

ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need

Wednesday 10th November 2021



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.

Some of you will be playing Face-to-Face and others online but all the results will be included in the overall scoring so don't worry!

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/donate/>

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

Our thanks to Mark Horton for writing this set for us – I hope you found it interesting (and accurate!).

Take care won't you and stay safe

Anna & Mark

Board 1. None Vul. Dealer North

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

In the modern bridge world North is going to open the bidding, the choice being between 1♦ and a weak 2♦. After 1♦-1♥ West bids 1♠ and East raises, 3♠ probably being the popular choice. If South then bids 4♥ West is almost certain to bid 4♠.

If North starts with 2♦ South might decide to jump to 4♥, partly because of the diamond fit and partly because it might make life awkward for EW. Here West will be doing well to bid 4♠. Then there is a case for South to bid 5♦, but it's pretty much a guess.

If North does not open the bidding East might have a way to show a weak hand with both majors when West is bound to try 4♠, but otherwise South gets to open - 4♥ perhaps being a popular choice. In

that situation West can bid 4♠ - not ideal, but the sort of thing you have to do.

4♠ is plan sailing and 5♦ is a good save - as long as declarer scores nine tricks. If East leads a trump and declarer wins in dummy it is important not to play a spade - then West wins and plays a second trump and if declarer wins, ruffs a spade and tries to cash two hearts West will ruff and declarer will be left with four club losers. It's better to try to cash two hearts immediately, West ruffs, but declarer overruffs and plays a spade. West wins and exits with a trump but declarer wins in dummy and can pitch a club on a high heart, losing only two more tricks.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East

<p>♠ J 6 4 2 ♥ Q 10 7 6 5 ♦ J 5 ♣ 8 6</p> <p>♠ Q 10 3 ♥ 3 ♦ A K Q 8 7 ♣ K 9 7 5</p>	<p>♠ A ♥ K J 2 ♦ 10 9 4 3 2 ♣ A Q J 2</p> <p>♠ K 9 8 7 5 ♥ A 9 8 4 ♦ 6 ♣ 10 4 3</p>
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If East opens 1♦ South might occasionally venture 1♠ despite the poor suit and the vulnerability. If West then bids 2♠ and North raises to 3♠ a lot of

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space will have been removed, making it harder for EW to reach 6♦. Harder, but not necessarily impossible, especially if an exchange of cue bids takes place after West bids 4♦.

Where South does not intervene, West may be able to start with an inverted 2♦. What happens next may depend on partnership agreements. For example if East rebids 3♣ and then bids 3NT over West's 3♦ West can continue with 4♣, or if its available, bid 4♦ to ask for keycards.

As you can see, there is nothing to the play in 6♦.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South

<p>♠ K 10 9 3 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ J 9 8 2 ♣ Q 8</p> <p>♠ J 2 ♥ A J 8 5 2 ♦ K ♣ 10 9 6 4 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 8 6 ♥ K 10 9 7 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ A 5 3</p>
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If West opens the bidding (perhaps with 2♥ promising hearts and a minor) East has an easy raise to game.

Assuming the first three players go quietly East will have a choice depending on system. Opening 1NT (13-15, 14-16, 15-17) might see South get involved with say 2♦ to show spades and another suit. If West then bids 2♥ North contributes 2♠ and East supports hearts after which West will probably go on to game.

If East opens 1♣ West responds 1♥ and then goes to game over East's 3♥.

North has a nasty hand to lead from - unless a spade is selected then declarer will be able to unblock the ♦K and dispose of two spades on the diamonds, securing a potentially valuable overtrick.

Board 4. All Vul. Dealer West

<p>♠ 9 7 6 3 ♥ 9 6 5 3 2 ♦ Q 8 7 4 ♣ —</p> <p>♠ A 4 ♥ K Q 8 ♦ 9 6 ♣ A K Q 10 9 5</p>	<p>♠ K 2 ♥ A J 10 4 ♦ A 3 ♣ J 8 7 6 4</p>
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If West opens 1♣ East responds 1♥ and South might be tempted to compete, perhaps bidding 2♣

to get both suits into the picture. If West then bids 3♣ and North joins in with 3♠ East might try 4♦. Now asking for key cards will establish that there are at least 11 tricks and if West makes grand slam try with 5NT East has enough to bid 7♣ when West will be choosing between what must be a laydown that or a slightly more adventurous 7NT.

