ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need

Wednesday 8th November 2023

Together we can …

… and by competing in this Simultaneous Pairs you have once again certainly shown that **together we can indeed do something to help make a difference** to children who really need our help. Over the past years we (well you) have helped raise an amazing **£1,277,280.68** … hopefully we will be a good bit more to that this year!

Thank you so so much for coming along and joining in, playing and donating – please don't forget the donating bit though, will you – just go to :

https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp

and you will see how you can do it – if you haven't already done so of course!

Our thanks, as always, go to our commentators: Mark Horton for his words of wisdom on Monday and Friday, Brian Senior did the analysis for the Thursday session and Julian Pottage completes the crew, writing up the Tuesday and Wednesday events. It's always interesting to see if they got it right but you will have discovered that by now of course !

With very best wishes

Anna & Mark – the ECatsBridge Team

Board 1			Dealer N
	♠	9	
	♥	AQJ6432	Vul: None
	♦	A	
	♣	7643	
♠ KQ104			♠ 532
♥ 8			♥ K107
♦ KQ953			♦ J842
♣ KJ2			♣ A85
	♠	AJ876	
	♥	95	
	♦	1076	
	♣	Q109	

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

North, who is too strong (with two aces and 11 HCP) for a pre-empt, opens 1♥. West, with a decent five-card suit and no real alternative, overcalls 2♦ in the sandwich seat. North is likely to finish in 3♥, possibly bidding it directly over 2♦.

3♥ should make. Although the ♥K and ♣J are both offside, declarer has just enough trumps to retain control for setting up and enjoying a long club.

4♦ makes East-West despite the fact that North has a singleton spade. The defenders do not get to make three aces and a ruff because any defensive spade ruff is with the ace of trumps.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 2			Dealer E
	♠	QJ94	
	♥	752	Vul: N-S
	♦	J53	
	♣	643	
♠ K86			♠ 10532
♥ AK84			♥ Q10
♦ 1082			♦ KQ74
♣ J95			♣ A107
	♠	A7	
	♥	J963	
	♦	A96	
	♣	KQ82	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1NT
All Pass			

The ECatsBridge Team are Anna Gudge & Mark Newton

Mill Cottage Voy

Stromness, Orkney KW16 3HX

Tel: 01787 881920

Email: anna@ecats.co.uk **** Website: https://www.ecatsbridge.com/

At some tables East will look favourably on the vulnerability and the three tens to find an opening bid. Assuming East passes, South opens 1NT if playing a weak no-trump. Nobody has reason to disturb this. I have heard of one or two people who play that a double of 1NT by a passed hand shows a maximum pass. To me it does not sound right to be doubling when you know you have a weaker hand than the opening bidder.

West is likely to start with a top heart and needs to be careful not to crash East's ♥Q at trick two. If the ♥10 looks encouraging, West should continue with a low heart. If ♥10 is discouraging (reverse signals in use), West should switch. If West does switch, a diamond works better than something black. Given the spades in dummy, it is easy to avoid a spade switch – but less clear why to steer clear of clubs. Declarer happens to hold four clubs but could as easily hold four diamonds. Quite often the defenders will drop a trick, allowing declarer to escape for one down.

If North-South play a strong no-trump then South opens 1♣ and East reopens with 1NT. It is probably easier for East-West make eight tricks when the partnership's combined assets are visible.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 3 — Dealer S — Vul: E-W

	♠ QJ106 ♥ 108632 ♦ Q1082 ♣	
♠ 874 ♥ J ♦ KJ97 ♣ 75432		♠ A92 ♥ AK974 ♦ A4 ♣ AK8
	♠ K53 ♥ Q5 ♦ 653 ♣ QJ1096	

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

With 22 HCP and a 5-card suit, East can reasonably treat the hand as worth 23 points and so open 2♣ rather than 2NT. If five-card Stayman is in use, West might check for a possible 5-3 spade fit rather than simply raising 2NT to 3NT.

If clubs were 3-2, 3NT would be very likely to make. So long as whoever has the three clubs does not have five spades as well, there would be nine tricks by way of one spade, two hearts, two diamonds and four clubs.

In practice declarer very quickly finds out that the clubs are actually 5-0. Because North has discards to find on the clubs, the defenders cannot stop declarer from making one more trick to add to the seven top winners. One down in 3NT would seem a normal result.

In theory East-West do best to play in clubs with ten tricks possible. In real life, as South might double 5♣ but would never double 3NT, they do not.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 4 — Dealer W — Vul: Both

	♠ 932 ♥ 1065 ♦ 72 ♣ KJ753	
♠ QJ6 ♥ Q9832 ♦ 954 ♣ A10		♠ 1087 ♥ AK4 ♦ J6 ♣ Q9862
	♠ AK54 ♥ J7 ♦ AKQ1083 ♣ 4	

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

West does not have a great suit for the 1♥ overcall but, as a passed hand, Oscar Wilde's quote 'I can resist anything but temptation' comes to mind. East would make an assuming cue bid facing an unpassed hand but, knowing game is not on here, simply raises 1♥ to 2♥. Whether South should double 2♥ or bid 2♠ is debatable. 2♠ could sound like a hand with five spades and six diamonds. South does not mind doubling with a view to converting 3♣ to 3♦.

