



**Commentary**  
for the  
**IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs**  
Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the IBU Simultaneous Pairs 2023, and for supporting the Irish Bridge Union (IBU).

As you probably know, the IBU is the confederation of the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Bridge Union, and has responsibility, on an all-Ireland basis, for sending teams to represent Ireland at World and European competitions. During the summer, one such team did battle on our behalf at the World Championships in Marrakech, finishing in a very creditable thirteenth place. The costs of such competitions, like most costs these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this Simultaneous Pairs, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the IBU, is greatly appreciated.

We hope that you enjoyed the chance to pit your bridge wits against your fellow players across Ireland (and for those still playing online, maybe overseas as well). As always, the hands (which are randomly generated by computer with no manual intervention whatsoever) provided plenty of tricky problems. Many thanks to our expert commentators Randal Milne (Monday), Enda Glynn (Tuesday), Brian Senior (Wednesday), Peter Goodman (Thursday), and Gay Keaveney (Friday) for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. Don't forget to check your standing in the national results at [www.ecatsbridge.com/sims](http://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims).

**Peter O'Meara**

**President, Irish Bridge Union**

Board 1	♠ 9732	Dealer N	
	♥ K	Vul: None	
	♦ 107542		
	♣ 974		
♠ KJ4		♠ AQ86	
♥ 108		♥ A963	
♦ AKJ83		♦ Q6	
♣ J52		♣ AKQ	
	♠ 105		
	♥ QJ7542		
	♦ 9		
	♣ 10863		
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	Pass	2 NT	Pass
4 ♦	Pass	4 NT	Pass
6 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

**Thoughts on the bidding**

Despite the weakness in diamonds, East's most descriptive opening is 2NT or your equivalent.

Straight away, West is envisaging slam but cannot bid 4NT immediately as most now play that as quantitative (invitational) and so can be passed. To let partner know that you're asking for aces you must bid 4NT indirectly. Firstly West bids 4♦ which shows slam interest and asks partner if they have 3+ card diamond support. East bids 4NT to deny 3-card support - any other bid is a cuebid. Following the guidance that you need 33+ for a small slam and 37+ for a grand-slam West should settle for 6NT.

Alternatively, West could give no information to the opposition by raising 2NT directly to 6NT.

### Thoughts on the play

When dummy goes down it looks like you've missed a grand slam and will have to talk to partner about ways to find out about dummy's ♠! As luck would have it, the bad break in the diamond suit limits East to 12 tricks.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 2	♠ 95	Dealer E
	♥ 106	Vul: N-S
	♦ AJ1094	
	♣ AJ98	
♠ AQ1043		♠ J8762
♥ KJ5		♥ A97
♦ K		♦ 7653
♣ KQ73		♣ 6
	♠ K	
	♥ Q8432	
	♦ Q82	
	♣ 10542	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

Some Norths may feel tempted to overcall but should resist it. You're vul vs not and are unlikely to win the auction holding minor suits, so are simply giving East the choice of compete or penalise.

East should re-evaluate their hand when partner opens 1♠. Your 5-count has now improved significantly (I recommend adding 3 points for a singleton once a suit fit is found). Some 5-card major players may consider pre-empting to 4♠ but ask yourself: is it likely that you need to pre-empt the auction after South's pass and North's silence? No, a simple raise to 2♠ describes your hand but you'll raise partner to game if they subsequently

invite. It's worth noting that West shouldn't value the ♦K as 6 points by adding 3 for the king plus 3 for the singleton. You should only combine the points for singleton aces, otherwise any singleton in suit contracts is simply 3 points.

### Thoughts on the play

North has a nasty choice of leads and may well select ♥10 preferring to do that rather than lead from suits headed by the ace or lead a trump and potentially help declarer locate missing honours.

Declarer doesn't need the heart finesse for 11 tricks. With the ♠K appearing on the first round and trumps breaking, West simply forces out the ♣A and then discards one of dummy's hearts on the other club honour before cross-ruffing.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 3	♠ AJ102	Dealer S
	♥ AJ65	Vul: E-W
	♦ 2	
	♣ A842	
♠ 965		♠ KQ84
♥ K1043		♥ 987
♦ J10876		♦ A5
♣ Q		♣ J976
	♠ 73	
	♥ Q2	
	♦ KQ943	
	♣ K1053	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

The thinking is likely to differ between 4-card and 5-card major players. The latter must open 1♣ here but 4-card major players may be tempted to open 1♥, don't. Consider your

rebid first. Unless partner responds 1♠, you won't have an honest rebid. When 4-4-4-1, open 1♦ unless that is your singleton, then open 1♣. This way, if you have to tell a fib it's in a minor suit which partner is less likely to leave you in.

Responder also has different information. The 4-card major players know that partner has 4 clubs and having passed already and only having a minor suit alternative may elect to raise straight to 3♣. North must now guess to try 3NT, bid 5♣ or pass.

The 5-card major players don't know that partner has 4 clubs and will respond 1♦, North bids 1♥ and South now raises to 3♣. Those playing 4th suit forcing are now stymied. They'd like to bid 3♠ naturally, so that partner can bid 3NT and protect their diamond stoppers but for them 3♠ would be looking for a spade stop (or an advance cuebid). North must therefore cross their fingers and bid 3NT - confidently!

### Thoughts on the play

On this auction, East will probably lead a low spade (either 3rd or 4th highest depending on your methods).

Prospects look bleak when dummy goes down. After winning the first trick with the ♠J (you'd like East to think that partner may have the ♠10) you can count two spades, two hearts, one diamond and, hopefully, three clubs. So you're one trick short. That could potentially come from any of the suits but needing to preserve dummy's entries North should start by leading a diamond towards the K-Q. If East hops up with the ace that gives two sure tricks to declarer, so East should play low.

