## Commentary

 for the CBAI Sinnultareous PainsFriday 8th March 2024

## Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs 2024, and for your continued support for the Association.

The funds that you contribute via these Simultaneous Pairs will help the Association in the rebuilding work ongoing as we emerge from the covid hiatus - training new teachers and new TDs, promoting the game and trying to attract new members, and so on. Many of our input costs, like costs generally these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this event, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the CBAI, is greatly appreciated.
We hope that you enjoyed the chance to 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 lots of tricky problems. Many thanks to our expert commentators Paul Delaney (Monday), Enda Murphy (Tuesday), Fearghal O'Boyle (Wednesday), Brian Senior (Thursday), and Karel De Raeymaeker and one of his junior protegeés, Isabel Burke (Friday), for their guidance through the maze. In the latter case, Isabel has provided the initial analysis, and Karel has supplemented it with some additional suggestions aimed especially at advanced players. Where he has not contributed, he has nothing to add to Isabel's comments! 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.

And finally, this note gives me a chance to repeat the theme of my presidential year: "Please cherish and nurture your club's beginners and novices - they are the future of our game."

## Gordon Lessells

President, Contract Bridge Association of Ireland


Isabel
Following two passes, South might open 24 either as a weak two or showing hearts and a minor. Many Wests will bid 2NT though Q86 isn't ideal but it's too flat to double. If $2 \boldsymbol{V}$ isn't opened, depending on agreements West will either open INT or rebid it and they should have no problem finding their spade fit here whether to stay in 3 or take the plunge to game is the question East will be asking themselves. In 4s declarer will need spades to break
favourably and also for Q of clubs to come down, however this is not the case with the clubs so only 9 tricks can be made in spades, and 8 tricks by West in NT. After a club lead, declarer can win then draw trumps and attempt to set up clubs to might be able to pitch heart losers. Caution will be needed to preserve entries in dummy for the clubs.

## Karel

Third seat openers are an area of huge potential. First of all, third in hand you can open way way lighter than in first or second position. If you have a "poor" hand you can be sure LHO in fourth seat has at least an opening bid and frequently better. In these situations you have several options. (I) pre-emption: so the above hand could open $2 \varphi$ (2) lead directional: this in my opinion is the important one so with the above hand we open I\&!! (3) an out and out bluff which should be done at favourable vulnerability with an escape plan so with the above hand we might elect to bid INT!!

So how do we choose？The heart suit is too weak and if in the likely scenario LHO declares we do not want a heart lead．Opening INT．If you get doubled bid $2 \star$（stronger suit less likely to get doubled－can also decide to run to 29 if $2 \uparrow$ does get doubled）．If LHO passes pd bids $2 \%$ as a transfer－pass． 2 Stayman bid 2 2 transfer bid 4ヶ．2 as whatever pass！！2NT as transfer to $\$$ simple $3 \star$ ．It could work but there is a lot of risk and we are at equal vulnerability． So l＇d bid Is here．

Note ：The opponents are likely to get to 4 by West．Any lead except a and 4s makes． On a diamond lead and a heart switch declarer is one off．A tartan opening（ $\mathrm{Y}_{\mathrm{s}}+\mathrm{minor}$ ）may work as North should be able to figure out your minor is diamonds，but may elect to lead a heart anyway．Note without any bid from South，North is very likely to lead a fourth best club．So a light third－in－hand opener in some way suggesting diamonds is the only chance for $\mathrm{N} / \mathrm{S}$ to get a good score．


## Isabel

Playing strong NT East will open INT and playing weak they will open I\＄and plan to rebid NT later．Depending on partnership agreements，South may or may not be able to show clubs over INT（probably not the best idea being vulnerable and not having a great suit）but if passed out，N／S can take the first
seven tricks provided a black suit is led．If 1$\rangle$ is opened，then a overcall is bound to come in，followed by either $2 \star$ or $3 \$$ from West－ depending on whether they play inverted minors over overcalls or not．North might briefly consider 4£ but looking at the adverse vulnerability and his 9 －loser hand，pass is the sensible option．Nine tricks can be made in a diamond contract by E／W－losing two spades， a probable spade ruff and a club．

## Karel

Over strong NT by East l＇d be very reluctant to bid clubs even if I could show them．Poor suit and adverse vulnerability．West has the choice between passing or（my choice）bidding Garbage Stayman．The worst that can happen is we play in a $4 / 3$ spade fit which rates to make． Over I\＄I think 2 is ok and certainly on this hand hits paydirt．Regardless E／W won＇t sell out and will end up in 3 which makes．In fact unless South leads SAK and then a low club and gets a ruff E／W will make 10 tricks in $\uparrow$ ．If N／S push on to $4 \boldsymbol{e}$ East needs to double for a juicy 200．Passing gets E／W a zero（IOO versus IIO／I30 available in $\uparrow$ ）．