Against a diamond contract the defenders probably start with three rounds of hearts. West should work out to go in with the ♣A on the first round of clubs because East's inability to open in third seat means that declarer knows West has the ♣A and would guess right if there was a guess. Taking the ♣A stops any overtricks in 3♦.

In a heart contract, the possibility that South could score a club ruff or at least effect an uppercut restricts declarer's options and means that the defenders should manage to score six tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 5

	♠ K7 ♥ A98 ♦ AJ72 ♣ A1074	Dealer N Vul: N-S
♠ 103 ♥ KJ7654 ♦ 83 ♣ J85		♠ AQJ986 ♥ Q10 ♦ KQ5 ♣ Q6
	♠ 542 ♥ 32 ♦ 10964 ♣ K932	

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	Pass
Pass	Dble	Rdbl	2♦
Pass	Pass	2♠	All Pass

Playing a weak no-trump, North has too many points for that and makes a suit opening. East has a strong hand for a simple overcall and conveys this by redoubling after North has made a reopening double.

If North-South play a strong no-trump, North opens 1NT and East's action depends upon the methods in use. Again it is likely that East-West will declare a spade partial.

South is likely to lead whichever minor North has bid against 3♠, which turns out to be helpful to declarer. 3♠ is makeable even on a trump lead if declarer runs five rounds of trumps, forcing North to come down to a doubleton ace in one suit or another. Making nine tricks is slightly simpler with hearts as trumps because declarer has the option of ruffing the third round of diamonds to create an entry to hand.

If North is in a no-trump contract, the unlikely start of the ♥Q overtaken with the ♥K would enable the defenders to make eight tricks. More likely East leads a spade. Then if declarer goes after clubs then it is possible to make six tricks in all.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 6

	♠ K9 ♥ A532 ♦ A92 ♣ AQ86	Dealer E Vul: E-W
♠ QJ10 ♥ 9864 ♦ K43 ♣ 943		♠ 8532 ♥ Q10 ♦ Q765 ♣ K75
	♠ A764 ♥ KJ7 ♦ J108 ♣ J102	

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

If North-South play a weak no-trump, North opens one of a suit and rebids 1NT. If they play a strong no-trump, North opens 1NT. Either way, the partnership should reach 3NT.

In 3NT most lines lead to one overtrick. The ♣K is offside while the ♥Q is onside, which means that declarer can take three tricks in each rounded suit. With the ♦K-Q split between the defenders, it should be possible to make two tricks in each pointed suit in addition.

Probably the most challenging opening lead against 3NT is a spade. There is then a danger of losing two tricks in spades as well as losing finesses to the ♦Q and ♣K. The solution is to work out that if the ♠5 is second highest then West has three of the four higher spades, which means that winning both the first and second rounds of spades will block the spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 7

	♠ K653 ♥ A85 ♦ 10653 ♣ KJ	Dealer S Vul: Both
♠ 97 ♥ J102 ♦ A92 ♣ 109642		♠ AJ4 ♥ 63 ♦ Q874 ♣ AQ87
	♠ Q1082 ♥ KQ974 ♦ KJ ♣ 53	

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

If you give full value to the king-jack doubleton as four points, the South hand satisfies the rule of 20, which means that more players will open the South hand than not. After South raises to 2♠, North would quite like to make 3♥ as a non-forcing game try – but whether it would be non-forcing is debatable. At least 2NT conveys the lack of a fifth spade. South, with four spades and a minimum opener, easily decides to sign off in 3♠.

If South passes as dealer, East opens 1NT in North seat and South will usually overcall 2♣ (Landy, both majors). Again North declares a spade partial, though possibly stopping in 2♠ this way.

With the ♠J onside but the ♣A-Q offside, making nine tricks with spades as trumps is likely to depend upon a winning view in the diamond suit. East wants to lead a diamond earlyish in the play, though ideally not at trick one as declarer will surely not play East to have underlead the ♦A when South could have a singleton diamond.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 8

	♠ 5 ♥ K82 ♦ A987 ♣ AJ1095	Dealer W Vul: None
♠ A8732 ♥ J74 ♦ QJ1064 ♣		♠ KQ64 ♥ Q103 ♦ K52 ♣ 876
	♠ J109 ♥ A965 ♦ 3 ♣ KQ432	

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

The cards fit well for North-South with the ♦A facing a singleton and little spade wastage for South facing North's spade singleton. Although 5♣ is thus an excellent contract, they are unlikely to get as high as game. They should, however, manage to buy the contract.

With three-card heart support and a singleton spade, North should raise hearts rather than rebid the clubs. South should be alive to the possibility that North has raised with three-card support and offer clubs as trumps.