If South's overcall is a simple 1♠ West has options, including a jump to 3♣ or perhaps 2♠. Over the former East's simplest option is to raise to 4♣. The a combination of cue bidding and RKCB should get EW to a grand slam. Well done if you managed it!

Notice that 7♠/7♦ are very good saves for NS - but EW might be provoked into bidding 7NT.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North

<p>♠ A 10 5 2 ♥ A Q 10 8 5 ♦ 9 6 ♣ 5 3</p> <p>♠ 9 6 ♥ K 9 6 4 2 ♦ J 3 2 ♣ J 8 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q 8 4 3 ♥ 3 ♦ A 7 ♣ A 10 9 7 6</p> <p>♠ J 7 ♥ J 7 ♦ K Q 10 8 5 4 ♣ K Q 2</p>
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If North opens 1♥ East will overcall, the choice being between a simple 1♠ and a two-suited effort (2♥ being the popular way to show this combination). Over 1♠ South bids 2♦ and then bids 2♠ over North's 2♥ rebid, raising 2NT to game. After a 2♥ overcall South bids 3♦ and then tries 3♠ over North's 3♥, again resulting in 3NT.

If North does not open East will start with 1♠ or 1♣ - the choice is yours. In either case South can overcall in diamonds although then it is unclear as to whether the no-trump game will be reached.

Played by North, 3NT has excellent chances. If East leads a club declarer wins in dummy and plays the ♥J. If that holds, the finesse is repeated and declarer then plays a diamond to the queen. Then declarer needs to exit with a low diamond. That loses to the ace and East can only play a top spade, declarer winning and playing a club. East takes that, cashes a spade and exits with a spade. Declarer wins and cashes another spade. West, down to ♥K96 ♦J has no good move. Pitching a heart allows declarer to play two rounds of hearts, while throwing the diamond jack allows declarer to exit with the ♥Q, endplaying West to lead back into the heart tenace.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East

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

If South opens 1♣ North responds 1♦. The aggressive rebid with the South hand is 3♥, but not everyone plays that as a splinter and 3♦ is a good alternative. Then after 3♥-3♠-4♣ South can bid 4♥ when North might ask for key cards before signing off in 6♦.

The 4-0 trump break means that careful play is required in 6♦. For example, on a spade lead declarer wins in hand and plays a diamond to the king, West pitching a club. Now declarer must leave trumps alone, playing on cross-ruff lines, cashing a second spade along the way. In the three-card ending declarer will have the ♦A and a spade and can play any card from dummy, East being forced to ruff and lead into the trump tenace.

Board 7. All Vul. Dealer South

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

If West opens 1♦ North overcalls 1♠ and East doubles. If South raises to 2♠ West passes and East has two options, to double again of bid 3♠. If East doubles then West is likely to bid 3♦ (notwithstanding that passing might lead to a very good result). If East then continues with 3♠ West might try 4♥, which East will be happy to pass.

A tactical opening bid of INT by West might rebound if North passes, as East will look for a heart fit before bidding 3NT.

Playing in hearts is sure to deliver at least ten tricks, while 3NT is not a hot favourite as both North and South are likely to lead a spade. Could anything go wrong? If South leads a top spade, North must

encourage lest South thinks declarer might have started with say ♠AJ9.

Board 8. None Vul. Dealer West

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

If North opens 1♠ East might overcall 2♣, although this type of bid is frequently of more use to the other side than to partner as it helps declarer to place the cards. After 1♠-(2♣) South's best move is to respond 2♦ and then bid 3♣ over North's 2♥. When North continues with 3NT South must choose between passing or bidding 4♠. Playing in no trumps is attractive at matchpoints and on this deal it offers NS the best chance of a really good score.

If North does not open East might start with 1♣. If West drags up a 1♥ response East rebids INT. If West retreats to 2♥ an inspired South might re-open with a double which North will be happy to convert.

Ten tricks are more or less secure in 3NT and 4♠ and I would not be surprised to see a few +460's on the score sheet.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North

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

If North opens 1♦ South responds 2♣ and then bids 3NT over North's 2♠.

If North starts with a strong 1♣ and South responds 2♣ then 3NT should still be the final resting place.