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\stackrel{1}{2}$ | － | $\stackrel{\rightharpoonup}{*}$ | 4 | NT |
|  | ＝ | ＝ | ＝ | ＝ | ＝＝ |
| N | 3 | － | － | － | － |
| S | 3 | － | － | － | － |
| E | － | 3 | 2 | 2 | － |
| W | － | 3 | 2 | 2 | － |

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| Board 3 | $+\quad 96$ $+\quad$ A1085 $+\quad 1096$ $-\quad 1062$ | Dealer S <br> Vul：E－W |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| － 854 |  | －Q |
| －J963 |  | －Q74 |
| －Q7 |  | －AK85432 |
| ＊AQ95 |  | ＊J8 |
|  | －AKJI0732 |  |
|  | －K2 |  |
|  | －K743 |  |
|  | \＆K743 |  |

Isabel
After a 1s opening by South and a pass from West，some Norths will pass but with three IOs and good spot cards，I would muster up a INT bid．East will come in with 2 and a
confident 34 from South puts North in a tricky spot. We have already stretched our values once, so pass is best here. West will lead $Q$ which will be ruffed in declarer's hand. They should draw trumps next, and as $\$ \mathrm{Q}$ comes down, the only iffy suit is clubs. We will probably end up opening the suit without the help of the defenders so it will be difficult not to lose four tricks overall. 3s makes on the nose.

## Karel

Indeed North should scrape up a INT bid. Over 2 though I would bid 4s (as my void in - and opponents presumably having values in $\leqslant$ makes it more likely that whatever partner has will be in $\vee$ and 2 ). Proper defence will beat 44 but declarer can make it very hard. $Q$ ruffed. 4 (queen drops). Use the $\$ 9$ as an entry to lead a which East must cover. Draw another trump pitching a heart. Small club to the ten. If East has the eA we are home. If East continues a diamond we are home. If East leads a heart it better be a low one and given Dummy's AT that will probably be rejected. So East will likely continue a club. If you play East for the A you are -I. If you duck West may overtake and cash eA again you are home. If either opponent switches a low heart win with the $K$ and run the spades. You don't have any legitimate squeeze but a careless discard may give you a chance. I'll wager a few 44 making will hit the score sheet.

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\stackrel{8}{0}$ | $\checkmark$ | $\varphi$ | $\pm$ | NT |
|  | $=$ | = | = | = | $=$ |
| N | 2 | - | - | 3 | 2 |
| S | 2 | - | - | 3 | 2 |
| E | - | 3 | 1 | - | - |
| W | - | 3 | I | - | - |


| Board 4 | 4 | Q72 | Dealer W |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\uparrow$ | Q96 | Vul: Both |
|  | $\checkmark$ | 1093 |  |
|  | \% | 10965 |  |
| ¢ Al085 |  |  | ¢ J64 |
| - KJ32 |  |  | - A875 |
| - A2 |  |  | - K875 |
| \% K74 |  |  | 2 AQ |
|  | $\pm$ | K93 |  |
|  | $\varphi$ | 104 |  |
|  | $\checkmark$ | QJ64 |  |
|  | 8 | J832 |  |

## Isabel

Most Wests will open INT here. East has a lovely hand opposite this so will probably ask for majors in which case they will arrive at 49 and make eleven tricks for +650 . Some Easts may just jump to 3NT over the opening and they will bring home ten tricks for +630 . In 4 P after a probable minor suit lead, declarer should win and draw trumps, losing to the 9 Q . Then with one trump left in dummy, a spade can be discarded on the 2 K , one can be lost and the final spade loser in declarer's hand can be ruffed. So, Stayman and arriving at $4>$ here gives the winning score at matchpoint pairs.

## Karel

Accurate analysis. Note 3NT requires a diamond lead to hold it to 10 tricks, any other lead makes II. Declarer also needs to play the spade suit for three tricks by (a) leading the J or (b) small to the 8. If declarer does lead the J, South needs to cover to give declarer a guess on the subsequent spade lead from dummy.

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | \% | - | $\varphi$ | $\pm$ | NT |
|  | $=$ | $=$ | = | = | == |
| N | - | - | - | - | - |
| S | - | - | - | - | - |
| E | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| W | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 |



## Isabel

If North has a way to show majors or spades and another suit then they will open that, if not East will open IV with their I7-count. South can show spades and a minor by bidding $2 \varphi$ and after a probable pass by West, North could certainly compete to 3s which puts East in a difficult position. If 3s is passed out then North can easily make it by only losing one spade, one heart and two clubs, making sure to ruff the heart losers in dummy. If West didn't pass after $2 \downarrow$, any encouragement at all would be tempting for East to head towards game. Even though game is more likely to go down than make, -50 for $\mathrm{E} / \mathrm{W}$ is better than -I40.