Because trumps are 3-0, the defenders would not need to rush to cash their spade trick to hold a club contract to eleven tricks. As it happens, East is likely to start with a spade. Declarer should play to ruff three diamonds in the South hand, though with hearts 3-3 those who draw three rounds of trumps will get away with it.

If East-West declare a spade contract, the defenders can make five tricks if South scores two diamond ruffs.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 9 — Dealer N — Vul: E-W

	♠ KJ107 ♥ J82 ♦ 76 ♣ KQJ4	
♠ A852 ♥ Q5 ♦ AJ9852 ♣ 7		♠ Q943 ♥ AK6 ♦ K104 ♣ 952
	♠ 6 ♥ 109743 ♦ Q3 ♣ A10863	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Dble	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Playing a weak no-trump, East opens 1NT. West uses Stayman and, on finding a spade fit, bids game. The shape and source of tricks make the West hand too strong merely to invite game.

If East-West play a strong no-trump, it is unclear whether West will respond 1♦ or 1♠ to a 1♣ opening. If West does become declarer in 4♠, it will be easy to find the initial club lead.

If North has not doubled 2♣, South is likely to lead a heart against 4♠. Declarer can then make an overtrick by discarding dummy's club on the third heart, crossing to the ♦A and leading low spade towards the ♠Q.

An opening club lead, which South will find if North has doubled 2♣, definitely saves the overtrick in 4♠. On a club continuation, again it works best to start trumps low away from the ace.

Since there is no need to lose two spade tricks if diamonds are trumps, eleven tricks are available with diamonds as trumps – but 4♠ even without an overtrick outscores 5♦ making.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	5	-	4	2
W	-	5	-	4	2

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Board 10 — Dealer E — Vul: Both

	♠ 95 ♥ A103 ♦ Q8643 ♣ 876	
♠ K1073 ♥ KQ974 ♦ 52 ♣ 102		♠ AQJ864 ♥ J852 ♦ ♣ A53
	♠ 2 ♥ 6 ♦ AKJ1097 ♣ KQJ94	

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

The South hand is strong enough I think to make an unusual no-trump overcall with a view to continuing with 3♦ if North bids 3♣. For

East-West it is useful to play that 3♣ and 3♦ by responder are conventional (3♣ showing the unbid major and 3♦ support for opener's major). West's 3♦ thus shows a decent spade raise.

North with five-card diamond support and the ♥A, which is likely to be working even facing a shortage, bids 5♦ without waiting to find out how high East-West plan to go. East, looking at a void in diamonds and a good six-card spade suit makes the fairly rare decision to bid five over five.

On any lead other than the singleton heart, 5♠ makes. With attractive honour combinations in both minors, it will be quite difficult to find the heart lead. If South does lead a heart, North should have no difficulty in reading it as a singleton – why otherwise would South lead the suit?

5♦ would make exactly with just the two black aces to lose.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 11

	♠ A87 ♥ KQ52 ♦ Q1063 ♣ A9	Dealer S Vul: None
♠ QJ6 ♥ A1087 ♦ 97 ♣ KJ76		♠ K1032 ♥ 963 ♦ AK4 ♣ 1084
	♠ 954 ♥ J4 ♦ J852 ♣ Q532	

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

The bidding comes down to earth after the dizzy heights of board 10.

Playing a weak no-trump and four-card majors, North opens 1♥ in third seat. Having already passed and knowing that neither side vulnerable is the ideal vulnerability for declaring, West protects with 1NT.

Knowing that West is ready for a heart lead, North probably leads the ♦3. If declarer wins and attacks spades, North does best to hold up the ♠A. The knowledge that North has length in both red suits and three spades might enable declarer to place North with a doubleton club. Entries permitting, if you know that North has a doubleton club, you would play South for Q-9-x-x – but the entry situation may dictate otherwise.

If North-South are playing a strong no-trump, North opens 1NT and surely buys the contract there. The defenders should have no problem taking eight tricks and might get nine if East finds the optimum card (the ♣8) when switching to clubs after getting back in and running the spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 12

	♠ Q9 ♥ AK74 ♦ Q10643 ♣ Q2	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ 107432 ♥ J953 ♦ J9 ♣ 106		♠ A865 ♥ 10 ♦ A72 ♣ A8543
	♠ KJ ♥ Q862 ♦ K85 ♣ KJ97	

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

With no-trump orientated holdings in both black suits and a moderate diamond suit, North will often open a weak no-trump if that is an

option. South then uses Stayman and, with 13 HCP, albeit not very good ones, is going to raise 2♥ to game.

If North-South are playing a strong no-trump or North does not fancy 1NT with two doubletons and opens 1♦, South responds 1♥ and North raises to 2♥. East, who had the wrong shape (the singleton heart) for doubling 1♦, can happily double 2♥. Possibly the increased chance of a 4-1 heart split will enable North-South to stay out of game – but that is always difficult with a combined 26 HCP.

On any reasonable defence 4♥ is going to fail. Even if declarer reads East's ♥10 as a singleton, there is no real way home. Drawing all the trumps would mean that the defenders get to run the spades while not drawing them would allow West to score a diamond ruff.