Winning in dummy, declarer now leads a small club and notes the play of the queen. This could be from all sorts of holdings but ideally its from Q-J bare, so a club to king follows - bad luck.

There is only one chance left for your contract and that is to hope the ♦A is now bare and so the successful declarer led a small diamond off dummy. East must win and is powerless. Declarer cannot be stopped from making two spades, two hearts, two diamonds and three clubs

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 4      ♠ QJ7      Dealer W  
                  ♥ KQ109      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ 43

♠ A8	♠ 9653
♥ 832	♥ A65
♦ 1092	♦ QJ875
♣ KJ972	♣ 3
	♠ K1042
	♥ J74
	♦ AK6
	♣ 1085

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

For weak no-trumpers it's 1NT-2NT-3NT or equivalent (don't use Stayman when 4-3-3-3).

For strong no-trumpers it's 1♣-1♠-1NT-2NT-3NT

There's no reason for East to do anything other than lead a small diamond (either 4th or 5th highest depending on your methods). When defending no-trumps, only lead an honour when holding 3+ honours with two touching (treating the 10 as an honour) or with a broken straight e.g. J-10-8 or Q-J-9.

### Thoughts on the play

There is no certain route to nine tricks here. The best play is to duck the first diamond and then win the second. Now it's down to luck. If declarer elects to set up the heart suit first then nine tricks will follow: three spades, three hearts, two diamonds and one club (two if North is a gambler and takes the finesse).

The unlucky declarers who started on spades first allow West to shoot back a diamond and so set up partner's diamonds while they still hold the ♥A.

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

=====

Board 5	♠ A862	Dealer N
	♥ A4	Vul: N-S
	♦ J104	
	♣ J654	
♠ J953		♠ 7
♥ J1065		♥ Q932
♦ K		♦ Q986
♣ KQ72		♣ A983
	♠ KQ104	
	♥ K87	
	♦ A7532	
	♣ 10	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

West's hand is too weak for a takeout double, especially since the ♦K is unguarded.

South should make a minimum raise of partner's spades (showing 12-15). North can add 1 point for their doubleton heart and invites, then South adds 3 points for the singleton club and raises to game.

### Thoughts on the play

East will probably rule out leading their singleton trump as potentially too helpful to declarer and will avoid leading diamonds if they know South started with 5. Leading from a shortish suit headed by an ace is seldom attractive (though it actually works okay here) so we're left with leading hearts.

Declarer can count one spade loser (unless 5-0), no heart loser, two diamond losers, and four club losers, for a total of seven. Now counting from dummy's side the losers are: one spade, one heart, one diamond, and four clubs, again seven. So no help there. But, as long as the both the diamonds and spades break 3-2 there's no problem.

Declarer wins the lead in hand (tend to keep your entries to the hand with the side suit you're going to set up). Now two rounds of spades uncovers the bad news. The only hope left is to restrict your diamond losers to just one.

This can be done if RHO has ♣H-x or either holds K-Q bare. As the former is almost six times more likely I expect the majority to play for that. So, you lead ♦J from hand. If RHO covers you win in dummy and lead another towards your ♦10. You lose just one spade, one diamond, and one club. If they don't cover then you run the jack, losing to your LHO. But the other honour falls on your ace on the next round.

This, however, is not a hand for best technique I'm afraid. If you gave yourself the best chance of making your contract you'll probably have ended up making just eight tricks!

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

=====

Board 6	♠ K82	Dealer E
	♥ A	Vul: E-W
	♦ AKQ8764	
	♣ 104	
♠		♠ A1073
♥ KQ932		♥ 1086
♦ J102		♦ 953
♣ AJ983		♣ Q76
	♠ QJ9654	
	♥ J754	
	♦	
	♣ K52	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	2♠
Dbl	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

### Thoughts on the bidding

I expect this hand will be very swingy. The purists will not open the South hand because

they hold 4 cards in the other major. I don't subscribe to this when your 4-card suit is weak and your 6-card suit isn't. The vulnerability also suggests getting into the auction early. If South doesn't open then West will open 1♥ and North may well just bid 3NT, hoping partner can provide a trick. If they temporise with a double then East will bid 1♠ and South will have to decide if 2♠ from them is natural (it is) and whether to bid it. I anticipate that North-South will play in diamonds, no-trumps and spades at varying levels. If East-West get to play in hearts then they may score well.

### Thoughts on the play

On this auction West will be inclined to lead ♥K or ♦J against 4♠. One either lead, declarer wins and discards three clubs on winning diamonds. Then, with the ♥A played, ruffs a club, ruffs a heart, ruffs a club and ruffs a heart. We're down to this:

```

♠ K
♥
♦ 8 7 6 4
♣-

♠ Q J 9 6
♥ J
♦ -
♣--

```

Declarer could just draw trumps now and lose your ♥J but it costs nothing to lead a winning diamond from dummy, forcing someone to ruff and discarding the losing heart. As it happens, the player who ruffs has to do so with a winning trump, so 11 tricks are made. But, if you have the nerve, you could over-ruff East with whatever card just beats it, then ruff your last heart with dummy's king. Whatever East does you finesse the ♠9 next and make 12 tricks!

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7      ♠ AKQJ10532 Dealer S  
 ♥ 10      Vul: Both  
 ♦ 43  
 ♣ 105

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♠ 8      ♠ 97
♥ Q98743      ♥ J62
♦ KQ5      ♦ J1096
♣ J84      ♣ 9632

♠ 64
♥ AK5
♦ A872
♣ AKQ7

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West	North	East	South
Pass	3♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	4NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	7NT	Pass	5♣
Pass		Pass	Pass

### Thoughts on the bidding

Despite the weakness in spades, South should show their balanced 20 count with a 2NT opening (or equivalent). It's not often, as partner, you'd hear that bid while holding eight playing tricks in your own hand! Clearly a slam is your target but as there's a possible 10 points missing it's important to check for aces before deciding on the best level.