## Karel

I play the Michaels convention as any range. I used to play it weak or strong, but this limited its use. The modern game goes out of its way to show support. With the likelihood of the opponents having a spade fit $3 \curlyvee \mathrm{NV}$ may be an idea but it's certainly very marginal. The BBO robot would bid 4t with the North hand (law of total tricks) and I would too. This puts a lot of pressure on East as 5 may make or be a good save versus a vul 44. The best option would be to double suggesting defending. West with 4 will be happy to comply.

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\stackrel{8}{8}$ | - | $\varphi$ | 4 | NT |
|  | = | = | = | = | $=$ |
| N | - | - | - | 3 | - |
| S | - | - | - | 3 | - |
| E | 4 | 2 | 3 | - | 2 |
| W | 4 | 2 | 3 | - | 2 |



## Isabel

In third seat West will open Is to which East will most likely respond INT if playing $2 / I$. Opener can now rebid $2 \varphi$ showing their distribution and point range. With no known fit, East should invite with 2NT carrying stops in both minors. As West is at the upper range of their rebid, they will place the contact in 3NT. With five top tricks, East needs to find four more. Three spade tricks are easy to establish, as is one heart trick for +600 .

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | \% | $\checkmark$ | $\varphi$ | 4 | NT |
|  | = | = | $=$ | $=$ | == |
| N | - | - | - | - | - |
| S | - | - | - | - | - |
| E | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| W | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |


| Board 7 | ¢ | AK76 <br> 2 <br> QJ9652 <br> A8 | Dealer S <br> Vul: Both |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ¢ Q984 |  |  | - 12 |
| - A96 |  |  | - KJI05 |
| - K83 |  |  | - 1074 |
| - J96 |  |  | \% KI074 |
|  | $\pm$ | 1053 |  |
|  | $\varphi$ | Q8743 |  |
|  | $\checkmark$ | A |  |
|  | 8 | Q532 |  |

## Isabel

After two passes, North will open I to which South will respond IV. I would choose to rebid 1s with the North hand here to show 5/4 shape. Some Souths will repeat their 5-card
heart suit and others may bid INT due to the poor quality of the suit. Eight tricks can be made in NT by South. When intending to set up diamonds, it is important not to waste entries to dummy as they are very precious. If West holds up their $\$ K$ and an entry or two has been used, South could end up locked in their hand and unable to reach dummy's established diamonds.

## Karel

So long as South doesn't cover the P J or T the suit is blocked and eight tricks are there. It would be interesting what West would do with AKJT9. On a small spade lead declarer must not duck as now the opponents can come to one spade, four hearts, one club, one diamond. Note an undisciplined $2 \boldsymbol{}$ opener by South will probably not fare well.

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | Q | $\checkmark$ | $\varphi$ | 4 | NT |
|  | = | $=$ | $=$ | = | == |
| N | I | 2 | I | 2 | I |
| S | - | 2 | I | 2 | 2 |
| E | - | - | - | - | - |
| W | - | - | - | - | - |



## Isabel

When West passes, North will start the bidding off with $1 \%$. With 8 HCPs some Easts may overcall I $\boldsymbol{t}$ - there is good playing strength and length in RHO's suit is good as partner could be short. Other Easts may choose to pass as the suit is quite poor. Regardless, N/S will end up in 4P, probably just losing a club and two diamonds. Both hands can provide discards for losers, depending on who is declaring.


## Isabel

North's is opening sees a ls response from South. North's 2NT rebid should encourage South towards slam be it with a natural 39 rebid (showing $5 / 4$ or less likely $5 / 5$ ) or a form of checkback with 3\%. Over 3४ North should be greatly encouraged as the double major fit bodes well with the five-card spade suit potentially offering discards in a heart contract. N/S are likely to end up in slam in either or $\nabla$, more likely the former. A spade lead seems passive and reasonable for West. This presents declarers with several different lines of play.

## Karel

Let's examine the potential lines of play, depending on which slam is being played, from which side:

64 by $S \mathrm{Q}$ is the standout lead. Win the ace. Q losing to K. Club ruffed. $\downarrow$ A and another, ruff. Two top spades. Heart to the Q. Cash © and guess the heart right.
$6>$ by North ( lead). Best to duck this. Win the club switch. Heart to the Q and because of the spade blockage and the diamond blockage you can't deal with four trumps in the West hand so you play up to the PK. Cash the $\downarrow$ Q and two top spades. Finesse the trump jack. Cash the $P$. Cash the $\forall A$ and throw the remaining high spade in dummy and claim.

