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12TH NOVEMBER 2021



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SESSION TIPS

Board 12 The “Rule of 20” is a good guide as to whether you should open a hand at the 1-level. Add to your hcp the sum of your two, longest suits and if the answer is 20 or more, open at the 1-level, irrespective of high card points.

Board 16 “Leaping Michaels” is a convention you can use after a Weak 2 opening in a major suit by one’s opponents. A jump to 4 of a minor shows a strongish hand with at least 5 cards in that minor and in the other major. This allows a direct cue bid of the major (say 3♥ over the opposition 2♥) to be asking for a no-trump hold rather than a Michael’s bid. The same bid can be used over a Multi 2• opening but only after extra discussion because the opener’s major may be unknown.

Board 18 “Pearson’s Law” is a guide to determine whether you should open your hand in 4th seat or else pass the board in. Add the number of high card points you hold to the number of spades. If the answer is 15 or more, then, in theory, you should

open the bidding. Like everything, it is a guide rather than a firm rule.

Board 23 After your partner makes a take-out double of the opponent’s 1 level opening bid and the opponent on your right calls a different suit at the 1 level, there is merit in playing a double of the suit your opponent has bid as for penalties (4+ cards in that suit and 6+ hcp). This enables your side to find a fit in that suit despite the opponent’s bid.

West	North	East	South
1♣	x	1♥	x penalty

double of hearts
2♣ 2♥ to play
Had South a 4-card spade suit, they could always bid 1♠.

Board 24 Minorwood (bidding 4 of the minor to ask for aces/ key cards in the suit bid) can be a useful efficient way of checking for these cards at a lower level than 4NT. Both players need to understand when 4 of the minor is treated this way. A jump bid to 4 of the minor is one obvious time.

SCORING ADJUSTMENTS

The overall results will only be adjusted if a scoring error has been notified to me by email to the following email address by midday, Saturday November 13th 2021. The adjustment may be done after this time but the adjustment must be emailed by this time. richardharoldsolomon@gmail.com

THE FOLLOWING CLUBS RAN A HEAT OF THIS EVENT

Alexandra	Kerikeri	Rangiora
Ashburton	Levin	Rotorua
Auckland	Marlborough	South Wairarapa
Cambridge	Marton	Taieri
Christchurch	Masterton	Taupo
Dargaville	Matamata	Te Anau
Franklin	Motueka	Thames
Gisborne	Nelson	Timaru
Golden Bay	New Plymouth	Upper Hutt
Gore	North Shore	Waiheke
Greymouth	Oamaru	Waikanae
Hamilton	Otaki	Wanaka
Hastings	Palmerston North	Wanganui
Hawera	Papatoetoe	Wellington
Howick	Paraparaumu	Westport
Huntly	Picton	Whangarei
Kaikoura	Queenstown	

(List correct as at 21st October 2021, assuming Covid allows heats to take place). It is possible heats may be run on Real Bridge.

Thanks for your support

THE NEW ZEALAND BRIDGE FOUNDATION

The Foundation exists to provide assistance to Bridge players and Bridge clubs. It is a registered charity and not for profit organisation. Donations and legacies to the Foundation are most welcome to ensure that the Foundation will be around for many years helping the game of Bridge to grow in NZ. Remember the tax advantages of donating to a registered charity!

Until two years ago the majority of the grants we made were to assist young or youngish players to play international bridge for NZ. It is now two years since face to face international bridge took place and therefore there has been no requirement for us to help those players. We have helped a small number of Clubs with grants to buy equipment and to improve their premises.

We are here to help. Any Club that is struggling financially to update their rooms and/or equipment should talk to us in the first place.

The surplus from running the NZ Wide Pairs goes to the Foundation. That surplus is a substantial percentage of our annual income. We thank everyone involved for that.

I hope you enjoy your evening.

Regards

DEREK EVENNETT
Chairman of Trustees
NZ Bridge Foundation



PRIZES

NATIONAL PRIZES

(Prizes overall, i.e. North/South and East/West combined)

1st Irongate Twin Pack:

Cabernet Merlot Franc and Chardonnay

2nd Winemakers Reserve Twin Pack:

Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc

3rd – 5th Family Estates Organic Twin Pack

(Pinot Noir and Chardonnay)

Top Two Pairs Non-Open Status (North/South & East/West combined)

“Top Two Pairs Restricted Open Status (North/South & East/West combined)

AND

Top Two Pairs below Intermediate Status (North/South & East/West combined)
and nearest score to 50.00%

Classic Twin Pack (Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and Marlborough Pinot Noir)

No pair may win more than one of the above prizes. If that were to happen the less valuable prize will be handed down to the next pair in the relevant category.

Each winning pair will receive 2 packs (2 bottles per pack)

All wines courtesy of Babich Wines, Babich Road, Henderson, Auckland

A player's status is determined by that shown on NZ Bridge website as at the date of the event

There will be special non-wine prizes for top two all-Youth pairs.

MASTERPOINTS

Per region (overall, i.e. not in each direction)

1 3A

2 2A

3 1A

per club. Winners of each direction or Howell winners earn 1A point per player.
A and C Points are awarded per club based on the across the field results.

Editor: Richard Solomon. Design & Printing: Alpine Printers, Pukekohe

THE AIMS OF UNITING, FUND-RAISING AND ENJOYMENT.

Uniting New Zealand in this time of Covid. That would be a nice aim for this year's Babich Wines New Zealand Wide Pairs. We will if we can though that depends on the alert levels in our country at present. Those clubs that can will take part and we hope that will be around the level of recent years though, of course, there may be less. At the time of writing this, we are examining the possibility of running a heat(s) for those in Covid Level 3 areas.

As usual, we aim to raise funds for the New Zealand Bridge Foundation in its aims of furthering the development of our game. What better way than all of us playing a session of bridge. There are 28 deals though only the first 24 will count in the across-the-field scoring. The other four are in case you need them to complete the movement for the number of tables you have. I hope you enjoyed playing them and will now take the time to read the write-up about them in this booklet.

Thanks to our expert "Compass" team of Bob Fearn, Michael Neels, Jan Spaans and Anna Kalma who will score this event hopefully within 15 hours. Each club will have its own results but the scores that count are the across-the-field ones this team produces. Check the New Zealand Bridge website or <http://www.compassmate.bridge-centre.org/results/> monthly to see the overall results, by clubs, by regions and by the other categories.

The New Zealand Bridge Foundation Chairman, Derek Evennett, describes a little of the Foundation and its work on page 1 of this booklet. We charge \$10-00 per player which, after deduction of the costs in running the event, goes to the Foundation. Thank you all for taking part and to the clubs for keeping table money to affordable levels.

Thanks to the event sponsor, Babich Wines of Henderson, sponsors of this event for many years. Prize-winners will get to sample some of their wines though everyone has a chance to purchase discounted wine from Babich. Please

see their offer in the advert on the inside-front cover. Please support those organisations who support our game.

In awarding prizes, we combine all into one field, whichever direction you sat, or indeed if you were in a Howell movement. There are category prizes for top 2 in Restricted Open, below Open and Junior categories as well as the top 5 overall...and a special prize for the score nearest to 50%. Any pair can only win one prize. In addition, each session winner on the across the field scores receives one A Point with A Points being awarded to the top three scores in each region (3-2-1 basis). C Points are also awarded.

Players always wonder why their scores vary between the percentage at their club and in the overall scores. In a small field of say 6 tables, +140 might be a top with others all scoring +110 on the same board. Yet across the whole field, +140 might only be worth a 60% score. Meanwhile, a +1400 score amid +660s will remain a complete top at both the club and in the overall results.

I hope you enjoy reading about these boards. Thanks to Andy Braithwaite for checking the analysis of the boards I have written up in this booklet. The Very Good, Good etc scores are, of course, only estimations. There is also DealMaster Pro analysis for each board.

Thanks also to all those at the clubs who helped with the organisation of the event. Please enjoy reading about the deals in this booklet.

I hope to feature the winners at a later date on the NZ Bridge website. Some interesting stories of the deals would be great. Please email me on Richard.Solomon@nzbridge.co.nz or just call me on 027 245 5418 to tell be of a fine or interesting play or an amusing incident. Don't be shy. Above all, enjoy.

Richard Solomon, Event Organiser

Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

North

♠ Q 7 5

♥ J 2

♦ K 8 6 4 2

♣ 9 5 2

West

♠ K 10 6 4

♥ A 8 7 5

♦ Q 10 3

♣ J 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ A J 2

♥ K Q

♦ A 9 7 5

♣ Q 8 6 4

South

♠ 9 8 3

♥ 10 9 6 4 3

♦ J

♣ A K 7 3

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - - - -

W - - - -

E 4 4 4 5 5

W 4 4 4 5 5

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1NT ¹	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT ¹	Pass
2♣ ²	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		
¹ 15-17	² Major Suit Enquiry		

A fairly tame hand with which to start, certainly with respect to the bidding. Those who play a 15-17 1NT opening will have a straightforward Stayman auction to 3NT. Others whose opening 1NT is weaker will start with 1 of a minor. While we recommend opening the lower of 2 four card suits, my only exception is when I hold both minor suits when I find opening 1♦ works better when the auction becomes competitive. You can introduce your second suit below the level of your opening bid, without the worry that partner expects you to have at least five cards if it was a major suit.

Here, it makes no difference as the auction is likely to be uninterrupted. A few South players may overcall 1♥ though opposite a passed hand and with such a poor-quality suit, there seems little merit. If partner is on lead, you

would prefer them to lead a club: so, why overcall? Were it the spade suit, there might be a little more merit in a competitive auction.

In our second auction above, West's 2NT showed a minimum hand without three hearts or four spades.

So, most should find their way to 3NT, mainly from East. The lead may well depend on whether West got to bid 1♥. Where they did not, a lowish heart from South is reasonable and is safe for the defence which is all they can hope for here. A spade lead will make that suit easy for the declarer while the singleton diamond (and a singleton led randomly is rarely a successful lead) will work out even worse for the defence.