As many play an immediate raise of 2NT to 4NT as quantitative (see Hand 1), you may have to transfer into spades first before bidding 4NT. Opener shows three aces and the biggest scorers will bid 7NT. You'd probably bid 7♠ at teams but it's reasonable to expect five quick tricks from a 20 count and you know, thanks to the no-trump opening, that there are no entry problems to your hand.

### Thoughts on the play

With 14 tricks on top I don't expect too much time will be wasted.

### Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	3	1	7	7
S	5	3	1	7	7
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 8      ♠ Q1063      Dealer W  
                  ♥ A732      Vul: None  
                  ♦ 98  
                  ♣ J53

♠ AKJ4                      ♠ 85  
 ♥ KI084                    ♥ Q9  
 ♦ Q103                     ♦ J754  
 ♣ I08                        ♣ AQ742

♠ 972  
 ♥ J65  
 ♦ AK62  
 ♣ K96

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
INT	Pass	Pass	Pass

### Thoughts on the bidding

Different systems will lead to some very different results. Those playing weak NT will have the easiest ride: INT passed out.

Those playing short club and strong NT will open 1♣ and East may well be tempted to raise clubs and, if playing inverted minors, bid 3♣. Not a success.

Those playing better minor will open 1♦ and East must elect to respond INT in order to get the best result. 2♦ isn't a winning bid.

### Thoughts on the play

INT played by West will probably elicit a spade lead from North (underleading the ace from A-x-x-x often gives a trick). That's three tricks in declarer's bag. There's another two available in hearts (only the A and J are missing), one in diamonds and one clubs.

While you have the club entries I'd begin with the heart suit. Declarer has to guess whom to play for the ♥J. If you guess to play South for it then you'll get home with 9 tricks. Small to the queen and finesse on the way back (don't forget to overtake dummy's ♥9 with your ♥10 though). With the right view in hearts, declarer should make three spades, three hearts, two diamonds (the 8 & 9 drop), and one club.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9      ♠ A9                      Dealer N  
                  ♥ AK9                    Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ Q976  
                  ♣ 8765

♠ J53                                      ♠ K642  
 ♥ 643                                      ♥ QJ1052  
 ♦ AK10842                              ♦ 3  
 ♣ 2     ♣ QJ4

♠ Q1087  
 ♥ 87  
 ♦ J5  
 ♣ AK1093

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	INT	Pass	3♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

### Thoughts on the bidding

If North-South are playing weak NT then the bidding will start off. INT - P - 2♣ - ?

If West decides to tell partner what to lead by bidding diamonds here then North should double for penalties. This isn't a command and a weak partner is allowed to move. If this is passed out then minus 800 is achievable. If East runs to 2♥ then a non-club lead is needed to allow North to draw dummy's trumps and hold East to 6 tricks.

If North opens 1♣ then South will bid 1♠. This time if West ventures 2♦ then North must pass in order to allow partner to double for takeout, which North may then pass.

If, in either scenario, West keeps quiet, North-South will end up in 2NT or 3NT (depending on how North values their 13 count (Personally I'd decrease this hand's value due to the lack of 10s but I'd bid game at teams because of the plethora of other intermediates!))

### Thoughts on the play

Against a no-trump contract with West silent, East will attack by leading ♥Q. If the defence keep plugging away at hearts when in, then declarer has to guess to take the double finesse in clubs in order to make 9 tricks.

This hand demonstrates why it's unwise to venture into a live auction when vulnerable against not unless you have enough to ensure no worse than two off.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 10	♠ QJ10	Dealer E
	♥ KJ43	Vul: Both
	♦ K652	
	♣ 72	
♠ K432		♠ 96
♥ Q1062		♥ A9875
♦ QJ7		♦ A9
♣ Q8		♣ A1093
	♠ A875	
	♥	
	♦ 10843	
	♣ KJ654	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

Should South make a takeout double of 1♥? I say not, simply because, when vulnerable, partner is entitled to expect more playing strength. Add the ♣Q to your hand and I would. The hand evaluation guide for takeout doubles is to add one point for a doubleton in the suit you're doubling, 2 for a singleton and 3 for a void and that your total should be 13+. You can add full shortage points of 1, 3 & 5 if you later discover a fit with partner.

West has the dreaded 10 count (11 with added value for the doubleton) but the three unsupported honours devalue the hand. Those playing weak and four might have some concerns about raising to 3♥ but should appreciate that partner has either a 5-card heart suit or 15+ points and so an invitational raise becomes more attractive.

East can add shortage value for the two doubletons and raise to 4♥.

### Thoughts on the play

If South had entered the auction then there are two possible consequences. 1) North may well double 4♥ for penalties and 2) either way, declarer is alerted to the possible heart position.

Played correctly, 4♥ cannot be defeated. South is likely to lead off with a small club. If declarer wins in dummy then the correct play in hearts is to lead an honour and run it, intending to do the same later if it loses. If the finesse holds, declarer takes another finesse then stops and ruffs a club.

If the first trick is won in hand then declarer must lead a small heart at trick two.

The single most important play is not to cash the ♥A at the first opportunity. With the trumps pips as they are, the defence cannot stop declarer from losing just three tricks.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 11      ♠ AQJ642      Dealer S  
                  ♥ A10                              Vul: None  
                  ♦ Q6  
                  ♣ 943

♠ K98	♠ 1073
♥ 764	♥ Q52
♦ J7	♦ 109542
♣ KQ1075	♣ A2
♠ 5	
♥ KJ983	
♦ AK83	
♣ J86	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

North's way of showing this hand is to respond 1♠ first and then jump to 3♠. This shows a 6-card suit and enough points for game.

Opener won't like their options but without a 5th diamond or a club stopper must bid 4♠.