3NT should not be in danger, but declarer will have a number of decisions to take. If North has bid spades, West is likely to lead a heart (which might be a good choice in any event) and declarer wins and might start by taking two rounds of diamonds ending in hand, West discarding a spade. If declarer

now cashes the ♠A East's ♠9 might suggest running the ♠8 on the next round (if East started with ♠109x I suggest you look for different opponents). That ensures ten tricks and if declarer is bold enough to play East for the ♣A then an eleventh will be secured.

The play in spades will be easier if West leads the suit at trick one, but declarer will still have to decide what to do about clubs, although as the cards lie eleven tricks should be possible. Say West leads a spade and declarer wins and then runs the ♠8. Then a spade to the jack is followed by the king and declarer starts on the diamonds. When West discards on the second round declarer can cash three hearts ending in dummy. If East discards the ♣Q at any point declarer will be able to play a club and then duck the return of the ♦10 and if East keeps two clubs and two diamonds declarer can cash the ♦Q and exit with a diamond, the ♣K scoring a trick.

Board 10. All Vul. Dealer East

<p>♠ A 2 ♥ K Q J 8 ♦ 9 7 4 ♣ A 10 8 2</p> <p>♠ K Q 10 9 ♥ 10 7 ♦ Q 6 3 2 ♣ K 6 5</p>	<p>♠ 7 6 5 3 ♥ 6 5 3 2 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ Q 4</p> <p>♠ J 8 4 ♥ A 9 4 ♦ A K 10 ♣ J 9 7 3</p>
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If South opens INT North will look for a heart fit before setting for 3NT.

Where the opening bid is 1♣ North responds 1♥ and then raises the rebid of INT to game.

If EW start with a spade then declarer should be held to nine tricks, but sometimes strange things happen. On any other lead declarer has time to develop three club tricks which means ten in total.

Board 11. None Vul. Dealer South

<p>♠ Q J 6 2 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ K Q J ♣ J 10 6</p> <p>♠ 8 5 3 ♥ K 9 6 3 2 ♦ 10 7 2 ♣ Q 7</p>	<p>♠ K 10 4 ♥ J 10 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ A K 4 3 2</p> <p>♠ A 9 7 ♥ Q 7 ♦ 9 8 6 5 3 ♣ 9 8 5</p>
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If North opens INT and East doubles for penalties South has to choose between passing and bidding

2♦. With two useful cards South might adopt the former approach and then the spotlight will be on West, who either passes or bids 2♥.

If North opens 1♣ East might overcall INT and then West will transfer to hearts.

If EW play in hearts declarer should manage at least nine tricks and if South leads a club then declarer has a chance of ten tricks by winning in hand, running the ♥J/10 and then playing a low heart to North's ace. Declarer wins the diamond switch, crosses to the ♣Q, returns to hand with a heart and cashes three more clubs.

If North plays in notrumps a low club lead puts the defenders in sight of eight tricks and if West keeps all five hearts declarer will have to discard two spades and then duck hearts twice to avoid an even heavier defeat.

2♦ is a much better spot for NS. If West leads a trump East wins and now needs to avoid returning a diamond which allows declarer to draw trumps and play on spades for eight tricks. East can afford to cash a top club, but must then switch to hearts, knocking out the potential entry to dummy after which careful defence will result in one down.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West

<p>♠ Q 9 ♥ Q J 8 6 5 ♦ J 9 8 5 4 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ A J 4 ♥ 10 7 4 2 ♦ K Q 3 2 ♣ J 4</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 5 ♥ K 9 ♦ A 7 6 ♣ A K Q 5 2</p> <p>♠ K 10 6 3 2 ♥ A 3 ♦ 10 ♣ 10 9 8 7 6</p>
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If West opens INT East has an easy raise to game.

If West starts with 1♣ then East might respond with an inverted 2♣, soon arriving in 3NT.

If West's first bid is 1♦ East responds 2♣ and then raises the likely 2NT rebid to game.

Where West passes initially and East opens 1♣ South might overcall 1♠. If West doubles and East rebids 2♣ West can continue with 2NT which will be raised to game.

When East starts with INT South might be tempted to make a bid showing spades and another suit but it could backfire if EW start doubling.

Let's assume that EW play in 3NT.

If West is declarer and North leads the ♠Q in response to South's overcall then declarer can duck. If North switches to the ♥Q declarer covers and is already sure of ten tricks.