With the ♠9 appearing in three rounds, attacking clubs works out best for the declarer but it is a hard choice for a declarer deciding which suit to attack. After an initial heart lead, East may cash decide to try clubs. Leave the spade guess until later. The defence may even save you the guess.

If North does gain the lead with ♠Q (and it is more convenient to finesse through South), they must not switch to diamonds. Few declarers will find their way to four tricks in the suit (leading ♦Q from West) but a diamond switch will guide East in that direction.

So, some declarers may make 11 but most should find their way to at least nine.

North-South		
	Very Good	+50
	Good	-150
	Average	-400
	Poor	-430
	Very Poor	-460

Board 2

East Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ A 6 5

♥ 10 9 7 3

♦ Q 5

♣ A K 7 4

West

♠ Q 10 9

♥ A Q 6 4

♦ K J 10 8 6

♣ Q

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ J 4 2

♥ J 8 2

♦ A 9 4 3 2

♣ 10 3

East

♠ K 8 7 3

♥ K 5

♦ 7

♣ J 9 8 6 5 2

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♦	x	Pass	Pass
2♦	All Pass	1♠	Pass

West	North	East	South
1NT	All Pass	Pass	Pass

Before you pick up your phone to your lawyer to sue me for dare suggesting an auction where one opens 1NT with a singleton, I have good cover and even right on my side!

If you open 1♦ as in our first auction and your partner bids 1♠ (not clubs, please..far too weak to bid that suit at the 2-level and risk missing a spade fit), you have a choice of bids to make. 2♦ is mainstream and leads the way to find a 4-4 heart fit if we have one. It may and does sometimes lead to a very poor contract especially at Pairs where others may do better in spades or no-trumps as in this board. To add insult, you run into an ugly 5-2 break.

Another alternative (there may be yet another if your opening 1NT is 15-17) is to raise spades with three card support and a side-suit singleton. You are in a major suit and should score better than in diamonds.

Where your opening 1NT is 15-17, you might even rebid 1NT (hence our opening 1NT in

Auction 2 is the same bid). It saves rebid issues and is more acceptable when your singleton is an honour. If your partner cannot produce 3 or 4 cards in the singleton suit, they have let you down badly! As you can see, here they produce 6!

Alternatively, East could pass North's take-out table. South would then have to bid 1NT. East might balance in their long club suit. West would rush back to spades! South is really too weak to do so unless forced as we will soon see.

So, East-West could declare any of four denominations (not hearts). However, South might just end up playing 1NT and that would be to the defence's advantage as even on a ♦J lead, the defence should score +200, excellent on a part-score deal.

Meanwhile, Wests will struggle in 2♦ on a high club lead. They may get to ruff the 4th round of hearts but will not win the trick. However, three hearts, two spades (for good guessers!) and three trumps will give them a plus score but a poor one as those in other denominations will outscore them. Those in 3♣ will need some good guessing to make their contract but 1NT should produce at least 90. 4-3 fits are never easy to play but the spade part-score plays rather well with clubs able to be ruffed in dummy or else the defence draw trumps and make only one trick in that suit.

All up, a fight for East-West part-scores unless they allow South to play 1NT, to the defence's advantage.

North-South		
	Very Good	+100
	Good	+50
	Average	-90
	Poor	-110
	Very Poor	-140

Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ Q J 10 5 3

♥ A K 10 8 2

♦ J

♣ J 7

West

♠ 9 8 4

♥

♦ 9 7

♣ A K Q 9 8

6 5 3

East

♠ 2

♥ 9 7 6 5 4

♦ K Q 8 5

♣ 10 4 2



South

♠ A K 7 6

♥ Q J 3

♦ A 10 6 4 3 2

♣

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - 4 5 6 -

S - 3 5 7 -

E 4 - - -

W 4 - - -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
4♣	x	5♣	1♦
Pass	6♠	All Pass	5♠

West	North	East	South
5♣	x	All Pass	1♦

Is this the kind of deal that we pay our money for or does it just frustrate?! Look at the second auction. 5♣ is rather an overbid at unfavourable vulnerability. You only need to go 2 down doubled and you have a very poor result if your opponents only make 450 or 420 in their major game contract.

However, on this occasion, it could spell disaster for North-South who will not be hard-pressed to make all 13 tricks in spades (played by South). Meanwhile, it takes a diamond ruff or a trump lead to beat 5♣ by one trick. The ruff can be obtained later in the play as declarer will need to ruff spades to reduce their losers.

Yet, while North might like their hand, they have a singleton in their partner's suit and a couple of small clubs, neither really attractive holdings to go bidding at the 5-level or higher. For most, double is for penalties and that is where the bidding will end.

Meanwhile, a jump to 4♣ will give North

more of a chance as there, double just has to be for take-out. Then, it kind of gets interesting. East has enough clubs and shape and trick potential to raise to 5♣ before South gets to offer a major.

Are they good enough to bid 5♠? They can see their void and good major cards. So, I think they can bid 5♠. Next it falls to West with no club or heart losers. Also, if their partner has clubs and the opposition have a spade fit, East will be very short in that suit. 6♣ might be rather a good contract. Yet, and there is a "but". What will the opponents do? How many spades can they make? That thought might put West off from bidding the club slam.

However, North must also be doing a bit of thinking. For North, it is not as clear-cut as they might have a loser in a red suit and one club loser. Were West to bid 6♣, then they may well take the push to small slam. They might just bid it anyway and will be well rewarded.

Although 7♣ is a save against 6♠ (-800 as opposed to -1010), it does seem a bit dangerous at adverse vulnerability. So, that's where the pendulum would stop. If you were North-South, did you make it to slam or were you stuck defending 5♣x? The sky was the limit. Did anyone really make the limit?

North-South		
	Amazing	+1510
	Very Good	+1010
	Good	+800
	Average	+510
	Poor	+500
	Very Poor	+200
	Very Sad	-50

To reach 7♠ played by North and receive a heart lead. So unlucky. All up, a great deal.

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ K Q J 9 7 5 4

♥ K 4

♦ 6 2

♣ K 6

West

♠ A 8 6 3 2

♥ 10 9 5 2

♦ 9

♣ J 10 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ 10

♥ Q 7 6

♦ A Q J 5 3

♣ A 8 7 2

South

♠

♥ A J 8 3

♦ K 10 8 7 4

♣ Q 9 5 4

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N 1 2 1 3 2

S 1 2 1 3 2

E - - - -

S - - - -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♦	Pass
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	x	xx
2♥	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

There is the potential here for North-South to extract a decent penalty off their opponents. South would be particularly keen though their partner just has too many spades to balance with a double, too many to re-open East's 2♦ overcall with a re-opening double and too many to pass West's 2♥ call following their partner's value showing (10+) redouble of 1♠. Indeed holding ♥K4, it would hardly occur to North that their partner was about to make a penalty double of 2♥. Unless you are long and weak, it is customary for opener to pass round to their partner to take further action... but long and weak North was.

So, what should East bid following the 1♠ opening. Here, either an overcall or a double are possibilities. My pick would be double, offering three suits. Unfortunately, this time West's choice was their partner's least favourite. North was there to "save" their

opponents whichever choice East had made.

In both cases, South showed their hand with 2NT though North was persistent with their spade bids and at 3♠, South gave up, with no liking for the auction, no spades and now a minimum hand.

2 of either red suit would play horribly for the East-West declarer, with 1NT were it possible much better. East would not enjoy their choice of leads to 3♠ either. The heart lead seems the most obvious whether or not West had bid the suit though unless declarer plays low at trick 1 and finesses later, they will not have much chance of a discard on the third round of hearts, not that a discard is very useful.

North might play ♥J at trick 1 and a heart to hand at trick 2. Next would come a high spade won by West and the diamond switch. West should get their ruff but only one ruff. Even if not, they will make two trump tricks and hold declarer to 9 tricks as long as East grabs both of their aces.

That would not please those who tried the spade game and who might be doubled. With the other suits well held, any South trying their luck in 3NT will also be very disappointed in the spade break. Either hearts (eventually) or diamonds will provide a trick/second trick which should defeat this contract.

So, many East-West players will breathe a sigh of relief after this board unless their opponents did indeed catch them at the two-level.

North-South		
	Very Good	+620
	Good	+500
	Average	+140
	Poor	-100
	Very Poor	-200

Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ K 10 2

♥ K J 5

♦ K 5 2

♣ Q 10 8 6

West

♠ A J

♥ A 9 6 3

♦ Q 7 6 3

♣ A K 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ 8 6 4

♥ Q 7

♦ J 8 4

♣ 9 5 4 3 2

South

♠ Q 9 7 5 3

♥ 10 8 4 2

♦ A 10 9

♣ J

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - - 2 3 2

S - - 2 3 2

E 1 1 - - -

W 1 1 - - -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
	INT ¹	Pass	2♣
x	Pass	Pass	2♣
x	Pass	3♣	All Pass

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♣
x	xx ²	Pass	Pass
INT	Pass	Pass	2♥
Pass	2♣	All Pass	
¹ 12-14	² 3 spades		

After North's weak no-trump opening, South takes the normal route of Stayman to find a major fit at the 2-level. Some think Stayman is a mechanism to find the right game contract but it can also be bid with far less hcp in just looking for a major contract as above (sometimes called "Garbage Stayman").

However, the interest is how West handles their 18 count. They cannot be sure whether their side has a making contract, or maybe even enough for game if South is very weak. It is a difficult area. If they double 2♣ (which might be just lead directing for clubs) and then double 2♠, they show a strong hand take-out style. East moved to their suit. However, you might play Lebensohl here which means with a 3-count, East must bid 2NT asking West to bid 3♣.

Any plans for the second week of Feb 2022?

What about coming for a day or three or even eight to the 2021 National Bridge Congress at Bay Park, Mt Maunganui

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Meanwhile in the second auction, where North got the clubs in first, they were able to use a support redouble (or double had West bid a suit) to show exactly three cards in partner's suit, spades. These are handy tools to have. South was able to compete in the knowledge that they had a 5-3 spade fit. They looked for a 4-4 heart fit first but ended back in spades.

