaten by a lot if North can keep his sticky little fingers off the ♣10 lead, Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	-	-	-
S	2	-	-	1	-
E	-	2	-	-	-
W	-	2	1	-	-
=====					

Board 22      ♠ A1064      Dealer E  
                  ♥ 8                      Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ A8752  
                  ♣ KJ7

♠ K972                      ♠ J853  
 ♥ 1065                      ♥ Q932  
 ♦ QJ3                        ♦ 964  
 ♣ 932                        ♣ Q10

♠ Q  
 ♥ AKJ74  
 ♦ K10  
 ♣ A8654

Board 23      ♠ K63                      Dealer S  
                  ♥ A103                      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ A  
                  ♣ KQ10532

♠ Q7                              ♠ A9842  
 ♥ J9754                      ♥ KQ2  
 ♦ 932                            ♦ 87  
 ♣ AJ4                            ♣ 976

♠ J105  
 ♥ 86  
 ♦ KQJ10654  
 ♣ 8

Finally a deal on which someone will bid and make game and might even get to a making slam.

Six Clubs is a nice spot. Declarer can play to take two heart ruffs, and will then just concede one trump trick. There are other possible successful lines of play, but that seems the simplest.

South will open 1♥ and North is strong enough to bid his suits in their natural order, so responds 2♦. Three Clubs from South and, while some will surely bid 3NT now and play there, North has nice top cards facing a strong rebid, so might try fourth-suit-forcing. Three Spades gets 4♦ from South, and now we are off to the races.

Eleven tricks are possible for those who stop off in 3NT, but I suspect that many declarers will come to fewer than that. After a spade lead to the queen, king and ace, declarer will be scared to let West into the lead too soon, so may lead a club to the ace then back to the jack, so losing to the queen. Only if East now cashes the jack of spades will 11 tricks still be possible after this start.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	7	5	6	3	5
S	7	5	6	3	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

South has a classical example of a 3♦ opening, but finds that it is his partner who has the strong hand, hence the problem, and not an opponent. What is North to respond? Game could easily be on – this is, after all, a vulnerable pre-empt.

Three No-Trump would be a big gamble as there may be no entry to the South hand, so many may choose to jump to 5♦.

A passive trump lead lets 5♦ through, as does the ace of clubs, a far from ridiculous choice of leading from strength after a pre-emptive opening. A spade lead is fine if East switches to a heart, while a heart lead sets up the third defensive trick so should beat the contract.

Those who respond 3NT on the North hand may get very lucky, If trick one is a spade to the jack, queen and king, declarer can cash the ace of diamonds then lead towards the ♠10 for his entry to the diamond winners. There is even an overtrick!

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	4	-	1	-
S	2	4	-	1	-
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	1

=====

Board 24      ♠ 4                      Dealer W  
                  ♠ Q10542          Vul: None  
                  ♠ 975  
                  ♠ AKJ7

♠ 76532                      ♠ KQJ108  
 ♠ 873                        ♠ J9  
 ♠ 42                         ♠ A63  
 ♠ Q42                       ♠ 985

♠ A9  
 ♠ AK6  
 ♠ KQJ108  
 ♠ 1063

Slam is possible in any of three suits on the N/S cards, with 6♦ perhaps the safest choice but 6♥ the best scoring.

Were North to open 1♥ there is a chance that South would drive to slam on seeing E/W bid strongly in spades, but North does not quite have an opening hand. So usually it will be East who opens the bidding. If he opens 1♠, South may overcall 1NT. Will West compete? He has only one queen, but does have five-card spade support – 2♠ or a pre-emptive 3♠?

North will certainly bid a forcing 3♥ over 2♠, but that won't get South excited, while North will either bid 4♥ or make a take-out double over 3♠. But again, is South going to bid beyond game facing a passed hand. I don't think so. No, to get to slam takes either an opening bid from North or some real inspiration from someone. Making any slam will score very well.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	6	6	6	1	4
S	6	6	6	1	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 25      ♠ QJ982                      Dealer N  
                  ♠ 862                        Vul: E-W  
                  ♠ AK  
                  ♠ QJ2

♠ K54                        ♠ 1063  
 ♠ J104                       ♠ AKQ97  
 ♠ QJ864                    ♠ 53  
 ♠ 86                         ♠ AK10

♠ A7  
 ♠ 53  
 ♠ 10972  
 ♠ 97543

If North opens a weak NT, East will double and South run, either via a simple run-out to 2♣ or via some wriggle such as 2♣ showing clubs and a higher-ranking suit.