64 by North (lead). Win. Again due to the blockage we can't deal with four trumps with West. $\vee \mathrm{Q}$ and $¥ \mathrm{~K}$. $\$ \mathrm{Q}$ ducked. Win return. $\$ \mathrm{~A}$ and ruff third diamond with the $\uparrow$. Cash two spades, finesse $Y 9$, cash $Y$ A dumping the third spade in dummy. Claim.
$6>$ by $\mathrm{S}(\mathrm{Q} \mathrm{Q}$ lead). Ace by default. Ruff club. Cash YAQ. Spade up. Ruff a club. Spade up. Cash $\Psi K$ pitch $a \downarrow$. Cash third spade in dummy. Play $\uparrow T$ pitching last $\downarrow$. East only has diamonds left.
$6 \uparrow$ by $S$ (non lead). You arrange a ruff with the $\vee T$. Play the hearts by $\vee Q$ then up to $K$. Cash two spades, finesse $\vee 9$, cash $\uparrow$ A throwing spade in dummy and claim.
*** As declarer it is ESSENTIAL to make a plan at trick one. As you run various scenarios through your head, it becomes clear that four trumps with West is impossible to deal with. Four trumps with East is manageable so we should try to cater for that


Isabel
East opens it (preferred choice when 444। unless the singleton is diamonds), West responds 14. North can bid 24 naturally which likely may end the auction as neither East nor West have clear bids to make with their only option being perhaps a pushy takeout double from East. The play in 2s should be fairly
standard with declarer having no way of avoiding two losers in each of spades, hearts, and diamonds. If North doesn't bid then if East chooses to rebid over INT, West is worth a courtesy raise that East should pass at pairs as there is no need to push for close games. There is little issue to the play in 3 especially on say a heart lead from South that will give declarer a free finesse. A spade lead may cause more issues especially if declarer delays drawing trump and attempts to make several ruffs in their hand as if they are not careful South's 9 might potentially steal a trick, but still ten tricks is not impossible on the layout.

## Karel

The sequence Ix P ly $2 x / 2 y$ needs to be agreed. My personal preference is to play it as natural with 13+ points and a good suit. The North hand here fails the "good" suit criteria in my opinion, particularly vulnerable. Indeed 2. doubled will go one off and maybe more for a terrible score. But add the K and now this is the sort of hand you want a natural 2 for. North might try a shaded INT, again very dangerous vulnerable and, with no evident escape, not to recommended. The green card in your box does have a purpose, although many players ignore it! Sometimes you are fixed so be it. Assuming North passes, East has an interesting problem. In teams the objective is to get to a making safe contract, not so in pairs. In pairs we want the highest scoring contract. NT generally outscores other contracts so West may well rebid INT (II-14). If playing weak NT they don't have that option and will bid 2 reaching the best spot. Over a INT rebid West is now goosed as 2 is checkback or New Minor Forcing, and shows a much stronger hand. In INT by East South will lead the Y . If declarer beats this, or a $\upharpoonright$ continuation, INT will fail (losing three hearts, two spades, and two clubs). Ducking hearts twice gets you 90 for yes ... a duck. Goes to show you it doesn't matter if you play like Zia but you are in the wrong contract.


## Isabel

A fairly standard auction looks like a weak NT opening by West, East will enquire about a major and after hearing $2 \$$ just bid 3NT ending proceedings. Playing strong NT le being opened East can respond $I \downarrow$, West will rebid INT and again this will be raised to 3. A fairly normal low spade will begin to threaten declarer whose simplest chance for 9 tricks looks like establishing diamonds. When playing a low diamond to the ace if North follows low there are additional chances if spades are 5-2 as when the king of diamonds is cashed if North doesn't unblock the queen he will get in with it and be unable to profitably attack spades from his side. In any case the spades being 4-3 and diamonds breaking 3-3 means that all suits are working favourably for declarer and nine tricks should roll home.

## Karel

Assuming strong NT my INT rebid is II-I4 and denies a 4CM. There are plenty that play a IM rebid as $5 / 4$ unbalanced and hide their 4CM. All to their own but as one well known bridge star commented ... "Bridge is easy just bid what you have". Isabel is correct that North should unblock the $\$$ on the $2^{\text {nd }}$ round. South will play the $\$ 5$ and then 10 showing an odd number and clearly has the J. Still a good declarer won't give North that chance. A diamond up to the ace wins. Now the PQ
ducked \$you only cover to set up a potential trick in partners or your hand $\%$. YJ ducked. $\varphi$ to the ace. $2^{\text {nd }}$ diamond. If North plays the Q duck. If North ducks $\$ K$ and another with the eA as an entry. This line makes if the spades were originally $5 / 2$ and doesn't give North a chance to be a hero. Sadly as the cards lie the best line is irrelevant.