It will be really hard for the defence to score a diamond trick against 2♣. Certainly, East should have a method of discouraging their partner from continuing clubs if West starts with a high club. 140 is quite likely, certainly 110 despite West's strength.

There are 6 losers for an East/West declarer in clubs and that should give the declaring side quite a good result with the vulnerability in their favour unless they are unlucky enough to be doubled.

North-South		
	Very Good	+140
	Good	+120
	Average	+110
	Poor	+100
	Very Poor	+50

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ 9 8 6

♥ Q J 4 2

♦ J 9 5

♣ Q J 4

West

♠ 10

♥ 9 8 3

♦ A K Q 8 6

♣ K 9 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ K 7

♥ K 7 6 5

♦ 7 2

♣ A 10 8 7 5

East

♠ A Q J 5 4 3 2

♥ A 10

♦ 10 4 3

♣ 6

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
2♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
		4♠	All Pass

West	North	East	South
2♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass	3♠	Pass

It does not look like much can go wrong for East-West here. It depends on your style on how quickly you reach 4♠ but that should be the contract.

Firstly, South may feel they want to act over East's opening bid. They have 10 hcp, a 5-card suit, even 4 cards in the unbid major. Yet, neither double nor 2♣ is a great bid. Double works, as here, when your partner bids hearts (or indeed clubs) but you would feel less comfortable should they choose diamonds. Meanwhile, a club overcall is not the best when you have a heart fit or when either of your opponents holds a barrel-load of clubs! Silence, at least initially, seems best.

A direct jump to game by opener in their suit (4♠) shows minimum points and a long (7+) card suit. Hence, our first auction was over very quickly. Holding three small diamonds might prove to be an asset or liability depending

on how strong partner's holding is. It is not a requirement of the jump.

Meanwhile, our other East limited their hand with 2♠. West's 3♣ is certainly forcing to 3♠ and does allow partner to pass if they really dislike spades and are minimum. However, their minor suits give hope for game opposite a long spade suit: hence the raise to game. Unless West wants to bid 3NT, it would seem wise for East to stay away from 3NT. As you can see above, a stand-out heart lead would beat 3NT (three hearts, ♠K and ♣A).

The play should be fairly straightforward. South had better start with a heart if they want to score a trick in that suit. East might try and slip through a club but South should be alert to that and take their ace to cash as many hearts as they can which is only one.

East ruffs and plays a diamond to dummy to run the ♠10. No joy but there are no more tricks for the defence. If East had not played their club earlier, South had better cash their ace or else a valuable Pairs overtrick will be scored.

North-South		
	Very Good	-170
	Good	-500
	Average	-620
	Poor	-650
	Very Poor	-800

Board 7

South Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ Q 10 8 4

♥ Q J 8 3

♦ A 9 8

♣ K J

West

♠ A K 6 5 2

♥ A 6 2

♦ J 6

♣ A 10 7



East

♠ J 7 3

♥ 9 7 5

♦ K 5 4

♣ Q 6 5 4

South

♠ 9

♥ K 10 4

♦ Q 10 7 3 2

♣ 9 8 3 2

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - 2 1 - -

S - 2 1 - -

E 1 - - 2 1

W 1 - - 2 1

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	2♣ ²	Pass	Pass
All Pass			2♥

West	North	East	South
1♠ ³	Pass	2♠	Pass
¹ 15-17	² both majors, at least 4-4.	³ 5+ spades	All Pass

So, on such boards are World Championship Pairs contests won and loss. What say you in this event? Will E/W score 110, 100 or 90? Such infinitesimal differentials determine who will receive Babich wines.

As the years have gone by (and I have played bridge for just a few of them!), I have seen the wisdom of opening 1NT if I can with a 5-card major in any 5332 shape (one does it as a matter of course with a 5-card minor and that shape). I have rarely regretted doing so. Thus, my strong no-trumper opened the West hand 1NT.

North will now either show both majors or remain silent leading to either 1NT by West or 2♥ by South as the final contracts. Where one chooses or has to open 1♠, the debate will be whether East should bid 1NT (definitely correct if 1♠ could be 4 cards, maybe correct otherwise) or 2♣. Either bid will end the auction.

North should not double 1♠ as they would only be comfortable if their partner bid hearts. That South could secure a reasonable -100 from 3♦ does not justify the double.

Perhaps the most interesting of these contracts is 2♥ by South. Against such bidding, it is usually correct to lead a trump as declarer is often short in the other major and would like to do some ruffing as here. A high spade is wrong on other accounts, too. The deal will soon become a guessing game of honours and it will be a great help to South to know West has ♠AK.

Lead a low heart just in case your partner with 2 hearts gains the lead and can return one. South wins and with their trump suit being attacked should try to set up their diamonds as tricks. So, comes the first guess as South wins the opening lead to play a diamond to the ace and a second diamond. Can East play low in tempo? If so, South may well misguess. That will lead to ♥A and another heart. Poor South will not be enjoying being declarer. They could be in grave danger of losing control, with only one trump left and no access to their hand. -200 beckons!

In 2♣, West should only lose one trick in each minor though the success of their contract will depend on how they play trumps. Playing for the overtrick by laying down AK will result in an undertrick! ♠A and a small spade should guarantee the contract, always a good thing to do. The same applies in 1NT where North should have chosen to lead the safer major, the heart.

It is beginning to look like any of +110, 100 or 90 will be reasonable result for East-West!

North-South		
	Very Good	+200
	Good	+100
	Average	-90
	Poor	-110
	Very Poor	-200

Board 8

West Deals

None Vul

North

♠ Q J 9 4

♥ 6 2

♦ A 8 6 3

♣ 10 9 8

West

♠ A 10 5

♥ Q J 3

♦ 9 5 4

♣ K J 5 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ 8 2

♥ A 10 9 8 7 4

♦ Q J 10

♣ Q 6

South

♠ K 7 6 3

♥ K 5

♦ K 7 2

♣ A 7 4 2

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2♥	x
3♥	All Pass		

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass
3♥ ²	All Pass		
¹ Multi 2♦	² Pass or Correct		

If 8 tricks is the maximum that should be taken by any declarer, our auctions accelerated to the 3 level, correctly in both cases. In our first auction, East opened a weak 2. While South was not that strong, they had enough high-card points and shape for a take-out double. West had too many hearts to let their opposition rest in a lowish part-score and so pre-emptively raised a level. That made it hard for North who had a "2 and a half" 3♠ bid available. If they played x as a game try in spades, then 3♠ would be a safer action. However, Losing Trick Count suggests they (a 9 loser) will not make 3♠ opposite a minimum take-out double (7 loser): 18- (9*7) = 2. The unknown is whether one's opponents can make their contract.

After the "Multi" opening, with 3 cards in each major, West can make a pre-emptive jump to the 3-level. When East owns up to having a Weak 2 in hearts, South can make

a take-out double showing usually 10-14 hcp. However, West could be weaker than they are. Thus, a tough decision for South. Pass is the winning "action" this time but could result in a missed game on other occasions.

For those who do not like leading away from an honour, they will find the South hand a nightmare on lead to 3♥, especially where North has not bid spades. With a trump lead very unwise, go with 4th highest of your longest and strongest, a spade. It does work, sometimes. If you choose ♣A, you will allow 3♥ to make. After the spade lead, the contract will drift one down thanks to the losing trump finesse.

Meanwhile, it would be wise to lead a diamond against North's 3♠, just in case the ♥K is in declarer's hand. Even ♥A lead makes it hard for East to find the best switch (♣Q) unless, with ♥K in dummy, West's ♥3, a low card, suggests switching to the lower suit, a good idea. However, even passive defence will see declarer lose one trick in three suits but two in clubs and therefore to be one down. Losing Trick Count was right.

North-South		
	Very Good	+110
	Good	+50
	Average	-50
	Poor	-100
	Very Poor	-140

Board 9

North Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ A Q J 9

♥ K 7 5

♦ A 6 3

♣ Q J 7

West

♠ K 10 7 4

♥ A Q J

♦ 9 8

♣ 9 6 5 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ 2

♥ 10 9 4 3

♦ K Q 7 5

♣ A K 10 4

East

♠ 8 6 5 3

♥ 8 6 2

♦ J 10 4 2

♣ 8 3

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	5	4	5	4	5
S	5	4	5	4	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT ¹	Pass	2♣
All Pass	2♣	Pass	3NT

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♦
Pass	1NT ¹	Pass	2♣ ²
All Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT

¹15-17

²Checkback, game interest or stronger

For strong no-trumpers, the auction was a simple Stayman affair ending in 3NT. For others, even those who use 4 card major openers, may choose to open 1♣ with North's flat shape. After a 1♣ opener, South would bid 2♣ and North the relevant no-trump bid which shows their point count.

In our second auction, it is usually better for North to show their point count by bidding 1NT rather than bidding the appropriate number of spades. Reserve 1 or 2♣ for a hand with 5 clubs and 4 spades. Note the concept of by-passing a diamond suit to bid your major should not apply here as South is strong enough to force to game and it would be a shame to miss a diamond fit if slam was possible.

There are many versions of checkback. In

the one above, North jumps to 3♣ to show maximum points and 4 spades, both a relief to their partner who had have been a little worried about this suit.

Even 4-card major advocates could choose to open this hand 1♣ as it is so flat. However, after a 1♣ opening, their partner should bid 2♣ with North reverting quickly to no-trumps.

All routes, therefore lead to 3NT with North mostly as the declarer.

East knows their partner has values or else the opponents would be in slam. In most auctions, they will know almost certainly that dummy has a heart suit but what else to lead? So ♥8 unless you lead 3rds and 5ths. West Wins and knows they are fighting a lone battle. So, in an effort to just secure another trick, they may return ♥Q.