### Thoughts on the play

East is on lead and, unless West had made a very high-risk overcall, is unlikely to find the killing lead of the ♣A, probably preferring the ♦10.

On the ♣A and another club lead, the winning and, when you look at dummy, the most attractive defence, is to cash the third club and then lead a fourth. This promotes a trump trick for E-W.

On a diamond lead, declarer cannot avoid a trump loser but can afford one but only one. They cannot, however, afford three club losers as well, so will win the diamond with the queen and try to discard a club on dummy's top diamonds. Unfortunately, West ruffs with the ♠8 and declarer has two options: 1) to over-ruff and play for the ♠K to now be doubleton and for the hearts to be 3-3 with the ♥Q on-side (the winning, if least likely line) or 2) to discard a club and hope that the ♠K is now doubleton.

My sympathies are with those who went with the latter and then got the excellent defence of three rounds of clubs (as above) except this time West will lead ♣K, East will

overtake to lead back a club the ♣Q and await their trump promotion.

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12      ♠ 1052      Dealer W  
                  ♥ K732                              Vul: N-S  
                  ♦ 1083  
                  ♣ KQ4

♠ A863	♠ 974
♥ 985	♥ J64
♦ AK	♦ QJ764
♣ 9732	♣ 85
♠ KQJ	
♥ AQ10	
♦ 952	
♣ AJ106	

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

### Thoughts on the bidding

Strong no-trumpers will open 1NT (15-17) and Norths will have to decide whether or not to invite game. In match-pointed pairs, it's not a winning strategy to risk a plus score for a risky game bonus and this flat 8-count, with few redeeming features, is unlikely to bring home 9 tricks even opposite a 17-count.

On the other hand, weak no-trumpers will open 1♣ and rebid 2NT (17-18) over partner's 1♥ response. These Norths are now more likely to bid 3NT.

### Thoughts on the play

The blocked diamond suit and the 3-3 heart break mean that it's impossible for the defence to stop declarer making 10 tricks – ♠2 : 4♥ : ♦0 : 4♣



A lucky hand for those who bid game. Note that even 2NT would have been in jeopardy if the diamond suit hadn't been blocked

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13      ♠ AKJ54      Dealer N  
                  ♥ 1065      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ 1054  
                  ♣ 72

♠ 762	♠ Q
♥ J72	♥ A84
♦ K963	♦ AQ8
♣ K65	♣ J109843

                 ♠ 10983  
                  ♥ KQ93  
                  ♦ J72  
                  ♣ AQ

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	1♠	2♣	2♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

#### Thoughts on the bidding

The auction suggested here is unlikely to be repeated often! The only bids I'm sure of are that East will open 1♣ and West will bid 1♦ and even that's assuming that some kamikaze North doesn't open a weak 2♠ first.

Some Souths will double 1♣ for takeout. Not my choice with so few points in the other suits but some players just have to overcall with opening hands. West bids 1♦ and now North has a chance to show their spades legitimately. If South passed then 1♠ will do but if South doubled then 2♠ showing 8-10 points with 4+ spades is the bid.

Over 1♠ East bids 2♣. It's worth noting that opener is not obliged to bid again in this type of auction, simply because partner still has a bid. So bidding 2♣ promises a 6-card suit. Those playing support doubles may elect to double here instead. This shows 3-card diamond support.

Over 2♠ East has a much more difficult decision. 3♣ would show a much stronger hand, as would a takeout double, so pragmatic players will probably pass (unless playing the Good-Bad 2NT, which I won't try to explain here).

South should only consider bidding again if East does too.

It's really difficult for West to see their flat 7-count as a reason to bid to 3♣ (vulnerable) unless East forces them to do so.

#### Thoughts on the play

East will lead ♣J against 2♠ and declarer will finesse. A diamond switch will allow the defence to take three tricks in that suit. Once declarer has seen West with two kings, they'll know to play East for the ♥A and ♠Q, dropping the first and playing towards the ♥K-Q to limit their heart losers to one. 110 for N-S

If East gets to play in clubs then 10 tricks are unstoppable. A spade lead and heart switch is best but as long as declarer lets that run to the ♥J South is unable to attack further. Once trumps are drawn, dummy's 4th diamond provides a heart discard.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14      ♠ 106542      Dealer E  
                  ♥ A105      Vul: None  
                  ♦ AK73  
                  ♣ 5

♠ 3	♠ QJ9
♥ K94	♥ 876
♦ QJ1086	♦ 54
♣ A762	♣ KJ1093

                 ♠ AK87  
                  ♥ QJ32  
                  ♦ 92  
                  ♣ Q84

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		Pass	1♣
1♦	1♠	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

### Thoughts on the bidding

Those Souths playing strong & 5 will open 1♣ and West has an easy 1♦ overcall. There being no great gain penalising a 1-level non-vulnerable contract, North bids 1♠ and South makes a limit raise to 2♠ (12-15). North's singleton is worth enough to encourage North to raise this to game.

### Thoughts on the play

East leads a top diamond which declarer wins with the ace and plays two rounds of trumps. Now the ♥Q is led and finessed until dummy's 13th heart is set up. Eleven tricks and +450.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15	♠ 108764	Dealer S
	♥ A4	Vul: N-S
	♦ Q74	
	♣ 1085	
♠ J32		♠ AKQ
♥ J98652		♥ K3
♦ A2		♦ KJ108
♣ A7		♣ KJ96
	♠ 95	
	♥ Q107	
	♦ 9653	
	♣ Q432	

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
			Pass
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

### Thoughts on the bidding

Some Wests will, no doubt, open a weak 2♥. I'm not a fan. You do have a 6-card suit and 6-10 points but you have two defensive tricks

outside of hearts that partner can never expect.