## Isabel

West will open IV and after some thought, North should probably double. Even with only three spades, the hand is too good to pass with shortage in the suit opened and all 14 HCPs scattered in the other three suits. East might stick in a 29 bid and South will bid 24. The auction could end there or some Easts might compete to $3 \vee$. This will make with no issues, even following a spade lead and a diamond switch, the defence can only take four tricks. A trump should be kept in dummy to ruff the club loser in hand.

## Karel

The majority of players hate defending. In all my years playing bridge, good defence has been the number one source of bundles of imps and good scores. Over 24, with the opponents vulnerable at pairs, with the East hand, l'd double it for penalties. Having done so l'd better lead a trump!! If not at favourable vulnerability, and with partner known to have
zero or one spade, bidding ${ }^{34}$ is probably better. Partner needs to be on the ball against 24. South will lead the 98 or $T$. West must duck, but I really can't see many Wests coming up with that play!! This allows East to lead trumps three times and kill the heart ruff in Dummy. Declarer may forget about the $\uparrow$ ruff as they are a tempo behind and play on einstead. Given the dire lack of entries they will probably need to go all out and play a club to the 9 . Declarer will need to play it well to go off only 1 .


## Isabel

If the $\mathrm{E} / \mathrm{W}$ pair plays the Flannery convention, this is a perfect hand for it. A 2 opening shows five hearts and four spades and fewer than 15 HCPs to avoid rebid problems. If not, IV is probably still best - after a $2 \downarrow$ (game-forcing) response, opener can bid 24 which is not a reverse. A 2 NT rebid could also work here and ending up in 3NT will be a good outcome. Four diamond tricks along with four hearts, a top spade and either an extra spade or an extra club will give declarer ten tricks which is a better score than ten tricks in a major suit game.

## Karel

Opening bids and rebids will all depend on your system. 3NT is where you want to be. If you get to 4 you will have to play it very well to
make ... and you'll still get a poor score versus those making ten tricks in NT. In 4Y, on the presumed $\mathbf{\wedge}$ K lead (assuming the suit was not bid) declarer will have to play on diamonds and use them as trumps to force North to ruff and be overruffed, K will setup the as an entry, while ruffing spades with the 9 K and T . In 3NT declarer can force an extra club or spade trick. The defenders can't set up four tricks before declarer has ten.


## Isabel

East will open the bidding with $1 \mathbf{A}$, South can stick in an overcall of 2 and West will pass for the time being - since a double would promise four hearts, INT would show a club stop and they've only two spades. North can bid $2 \varphi$ which is forcing for one round - usually showing six hearts. With a choice between repeating clubs and supporting hearts, it would be better to bid $3 \uparrow$. West might now compete to 3 as they had enough points from the beginning and it is probably safe to assume partner has six spades. Whether N/S end up in $4 / 5$ ¢ or E/W outbid them - it all depends on how optimistic or aggressive the players are! E/W can easily make 44, just losing a club and two hearts. N/S can make eleven tricks in hearts, just losing a spade and a diamond. Eleven tricks can also be made in clubs.

## Karel

A good policy in competitive auctions is to bid directly to what you think is your side's spot. If the opponents go quietly this is fine. If though they choose to bid on, the lack of definition in your jump now makes it very hard to do the right thing. With the East hand there is a strong case for just opening 4 4 ! It's a purely offensive hand and a 4s opening make life very awkward for the opponents. Let's assume a ls opener. Now we have an easy 24 overcall as South. Clear cut pass by West. North could bid 49 which is likely to buy the contract especially as the opponents don't seem to have a spade fit. But if East is one of those "I ain't going to be pushed around"-types and now bids 49....

So with the North hand $2 \varphi$ forcing WITH values is best. East will rebid their spades. South 3\%. West on the bidding can see the $\checkmark A Q$ are big cards. East rates to have three or four diamonds. If West squeaks up a 3 bid that gets their side to $4 \Phi$ and probably $5 \$$ over $5 \%$. As Isabel says the final outcome will all depend on the poker characteristics at the table. How did you do?

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\stackrel{0}{8}$ | $\checkmark$ | $\varphi$ | 9 | NT |
|  | $=$ | $=$ | = | $=$ | == |
| N | 5 | - | 5 | - | - |
| S | 5 | - | 5 | - | - |
| E | - | 3 | - | 4 | - |
| W | - | 3 | - | 4 | - |


| Board 15 | \$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { KQJ3 } \\ & \text { AKQ106 } \\ & 86 \\ & \text { A6 } \end{aligned}$ | Dealer S <br> Vul: N-S |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ¢ 976 |  |  | ¢ 10542 |
| - 9874 |  |  | - 5 |
| - AK9 |  |  | - QJ2 |
| Q Q75 |  |  | - K9842 |
|  | $\pm$ | A8 |  |
|  | $\varphi$ | J32 |  |
|  | $\checkmark$ | 107543 |  |
|  | 8 | J 103 |  |

Isabel
After two passes, North will open the bidding with IV. South can respond $2 \vee$ and with a 4loser hand, North will jump to game. After a probable diamond lead, the defence can take
another diamond and a club later on for +620 . Ten tricks can be taken in NT for +630 which will probably be a top with most tables likely to play in 4ケ. However, being practical about it, most pairs will play in 4 because of the strength of the hearts and the lack of cover in the minor suits.