Declarer should keep the clubs as an entry to the North hand should the spade finesse fail. So, cross to dummy with a diamond and take a successful finesse (yes, they do work, occasionally!). It's a choice now of which red suit will break...or is it? Try diamonds first but no luck there but hearts do behave...and you can claim 11 tricks.

If on lead, West may well try a spade. South will have to play hearts themselves but with no danger from the other suits, they can afford to do that and the break could not be kinder.

North-South		
	Very Good	+490
	Good	+460
	Average	+430
	Poor	+400
	Very Poor	-50

Board 10

East Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ 10 9 6 5

♥ 9 8

♦ A 8 7

♣ Q 7 6 4

West

♠ Q J 4 3 2

♥ A 4

♦ J 9 6

♣ A K 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ A K 7

♥ Q J 7 5 3 2

♦ K 3

♣ 9 5

South

♠ 8

♥ K 10 6

♦ Q 10 5 4 2

♣ J 8 3 2

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - - - -

S - - - -

E 1 1 5 5 4

W 1 1 5 5 4

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♣	All Pass	3♠	Pass

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass	2♥	Pass

The length of East's heart suit may depend a little on the range of your INT opening and whether it is East-West's style to open INT where they can with a 5-card major. If they can and they are playing a weak no-trump, then East is guaranteed to hold 6 hearts when they rebid their heart suit. Therefore, West can jump immediately to the better of the major games, 4♥.

If either or both of those conditions do not apply and East could be a 2533 shape, then a little more investigation is required. Of course, that assumes you would not bid your better minor with that shape because it is not your style to open INT with a 5-card major. Had you been unable to open INT because your range was stronger, then with that shape, you would call INT in response to 1♠.

The 3♣ bid (suggesting 5 spades) unearthed the spade fit while others would have bid more directly to 4♥. Both contracts should make 11 tricks but 4♥ is much more straightforward and offers a greater chance of a second overtrick. That second overtrick would never come if

South leads a low diamond but another very valid choice is the singleton spade.

There is no way that East can play the heart suit without losing a trick. Therefore, trick 2 is **not** the time to take a trump finesse, even without the possibility of a ruff in the air. Imagine the finesse lost and North held the ♦A. That would be a losing trump finesse, ♦A and two ruffs, down one. So, reduce the risk of that happening by playing small to the ♥A and now a second heart. South can win and play a diamond to secure a second trump trick with a second ruff but that is only three tricks for the defence.

This time, because the finesse works, East can make an overtrick but it is a dangerous line.

Meanwhile, in 4♣, there are unlikely to be ruffing considerations, especially if North leads a low club. The difficulty is getting back to the established hearts if there is a 4-1 trump break. So, win the club lead but do not take a ruff. Best to play ♥A and a second heart and you only feel regret if the finesse would have worked and trumps break 4-1 which is the actual situation!

Perhaps, you should cross to dummy and try the heart finesse. Another one works! Cash ♥A and play ♠Q and a spade to the king, ruff a heart high and return to dummy with a trump, claiming with a 3-2 trump break but not on this night! Here, you can ruff a club with ♠K and ruff a heart low, over-ruffed by North, who is best to under-lead ♦A. You need to keep South off lead and so play ♦K, which to your relief, scores the trick. You can discard a diamond on the high heart. North scores their second trump trick but ♦A is only the third trick for the defence.

I said 4♥ was more straightforward! In 3NT, a low diamond lead really threatens the contract but North is much more likely to lead a low club. Win and play ♥A and you really hope South has ♥K to avoid a diamond problem. It does and unless South returns a diamond, West will scoop all the match-points with three overtricks.

North-South		
	Very Good	+100
	Good	-600
	Average	-620
	Poor	-650
	Very Poor	-690

Board 11

South Deals

None Vul

North

♠ J 10 7 3

♥ 3 2

♦ Q 4

♣ K Q 9 4 2

West

♠ A 9 6 5

♥ A Q 8 7

♦ K 5 2

♣ 8 7



South

♠ 8 2

♥ J 10 6 5 4

♦ J 10 8

♣ J 5 3

East

♠ K Q 4

♥ K 9

♦ A 9 7 6 3

♣ A 10 6

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	Pass	3NT	Pass All Pass

West	North	East	South
1♣ ²	Pass	1♦	Pass
1NT ¹	Pass	3NT	All Pass
¹ 12-14	² 2+♣		

West or East could end up as declarer (East, if West had started with 1♥ and had then supported diamonds). I would probably rather be declarer from the East seat. I qualify with "probably". The weak no-trump auction is very straightforward, with East having no real interest in the majors, although if West could have five spades in their opening..and say two small hearts, I would like to know.

Even strong no-trumpers who play 5-card majors will have a very brief auction. They will open their minor preference (2+ 1♣) or if they need three cards for that bid, then 1♦. That might get some real interest from East but that will soon diminish when they hear their partner has a 12-14 1NT type.

There is a reason for North to lead either black suit. An unbid major is always an appealing choice though clubs could be and indeed is a winner. After a club lead, North has no certain outside entry. They would like their

partner to have length as well as one of the missing honours in clubs. "The ace would be the better one, partner." Well, they did have length and an honour but not the one North wanted.

If you led a high club, South should encourage. So, apart from duck the mandatory two rounds of the suit, how should West play? The obvious answer is you have 9 top tricks, 10 if there is an even spade break, and you are not going to risk the contract for an overtrick. However, if you can be certain from the carding that one opponent has 5 clubs, then you can afford to lose a diamond to the safe hand, regain the lead and score a valuable overtrick.

Best discard for now on the third round of clubs is a diamond...and then check out spades. No joy. So, try diamonds but when North shows up with the queen, you would not duck that and might be wary of playing your third diamond as a cunning North would play the ♦Q from QJx. If you let North have the lead and they had DJ, they would cash two more clubs and a spade, down two, in the quest of an overtrick.

When on lead, South has two unbid black suits. Neither opponent has shown any interest in either. As South does not appear to have an entry, they might make the wrong choice, spades. A club is, though, doubly dangerous, for the declarer as they may find it hard to know which opponent holds club length.

So, I predict a lot of cautious declarers who will take their 9 tricks and leave a rather surprised South with a heart winner at the end. Three hcp but two, maybe three tricks for South.

North-South		
	Very Good	+100
	Good	+50
	Average	-400
	Poor	-420
	Very Poor	-430

Board 12

West Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ K J 10 5 4 3

♥ 7 4

♦ J 5 4 2

♣ A

East

♠ Q 9 6

♥ A J 5

♦ A Q

♣ K 10 7 6 2

West

♠ A 8

♥ Q 10 8 2

♦ 10 9 7

♣ 9 8 4 3

**South**

♠ 7 2

♥ K 9 6 3

♦ K 8 6 3

♣ Q J 5

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♠	2NT	All Pass

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♦ ¹	2NT	All Pass

¹Multi 2♦

Two very short auctions. The North hand is very close to a 1-level opener. The "Rule of 20", your hcp added to the length of your two longest suits, has this hand 1 point short. Certainly, had the ♦J been the ♦Q, I would have opened at the one level.

In both cases, East gets to overcall with a strong no-trump type hand, in the 15-18 range and at least one stopper in both majors in the case of the Multi opener. Otherwise with that point count, East would make a strength-showing double.

The West hand is just not quite strong enough to bid on, and that should be a relief at the final trick count-up. It would be very unusual for a Weak 2 hand to bid again after this auction. North knows their partner must have some values or else their opponents would be in game. 3♦ is the winning action for North with the opponents' cards lying hugely fortunately for a declarer in 3♦ or 3♠. Just because it works this time does not make it right. Thus, passing 2NT seems the normal

action, especially at adverse vulnerability, which will be rewarded if North-South can get a positive result.

Where North opened 2♠, South can lead their suit. In the case of the Multi 2, where South does not know the suit, we normally lead our shorter major. So, in both cases ♠7. East knows where spade length is, and the king. To lead a club from dummy seems a good start. So, take the ♠A to lead a club. It's time for North to reflect. East must have ♠Q, protected. So, their spade suit is effectively cut off. With hearts unattractive and clubs attracting the declarer, why not try a low diamond?

East finesses and South has a choice of winning plays, ♦2, indicating a 4-card suit, or a spade for North to win and continue diamonds. South will regain the lead with a third round of clubs for the defence to take three diamond tricks, ♠K and two club tricks. There is no time to score a heart trick as well but +50 is some compensation for missing out on making, luckily a 3-level contract of their own.

North-South		
	Very Good	+140
	Good	+110
	Average	+50
	Poor	-110
	Very Poor	-120

Board 13

North Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ A J 10 9 7 6

♥ Q 9 8

♦ J 10 6 2

♣

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ K

♥ A K J 6 2

♦ A 7 3

♣ K Q J 6

East

♠ Q 8 5 3

♥ 7

♦ 9 4

♣ 9 8 5 4 3 2

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	2	4	6	5	4
S	2	4	6	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
	2♣	Pass	2NT ¹
Pass	3♥ ²	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

West	North	East	South
	2♦ ³	Pass	2NT ¹
Pass	3NT ⁴	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣ ⁵	Pass	5♦ ⁶
x	5♠ ⁷	All Pass	

¹Enquiry ²Good hand with ♥ feature

³Multi 2 ⁴Max Weak 2 in ♣

⁵1 or 4 key cards ⁶♠Q ask ⁷No!

There are two main exploratory methods after your partner opens with a Weak 2. Ogust asks simply whether the suit and the hand as a whole are up to scratch with the answer to both questions here being “yes”. The other method used above in our first auction asked about side-suit features (a feature is an honour not a shortage....too confusing if both) and that was why North bid 3♥. For all that, it would be hard for South to picture a void in their partner’s hand. Since North by-passed 3♦, there could easily be a loser in each minor on a diamond lead to slam. So, South simply bid to game. Dicey slams should not be bid at Pairs. Get an average plus with overtricks.

Be sure you know whether 3♥ by South after a 2♣ opening is forcing or not. If not, then use 2NT. If it is, then you could use it but when

partner raises to game, you know nothing about how good the weak 2 is. It is true that North could cue 4♣ but is that showing the ace or a void?