The awkward lead for declarer is a small heart, especially when there has been no adverse bidding. If declarer is tempted to go up with dummy's king South wins and now a perspicacious spade switch (admittedly unlikely) would endanger the contract if North wins with the nine, cashes one heart and then exits with the ♠Q. The winning move for declarer is to play dummy's ♥9. If South wins and switches to a spade North wins with the nine and is very likely to continue with the ♠Q. If declarer wins that there is mildly double-dummy line for an overtrick, declarer crossing to the ♦A and then ducking the next round of the suit when South discards a spade (or a heart). North wins and exits with a heart but after taking dummy's king, declarer cashes two diamonds squeezing South in the black suits.

Board 13. All Vul. Dealer North

<p>♠ 9 8 7 4 ♥ Q J 10 9 5 ♦ J ♣ J 9 5</p> <p>♠ K 5 2 ♥ K 7 4 ♦ Q 8 7 ♣ K Q 8 2</p>	<p>♠ J 10 6 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ A 10 6 4</p> <p>♠ A Q 3 ♥ 8 2 ♦ A K 10 9 6 2 ♣ 7 3</p>
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There may be some pairs who have a bid to show a weak hand with both majors with North's collection. After say 2♥ (a method outlined in *The Mysterious Multi*) South responds 2♠ which ends the auction.

Otherwise, if South opens 1♦ North responds 1♥ and passes the rebid of 2♦.

If West leads a top club against 2♦ the defenders can play three rounds of the suit forcing declarer to ruff. Then, with no entry to dummy, only a little care will be needed to restrict declarer to six tricks. One possible ending will see declarer reduced to ♠AQ3 ♦10 and forced to lead spades from hand.

Board 14. None Vul. Dealer East

<p>♠ K 7 2 ♥ J 8 ♦ A K J 9 4 2 ♣ 7 6</p> <p>♠ A Q J 6 4 ♥ 7 ♦ — ♣ A Q 10 9 8 5 2</p>	<p>♠ 9 3 ♥ K Q 10 9 6 4 3 2 ♦ Q 6 ♣ 4</p> <p>♠ 10 8 5 ♥ A 5 ♦ 10 8 7 5 3 ♣ K J 3</p>
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If East opens 3♥ North might be tempted to overcall 4♦. It would be hard to blame South for raising to game, but West might be inclined to risk a double despite the trump void.

If East opens 4♥ that is likely to silence everyone.

What should South lead against a heart contract?

On a spade lead declarer does best to take dummy's ace, cash the ♣A, ruff a club, ruff a diamond, ruff a club and play a top heart, which results in ten tricks.

Leading either minor is no improvement, but I doubt many will find the opening lead of the ♥A, after which a spade switch allows the defenders to take four tricks.

If North plays in a diamond contract, the best defence is to lead a club, West winning and cashing a second club on which East pitches a spade. Then the ♠A followed by the queen ensures the defenders score five tricks.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South

<p>♠ K 8 ♥ Q J 9 7 ♦ A 7 4 2 ♣ K 10 3</p> <p>♠ — ♥ A K 10 6 5 3 ♦ Q 10 9 8 ♣ J 9 2</p>	<p>♠ A 9 7 4 3 ♥ 8 4 ♦ K J 6 ♣ A 6 5</p> <p>♠ Q J 10 6 5 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 5 3 ♣ Q 8 7 4</p>
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If South opens 2♠ West might be tempted to bid, although it looks sounder to pass and await developments. However, overcalling 3♥ could work out well if North doubles for penalties. If North passes East would be sure to choose between 3NT and 4♥ and now North has a gilt-edged double. If West does not intervene then East gets to defend 2♠.

If South starts with a Multi 2♦ West will probably overcall 2♥ and again North does best to adopt a waiting game, doubling any game contract.

If South passes and West opens 1♥ East responds 1♠ and then has to decide what to do over West's rebid, be it 2♦ or 2♥.

In these days of light opening bids East might raise 2♥ to 3♥ when any West conversant with *Meckstroth's Law* will advance to game. Notice that if hearts are 3-2 there are always ten tricks.