3NT makes if East starts with a low club but fails by two tricks on an initial spade lead.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 13 — Dealer N — Vul: Both

	♠ KQ ♥ K10 ♦ AK9532 ♣ A84	
♠ J73 ♥ AQ32 ♦ 8 ♣ J9532		♠ A64 ♥ J9864 ♦ QJ7 ♣ K10
	♠ 109852 ♥ 75 ♦ 1064 ♣ Q76	

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

With the six-card diamond suit, North might consider upgrading the hand to a 2NT opening but should devalue the spade holding and settle for 1♦.

While East's hearts are poor, the strength of the hand justifies the overcall. Holding four-card heart support and some shape, West raises to the 'level of the fit', jumping to 3♥. This stymies North.

How is the play likely to go in 3♥? As North has bid diamonds, South leads a diamond. North, seeing the singleton diamond in dummy, may well win and switch to a spade. If declarer takes the losing trump finesse, North after winning might cash a spade and switch to a low club. At this point North has already turned up with plenty of values for an opening bid and it is not a certainty which defender has the ♣A. Declarer will probably guess right – but a losing guess (finessing the ♣10) could result in down two because South would gain the lead and give North a spade ruff.

If North plays in 2NT, East leads a heart. Declarer wins and clears the diamonds. Best defence is then for the defenders to run the hearts. This squeezes North out of a diamond winner and down to a singleton ♣A, after which a low club switch means two down. Of course South might well transfer into spades if North opens 2NT – but 3♠ can go two down too.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 14 — Dealer E — Vul: None

	♠ A105 ♥ 8763 ♦ AQ106 ♣ 64	
♠ 64 ♥ A1092 ♦ J974 ♣ Q108		♠ KQJ732 ♥ J ♦ 852 ♣ J72
	♠ 98 ♥ KQ54 ♦ K3 ♣ AK953	

West	North	East	South
		2♠	Dble
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

East has a classic hand for a weak two opening. The doubleton diamond means that the South hand is less perfect for a takeout double – but the strength of the hand, the lack of a spade stopper and the presence of four hearts make it by far the best of the alternatives.

If you play Lebensohl, North's 3♥ is constructive (a weaker hand would bid 2NT first), hence South's raise to 4♥.

With trumps 4-1 and the ace offside, making 4♥ is not easy. Although you can make it on a trump endplay after ducking the first spade, the more natural line is to win the first spade and immediately play three rounds of diamonds to get rid of South's second spade. You then get home with six top winners, a trump, a spade ruff, a diamond ruff and a club ruff.

3NT plays well. You can hold up the ♠A (until the second round if you trust East to have a six-card suit) and duck a club into the West hand. After that the run of the clubs means that West has to find two discards. Parting with the ♥2 is painless but finding a second discard is tricky.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 15

	♠ KJ104 ♥ 976 ♦ AK95 ♣ 62	Dealer S Vul: N-S
♠ Q75 ♥ Q10 ♦ 7643 ♣ A954		♠ 93 ♥ AJ832 ♦ QJ108 ♣ QJ
	♠ A862 ♥ K54 ♦ 2 ♣ K10873	

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	

I am not sure what I can say about this auction, other than to say that it proves we do not edit out boards that are likely to result in a pass out.

The vulnerability makes it unlikely that North or South would stretch to open. Possibly North could open 1♠ – a spade lead likely is likely to work reasonably if East declares. The downside is that you do not feel totally comfortable about passing 2♣ response holding two low clubs.

So far as East goes, the hand falls well short on the rule of 15 for fourth seat openings (add HCP and number of spades to see whether it comes to 15 or more). While it is true that the vulnerability is favourable, possession of the spade suit tends to be important whatever the vulnerability.

If North does open 1♠, South raises to 3♠. On the normal lead of the ♦Q, declarer has the chance for an overtrick in 3♠ by discarding one of dummy's hearts on the second diamond and then playing a club. You will also need to play West for the ♠Q to make the tenth trick.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 16

	♠ KQ8 ♥ K964 ♦ J1082 ♣ 104	Dealer W Vul: E-W
♠ AJ9542 ♥ Q32 ♦ KQ9 ♣ 2		♠ 10763 ♥ A10 ♦ A764 ♣ 953
	♠ ♥ J875 ♦ 53 ♣ AKQJ876	

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

For most, West's opening bid of 1♠ and East's raise to 2♠ will be popular choices. Optimists in the South seat might think of bidding 3♠, if that would ask North for a spade stopper, though most people probably play the cue bid as hearts and a minor. Given that there is no assurance East-West plan to bid 4♠, it would be a little rash for South to overcall 5♣, inviting a double. The single jump to 4♣ represents the middle ground.

4♣ normally fails by a trick with two tricks in each red suit to lose. If, however, West rashly started with the ♠A, declarer could ruff, cross to the ♣10 and discard two diamonds on the ♠K-Q for an overtrick.