Meanwhile, in our other auction, North/South were using the “unders and overs” approach, the weak hand bidding one under their 6-card suit with a minimum and one over with a maximum weak 2. That way, the strong hand is always (well, nearly always!) declarer, often a key advantage. South thought that slam would be good opposite ♠AQ and another feature and used Roman Key Card. North showed one key card, presumably, ♠A. So, they asked for the ♠Q. West could not be sure if their partner would be on lead to a slam and so doubled for a diamond lead. North denied ♠Q and so East made the danger lead for declarer.

Alternatively, and more traditionally, North’s response to 2NT could be 3♦ showing a good weak 2 in spades with South then perhaps off in search of a small slam. After 3♦, 3♠ by South would set trumps and be a slam try. South could also bid 3♥, natural and game-forcing.

On a diamond lead from East, 6♥ is no better than a successful ruffing finesse of ♠A. If West is on lead and chooses ♦K, it is much the same. As stated, just making 12 tricks will be a good result with many playing in spades or no trumps.

Were the club ruffing finesse to fail, and assuming a trump loser, 5♠ would not make. So, our North would be mighty pleased when West played ♠A on the king. Back to table with a heart and ♠K and two more rounds of clubs. If North tries to return to hand with a heart, then they will lose three tricks. Only a 4th round of clubs works and only then once North ducked the opening diamond lead.

If North did survive their 5♠ contract, they might have a quiet word later to their partner about bidding dubious slams.

North-South		
	Very Good	+1430
	Good	+680
	Average	+650
	Poor	+620
	Very Poor	-100

Board 14

East Deals

None Vul

North

♠ A Q 5 2

♥ 10 8 4 3

♦ Q 7

♣ J 10 8

West

♠ J 10 7

♥ K 9 6

♦ 8 5

♣ K Q 4 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ 9

♥ A Q 7

♦ J 9 6 4 3

♣ 9 7 6 5

East

♠ K 8 6 4 3

♥ J 5 2

♦ A K 10 2

♣ A

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
2♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	All Pass	2♦	Pass

West	North	East	South
2♠	Pass	1♠	Pass
4♣	All Pass	3♥ ¹	Pass

¹3+ hearts, game try

In our first auction 2♣ is a slight overbid but the West hand is improved with 3 card spade support. East might have jumped to 3♦ but the 2♣ bid did not improve East's hand and they would be very minimum for the jump. Indeed, when West gave preference to spades which could be just two-card support, our East stayed low. Poor spades, communication problems in partner's suit and marginal point count for game. In Pairs especially, there is a place for caution.

In the second auction, East was more ambitious. Here 1♠ guaranteed 5+ cards, hence the raise to 2♠. Poor trumps opposite only a three- card suit might have persuaded East to play at the 2 level but they tried for game, 3♥ showing at least a three-card suit and needing help in that suit. West was super-maximum for 2♠, had help in hearts and even provided some

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help in the trump suit. So, 4♠ it had to be.

South has an awkward choice of leads. After the direct raise to 2♠, South may start with a diamond. However, where East has bid the suit, second highest club or even ♥A are more likely options. Where ♥A chosen, North must discourage continuation of the suit.

After a minor suit lead, East will probably unblock ♣A (♦lead), cash high diamond(s) and ruff a diamond with North over-ruffing. North may anticipate heart discards on clubs and therefore switch to a highish heart indicating no interest in the suit or may play two rounds of spades, leaving declarer in dummy.

In that case, East will discard 10 and a heart on two high clubs and will just have to hope South holds the ♥A. Ruff the 4th round of clubs, draw trump and lead a heart towards the king. Game (or +170) will be made for the loss of two spades and ♥A, a rather fortunate lie of the cards for East.

North-South		
	Very Good	+50
	Good	-140
	Average	-170
	Poor	-420
	Very Poor	-430

Board 15

South Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ A 8 7 6 5

♥ 8 7

♦ K 9 2

♣ K Q 5

West

♠ K J

♥ Q 10 9 6

♦ Q J 8 7 6 5

♣ 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ 10 9 4 2

♥ A K J 5 3

♦ 10 3

♣ 4 2

South

♠ Q 3

♥ 4 2

♦ A 4

♣ A J 10 9 8

7 6

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N 4 - - 2 2

S 4 - - 2 2

E - 3 3 - -

W - 3 3 - -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	2♥	1♣
3♥	5♣	All Pass	3♣

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♠	x	1♣
2♥	3♥	x	2♣
All Pass			4♣

When your partner opens at the 1-level and you have a 12-count with KQx in your partner's 6 or 7 card opening suit, it is very hard to stop below game, even if that suit is a minor. Not just that but in our first auction, opener made a free bid at the 3-level.

The only things that might stop North from going to 5♣ are the quite strong opposition bidding and their doubleton heart. Had they held three small hearts, they could be almost sure that their partner had no more than one heart in their hand.

So, our first auction continued at quite rapid pace so that North's second bid had to be above 3♥. It did not seem that South had much spade support and with their own suit none-too-strong, they focused on clubs.

Several good things could happen by bidding 5♣. It might make while the opponents

might also bid on. East would not be tempted though West might, with 10 cards in the red suits, and spades seemingly badly placed if the spade bidder had AQ.

I prefer East's 2♥ call to the negative double of the second auction. With everyone "talking", it should be safe enough to bid one's good 5-card suit. So, the club-heart battle continued, though South was able to limit their hand with 2♣ and ultimately that might convince North that 11 tricks might be too hard.

The vulnerability might tempt West to bid over a 4♣ bid. If they do get to play 4♥, it might be hard for North to double; they may just take the push to the 5-level. With East declarer in 4♥x, East's spade problem will be solved probably at trick 1 when South leads ♠Q. One down will be a nice result for the declarer.

If West gets to declare, the defence may start with two rounds of clubs. West ruffs, draws trumps and plays on diamonds. When South takes their ace, they need to lead ♠3. Assuming their partner has shown 5 spades, leading low cannot cost and may gain. +300 would be a good result for the defenders.

As long as the defence play only two rounds of hearts, there is no hope for South if they reach 5♣. Occasionally, a ruff and discard may help the defence but this is the normal situation where it would prove catastrophic!

North-South		
	Very Good	+300
	Good	+130
	Average	+100
	Poor	-100
	Very Poor	-140

Board 16

West Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ 2

♥ Q J 10 9 4

♦ K J 8 6 4 2

♣ A

East

♠ 10 5

♥ A K 7 5

♦ A 5 3

♣ J 9 7 2

West

♠ A Q 8 7 6 3

♥ 6

♦ 10

♣ K 10 8 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ K J 9 4

♥ 8 3 2

♦ Q 9 7

♣ Q 5 3

	♠	♦	♥	♣	NT
N	-	2	1	-	-
S	-	2	1	-	-
E	6	-	-	5	1
W	6	-	-	5	1

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♣ ¹	x	3♥
3♠	4♦	4♠	All Pass

West	North	East	South
2♠ ²	3♣ ¹	4♠	All Pass

¹5+♥ and 5+ minor, Michael's style²Weak Two

Ignore all you might read above about East-West making a club slam. Yes, they can thanks to a couple of well-placed black-suit honours but who wants to be there?! This is a freakish deal where East-West are likely to be in spades...but how many and will South resist the temptation to double? They should be fine doubling 5♠ but below that, they should record a poor score by doing so.

Our "Rule of 20" has the West hand as a 1-level opener (9 hcp and 11 cards in the 2 longest suits). Therefore, I'm with our first West. However, they have an awkward decision after South bids 3♥. Their partner's double of 2♣ promised values and maybe a penalty double of one or both of North's suits. It would normally be right to pass and let East decide what they would like to do.

However, the West hand is not a normal opener and the vulnerability is wrong much of the time for defending at the 3-level, if their side has a making game. It is probably better for West to show long spades rather than reach into the unknown at the 4-level with a club bid. Hence, 3♠ may incur partner's wrath

if they were about to punish 3♥ (they might but it would be wrong on this day) but seems a sensible compromise.

This allows North a second bite and slightly awkward decisions for both East and South, especially South. East might choose to double 4♦, but the best they can achieve is +300. South would be loath to bid on if East chooses 4♠ though it is the winning action for their side. They will double 5♠ but although it can be made, chances are it will not.

Our second auction is after a Weak 2 and North uses 3♠ as a Michael's Cue Bid. Another option is Leaping Michaels where a jump (leap) to 4♦ shows a good hand with at least 5 diamonds and 5 hearts. Over either, East is likely to bid 4♠ knowing their partner has 6 spades.

After North's bidding, South will be surprised to see AKA in the red suits appear in dummy. North might start with ♣A hoping to score a club ruff. Not today.

♥Q continuation sees the ace taken and ♠10 played and covered. Back to dummy and a second trump with South needing to insert ♠9. Now, ♠A and ♣K and another club ensures 10 tricks for West. However, what about 11, on any lead?

Say ♥Q lead. Declarer wins to play ♠10 covered and won as above. Now, low club bringing down the ace and a diamond switch and ♠J. It does not matter whether South covers. There is always a club entry to dummy to take the spade finesse again if South does cover. 11 tricks made.

That's hard to achieve and those defending 5♠x may well get a plus score, just, for the defence! Meanwhile, there are 5 tricks for the defence, including a heart ruff, against 5♦x, with 500 not being enough compensation for the defenders though they may feel that was safer money than in 5♠x. I do not think they will have given the club slam a moment's thought!

North-South		
	Very Good	+200
	Good	+100
	Average	-170
	Poor	-620
	Very Poor	-790
	Truly Horrible	-1370

Board 17

North Deals

None Vul

North

♠ A Q 3

♥ 10 5 4 3

♦ A Q 10 8 7

♣ 8

East

♠ 9 8

♥ A J 9 6

♦ K 9 4 2

♣ 9 4 3

West

♠ 10 6 4 2

♥ K 8 2

♦ 5

♣ A K 10 7 5



South

♠ K J 7 5

♥ Q 7

♦ J 6 3

♣ Q J 6 2

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - 2 - - -

S - 2 - 1 -

E 3 - 2 - 2

W 3 - 2 - 2

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♠
2♣	x ¹	3♣	All Pass

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♣	All Pass		

¹support double

Rather tamer than the last board but the same number of match-points at stake.