There is nothing to the play in a heart contract, declarer disposing of a club on the ♠A, cashing two rounds of hearts and then playing on diamonds, which delivers nine tricks.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West

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

If West opens 1♥ North might risk 2♦ which leaves East with no obvious bid. If East passes South might raise to 3♦ when West will probably come again with 3♥ which East, with two aces and the near certainty that there are no wasted values in diamonds will be tempted to raise to game.

If West opens 4♥ game is reached immediately.

4♥ does not appear to have much hope, but the defenders still need to be careful. Suppose North were to lead a spade, declarer ducking, winning the second spade, and exiting with a spade. If South is on lead and exits with a low diamond declarer pitches a club and will be able to squeeze North in the minors. It will not help South to exit with the ♦K as then declarer ruffs, crosses to the ♥A on the second round of trumps and throws a club on a low diamond, North having to win (if North unblocks and honour declarer must play the ♦10 on the second round of the suit). The simplest way to avoid this is for South to switch to a club when in with the third round of spades.

Board 17. None Vul. Dealer North

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

If East opens 1♣ West responds 1♥ and North can then join in with 1♠. If East and South pass West might try a double, when East will either rebid 2♣ or try 2♦. As West's double may imply tolerance for clubs 2♣ is the safer option. In that scenario South might decide to contest the part-score with 2♠, which should conclude matters.

If EW play in clubs, the strongest defence is three rounds of spades followed by a diamond switch

ducked to dummy's queen. Then declarer must play for clubs to be 3-3 or suffer a diamond ruff.

In a spade contract, if East cashes a top club and switches to the ♥J declarer must take dummy's ace and play three rounds of trumps before setting up a second heart trick.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East

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

If East opens 2♠ West might look for game - for example after 2NT if East rebids 3♥ to show a feature with a decent hand West would bid 4♠.

If East starts with a Multi 2♦ South should probably keep quiet, although it is tempting to make the cheap overcall. After 2♦-(2♥) West doubles and East will probably settle for 2♠, having a modest suit and a heart holding that does not look promising.

If East does not open, South will have a chance to start with 2♦/2♥. West doubles the former and East bids spades - 3♠ looks about right. Over 2♥, West and North pass and East bids 2♠.

If EW play in spades and South leads the ♦10 declarer must win with dummy's ace. It looks tempting to cash the top spades hoping for a 2-2 break, but with dummy entries at a premium it works well to start with a spade to the king. If declarer treats the queen as a singleton then one option is to play the ♦9 at this point, North winning and probably switching to a club. Declarer wins in dummy and having seen South's ♦8, takes a ruffing finesse against North's remaining honour which enables a club to be discarded.

The only lead that is sure to defeat 4♠ is a club, but even then there is a small trap to avoid. Suppose South leads the ♣Q and declarer wins, plays a spade to the king and then tries the ♥K. If South ducks and North ruffs it would be a mistake to cash the ♣K and then exit with a top diamond (a trump is no better) as declarer wins, cashes the ♠A and then plays the ♦J. North can win, but is endplayed, declarer no longer losing a trick to the ♥A.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South

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

If South opens 1NT (14-16/15-17) North raises to game.

Where South starts with 1♣/1♦ West might occasionally overcall 1♠, but the final contract will still be 3NT.

If West leads a spade against 3NT declarer wins in dummy and ducks a diamond, West winning. If West now clears the spades declarer will be up to ten tricks and will need to decide about the heart finesse. If West has not overcalled after 1♣/1♦ then declarer has every chance of eleven tricks. In order to be sure of holding declarer to 10 tricks the defender on lead has to start with a heart, although in the modern era where passive leads are preferred, if East is on lead the ♠10/9 might be selected.

Board 20. All Vul. Dealer West

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

There will be the odd opening bid from North, but be it 1♣/1♦ East can overcall 1NT. Assuming South passes West transfers to spades and there the matter rests.

When North passes initially and East opens 1NT West will transfer to spades.

After an opening bid of 1♣ West responds 1♠ and then faces a classic dilemma if East rebids 1NT- sit for it or go back to spades. Both will attract support.

If East plays in 1NT only a diamond lead puts the defenders one step ahead. Otherwise declarer will

have time to establish a heart trick and play towards the ♠K.