Isabel
West will open 14 and East will respond 2 whether the partnership plays $2 / I$ or not, depending on whether 3 promises extras, that can be bid or West can repeat their spades to show six plus. With a known fit and a nice hand for partner, East will jump to 44. North's safest lead is probably the $\$ 6$ (second from the top of a bad suit). Declarer will win in hand, draw trumps catching the Queen, pitch the diamond loser and the 95 on the two top hearts and only lose to the sA for twelve tricks. Of course, if North led a diamond at trick one then it will hold Declarer to eleven, but it's not easy to do that. However, at pairs, that diamond trick is the difference between a top and a bottom so the players who found that lead will reap the rewards.


## Isabel

North will probably pass in first seat but a slightly aggressive weak $2 \vee$ opening is tempting with such high spots and not being vulnerable. Failing that, East could open I or INT. South could overcall $2 \boldsymbol{2}$ if was opened but not if INT was. West will say either $2 \checkmark$ or $3 \diamond$ if $I \diamond$ was opened, depending on agreements on whether inverted minors are still on over an overcall or not. If INT is opened that will be the likely final contract. Most people will lead 07 (fourth best from longest and strongest) and declarer can make eight tricks here.

## Karel

Whether playing weak OR strong NT I'd open the East hand INT (again looking for a higher scoring contract). South should pass (no real suit and scattered values). INT will therefore buy the contract. The lead of a club from KJxxx is statistically poor. The BBO robot would lead a heart in this case, which is certainly likely to be every bit as effective as a fourth best club. Declarer can't afford to mess about so will take their eight tricks for +120 , normally a very good score in part-score territory. Sadly here 4 makes ... or even better 44. I have no idea how you would end up in spades and then be lucky enough to have $\Phi K Q$ under the $A J$ and the suit breaking $3 / 3$. If anyone does end up in spades they will get a huge score.


## Isabel

East opens $1 \%$, South's is overcall will be followed by INT from West. North now has a tricky decision but pass is the most logical bid. East will be content with INT and South has no need to take any more action. North has a perfectly clear spade lead and declarer should duck it. South has an interesting decision now: if Declarer plays the six on the first round Partner's lead is almost certainly a doubleton in which case the ten in Declarer's hand will become a second spade stop. For this reason it might seem better to attempt to establish Partner's suit which is almost certainly diamonds. Declarer should run the diamond around to the Queen. North will then clear the suit and the defence is in an excellent position. If Declarer attempts to play on clubs, South should now play a spade as tempo is on their side and will have a sure entry with the PA. Down two seems the likely result but another undertrick is also possible.

## Karel

The contract will really depend on North's actions. With a 5/5 5-count, vulnerable, it seems inadvisable to act. Yet if partner has three or more cards in either of the red suits, that is where we want to be. If they don't you are in a $5 / 2$ spade fit - hardly a disaster. At pairs there is a strong case for bidding double or 2 (not $2 \uparrow$, your suit is junk). Double will work a
treat if left in as per Isabel's analysis (with the West hand l'd be inclined to pull it to $2 \boldsymbol{2}$ ). 2 gets you to your fit. At teams it would be a riskier proposition.

In the play of INT declarer should not duck the spade as their pips guarantee a second stopper and, far more importantly, you definitely DON'T want a diamond switch. Finesse the club, if it loses hope they are $2 / 2$. Sadly that's not the case, so down you go.

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\bigcirc$ | - | $\stackrel{\square}{ }$ | 4 | NT |
|  | $=$ | $=$ | = | $=$ | = |
| N | - | 3 | - | 2 | I |
| S | - | 3 | - | 2 | 1 |
| E | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| W | 2 | - | - | - | - |


| Board 19 |  | KJ76 | Dealer S |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  |  |  | Vul: E-W |

## Isabel

South will open with a solid IV to which North can respond with a (game-forcing) $2 \boldsymbol{2}$. South will rebid $2 \varphi$ and with cover in the rest of the suits, North can safely say 3NT. East doesn't have a lead that stands out - a club into the strength can be ruled out, a heart through the strength probably isn't the best idea. If North had two hearts they would have supported, if they have one a finesse can be taken anyway so it loses when North is void which is this case exactly. Say a spade is chosen, Declarer can win at the first available opportunity, set up clubs for four tricks, two diamond tricks, the spade at the beginning and two hearts for nine in total. Caution should be taken to keep either the $A$ or the Q on the table to get the second heart trick.