It does seem better to overcall at the 2-level than a level higher though at least in the second auction, West knew their partner had some values whereas 2♣ could have been walking into a "bidding cauldron"! Not, today, though.

Our first auction gives a good example of a support double, 3-card support for responder's suit. We saw its cousin, the support redouble, on Board 5. However, here, once their opponents had reached the 3-level, South was quite happy to defend, a decision North would respect.

Meanwhile, North chose well to raise spades on our second auction, though, once again, neither partner was willing to bid over 3♣.

♠A and a trump switch would be a good start for the defence, a nebulous heart far

less so. West would win either in hand to lead their diamond. Is North brave enough to underlead to South's ♠J for a second trump. If they do, West will do very well to run the club to dummy's ♣9. Now, one spade can be ruffed and another discarded on ♦K. South will score a trump and the defence also have two top spades and ♦A. Unless West needs to find ♥Q to come to 9 tricks, they may not endanger their contract for the sake of an overtrick, though playing the ♥A on the second round will bring down the queen. If needed West may realise North did open the bidding so that there is ample reason for them to take a wrong view and finesse.

Meanwhile, there is big trouble for any South playing in spades, even bigger if they a losing diamond finesse. The defence do best to keep leading trumps but even down 2 will see North-South reasonably happy if many other tables can score 110 in 3♣.

North-South		
	Very Good	+100
	Good	+50
	Average	-50
	Poor	-100
	Very Poor	-110

Board 18

East Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ A 9

♥ A 6 3

♦ 10 9 8 4

♣ A 8 5 3

East

♠ 10 7 6 2

♥ J 9 4 2

♦ K Q 7

♣ Q 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ Q 8 5 4

♥ K Q 5

♦ J 6 5

♣ J 10 9

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	1NT	1♥	Pass
		All Pass	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT ¹	Pass	Pass
112-14		All Pass	

If I was selecting 28 interesting deals to test pairs, then this deal would never make the cut! Indeed, for many and perhaps wisely so, this might be the quickest of the boards as all four players start and end proceedings with a "pass". If West chooses to open a weak no-trump in third seat, they will buy the contract, though if West does pass, and with no major and a passed partner they really should, then it is over to North to make a bid.

Pearson's Law is a guide to decide whether or not to open in 4th seat. If the sum of our high card points and number of spades is 15 or more, then we should open the bidding. So, North has 12 hcp and 2 spades. Enough said? Let's see if this Law holds true here.

However, first, should East make a system bid (2♣ is better though some may play 2♦) to show both majors. It's no great bid with 4-4 shape and almost all their hcps in the minors.

That would see East as declarer in 2 of a major after West bids 2♦ to show equal length. Whichever major is chosen should produce the same result with two spade, three heart and ♣A as losers, down 1. So, how will -50 stack up for East-West?

I would think any minus score for East-West will be poor though let's see how North would fare in 1NT. A heart lead is safe for the defence, safety being as much as they can get on this deal. Declarer should win in dummy to run ♣J. They can recover East's heart continuation in dummy and take, successfully, a second club finesse. They will soon have three club and three heart tricks along with ♣A. So, East-West would record -90 and Pearson's Law will have been disproved.

Were West to be declarer in 1NT, North should start with ♦10. Declarer may attack either major but 4 minor suit tricks and two spades should be the limit. Again, solid unspectacular defence by continuing diamonds, should restrict West to 4 minor tricks and two in spades.

Did you finish the board with a minus score? If so, you will not be scoring particularly well on this board, which, being Pairs, carries as much importance as a slam deal. "Bread and butter" "boring". Maybe but utterly significant, nonetheless.

North-South		
	Very Good	+90
	Good	+50
	Average	0
	Poor	-90
	Very Poor	-100

Board 19

South Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ Q 8 6

♥ K J 10 5 2

♦ 5

♣ K Q 10 8

West

♠ 9 3

♥ A 7

♦ A K 8 2

♣ A J 7 6 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ K J 7 5 2

♥ 9 8 4

♦ J 10 6

♣ 9 3

South

♠ A 10 4

♥ Q 6 3

♦ Q 9 7 4 3

♣ 5 4

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - - 2 - -

W - - 2 - 1

E 1 1 - 1 -

W 1 1 - 1 -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♥	1♠	Pass
X	Pass	2♠	All Pass

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	2♥ ²	2♠	Pass
All Pass			3♥
¹ 15-17	² ♥ or perhaps ♥ and a minor		

A more competitive part-score here with North-South perhaps advancing to 3♥ which would not be correct if they can defeat 2♠.

West may start either with 1♣ or perhaps a strong no-trump. North is likely to overcall the strong no-trump in hearts and after a brief but necessary intervention from East, South will likely compete to the 3 level.

One quick move from East is also likely after North overcalls their partner's 1♣ opener, though East may pass initially and come in with 2♠ after South raises hearts. In our first auction, 1♠ showed a 5-card suit with West certainly wishing to compete over 2♥ but where? The double is a fair bid, showing two-card support, perhaps 4 diamonds and the strength to compete. Will it be correct for North-South to defend 2♠? Let's see.

Against 3♥, East is likely to look for a ruff by

starting with ♣9 whereas ♦J would probably work out better for the defence. If West takes ♣A, they are likely to switch to ♠9. This will go to East's ♠J and dummy's ace (though if declarer knows West has 2 spades, a duck here would be better.)

However, after taking ♠A, North can finesse against ♣J and then set to work on trumps. They will now suffer a spade ruff and lose a spade, ♥A and a ruff and one trick in each minor for down 1. Instead of playing trumps, North might try a high club with East ruffing and South over-ruffing. They thus cannot avoid that spade ruff.

Against 2♠, South will lead a heart. East wins and plays a second round. North can switch to trumps with the defence still able to take two trump tricks. Yet, one club and two tricks in each major is not enough for the defence. North is best to switch at trick three to their diamond. The defence can draw trumps on East with North scoring a diamond ruff in the process, the ruff being a third trump trick for a one trick set. However, on a non-diamond lead, declarer can play a trump to the jack, regain the lead and play ♠K and draw trumps, losing just two spades, two hearts and a club.

North-South		
	Very Good	+200
	Good	+140
	Average	+100
	Poor	+100
	Very Poor	-110

Board 20

West Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ A 6 5

♥ 10 5 4 3

♦ A 10 9 2

♣ A 5

East

♠ J 10 4 2

♥ A J

♦ K 8 6

♣ Q 10 7 6

West

♠ Q 3

♥ Q 8 2

♦ J 7 5 4

♣ K 8 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ K 9 8 7

♥ K 9 7 6

♦ Q 3

♣ J 9 3

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT ¹	All Pass	

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

¹12-14

Any East – West pair playing a convention where against an opponent's 1NT opening which shows clubs and a higher suit might find East trying 2♣ and seemingly striking gold. Neither North nor South would find it easy to compete over 2♣ with only a heart lead from South making East's position particularly comfortable. Indeed, a declarer could easily be conceding a disastrous -200 in this contract, making competition unnecessary.

Otherwise, expect North to be declarer in 1NT or South in 2♥. Either black suit lead from East is seemingly reasonable for the defence against 1NT as long as East does not select ♠J. If they do, West must play low though dummy's spade cards should make such a play more obvious. Of course, with East holding ♠10, on a low club lead, North can insert ♠9 which creates two club tricks for the declarer. North should, thus, come to two tricks in each suit and record a good +120.

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West should be comforted that there is no bad lead from their side against 2♥. None may immediately appeal with the unbid club suit lead looking the best choice. That should stop East from having any ideas of leading away from ♦K and the defence will soon have a spade, two hearts and one trick in each minor for – 110.

North-South		
	Very Good	+200
	Good	+120
	Average	+110
	Poor	+90
	Very Poor	-50

Board 21

North Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ 8 7

♥ A J

♦ J 10 4

♣ K J 8 6 5 2

West

♠ A Q J 6

♥ Q 10 9 8 6 4

♦ A 6 3

♣

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ K 10 9 4 3

♥ K 7 3 2

♦ K 8 7

♣ 7

South

♠ 5 2

♥ 5

♦ Q 9 5 2

♣ A Q 10 9 4 3

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N 3 1 - - -

S 3 1 - - -

E - - 6 5 -

W - - -6 5 -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	3♣
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♥	2♣	4♣ ¹	x
4NT	Pass	5♣ ²	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

¹Splinter, 4+ trumps, singleton/void ♣

²1 or 4 key cards

We emerge from the part-score zone with a slam opportunity for East-West. The bidding on this deal would be a lot different were the vulnerability the other way around as North-South could afford to be a lot more aggressive. Assuming their opponents were vulnerable, North-South would normally be sacrificing for two down doubled at the 5-level, even 3 down if not vulnerable. Of course, -500 is fine assuming most tables will bid to slam...but will they?

One out of North-South should be able to bid clubs but not North in first seat, with a poor 6-card suit and a flattish hand. However, when East passes, South might try a 3rd-in-hand 3♣ opener having both a better quality suit and better shape.

This gives West an awkward decision as

whether to double or bid hearts. Opposite a passed partner, I would prefer the safety of a 6-card suit. Our East raised a little tamely to game but their hand is ace-less. They could try 4♣ as they did in the second auction. Every so often, they strike partner with just the right hand...and this was such an occasion. Even if West doubles 3♣, it is unlikely East would look beyond game. Pre-empt makes it tough for the opposition and do work!

In our second auction, it is hard to know who would be more surprised by their partner's club bids, South by their partner's overcall or West by what seems to be a splinter bid, one or less clubs and heart support. Normally, it is not great news when both partners are very short in the same suit though here, it means that East's high-cards will be very valuable to West.