4♠ is makeable despite the 3-0 trump break. If the defenders start with two rounds of clubs, declarer can ruff, cash the ♠A, play four rounds of diamonds and exit with a trump. North, who has four hearts left for the last four tricks, has no choice but to exit in the suit. This means that the ♥Q and ♥A both score, with a cross-ruff for the last two tricks.

If South won the first club and switched to a diamond, endplaying North would still be possible but would entail not playing the ♠A on the first round of trumps.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 17

	♠ 105 ♥ J973 ♦ J10532 ♣ 64	Dealer N Vul: None
♠ K942 ♥ K2 ♦ KQ ♣ J9853		♠ A876 ♥ 1065 ♦ A7 ♣ AK107
	♠ QJ3 ♥ AQ84 ♦ 9864 ♣ Q2	

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

Playing a weak no-trump and four-card majors, East opens 1♠. West has just enough to make an artificial game-forcing 2NT raise. East then shows the balanced hand and, with a minimum, West signs off.

If East-West are playing a strong no-trump, East opens 1NT and West uses Stayman. Again the contract is 4♠ played by East.

South is likely to lead a diamond against 4♠. Since trumps are 3-2, it does not matter if declarer cashes the ace-king of trumps – but if they are 4-1 then cashing them might allow the defender with four trumps to draw the remaining trumps when in with a heart. With the ♥A onside as well, making 10 tricks is easy. The club guess is for the overtrick.

'Eight ever nine never' says to play for the drop. Added reasons for doing so are (i) the North-South silence in the auction slightly increases the chance of a 2-2 club split and (ii) sometimes South would lead a club if holding a singleton – indeed GIB Robots are famous for doing so!

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 18

	♠ AKJ1053 ♥ Q1086 ♦ J3 ♣ A	Dealer E Vul: N-S
♠ Q ♥ K72 ♦ AKQ10865 ♣ 54		♠ 92 ♥ AJ54 ♦ 94 ♣ J9863
	♠ 8764 ♥ 93 ♦ 72 ♣ KQ1072	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	Dble	3♠
4♦	4♠	All Pass	

In third seat there is some case for West to pre-empt in third seat knowing that game is unlikely and that the vulnerable North-South might find it hard to come in at a high level. Most people will choose a simple 1♦, as in the example auction. While South's jump raise to 3♠ is a weak action, North has a strong hand in the context of a 1♠ overcall and would go on to 4♠ even if West passed over 3♠.

The North-South hands have terrible duplication, with South's only high cards, the ♣K-Q, waste paper (or waste electronic thingies) facing North's singleton. As West has bid diamonds, East is sure to lead the suit, which enables the defenders to make their two diamond tricks. Best after that is for West to switch to a low heart, get back in with the ♥K and play a third round of diamonds. This would promote a trump trick if East had J-x of trumps. As it is, declarer can ruff high or even very high and avoid a trump loser.

In a diamond contract, while the defenders cannot readily cash their three top winners in the black suits, North can avoid any risk of being squeezed in the majors by playing a second round of spades.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 19 — Dealer S — Vul: E-W

	♠ KQ95 ♥ Q7 ♦ 42 ♣ Q10965	
♠ J6 ♥ 953 ♦ KQ3 ♣ J8743		♠ 1032 ♥ A104 ♦ A9765 ♣ K2
	♠ A874 ♥ KJ862 ♦ J108 ♣ A	

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

The auction looks fairly straightforward. At adverse vulnerability and without a great suit, East is not too tempted to open in third seat. South could in theory pass the 1♠ response as game is unlikely facing a passed hand – but usually you would only pass with a sub minimum opener or a hand with just three-card spade support.

The friendly layout (from declarer's viewpoint) with hearts 3-3 and spades 3-2 means that a spade contract yields 10 tricks. The defenders just make their three top winners in the red suits.

At the vulnerability, East-West are unlikely to buy the contract. If they do, they can make seven tricks in a diamond contract, though possibly not even that if the ♣A captures the ♣K.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 20 — Dealer W — Vul: Both

	♠ AQ5 ♥ J1074 ♦ 642 ♣ 875	
♠ K64 ♥ 9852 ♦ A8 ♣ QJ43		♠ J1082 ♥ 6 ♦ J1093 ♣ K1092
	♠ 973 ♥ AKQ3 ♦ KQ75 ♣ A6	

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

Playing a weak no-trump and four-card majors, South opens 1♥ and next selects 2NT as a game try. North then needs to decide whether to revert to hearts, despite the lack of ruffing value, and whether to go for game. The large number of losers that 4333 types always tend to have suggests stopping in a parts-score, while the fact that two suits are wide open and South does not have to be completely flat suggest playing in hearts.

From a declaring viewpoint, the ♠K is onside while the ♦A is offside. This means that the losers in a heart contract are two in diamonds and one in each black suit. The 4-1 trump split is no more than a minor irritation.