## Karel

3NT by North seems the spot. Nine tricks can be established but the defence will duck two rounds of clubs and now things get sticky. On the spade lead and return it may be worthwhile ducking as East may continue the $Q$ and now you don't need two heart tricks. Should the opponents switch to diamonds at any point, especially trick 2 , things will get very tricky. I suspect most will make nine tricks but it very easy to go wrong on this hand.


## Isabel

Whether or not the West hand is a 1 opening is a source of debate. It is certainly worth it in playing strength however opening such hands can cause the auction to get out of control especially when partner makes a bid predicated on the presumption of more HCPs. The hand should never be opened a weak two as it is far too strong so on balance the options are pass or It. If Is is opened, it will probably go pass, pass to South who could double and rebid hearts to show a hand that's too strong to overcall in the first place. North will show their clubs and South will say $2 \boldsymbol{}{ }^{\vee}$, North should raise to $4 \%$. West will lead their singleton club, declarer will win, draw trumps and only lose a club, diamond and spade for +620 . If West passes in the first place, South will open IV,

North will respond 19. South will either say 3 or $4 \uparrow$, either way they will end up in game.


## Isabel

North will open the bidding with 20 or the equivalent of their $23+$ point hand. If they play a relay $2 \downarrow$, South will bid that and North will show their suit. The prospects of slam look great from the spade point of view from South's hand but with so few points it's a tricky decision. It would not be surprising to see lots of 69-I scores from those who got a heart lead. As they say - against a slam at matchpoints it's often best to lead out an ace. Lots of people won't but then the heart can be discarded on a diamond and the club finesse is working.

## Karel

Ok so double dummy 64 doesn't make. A possible auction is $2 \boldsymbol{2} 2 \mathrm{NT} 30^{*} 4 \% 4$ $40 * / 64$. So if West takes the opportunity to double the heart transfer for a heart lead North has been warned, and should bail out in 49. The lack of a double of $3>$ is also worrying as now East could have them both or a sequence $\mathrm{Q} J$, KQ etc. North may make a fake heart cue if they have decided to go to slam, to deter a heart lead. On top of all this hokerypokery and having avoided the heart lead you still need the club finesse. All in all pretty dreadful odds for the slam. Someone will
undoubtedly bid 6s and not receive a heart lead, but l'd much rather be in 4s


## Isabel

East will open IV or INT depending once again on partnership agreements. If they open IP, it will probably go pass, pass to North who will most likely double - even in the absence of a fourth spade. N/S will probably then end up in 24. West will lead a heart which will be won. South will lose two diamond tricks and two heart tricks for plus one. N/S can also make ten tricks in diamonds though it is not clear how they'd get there. Possibly they have an agreement that 2NT minors could be $4 / 4$ from North after East opens and it comes around then South will pick diamonds over clubs. Especially non-vulnerable this could be the case. In either contract the lead should be the same.

## Karel

Ok so IVPPxxx (good hand) Is P P x P 2 PP 2s all pass. The key point is that East should strive to show a good hand. On this basis the $\psi$ j is a good shot as an opening lead. It either traps the diamond in the North hand, as is the actual case, or Partner has the $\varphi \mathrm{A}$ or $\boldsymbol{\varphi} \mathrm{K}$ and can give us a ruff. This will hold South to nine tricks. On a heart lead, Declarer ducks ensuring a heart ruff and ends up with ten tricks.

N/S, with an eye on the vulnerability, might double $2 \varphi$ which is certainly going at least one off for a likely zero. Note the importance of doubling at matchpoints. If N/S don't double then +100 for them will be a zero versus the +140 available. The vast majority of players do not double anything like enough in part-score contracts at matchpoints.
If East opens INT, they will buy the contract. This goes down one for a very good score.


| Board 23 | $\stackrel{\varphi}{\varphi}$ | $\begin{aligned} & \text { KQ653 } \\ & \text { AKQ4 } \\ & 4 \\ & \text { I083 } \end{aligned}$ | Dealer S <br> Vul: Both |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ¢ 972 |  |  | ¢ 108 |
| - J5 |  |  | - 10762 |
| - 1083 |  |  | - AQ9752 |
| A AQ742 |  |  | -9 |
|  | $\underline{9}$ | AJ4 |  |
|  | $\stackrel{\square}{ }$ | 983 |  |
|  | $\checkmark$ | KJ6 |  |
|  | \% | KJ65 |  |

## Isabel

South will open INT if playing weak or if not. Over a INT opening, with a $5 / 4$ gameforcing hand I always bid $2 \%$ and if 2 is responded (which it is in this case) then North should jump in the suit that they hold 4 cards in - $3 P$ in this case. Now South knows that they have a $5 / 3$ fit in spades so adding up the points, they should be in 44. Over a l\& opening, North will respond is and INT can now be rebid, North can bid 3 or 34 , both sending a similar message to partner and they will end up in 4s once again. If North is playing the contract, East has an obvious singleton club lead which will be won with the queen, ace will be cashed, a ruff will be given and the $A>$ will be cashed for down one. Although this contract is standard in practice, I would not be surprised if it goes down at most tables.