West should check that their partner has at least one of the top heart honours, rather than jumping directly to 6♥. It is useful to have 5♣ response to key-card as showing 1 (or 4) key-card so that you can bid below the trump suit (5♦) to ask for the trump queen. Not today, though, with West holding that card.

Expect most to play the board in hearts. However, if East does become declarer in 6♣, South might try their singleton heart. There is no reason for North to play the jack. Up with the ace and return partner's lead: a rare North/South plus score.

North-South	Very Good	50
	Good	-230
	Average	-480
	Poor	-500
	Very Poor	-980

Board 22

East Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ A 9 8 7 2

♥ Q 8

♦ K Q 4

♣ Q 6 3

West

♠ J 6 5 4

♥ K 5 3

♦ 10 8

♣ J 8 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ 10 3

♥ A 9 6 2

♦ 6 5 2

♣ A 10 9 7

East

♠ K Q

♥ J 10 7 4

♦ A J 9 7 3

♣ K 5

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1♦	Pass
		1NT ¹	All Pass

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	1NT ¹	Pass
¹ 12-14		All Pass	

Back to the world of part-scores at a very low level. In the first auction, where East/West are playing a strong no-trump, West's bid should silence North. Would you call 1♠ with your 5-count? It's marginal. With 5 hcp and a 4-card major, it is often right to call though here two jacks do not make it a particularly good 5-count. However, if West passes, North will step in with 1♠ and since it is doubtful whether anyone will disturb that bid, a bid by West might work out better.

Where West does take a bid, it is important that East limits their hand with 1NT and does not bid their second suit. 2♥ would show a much stronger hand (a reverse), no less than 16 hcp. 1NT is also a better bid than simply rebidding a 5-card diamond suit. A heart fit should never be missed.

After the 1NT opening, North's 5-card spade overcall is more appealing than were North directly after the no-trump bid. The hand is

shapeless but at least North knows from West's pass that South will have some values. An alternative to 2♣ is doubling, which can be a little less than the 15+ hcp normally required because they are in the pass-out seat. The stakes would become rather higher with the double. Indeed, if West starts running, they will find no particularly comfortable spot at the 2 level.

So, 1NT by East, doubled or not. South has a non-too-exciting choice of leads. ♠10 would be inspired and should beat the contract but still requires top defence. The other black 10 looks more likely. With declarer playing low from dummy, North should encourage clubs with ♣K taking the first trick. The best line for East (low to ♦10) is by no means the obvious one but if found should produce 4 diamond tricks once they finally get to dummy with ♥K... and probably therefore a successful contract. However, a heart to the king would work as well, to be followed by ♦10. The combination of ♣J and ♣8 prevents the defence from taking more than 2 club tricks. East should scramble home with 7 tricks.

Meanwhile, North may be attempting to make 2♠. The defence are likely to start with a heart to the king and perhaps a diamond switch. Declarer can now discard one of their diamond losers on ♥Q and only has to guess the true club position to make 8 tricks. The only 100% way to beat 2♠ is an initial low diamond lead away from ♦A (or when in for the first time with a trump) and that lead is just not recommended. Not that 2♠ is easy to make.

North-South		
	Very Good	+200
	Good	+110
	Average	+100
	Poor	-90
	Very Poor	-100

Board 23

South Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ Q

♥ A 10 7

♦ A K J 9 8

♣ J 10 9 7

West

♠ K 2

♥ Q J 4

♦ 7 6 5 3

♣ Q 8 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ A J 9 6 4

♥ K 8 6 2

♦ 10

♣ K 6 3

South

♠ 10 8 7 5 3

♥ 9 5 3

♦ Q 4 2

♣ A 5

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	x	Pass
2♣	All Pass		1♠

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	x	Pass
x	2♣	2♥	1♠
			All Pass

3♦ may be harder to bid by North-South than to make, unless the 1♦ opener promises at least a 5-card suit. North will not like their partner's spade bid while, especially vulnerable, South may feel that one bid is enough for their hand.

East has a reasonably classic take-out double shape, even if minimum in hcps. They have both majors, always a good point. However, in our first auction, West chose to bid their club suit causing the other three players to pass with varying reasons. North had club length and shortage in partner's suit. East and South were not strong enough for a second bid. So, 2♣ became the contract. North's ♠Q did West no harm but they had poor trumps and lots of potential diamond losers. North can win the diamond continuation and play ♠J overtaken by South to play a second round.

West continues with a heart from dummy but

North wins to play a third round of clubs. There will be 2 trump, 3 diamond and ♥A to lose for one down, -100.

In our second auction, faced with an awkward choice of actions after their partner's double, West chose to double rather than bid their 4-card club suit. Another alternative might simply be to pass. This double can mean different things for different partnerships. I prefer it to show at least 4 spades, so as not to dismiss the suit as playable despite the opponent's bid. Hence, I would not double here. However, for others, it shows 4 hearts. Now, only three here but if partner has a 4-card suit, 2♥ might be a playable contract, a nice idea in this major-suit world. Let's see.

A likely lead from South is a diamond with a second high diamond continuation. East might try a trump to the jack and North's ace. Say North returns a trump. Win ♥K, and play a club to dummy. It costs South a trick to take their ace. So, they duck and East ruffs a second diamond. Now spade to the king, ♥J drawing trumps and two more spade tricks comes to 8 tricks, a lucky but nice score. A little harder on an initial spade lead though one down would still be better than conceding 110 against a diamond part-score.

In diamonds, East might lead a low club, ducked to West. Club losers should be restricted to one, meaning that with just three major suit losers, declarer should manage 9 tricks.

North-South		
	Very Good	+200
	Good	+110
	Average	+100
	Poor	-100
	Very Poor	-110

Board 24

West Deals

None Vul

North

♠ J

♥ 10 9 7 6

♦ K 4 3

♣ A K Q 7 2

West

♠ 10 8 5 3 2

♥ J 8 4

♦ 10 9 5

♣ 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ A K Q 7 6

♥ A 3

♦ A 6 2

♣ 10 5 3

East

♠ 9 4

♥ K Q 5 2

♦ Q J 8 7

♣ J 9 8

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	4♣ ¹
Pass	4NT ²	Pass	5♦ ³
Pass	6♦ ⁴	Pass	7♣
All Pass			

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

¹Minorwood ²key cards & ♣Q

³side-suit king ask ⁴♦K or 1 side suit king (after 5NT) (your choice)

Aces are good, very good, frequently worth more than 4 hcp, and South has plenty of them along with a decent side-suit and trump support. Indeed, South would be rather hopeful that their partner had a 6-card suit. That would be wonderful. A side-suit king would be even better and a spade suit that set up for discards.

So, in our first auction, North used Minorwood (a clear jump to 4♣) to check on key-cards...and North owned up to two + ♣Q. If North had a king, especially the ♥K, that could add up to 12 tricks even without a discard on the spades. So, asking for side-suit kings would be a great idea and the next

non-trump suit after 4NT should be the request (much more efficient than 5NT) though if the response is shown by the suit where the king is, then the answer either way would be the same, 6♦.

That is 12 on top if North has 6 clubs and spades has the potential for an extra trick. So, South may well try for all 13, probably in clubs in case ruffing is involved. North will think they are about to make all 13 with their so useful ♠J but they are a club short and the spade break is unkind. Unlucky if you tried for grand.

Meanwhile, South in our second auction was not using Minorwood and reverted to 4NT ace-ask. The 5♠ response confirmed all the key-cards were present with 6♦ showing perhaps 1 king. South could not underwrite 13 tricks especially if the ♣J was missing and also if their partner did have only 5 clubs and a 4-card red suit. So, they settled for just 12 tricks and would score well for playing in no-trumps. A 3-2 club break is only 68%, the minimum you need for a good grand-slam. Add on here a little for the singleton jack but caution here was the right action...a little unlucky for those who chose to try for all 13 tricks.

With many unlikely to go past the game level, it was a case of "if only" for those who did try for grand-slam.

North-South		
	Very Good	+990
	Good	+920
	Average	+490
	Poor	+420
	Very Poor	-50

Board 25

North Deals

E-W Vul

North

♠ A Q 10 9 6 2

♥ A 7

♦ 9 5 3

♣ 8 5

West

♠ 7 5 4 3

♥ K J 6

♦ K Q 4

♣ K 9 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

East

♠ K 8

♥ 10 8 5 2

♦ 6 2

♣ A 10 7 6 3

South

♠ J

♥ Q 9 4 3

♦ A J 10 8 7

♣ Q J 2

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - 2 - 1 -

S - 3 - 2 -

E 2 - 1 - -

W 2 - 1 - -

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♠	All Pass	

West	North	East	South
	2♠	All Pass	

It may be that a Weak 2 opening works out better than an upgrade to 1♠ on this North hand. However, with an outside ace and a very powerful trump suit, this hand really does merit a 1-level opening. The only negative is the lack of a singleton.

Of course, South will wish they had stopped in 2♠ after their partner's 1-level opener, when North struggles at the 3-level. South does indeed have a good invitation opposite a 1-level opener. Next time, their partner will be an ace or king stronger and game can be made.

However, the ultimate winners on this deal might be those who play the Multi 2♦ where North opens 2♦ and South bids a "pass or correct" 2♠ showing either just better hearts than spades or game interest in hearts, as is your choice. While West has a particularly unpleasant choice of opening leads (a trump is by far the best), the defence can get off to a good start with East on lead and chooses

either red suit.

Even after the Multi 2♦, West is not worth a bid, nor indeed after the Weak 2♠ is passed around to them. Their only 4+ card suit is the enemy suit. Meanwhile, in our first auction, North may not pass 2NT as their hand is unsuitable for no trump play. Sometimes against 2NT, the defence might find the killing defence of a low club to the ace and a heart switch which very soon will cut South off from their dummy. After South had bid diamonds, West's more logical lead is a club (a spade lead will suit South). The defence can set up four club tricks and ♠K but if they do not find the heart switch at trick 3, South will indeed score 5 spades, a club and 2 aces for a huge result.