In a no-trump contract, obviously no ruffs are possible, which means that declarer makes just two tricks in spades, four in hearts and one in each minor for eight in total.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 21 — Dealer N — Vul: N-S

	♠ 83 ♥ J8754 ♦ A2 ♣ AKJ6	
♠ AK42 ♥ ♦ K874 ♣ 108432		♠ Q107 ♥ KQ93 ♦ QJ1065 ♣ 7
	♠ J965 ♥ A1062 ♦ 93 ♣ Q95	

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

In spite of holding only 10 HCP, West has the perfect shape for a takeout double after South raises 1♥ to 2♥. South, with four-card heart support and no desire to defend 3♦, pushes on to 3♥ despite being vulnerable.

East, who has good hearts, is unlikely to go on to 4♦. Doubling 3♥ would also be risky, though not crazy at matchpoints.

The lead of the singleton ♣7 defeats 3♥. Later East can split honours on the first round of trumps and score two club ruffs to give the defenders five tricks in all. If East starts with the ♦Q, declarer can make 3♥ by leading a low heart intending to finesse the ♥10; despite knowing that West doubled hearts for takeout (so is probably short in the suit) it is not clear to do this.

In a diamond contract it is possible to make eleven tricks even if the lead is a trump to the ace and a trump back. After that start you need to play on clubs early, taking three ruffs to set up the fifth club. A ruffing heart finesse along the way sets up a heart trick. This way you make three spades, four diamonds, one heart, a club and two heart ruffs.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 22 — Dealer E — Vul: E-W

	♠ J ♥ KQJ7643 ♦ 8 ♣ QJ105	
♠ AQ43 ♥ 108 ♦ AK106 ♣ AK9		♠ K109865 ♥ A5 ♦ 9532 ♣ 4
	♠ 72 ♥ 92 ♦ QJ74 ♣ 87632	

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

After East opens a vulnerable weak 2♠, West envisages a slam if East has the right cards. East does not get the chance to reply to the 2NT enquiry as North jumps in hearts. Perhaps North should go all the way to 5♥ as the vulnerability is favourable and East-West are

likely to bid up to 4♠. With a heart lead marked, West is more wary about slam prospects. The way to try for a slam while denying a heart control would be to jump to 5♠ – but there might not be twelve tricks even if East has a heart control.

Assuming South leads a heart, declarer in a spade contract can win, draw two rounds of trumps and discard the ♥5 on West's second top club. How many tricks declarer makes now depends on the play of the diamond suit. Those who cash the ace-king of diamonds will find South has two winners but should not panic. It is possible to recover (partially anyway) by ruffing a club in hand, returning to dummy with a trump and exiting with ♥10. Because South cannot beat the ♣9, ruffing a heart and exiting with the ♣9 also secures a ruff and discard. To make all thirteen tricks, an endplay will not do. You need to run the ♦9 on the first round of the suit. You can then finesse the ♦6 on the second round. This is quite a difficult play to find even when you know North has a lot of hearts.

A heart contract would have six losers: five tops and a club ruff.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	1	7	-	7	7
W	1	7	-	7	7

==========

Board 23

	♠ AQ943 ♥ 986 ♦ K98 ♣ 95	Dealer S Vul: Both
♠ K10872 ♥ J43 ♦ A75 ♣ 82		♠ J5 ♥ K10752 ♦ Q10 ♣ Q1073
	♠ 6 ♥ AQ ♦ J6432 ♣ AKJ64	

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

With the moderate suit, the relatively flat shape and being vulnerable I suspect that the majority choice for West will be to pass over 1♦ rather than overcall 1♠. When North responds 1♠, West is glad of the decision!

After North later gives preference to 2♦, South is conscious that clubs may be a better trump suit (North could hold equal length or possibly even 2-3 in the minors) but also that 3♣ sounds like a game try. Perhaps it would have been better to open 1♣, treating the diamonds as a four-card suit, which would avoid this dilemma.

As it happens, with the ♠K, ♥K and ♣Q all onside, the cards will be forgiving if North-South carry the auction to 4♦ or 5♦. If declarer plays a trump to the ♦K early, it is possible to make eleven tricks without taking the club finesse because dummy can ruff two clubs.

3NT could be a very lucky make. You need to sneak through a diamond to the king and then develop the club suits.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	4	5	2	3	3
S	4	5	1	3	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

==========

Board 24

	♠ AQ1083 ♥ Q87 ♦ 96 ♣ 632	Dealer W Vul: None
♠ KJ752 ♥ K42 ♦ J52 ♣ 107		♠ 64 ♥ A3 ♦ Q107 ♣ AKQJ95
	♠ 9 ♥ J10965 ♦ AK843 ♣ 84	

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

After East opens 1♣, I would feel inclined to make an Unusual 2NT overcall on the South hand because the red suit lengths are equal and you do not want to suggest a heart lead against a spade contract. This has the effect of shutting the opponents out of the rest of the auction because West is too flat to be bidding 3♠ and, by the time the bidding gets to East, a 3♣ rebid would be insufficient.

3♥ fails by a trick if the defenders cash their two club winners and then play three rounds of trumps. This way they will score a diamond trick as well. Looking at ♦Q-10-x, perhaps it is not too difficult for East to find the trump switch.