Those who do open 2♥ will get an enquiring 2NT response. When West shows a maximum East may well imagine partner with something like

- ♠ x-x-x
- ♥ Q-J-10-x-x-x
- ♦ A-x
- ♣ Q-x

and enquire further via 4NT. Playing Roman Keycard Blackwood, West bids 5♥ to show two of the five aces (the king of trumps being treated as the fifth) and denying the queen of trumps

That investigation may happen from the other side if, instead, West passes and East opens 2NT. Now, after transferring, West may choose to bid 4NT. This time it's East who shows two aces but not the ♥Q.

### Thoughts on the play

The only concern for declarer is the trump suit but as the cards lie declarer can't go wrong - even leading the ♥K off table at trick two doesn't cost!

Interestingly, that it is the only winning play if you're in no-trumps. If you were and found this line then well done for your top score.

#### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16      ♠ AJ      Dealer W  
                  ♥ KJ6      Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ AJ10432  
                  ♣ 85

♠ 1063	♠ K975
♥ 43	♥ 9875
♦ 876	♦ Q
♣ AKJ43	♣ Q1072
♠ Q842	
♥ AQ102	
♦ K95	
♣ 96	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

North kicks off with ♦1 and South bids 1♥. North is a little too weak for a 3♦ rebid which should show 15-18 HCP, so rebids 2♦. What should South rebid?

South knows that North isn't balanced, hasn't got a second suit (so can't have 4 spades) and so has 6+ diamonds.

Nevertheless, 2♠ is the correct bid. It's forcing for one round (ie 11+ points) and helps partner to bid no-trumps at an appropriate level when they have the club suit stopped.

Having denied 4-card heart support, North can show their 3-card support now.

I don't expect many to bid this Moysian (4-3) fit to game but the logic is impeccable. South knows that partner has only 4 cards in the black suits and so it's likely to be the short heart holding that has to ruff - thus protecting the 4-card suit from being shortened.

### Thoughts on the play

The play in 4♥ is the same as in 5♦. West will cash two clubs and then switch to a spade. That gives declarer pause, for if the ♦Q doesn't fall in two rounds then you'll need to take a winning spade finesse now. On the other hand, if the ♦Q does fall then you have all the remaining tricks. For those interested in such things, the chances of the queen dropping in one or two rounds is just over 53

percent. It also only requires one good thing to happen, so hop up with the ♠A. Now draw trumps and make the percentage play in diamonds - king followed by ace. +450

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 17      ♠ 2      Dealer N  
                  ♥ 10      Vul: None  
                  ♦ AQJ9743  
                  ♣ J1054

♠ KJ7	♠ Q53
♥ AQ87543	♥ J6
♦ 86	♦ K2
♣ 3	♣ AK9762
♠ A109864	
♥ K92	
♦ 105	
♣ Q8	

West	North	East	South
	4♦	Pass	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♦	Dbf	Pass
Pass	Pass		

### Thoughts on the bidding

I like to keep all my 4-level openings pre-emptive and this hand fits the bill.

Normally I'd want an 8-card suit but 7-4 is almost as good.

West must protect partner here and North, having shown their hand, passes. Round to South who, with little defence to 4♥ may try 4♠ and North should revert to 5♦ (though passing works just as well here as the spades are 3-3). Note that there's little point in bidding 5♣ as, even if partner has four, you'll need entries to establish the diamond suit.

### Thoughts on the play

The most likely defence is one round of hearts followed by three rounds of clubs, East hoping that partner can over-ruff dummy.

Declarer, however, ruffs in with the  $\heartsuit 10$  and takes the losing finesse in trumps. -300

Those who allow West to play in  $4\heartsuit$  might not do so well. All starts optimistically when North leads their spade and gets a ruff but partner's doubleton diamond is a disappointment.

In with the  $\heartsuit K$ , declarer will play the  $\heartsuit J$  and, if South covers, declarer wins, crosses over to a top club and has to guess whether to finesse against the  $\heartsuit 9$  or to play for the drop. Followers of the principle of restricted choice will take the finesse.

This states that "If one opponent plays a critical card in a suit, his partner is twice as likely to have the adjacent card in the same suit".

#### Makeable Contracts

	$\clubsuit$	$\heartsuit$	$\spadesuit$	NT
	=	=	=	==
N	-	3	-	-
S	-	3	-	-
E	3	-	4	4
W	3	-	4	4

=====

Board 18	$\spadesuit$ J	Dealer E
	$\heartsuit$ KJ9653	Vul: N-S
	$\diamondsuit$ 53	
	$\clubsuit$ 9852	
$\spadesuit$ KQ43		$\spadesuit$ 985
$\heartsuit$ 84		$\heartsuit$ Q2
$\diamondsuit$ KQJ987		$\diamondsuit$ A10
$\clubsuit$ J		$\clubsuit$ AKQ764
	$\spadesuit$ A10762	
	$\heartsuit$ A107	
	$\diamondsuit$ 642	
	$\clubsuit$ 103	

West	North	East	South
		INT	Pass
$2\clubsuit$	Pass	$2\heartsuit$	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

#### Thoughts on the bidding

I expect there'll be a lot of very different results on this board.

The first point of deviation is what East decides to open. Playing a strong no-trump

they have a choice, either open INT to show your strength (if not exactly your shape) or open  $1\clubsuit$  with the view jumping to  $3\clubsuit$  at your next turn. Over a INT opening the auction is likely to proceed as suggested.

If East instead opens  $1\clubsuit$ , then does South decide to overcall with  $1\heartsuit$ ? The guideline is 10+ points for vulnerable, 1-level overcalls but many will find the pre-emptive effect too much to resist.

If South passes, West has an easy bid of  $1\heartsuit$  but if South bids  $1\heartsuit$  then West has to choose between a pass (expecting partner to double next) and bidding  $2\heartsuit$ . The third variable is if North ignores the vulnerability and bids hearts. If they do then 3NT by E-W has no chance.