West would double 2♣ for take-out to show his values, and now East may pass and collect an inadequate +100, or more likely take out into the chunky five-card heart suit, seeing that the vulnerability makes getting a big enough penalty out of 2♣ hard work.

Some Wests will pass out 2♥ and declarer will come to nine or ten tricks. A probably smaller number will raise to 3♥ to invite game, and East will accept the invitation. As the cards lie ten tricks cannot be prevented, though declarer will need the favourable club position to provide a spade discard from the dummy if the defenders manage to establish the extra spade trick early enough.

Where North opens 1♠, East will overcall 2♥ and that will sometimes end the auction if North sees no reason to reopen when holding a weak NT and not short hearts. Some Wests, however, with raise to 3♥, though what looks to be a badly positioned ♠K may dissuade most from doing so. If West does raise to 3♥, presumably East will go on to game.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	3	4	1	3
W	-	3	4	1	3

=====

Board 26      ♠ 9754      Dealer E  
                  ♥ J7      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ QJ873  
                  ♣ A2

♠ K10      ♠ Q3  
 ♥ 1084      ♥ AK632  
 ♦ A104      ♦ K92  
 ♣ J7653      ♣ 984

♠ AJ862  
 ♥ Q95  
 ♦ 65  
 ♣ KQ10

Board 27      ♠ AQ6      Dealer S  
                  ♥ 8      Vul: None  
                  ♦ J10953  
                  ♣ KQ102

♠ 8      ♠ 10532  
 ♥ AQJ7653      ♥ K942  
 ♦ Q74      ♦ A86  
 ♣ 95      ♣ J6

♠ KJ974  
 ♥ 10  
 ♦ K2  
 ♣ A8743

Everyone should have something to say after East has opened 1♥. South will overcall 1♠ and West, even playing four-card majors, does best to compete with 2♥. Now the winning action on the North hand is to bid a quiet 2♠, which is the most that either side can make. But many a tournament player will see four-card support and a little bit of strength and shape and raise to the three level, quoting, 'the level of the fit'.

However sound an idea that may be in the long term, today it just takes N/S a level too high and a heart lead ensures down one. Though competing to the level of the fit – we have a nine-card fit so should compete to the nine-trick level – is sound in general when the opposition have already found their fit and when vulnerable there is less to be gained from doing so. If E/W were not going to compete to the three-level, as is probably the case here, bidding 3♠ offered no benefits.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	-	2	-
S	-	1	-	2	-
E	1	-	1	-	-
W	2	-	1	-	-

=====

Life may be much easier for those N/Ss playing five-card majors on this deal. South will open 1♠ and, if West overcalls with a pre-emptive 3♥ or even 4♥. North can bid 4♠ quite comfortably facing a known five-card suit, but whereas some will prefer a negative double if facing a potential four-card suit. Sure, North can still bid 4♠ but not everyone will be comfortable in doing so.

If North doubles 3♥ or 4♥, East may raise to 4♥ and South may bid 5♣, Will North convert to spades, knowing that there should be a nine-card club fit? Maybe he should, but...

Everything is simple if West overcalls only 2♥. Facing a possible four-card major, North can start with a double then show three-card spade support at his next turn, and the top spot is reached.

Plus 450 should score okay, while how +400 scores will depend to some extent on how many Wests go on to 5♥ and are doubled for the excellent E/W score of -300.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	3	-	5	-
S	5	3	-	5	-
E	-	-	3	-	-
W	-	-	3	-	-

=====

Board 28      ♠ 10765      Dealer W  
                  ♥ K96      Vul: N-S  
                  ♦ QJ103  
                  ♣ J10

♠ AQ84      ♠ J93  
 ♥ 872      ♥ 105  
 ♦ 8      ♦ AK9764  
 ♣ KQ843      ♣ 65

                 ♠ K2  
                  ♥ AQJ43  
                  ♦ 52  
                  ♣ A972

West will open 1♣, East respond 1♦ and South overcall 1♥. One Spade from West – show the shape even with a minimum hand – and 2♥ from North.

Nobody has a clearcut bid from here so that maybe that. Two Hearts can be beaten, particularly after the normal lead of the singleton diamond. Meanwhile, E/W can make eight tricks in any of the other three suits. Two Spades scores better than defending 2♥ for +100, and of course doubling and collecting +200 is even better, but few are likely to do either.

There is also the possibility of a weak jump shift response of 2♦ from East. That obliges South to bid 2♥ but now West will not bid the spades on what looks like a misfit. Half of North's points are in diamonds, so he should not contemplate raising hearts on such limited values, so 2♥ should buy the contract.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	-	1
S	-	-	1	-	1
E	2	2	-	2	-
W	2	2	-	2	-
	=====				