3♣ fails if, as is likely to happen, North scores a diamond ruff. It does not matter whether South scores a spade ruff on the second round because North would have two natural spade winners without the ruff.

An opening heart lead holds a no-trump contract to eight tricks by East because declarer has no right view in the spade suit to take and no time to set up a diamond winner.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 25

♠ KQ754
♥ 8643
♦ 102
♣ 105

♠ J8632
♥ Q107
♦ J73
♣ Q6

♠ 109
♥ K9
♦ AQ86
♣ 97432

♠ A
♥ AJ52
♦ K954
♣ AKJ8

Dealer N
Vul: E-W

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

South might open one of any suit other than spades or perhaps 2NT. If South opens 1♥, it is almost impossible to miss the heart fit. Otherwise the partnership might finish in 3NT.

West probably leads a spade against 4♥. Declarer can win and play on clubs. The ♣Q drops on the second round and, if West ruffs in on the third round with the ♥10, this is with a natural trump winner. Declarer could also get home by playing ace and another heart early. With trumps 3-2 and the ♦A onside, the only losers are two trumps and the ♦A.

3NT is also makeable. It is less clear what the lead will be against 3NT because most auctions that finish in 3NT will involve a bid that discloses the presence of a spade suit in North hand. If the lead is a spade, declarer can soon play ace and another heart, paving the way for a fourth round heart winner and getting to dummy. You may still to go down if you take a losing club finesse or fly in with the ♦K on a diamond switch from East.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 26

♠ 102
♥ K105
♦ Q52
♣ A9764

♠ 865
♥ 7632
♦ K10863
♣ Q

♠ AK973
♥ AJ8
♦ A
♣ K832

♠ QJ4
♥ Q94
♦ J974
♣ J105

Dealer E
Vul: Both

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

Perhaps with the unguarded ♣Q, the West hand is not quite worth a raise of 1♠ to 2♠ – but I think I would raise. With 19 HCP and five spades, East has an easy decision to bid the spade game after West supports spades.

The fate of 4♠ largely depends upon the initial lead. The two most likely leads, if you are looking at just the South hand, namely the ♣J and the ♦4, both give declarer a chance.

After the lead of either minor, declarer can arrange to ruff two clubs in dummy and discard a heart on the ♦K. The only losers this way are one in each suit apart from diamonds.

A trump lead defeats 4♠ because North can play a second trump when in with the ♣A; this means that declarer cannot ruff two clubs in dummy. The ♥4 lead also defeats 4♠ because North can continue hearts when in with the ♣A; this gives the defenders two tricks in hearts to go with their trick apiece in each black suit.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 27

	♠ 1096 ♥ Q742 ♦ KJ87 ♣ AQ	Dealer S Vul: None
♠ A432 ♥ AK53 ♦ ♣ 98743		♠ KQ7 ♥ J10 ♦ AQ1043 ♣ J102
	♠ J85 ♥ 986 ♦ 9652 ♣ K65	

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♣	Dble	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass

The North hand is just about worth making a takeout double of West's 1♣ opening, the presence of so many values in clubs notwithstanding. East-West are likely to arrive in 3NT, though they might do better defending.

Since East has bid diamonds, South is likely to lead a major against 3NT. An initial spade lead, while in theory safe, is likely to result in an overtrick. This is because North, seeing the void in diamonds in dummy, is likely to switch to a diamond when in with the ♣Q. An opening heart lead works out slightly better. Declarer must then choosing between letting North win with the ♥Q, with the risk of a diamond switch, or crashing honours in the heart suit. As the cards lie, with spades 3-3 and the ♦K-J both onside, 3NT is makeable either way.

An initial diamond lead would allow an allow overtrick in 3NT. If the defenders keep playing diamonds, declarer just loses one diamond and two clubs. If they do not keep on playing diamonds, declarer has time to set up the clubs.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 28

	♠ J1084 ♥ Q2 ♦ 1086 ♣ AJ102	Dealer W Vul: N-S
♠ A973 ♥ A65 ♦ Q972 ♣ 87		♠ Q6 ♥ J973 ♦ K3 ♣ Q9543
	♠ K52 ♥ K1084 ♦ AJ54 ♣ K6	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
All Pass			

If North-South play a weak no-trump, a 1NT opening from South rates to be the only positive action in the auction. If a strong no-trump is in use, South might open 1♦ and will rebid 1NT after a 1♠ response.

If no suits have been bid, West will choose which pointed suit to lead. Two rules that I usually apply are in conflict here. Normally I prefer the major to the minor and normally I prefer the suit without the ace to the suit with the ace. My choice would be the ♦2 but I can understand why some will choose the ♠3. If both spades and diamonds are bid suits, West might lead the ♥5 instead.