If both South and North keep silent, then the bidding is likely to proceed:  $1\clubsuit$  - P -  $1\heartsuit$  - P -  $3\clubsuit$  -  $3\heartsuit$  -  $4\clubsuit$  - ?

#### Thoughts on the play

Again, I expect hugely different results. If South leads a small spade against 3NT then declarer has 13 tricks!

If South leads passively against a suit contract then again 13 tricks!

If North leads their singleton spade against a diamond contract or South leads the  $\spadesuit A$  against a club contract then five tricks could follow for the defence. Note that if South elects to give partner a spade ruff at trick two then they should return the  $\spadesuit 10$  to tell partner they'd like the higher-ranking suit, other than trumps, returned.

#### Makeable Contracts

	$\clubsuit$	$\heartsuit$	$\spadesuit$	NT
	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	2	-
E	2	2	-	2
W	2	2	-	2

=====

Board 19      ♠ 103      Dealer S  
                  ♥ KQ953      Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ KQ93  
                  ♣ AQ

♠ QJ964      ♠ 875  
 ♥ AJ            ♥ 82  
 ♦ J752        ♦ A1064  
 ♣ K10         ♣ 7632

                 ♠ AK2  
                  ♥ 10764  
                  ♦ 8  
                  ♣ J9854

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

**Thoughts on the bidding**

West will open 1♠ and North, if they play wide-ranging overcalls, will bid 2♥, otherwise they'll double first with the intention of bidding hearts at their next turn to show 16-19.

In either case 5-card major Easts may well bid 2♠. In either sequence, South should assume a heart fit and, adding 3 points for their singleton diamond, bid 3♥.

Another possible sequence is 1♠ - 2♥ - P - ? in which case South's correct bid is 2♠ to show an invitational raise in hearts (3♥ in this sequence is merely pre-emptive with 4+ support).

**Thoughts on the play**

I can't see much of interest here. Declarer will want to make sure that trumps are first led from the South hand, to cater for a singleton ♥A with West and later to take the club finesse, but I expect most to make 11 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 20      ♠ 6      Dealer W  
                  ♥ AK6      Vul: Both  
                  ♦ AK9762  
                  ♣ J83

♠ 3            ♠ KJ87  
 ♥ J943       ♥ Q1082  
 ♦ QJ8        ♦ 103  
 ♣ A9742      ♣ Q106

                 ♠ AQ109542  
                  ♥ 75  
                  ♦ 54  
                  ♣ K5

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

**Thoughts on the bidding**

Responding 1♠ followed by 4♠ shows a stronger hand than an immediate 4♠ (which would be the correct choice if South didn't have the ♣K)

**Thoughts on the play**

West has a nasty lead to make. They've heard about North's 6-card diamonds suit, so the more natural diamond lead is out. The singleton trump lead is unlikely to be right either. So the choice is between the ♣A and a small heart.

If they lead the former then South has no more problems. On the heart lead, however, declarer needs to be a little careful in order to make the contract.

The heart is won in dummy and a spade led. South will now have to guess to play East for the king or the jack and finesse accordingly. As it happens, either works. The ♠A follows and the bad news comes to light.

The next step is to play two top diamonds and then a third, ruffing in the South hand. With dummy's diamonds now set up, the contract is safe. Dummy is entered with their remaining top heart and a winning diamond played. East must ruff and South can either over-ruff and lose one spade and two clubs or throw a club and lose two spades and one club. 620 made.

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

=====

Board 21	♠ 6	Dealer N
	♥ 974	Vul: N-S
	♦ AK9763	
	♣ J65	
♠ Q1092		♠ A743
♥ J2		♥ AK6
♦ J108		♦ Q52
♣ AK74		♣ Q109
	♠ KJ85	
	♥ Q10853	
	♦ 4	
	♣ 832	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

The suggested auction will only happen when the N-S pair is playing a weak 2♦. East's choice of action is going to be uncomfortable. Q-x-x is hardly a solid stopper but double distorts your hand as you're promising shortage in diamonds and pass, as your partner will tell you later, is for wimps!

Now over to West. Here's a great tip: If you hold a balanced hand and you're thinking of using Stayman when partner has bid no-trumps over a 5+ suit that you hold three cards in - DON'T.

If North passed then I expect most E-W pairs to end in 4♠ either via:

Strong NT

P - INT - P - 2♣ - P (2♦) - 2♠ - P - 4♠

Weak NT

P - 1♠ - P - 3♠ - P - 3NT - ?

Notice how the weak no-trumpers have a chance to play in 3NT. East should bid 3NT in this position when they hold a 4-3-3-3 hand

(i.e. no ruffing values) but I suspect not many will.

### Thoughts on the play

A 4♠ contract has no chance on a diamond lead, which should be found by either defender.

3NT, however, has excellent chances.

If South leads partner's suit then North will suspect it to be singleton (would East overcall no-trumps holding just ♦Q-x?). If so, they should win and, hoping to set up partner's suit, switch to a heart (not cashing the second diamond in case declarer needs a diamond for their 9th trick).

On any other defence, declarer is likely to make 10 tricks : three spades, two hearts, one diamond, and four clubs. This simply requires East to play South to hold the ♠J and finesse not to run the ♣10 to North's jack

If South doesn't know about partner's diamonds they will, of course, lead a low heart, allowing West's ♥J to win a trick and again ten tricks (losing a spade and two diamonds)

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

=====

Board 22	♠ 752	Dealer E
	♥ 972	Vul: E-W
	♦ 873	
	♣ K983	
♠ 108		♠ KQ4
♥ 6		♥ QJ10853
♦ 54		♦ A62
♣ AQJ76542		♣ 10
	♠ AJ963	
	♥ AK4	
	♦ KQJ109	
	♣	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

I'd be surprised if many N-S pairs stop short of game on this hand.