Playing in spades is much better. For example on a diamond lead declarer wins with dummy's king and plays two rounds of spades, North winning with the ace. Now to restrict declarer to nine tricks North must switch to a heart so South can win and cash the ♠Q. If North fails to find the switch declarer will be able to organise a diamond ruff, at the same time establishing the clubs and will emerge with ten tricks.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North

<p>♠ 6 ♥ K 8 6 ♦ A 8 7 5 3 ♣ A 8 5 3</p> <p>♠ A Q J 8 3 ♥ A Q 5 ♦ 6 2 ♣ J 10 6</p>	<p>♠ 10 7 5 ♥ J 7 4 3 2 ♦ Q 10 4 ♣ 7 2</p> <p>♠ K 9 4 2 ♥ 10 9 ♦ K J 9 ♣ K Q 9 4</p>
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If North opens 1♦ South responds 1♠. If North rebids 1NT South will at least invite game. In the cases where South jumps to 3NT West might be tempted to double asking for a spade lead.

If North rebids 2♣ South is likely to invoke the fourth-suit by bidding 2♥. When North replies with 2NT South raises to game.

With the diamonds behaving 3NT is unbeatable. If East leads a heart declarer takes ten tricks. The value of spot cards is illustrated by exchanging South's ♠9 for East's five. Then if the contract is 3NT doubled....

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East

<p>♠ 8 7 6 5 ♥ Q J 7 6 4 3 ♦ J 6 ♣ 6</p> <p>♠ A K J 9 ♥ A ♦ Q 10 7 ♣ A K J 9 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 3 2 ♥ K 10 2 ♦ 9 8 5 4 3 ♣ 8 5</p> <p>♠ 10 4 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ A K 2 ♣ Q 10 7 4 3</p>
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West is sure to open with something strong. After 2♣ all roads should lead to 3NT (even where North overcalls 2♥) and the same is true if West opts for an opening bid of 2NT, East perhaps looking for a possible 5-3 fit in a major before settling for 3NT.

If West starts with a Strong 1♣ North is sure to bid, but once again 3NT is my nap selection. For example after 1♣-(2♦*)-Pass-(2♥) -Dble*-(Pass)-3♦-(Pass)-3♥*-(Pass)-3NT, Two Diamonds promising hearts or the black suits.

On a heart lead 3NT is a very interesting contract to play and should be easier if North has show length in hearts. Having won with the ♥A it costs nothing to cash a top club. Then three rounds of spades ending in dummy will tell you a lot about North's hand. If South pitches a heart on the third round of spades declarer might elect to cash the ♥K discarding a diamond and play a club to the jack. When North pitches a heart declarer cashes the ♠J. If South throws a club and declarer then plays two rounds of clubs South wins but is then faced by a dilemma. Cashing the top diamonds will give declarer an overtrick, but trying a low diamond might see declarer put up the queen and cash a club for eleven tricks. South should probably pitch a diamond, as declarer is unlikely to exit with a low diamond.

As the cards lie declarer can also make the contract even if the ♥K is not cashed, but then a very good guess in diamonds may be required at some point.

Board 23. All Vul. Dealer South

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

If West opens 1♥ and North overcalls 2♣ South will probably stretch to 2NT on the strength of the ♣K. If North then bids 3♠ South will advance to game.

If North doubles 1♥ South bids 2♠ and North raises to game.

Were West to open INT, North will use whatever systemic tool being employed, which should enable the spade fit be located. For example, if North bids 2♦ showing spades and another suit and South jumps to 3♠ the game will be reached. Were South to respond 2♠ North might make a try with 3♣ when South will accept the invitation.

Given the opening bid, declarer is a favourite to get the diamonds right and score 11 tricks.

Board 24. None Vul. Dealer West

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

I would be happy to open the West hand with a three-suited 2♥. In the absence of competition East would respond with a non-forcing 2♠ and then correct West's rebid of 2NT showing a minimum with spade shortage to 3♣.

Here North would do something over 2♥, perhaps venturing 2NT, which would end the bidding.

If West opens 1♣/1♦ North will double intending to bid notrumps on the next round. If East comes in with 1♠ and South and West pass then North's INT should be the final resting place.

Where West passes initially and North opens 1♣, East can overcall 1♠. If West then bids INT North can double, when, if East bids 2♣ North will probably double again (depending on agreements).