Overtricks in 1NT are going to result whatever West leads. There could be as many as three overtricks on a spade lead if declarer plays the ♠8 from dummy to draw East's ♠Q (or if East put up the ♠Q on the ♠4). I suspect that making nine tricks will be the most common result, with eight tricks more common than ten.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 29

Dealer N
Vul: Both

	♠ AK ♥ 1082 ♦ AK104 ♣ J942	
♠ QJ3 ♥ K974 ♦ J962 ♣ K8		♠ 108654 ♥ 3 ♦ Q7 ♣ Q10763
	♠ 972 ♥ AQJ65 ♦ 853 ♣ A5	

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

Playing a weak no-trump, North makes a suit opening and rebids 1NT. South then wishes to investigate a possible 5-3 heart fit. In the example auction I have assumed that 2♣ is some sort of enquiry and that North's 2♥ shows three hearts in a minimum.

If a strong no-trump is in use, South transfers into hearts and rebids 3NT to offer a choice of games. With three-card heart support and a possible ruffing value, North chooses the heart game.

With hearts as trumps, you could make ten tricks in a variety of ways, the obvious one being by ruffing a spade in the North hand. Indeed, if you could divine the diamond position, you might make eleven tricks on a non-club lead – but I am not expecting many pairs to find the line to do that.

In 3NT, there should be no overtricks. After an initial spade lead, the defenders score three spade tricks and a heart trick. A club lead, while doing less to set up defensive winners, is also effective because it attacks the side entry to dummy's heart suit.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 30

Dealer E
Vul: None

	♠ K42 ♥ 54 ♦ A5 ♣ Q95432	
♠ A965 ♥ AK632 ♦ 10984 ♣		♠ J107 ♥ Q87 ♦ KJ762 ♣ A6
	♠ Q83 ♥ J109 ♦ Q3 ♣ KJ1087	

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

A natural auction should enable East-West to locate their two-suit fit in the red suits. Although they have nine diamonds and only eight hearts, the fact that hearts is a major makes it normal to choose to play in hearts.

From declarer's viewpoint, the breaks are friendly, with the spade honours split, hearts 3-2 and diamonds 2-2. Securing an overtrick in 4♠ largely depends upon a winning view in the diamond suit.

If North leads a club against 4♥, declarer does best to play low from dummy as a discovery move. South probably plays the ♣K, which enables declarer to read the position of the club picture cards – North would have led the ♣Q if holding the ♣Q-J and South would have played the ♣Q if holding K-Q. The knowledge of South's greater strength in the club suit might enable declarer to take the winning view in diamonds.

In 5♦ it seems less likely that declarer would take the winning view in the diamond suit because playing North for the ♦Q works better if the suit splits 3-1 or even 4-0.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 31

	♠ J43 ♥ K97 ♦ A6 ♣ Q10732	Dealer S Vul: N-S
♠ K9762 ♥ J85 ♦ J73 ♣ K8		♠ Q5 ♥ AQ3 ♦ K1094 ♣ AJ54
	♠ A108 ♥ 10642 ♦ Q852 ♣ 96	

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

Playing a weak no-trump, East makes a suit opening and rebids 1NT. West is just about worth inviting game facing a hand in the 15-17 range. In the illustrated auction I have assumed that 2NT shows middle of the range (16 points), which is not enough to encourage West to bid game.

If East-West play a strong no-trump, West makes a transfer in reply to 1NT and rebids 2NT, which East might or might not pass.

3NT is makeable even on a club lead (which South is only likely to find if North has doubled an artificial club bid, something that did not happen on the example auction.) South is more likely to lead a heart. North does best to finesse the ♥7, which draws the ♥Q. Declarer can lead the ♠Q, won by the ♠A. South continues hearts, won by the ♥A. Declarer clears the spades, whereupon North wins the third round and cashes the ♥K. If this defender leads the ♦6 next, declarer has a choice to make. It is no good playing South for the ♦A because that would mean losing two tricks in each major and the ♦A. However, if you put up the ♦K, you will need the ♣Q onside. It is a tricky decision whether to play North for the ♦A-Q.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========

Board 32		Dealer W
	♠ Q94 ♥ 964 ♦ 9854 ♣ K92	Vul: E-W
♠ K10865 ♥ A105 ♦ J106 ♣ A4		♠ 72 ♥ K832 ♦ 732 ♣ J765
	♠ AJ3 ♥ QJ7 ♦ AKQ ♣ Q1083	

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

With scattered honours and with three-card heart support, West is quite likely to open a weak no-trump if the option to do so is there. After the double comes, my usual rescue system for the 1NT opener's partner is that bidding a suit shows that suit plus a higher suit, hence 2♣. West does not want to play in clubs, so tries 2♦, East correcting to 2♥.

South would quite like to take further action, perhaps 2NT or perhaps doubling again if that simply shows extra values rather than specifically takeout or penalties.

2♥ fails by two tricks after South cashes three diamonds and switches to a low club. The only way for declarer to get to hand to lead a spade towards the king is by winning a trump switch with the king – but then there would be no point in ruffing two clubs in dummy because one of the ruffs would be with the ♥A.

South can make 2NT. For example on a spade lead declarer wins in hand, unblocks the diamonds and then play a club to the king.

If North were to lead a low club against 1NT doubled, a 500 penalty could result. Escaping for 300 would be more usual.

Makeable Contracts

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

==========