Most tournament players play a form of 2-suited overcall, usually Michaels or Ghestem. When playing Michaels a cue bid, i.e. 2♥ here, shows 5-5 in spades and a minor with 2NT showing 5-5 in the minors.

Playing Ghestem, the cue bid shows 5-5 in the extreme unbid suits (here that's ♠ & ♣), 2NT shows the lower unbid suits (♦ & ♣) and 3♣ shows higher unbid suit (♠ & ♦)

Once South discovers that partner has 3+ spades I think most South's will punt 4♠, especially if they know that East has five hearts as it increases the chances of finding partner short.

### Thoughts on the play

West will lead a heart and declarer has no option but win and to play for one hand to hold the ♠K-Q bare. No joy, so -50.

Well done if you stopped at a lower level.

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 23	♠ A2	Dealer S
	♥ Q3	Vul: Both
	♦ K9832	
	♣ Q872	
♠ 9863		♠ J74
♥ 985		♥ K10742
♦ AJ106		♦ Q74
♣ 63		♣ K9
	♠ KQ105	
	♥ AJ6	
	♦ 5	
	♣ AJ1054	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

North's response to partner's 1♣ opening will vary depending on whether or not 1♣ promises a 4-card suit. If it does, then an immediate and invitational 3♣ response looks best. South will bid 3♥ to show their heart stopper and, at the same time the lack of one in diamonds, and North will bid 3NT.

If the club suit may be short then North will respond 1♦. South's rebid of 1♠ is treated by most strong & 5 players as showing 5 clubs and 4 spades, with balanced hands rebidding 1NT even with a 4-card major. Playing this style requires that responder bids their major in preference to their minor (even if the minor is longer) unless they are strong enough to show the major over a 1NT rebid.

East, shouldn't bid with such a poor hand when vulnerable.

### Thoughts on the play

With every card sitting right for declarer, twelve tricks are theoretically makeable but, in practice, only those who manage to make North declarer are likely to achieve this. That's because a heart lead from East will run around to the queen giving declarer three heart tricks (finesse needed). That plus five club tricks (finesse needed) and four spade tricks (no finesse needed) comes to twelve in total.

With West on lead, it's likely to be a heart lead because that's the unbid suit. My choice is the ♥8 (2nd highest of small cards). Now declarer would have to lead their singleton diamond towards dummy's king before cashing all their other tricks (they need an entry to dummy's king). An unlikely action unless South was pushing for tops or loves to take risks!

Makeable Contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	6	4	3	6	6
S	6	4	2	6	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 24      ♠ AKJ65      Dealer W  
                  ♥ 6                      Vul: None  
                  ♦ AJ8  
                  ♣ Q1084

♠	♠ Q74
♥ AQ1095	♥ K32
♦ K73	♦ Q1065
♣ AJ953	♣ K72

  

♠ 109832
♥ J874
♦ 942
♣ 6

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
1♥	1♠	3♥	4♠
5♣	Pass	5♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

### Thoughts on the bidding

East has the first problem on this hand when partner opens 1♥ and North overcalls 1♠. A flat 10 count. 4-card major players will bid 2♦, whereas 5-card major players have to judge whether to invite or make a minimum raise. The ♠Q has gained some value from the overcall, so many will choose to invite (using your own methods, of course).

Now the spotlight is on South. Just 1 HCP but opposite a 5-card spade suit and holding a singleton club the hand has much greater playing strength. Total tricks advocates would have no problem finding the 4♠ pre-emptive bid here.

West has a nasty choice but my guess is that with a void spade and an undisclosed 5-card side-suit, the majority will choose to bid on and, if that's the choice than bidding 5♣, to give partner a choice of contracts, seems best. Pass, unfortunately, is not forcing here as partner didn't bid game.

Double, however, given the quality of the minor suits, is a reasonable alternative.

### Thoughts on the play

Firstly, 4♠x should only go two off. The important play for declarer is to cash just one top trump before creating voids in both clubs and hearts before cashing the other top trump and cross-ruffing. At some stage, they'll lead towards the ♦A-J-x, hoping that the K-Q are with West but that's not to be.

Both 4♥ and 5♥ need great care. Everything, except diamonds, breaks badly. Firstly, declarer ruffs the spade lead and cashes a top heart before crossing to dummy's ♥K. The bad break is worrying. When there's a risk of losing trump control, it's best to try to set up your side suit while retaining trump control, so cash the ♣K next and then aim to finesse a club. When South shows out, however, declarer must change tack and, winning with the ♣A, lead a diamond towards dummy and finesse the ♦10 when North plays small. When that holds, declarer can either persist with diamonds, or draw trumps before returning to diamonds. Either way a tenth trick follows.

In 5♥, however, declarer must go against the odds and play on diamonds and not on clubs. It's unlikely, therefore, that many will make it.

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

=====

Board 25      ♠ 65                      Dealer N  
                  ♥ QJ7542                  Vul: E-W  
                  ♦ A  
                  ♣ AK84

♠ AQJ10	♠ K7432
♥ 106	♥
♦ KQJ109	♦ 863
♣ 76	♣ QJ1032

  

♠ 98
♥ AK983
♦ 7542
♣ 95



<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♥	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

### Thoughts on the bidding

I doubt that the suggested auction will be followed by everyone and if E-W get their spades into the auction then North will, most certainly, be pushed to 5♥ - but will E-W find the 5♠ sacrifice?

Even those playing weak two-suited overcalls will think twice about overcalling with the East hand when vulnerable against not. But it works very well here.

South is likely to raise a 5-card heart opening to game, pre-emptively i.e. with no expectation of making it but simply to keep the opponents quiet (see The Law of Total Tricks below). If East has passed then West is unlikely to compete, again because of the vulnerability and because partner passed over 1♥.