If NS play in notrumps and East leads a top spade declarer wins and does well to run the ♥8, West winning and switching to a club. Winning with the queen declarer plays a diamond to the seven and ten, wins the spade return, plays the ♥J. When that wins another heart puts West on play. On a diamond return ducking is the winning move, while if West plays a club declarer can finesse, but might prefer to win pitching a diamond and exit with a spade. These manoeuvres will result in eight tricks, while other lines are likely to deliver only seven.

If EW play in clubs, the strongest lead for South is the ♣Q. If South then guesses to switch to a spade North can win and play three rounds of trumps, with a significant penalty in prospect. However, should South switch to a diamond at trick two declarer wins with the ten, cashes the ace, crosses to dummy with a heart, ruffs a diamond, goes back to dummy with a heart, ruffs a heart and exits with the ♠Q. North will be down to ♠AK9 ♣AK10 and unable to prevent eight tricks from being scored.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North

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

One option for North is to open a weak 2♦. If East doubles South jumps to 5♦. I confess I have no idea what will happen next. It would be quite a stretch for West to take a bid at this point but after two passes East doubles again and now West might decide to bid 5♥.

Some players will be able to start by bidding 2NT with North's cards. If East doubles South again bids 5♦.

Where North passes, if East opens 1♥ and South overcalls 2♦ West supports hearts (choose your own level) and East will probably bid 5♥ over North's inevitable 5♦. (I say inevitable, but North might also consider bidding 4NT on route to 5♦.)

Where South does not overcall, West again raises hearts and the question is will North then join in. After 1♥-2♥ North can bid 2NT. After 1♥-3♥ North can bid 3NT and after 1♥-4♥ North can consider bidding 4NT. What you might call an 'unusual' situation. (Pun intended!)

If East is able to begin with a strong 1♣ and South overcalls to show diamonds North jumps to 5♦ and East doubles. Over to you, West!

For practical purposes I think West should bid 5♥ over partner's second double - one factor is that even if you have misjudged the situation NS might go on to 6♦.

There are always eleven tricks in hearts and at least nine in diamonds. If the defence develops in such a way that the majors are eliminated then in the six-card ending declarer will be able to play two rounds of clubs, hoping for the actual position, or that a defender with ♣H9(2) will not unblock. That results in ten tricks.

Board 26. All Vul. Dealer East

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

If East opens 1♣ South overcalls 1♦ and West bids 1NT, East raising to game.

If East's 1♣ is strong and South makes a two-suited overcall, for example 1♣-(1♥*) showing two suits of the same colour, then West doubles and North bids 2♥, saying 'I prefer hearts to diamonds, but have a better fit in a black suit'. East rebids 2NT and West raises to 3NT.

There is not much to the play in 3NT. If South leads a top diamond there are many ways to ensure declarer takes only ten tricks. One is to continue with two more diamonds, and switching to either black suit also works. The one thing South must not do is switch to a heart.

Board 27. None Vul. Dealer South

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

If West has a bid to show both majors, North might simply bid 3NT.

Where West passes North and North opens 2NT South looks for a five-three heart fit before settling for 3NT.

If North starts with a strong 1♣ the modern approach is for South to respond 1♠ to show a balanced hand, making sure that the strong hand gets a chance to bid notrumps.

If the defenders lead spades against a notrump contract then declarer can play on clubs for at least ten tricks. Only a heart lead holds declarer to nine tricks.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West

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

If West opens 1♦ East responds 2♣ and then bids 2♥ over West's 2♦. If West then bids 3♣ East, despite the void in partner's suit will continue with 3♠. If West then goes back to 4♣ East might try 4♦, even though bidding a void in partner's suit is generally frowned upon. If West then bids 4♥ East might ask for key cards before settling for 6♣.

South has an awkward hand to lead from - let's say a spade is chosen. Here's a possible line: Declarer wins, ruffs a spade, ruffs a diamond, ruffs a spade, ruffs a diamond and cashes the top clubs. When North discards declarer exits with a club to reach this position:

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

Playing a diamond allows declarer to establish a second trick in the suit, while a spade sees declarer discard a diamond from dummy and North is squeezed (in that case declarer can arrange to take the last trick with the ♥2!). Exiting with the ♥Q sets up a finesse against North's jack while the nine is covered by the jack and king and declarer can play a heart to the ace felling South's queen.

The alternative is to start diamonds by cashing the ace - the ending will be slightly different, but the result will be the same.