Meanwhile, East may well choose a heart (♥8, second highest) against a spade contract by North. They do not need a diamond ruff with North likely to hold ♠A. To North, that seems unlikely to be a lead from the king. So, insert ♥9 to the jack and ace. Taking a double diamond finesse to get to dummy might some days be a winner but not on this one. The spade finesse only works if West has Kx. There is therefore something to be said to just play ♠A then ♠Q. East has to switch to a low heart and if declarer again withholds the ♥Q, they will get a bonus when West has to play the king.

Suddenly, the defence are on the back-foot and will find it hard to take their four minor suit tricks. At best, they will now get three along with one trick in each major. It seems that in order to defeat 2♠, East does have to lead a diamond after all.

North-South		
	Very Good	+120
	Good	+110
	Average	+100
	Poor	-50
	Very Poor	-100

Board 26

East Deals

Both Vul

North

♠ A 4

♥ J 8 7 2

♦ J 8 2

♣ A J 6 2

West

♠ 8 7 6 5 2

♥ 9 6 3

♦ 9 3

♣ Q 9 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

South

♠ J 9

♥ A K Q 5

♦ K 7 6 5

♣ K 5 3

East

♠ K Q 10 3

♥ 10 4

♦ A Q 10 4

♣ 10 8 7

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	4	3	5	1	3
S	4	3	5	1	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	1NT ¹
Pass	4♥	Pass	2♥
		All Pass	

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

¹15-17

A routine path to game whether your opening 1NT range is 12-14 or stronger. Some East players may be tempted to start either with 1♦ or 1NT themselves. West will only bid if forced and if South makes a penalty double of 1NT, West runs to spades. In such a situation, it is a good idea to play the next double by either partner as a take-out double. If that is the case, then reaching 4♥ should be straightforward. If 2♠x became the final contract, the six tricks the defence could take would not compensate for the missed vulnerable game.

The majority, though, will have an uninterrupted sequence to 4♥ though either North or South could be declarer. If South where declarer has shown a 15-17 no trump hand, West might choose their top diamond. After all, they know their partner has high cards

or else their opponents would be slamming. Alternatively, they may try a low club which just might confuse a declarer who does not put in the jack at trick 1.

East, who knows their partner must have very little and who may have heard South bid diamonds, can start with ♠K. North may as well win that trick and draw trumps as they have an awkward diamond suit to handle.

So, whatever the lead, the declarer can draw trumps and then play clubs in the normal fashion, ♠K and a second club to the jack. The ace brings down the queen and South's spade loser can be discarded on the 13th club.

The declarer then has ♠A, 4 clubs and 5 trump tricks. The simple approach then for an overtrick is a diamond towards the king; 11 tricks. An extra overtrick should only occur where East exits a low diamond when taking their ace on the first round of the suit.

The only problem might occur where East has opened the bidding. While this would confirm where the ♦A has to be, a declarer may presume the ♠Q is there as well. However, even if declarer plays East for doubleton ♠Q, they might not make 10 tricks as a sneaky exit of ♦Q or simply just the third club (after cashing ♠Q) might even leave North a trick short of their game.

North-South		
	Very Good	+680
	Good	+650
	Average	+620
	Poor	+200
	Very Poor	-100

Board 27

South Deals

None Vul

North

♠ J 10

♥ 6 3

♦ J 9 8 5 4

♣ Q J 7 3

West

♠ A K 9 6

♥ 10 4

♦ A Q 3 2

♣ A 10 9



East

♠ 7 3 2

♥ Q 9 8 7

♦ K 10 6

♣ K 6 5

South

♠ Q 8 5 4

♥ A K J 5 2

♦ 7

♣ 8 4 2

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

Possible Auctions

West	North	East	South
1NT ¹	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	2♦ ³	Pass	2♣ ²
Pass	Pass	Pass ⁴	2♥

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT ¹	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

¹15-17 ²Both majors ³Equal length in majors

⁴double if it is a penalty double

25 hcps are often enough for 3NT. Maybe, except when they are not! With no long suit and no particular fit, the contract may fail. That is why opposite a 15-17 INT opening, a totally flat 8-count is not that good a holding to go looking for game. That is why our East hand passed out 1NT on this board. We will see that even 17 opposite that hand may not be enough. There again, when you pass out 1NT, strange things may happen.

In came South in the balancing seat with a respectable enough 10 count, 5-4 in the majors, all points in the long suits, with a reasonable expectation of points in their partner's hand. 4 will be an extreme disappointment especially if their opponents are playing penalty doubles. Luckily for some Souths, their opponents are

playing take-out doubles...and if 2NT from East is artificial (Lebensohl, maybe both minors), then South could be left to play 2♥ undoubled. However, West might just try a take-out double of 2♥ and East will not take it out!

With only three minor suit losers, 2♥ might not play too badly for South. The defence have also two top spades and a trump trick but need to prevent declarer ruffing a fourth round of spades. Even two down would be a reasonable result for South unless doubled.

In our second auction, East's heart bid would silence South. East elected to raise 1NT, perhaps on the basis of reasonable diamond cards. West would be happy to accept the invitation. With spades not mentioned, the lead of either black suit is possible, though North will soon regret any club lead.

Any club lead gives West 8 top tricks (3 in each minor suit and 2 spades). The ninth can come from the diamond finesse, though there seems no particular reason to take it. Otherwise, West can turn to spades, with a three-three break or as works here, two top spades and then play the third round from dummy. South has no answer.

However, the pendulum perhaps favours the defence on ♠J lead. West now needs both three spade tricks and the diamond finesse.

What though if South doubled 3NT, such a double suggesting strongly the lead of dummy's first bid suit, hearts? That immediately gives South three tricks, though they should take the jack and switch. (Interestingly, a duck at trick one by South puts huge pressure to keep North off lead as if they do, then a second heart does defeat the contract.) A low spade is the most obvious switch...and it's over to West to play spades and diamonds correctly. So, 3NT is there to be made but that is not to say it always will.

North-South		
	Very Good	+100
	Good	-50
	Average	-150
	Poor	-300
	Very Poor	-400

Board 28

West Deals

N-S Vul

North

♠ Q 10 7 5 4

♥ K 4 3

♦ Q 9 2

♣ Q 6

East

♠ K 2

♥ 5 2

♦ K J 10 7 6

♣ K 10 9 4

West

♠ J 6 3

♥ Q J 10 8 7 6

♦ A 8

♣ J 5



South

♠ A 9 8

♥ A 9

♦ 5 4 3

♣ A 8 7 3 2

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT

N - - - 2 1

S - - - 2 -

E 1 2 2 - -

W 1 2 2 - -

Possible Auctions

West

2♥

North

All Pass

East

South

West

2♦¹

Pass

¹Multi 2♦

North

Pass

2♠

²Pass or Correct

East

2♥²

All Pass

South

Pass

I think all would open the West hand as a Weak 2 though there will be much debate as to whether North or South should bid over it as -110 will not score that well for North-South. Of course, if North balances, 2♠ may not end the bidding and will result in some -200's against North-South.

Then, if South does call, will it be an off-shape double or a disastrous 3♣ bid? Maybe, no action is the best action.

North is likely to lead a spade against 2♥.... and that should solve one problem for West. If South takes their ace, they should play ♥A and a second trump. Now, some good guessing in the minors from West will be needed to keep their total losers to 5.

Meanwhile, the slower Multi auction gives North two chances to bid. They do not need to overcall the first time, a really bad idea if West's Weak 2 was in spades (it does happen!). Second time round, they know their

partner has values and the wafer-thin overcall becomes safer.

South will do well to pass this bid as three aces and a doubleton heart are all good assets. Also, North might be a little stronger than they were. Yet, Pairs is not really about bidding and making very tight games. South will surely not get a bad score for passing out 2♠. Indeed, this time, with three diamonds and a club to lose, as well as one trump, they need to play carefully to make even 8 tricks. Don't forget to ruff that heart loser before playing trumps. +110 will be a nice score for whichever side is declaring.

North-South		
	Very Good	+100
	Good	+50
	Average	-100
	Poor	-110
	Very Poor	-200

SESSION TIPS

Board 1 Although we recommend opening the lower of 2 x 4-card suits, consider opening the higher of both minors, especially if not strong, as this enables you to bid both suits more comfortably in a competitive auction.

Board 4 After your partner makes a value showing redouble (10+ hcp) after your opening bid and an opponent's double, it is normal for you (the opener) to pass an opponent's bid round to your partner to see if they wish to make a penalty double. You would only bid if you were extremely distributional. Unless otherwise agreed, doubles by your side are all for penalties.

Board 5 Especially if you play a weak no-trump opening, there is no guarantee that Stayman is a 10+ hcp game try. It can be bid with zero points to find a fit as playing in no-trumps will not be a good idea with such a weak hand opposite. This is sometimes referred to as "Garbage Stayman."

A support double occurs when you open with a suit at the one-level and your partner bids a second suit. Then an opponent bids a third suit. Double by opener shows exactly 3- card support for responder's suit. Similarly, when the opponent doubles, redouble by opener says the same.

These actions do not promise any particular strength, just three-card support. These can be very useful actions. (for a Support Double in action, see Board 17.)

Board 6 When you open 1 of a major and after partner's change of suit bid, jump to game in your major shows a 7+ card suit but minimum point count, using Fast Arrival principles.

Board 7 Assuming your hcp falls within your no-trump range, it is quite a good idea to open 1NT with a 5332 shape which includes a 5-card major. You can then choose to play a check-back version of Stayman to find the 5-card major or just play Simple Stayman, ignoring the fact that the major could be a 5-card suit. Board 10 shows an advantage of playing this style as there the rebid of hearts at the 2-level (1♥-1♠-2♥ guarantees a 6-card suit.)

Your side opens 1NT. An opponent shows both majors and their partner chooses one. This is a good time to lead a trump as the declarer is often very short in the other major and wants to use their trumps to ruff some of their partner's losers in that suit.