E-W may have better chances against 4-card suit openers. South won't know quite how to value the hand and may well bid just 2♥.

West would like to double this for takeout (which again would uncover the spade fit) but isn't strong enough to pull partner out of a 3♣ bid if that's what they respond, so may well pass.

With a heart fit, North's hand jumps from a 14 count to an 18 count (3 extra points for a singleton ♦A and another 1 for the doubleton club) and whether they bid 3♥ or 4♥ N-S will get to game.

### Thoughts on the play

10 tricks are easily made in 4♠ and 11 tricks in 4♥. This is an example of the Law of Total Tricks at work. The Law states that the tricks available to each side will equal the number of trumps they hold. In this case N-S hold 11 trumps in hearts and E-W hold 9 trumps in spades. Obviously, there are other factors at work; if you'd like to learn more then read Larry Cohen's "To Bid or Not to Bid: The Law of Total Tricks"

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 26	♠ Q52	Dealer E
	♥ K5	Vul: Both
	♦ 1075	
	♣ K10986	
♠ 1098		♠ AK63
♥ AQ		♥ J108432
♦ 8432		♦ K
♣ J542		♣ A7
	♠ J74	
	♥ 976	
	♦ AQJ96	
	♣ Q3	

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		1♥	Pass
INT	Pass	2♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

### Thoughts on the bidding

With just a 5-card minor and only 10 HCP I expect most Souths to not overcall. Partner has a right to expect more from a vulnerable 2-level overcall and it's far more tempting for the opponents to double two of a minor for penalties as it can't be doubled into game.

West's INT response denies 4 spades so East simply rebids 2♥ to play.

### Thoughts on the play

South has two suits with unsupported honours, which are unattractive leads, and it doesn't look right to lead a diamond, so I expect a trump lead to be made most often.

A trump lead removes the possibility for declarer to protect themselves against a 4-2 spade break by using one of dummy's top trumps but as it happens, there's no need.

Once the heart finesse is wrong but the spades are 3-3, 9 tricks become inevitable.

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

=====

Board 27	♠ K965	Dealer S
	♥ QJ	Vul: None
	♦ Q943	
	♣ Q75	
♠ Q107		♠ AJ4
♥ 10654		♥ AK983
♦ K6		♦ A872
♣ AK42		♣ J
	♠ 832	
	♥ 72	
	♦ J105	
	♣ 109863	

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

### Thoughts on the bidding

Strong & 5 players will open 1♣ with West's hand and East simply responds 1♥ (don't starting jumping levels of bidding just because you're strong). West shows a minimum opening (12-15) and 4 hearts with their minimum raise.

East can now make a splinter bid of 4♣. This tells partner a) West has interest in slam, and b) that West has, at most, 1 club).

West's options are a) sign-off in 4♥ or b) show their ♦K by bidding 4♦ (this option is only available to those who have agreed to show first or second round controls below game).

It's tempting for West to sign-off in 4♥ because the majority of their points are in partner's short suit and I wouldn't blame anyone that did. East would then have to make a unilateral decision to press on to slam.

West does, however, have a very valuable doubleton ♦K and the ♣A-K are going to provide at least one discard, so this may be enough to persuade West to encourage partner's investigation of slam.

This hand is a good example of why many are now playing the 41/30 version of Roman Keycard Blackwood. It allows a partnership who've agreed hearts to ask about the queen of trumps without getting too high. If East bids 4NT, West bids 5♣ to show one or four of the five aces (the king of trumps being the 5th). This is the opposite of standard RKCB where a 5♣ response shows 0 or 3. East, encouraged by the showing of one ace, can now bid 5♦ to ask if the queen of trumps is in the West hand (note that playing standard RKCB West would bid 5♦ to show 1 ace and now, because the next suit up is the trump suit, East can't ask about the queen of trumps without pushing to slam).

### Thoughts on the play

With the hearts breaking 2-2 and with both trump honours in North's hand, there can be no mis-guess. Plus with the ♠K well-placed, thirteen tricks are easy.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	5	7	5	6
W	4	5	7	5	6

=====

Board 28      ♠ 86532      Dealer W  
                  ♥ KJ      Vul: N-S  
                  ♦ A  
                  ♣ QJ1075

♠ A107      ♠ J  
 ♥ Q3      ♥ A972  
 ♦ KQ109872      ♦ J654  
 ♣ 3      ♣ K642

                 ♠ KQ94  
                  ♥ 108654  
                  ♦ 3  
                  ♣ A98

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♦	Dbl	3♦	3♠
4♦	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

### Thoughts on the bidding

North is going to be conflicted by what to do over West's 1♦ opening. They are vul vs not and their spade suit isn't worthy of an overcall. Most of their points are in the red suits so they'll be uncomfortable about using a 2-suited overcall even if they weren't playing weak/strong two-suited overcalls.

"When in doubt, pass" is a good maxim in these situations.

East will probably respond 1♥ in order to get the major suit into the auction. A 3♦ invitational response (adding shortage points) works very well here but the trouble is that, 8 times out of 10 partner's next bid is 3NT and you won't know what to do with that.

South is content to play in hearts, so passes 1♥ and West shows their minimum opening by bidding 2♦. Now North can double for takeout without taking the bidding too high. West too is free to make a competitive raise to 3♦ and I expect the bidding to follow that which is suggested.

Until, that is, West's decision over 4♠. At pairs it's touch and go whether to defend or whether to sacrifice. The control in trumps and the singleton club would probably persuade me to pass.

### Thoughts on the play

Unless North leads the ♥K, I expect 5♦ to go down one, losing a heart, a diamond and a club.

4♠ is going to depend on how declarer guesses the hearts. The successful ones are likely to have been helped by East's bidding (i.e. the stronger East has bid the more likely declarer will place them with the ace)

### Makeable Contracts

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

=====