## Karel

As Isabel points out there are a lot of different scenarios possible on this deal. 49 by North is automatically down on the obvious club lead. By South it requires a diamond lead and club switch. If South opens $1 \%$ playing strong NT and North responds is East should bid $2 \checkmark$ for a lead. It is very unlikely this will go for a number. Over a weak NT and $2 \boldsymbol{2}$ Stayman same thing 2 for a lead. It is extremely important to take every opportunity to improve your side's defensive chances. While Isabel's Smolen route is entirely reasonable due to the strength of the North hand, I would transfer to spades (stops a lead directing $2 \downarrow$ ) and then bid $3 \uparrow$. I don't mind declaring $\geqslant$ s from my side if I find we have a fit. South now has an interesting decision. They could agree spades and end up in 4s or they could bank on ten tricks in NT and bid 3NT which will earn a huge score. Holding the $\$ K J x$ they may well decide to bid 3NT in the other scenarios as well. If you managed to get to 3NT here, well done!


Isabel
After a pass by RHO, North will open his lovely spade suit at the I-level. Being obliged to respond, South will have to say INT to which North will show his 4 -card heart suit at the 2 level. South will revert to 24 and the bidding should end there. East will lead his clubs from
the top and take the first three tricks. Any switch is probable. East knows the trumps are breaking for declarer so there is no harm in a spade switch - it will also cut down on a potential heart ruff or two. North has a diamond in dummy for a heart discard but can't get to it if there was a spade switch so will lose two hearts and three clubs for 2 making.

## Karel

Correct analysis but how does declarer lose just 2 hearts tricks on a trump switch (the correct action) after three rounds of clubs? If they play a top heart from hand, a trump comes back and boom! ... three heart losers. So Declarer must overtake the $\$ K$ with the Ace and lead a heart. West must duck. Declarer now needs West to have three hearts to the Ace. They play a low heart. West wins continues the spades to stop the ruff. Declarer draws one more round of trumps and ducks another $\uparrow$. Phew!!


## Isabel

Here those who play weak NT will start with that holding a standard balanced 14 count and those playing strong NT will start with 1$\rangle$. After hearing INT from North, even an optimistic South may not even try for slam. However, after 1 $\downarrow$, a 9+ card fit is known and holding a shortage in hearts with solid other suits makes slam in diamonds look appealing.

After a response of ls to the opening, INT will be rebid and South needs a way to ask for keycards with diamonds as trumps - $4 \checkmark$ is a good bid here. After hearing that partner has two keycards, South will venture to $6 *$. The As is placed nicely, as is the $K \mathbb{P}$. There are enough trumps for losers in each hand to be ruffed, so +920 will be a good score here.

## Karel

This is a classic pairs versus teams hand. In teams Isabel's analysis of getting to 64 via minorwood or some other sequence is spot on. Even with the ex wrong it has lots of chances and is a very good contract. Sadly in pairs 6 NT makes. So while bidding $6 \$$ will get you at least $60 \%$ as there will always be at least some pairs playing only in game, you need to strongly consider 6NT at pairs.


## Isabel

East opens IP and whilst West doesn't have the book values for a l-level response, four trumps a singleton and a side suit for Declarer is definitely worth a move. Is is reasonable as is a pre-emptive $3 \downarrow$ (showing 4-card support and $5-7 \mathrm{HCPs}$ ). Over the latter a raise to 4 H is probably worth the push at pairs. Over IS East should rebid INT to show their point range over which at pairs $3 \vee$ from West is reasonable in case Partner has wasted minor cards like the ${ }^{2} \mathrm{~K}$ or Q , in which case a close game is
probably not worth the push given others in the room may have passed originally so the contract is probably a level to high anyway. This is the win for the 14 response as $4 \%$ has no play with four losers and no way of getting rid of any of them.

## Karel

We have two possible auctions.
(I) INT 20 2 2 P .
(2) IH $3 \vee * \mathrm{P}$. $3 P$ is a law of total tricks raise and weak. East does have a nice hand but soft values and needs way too much from Partner to cover all their potential losers, so should never raise to game.

Bridge is a funny game, exchange the $\Psi \mathrm{J}$ for the 4 and in the West hand and now $4 \longdiv { }$ is a $50 \%$ proposition.


## Isabel

In second seat West opens $1 \boldsymbol{\%}$, it is tempting for North to pre-empt $3 \checkmark$ opposite a passed partner but $I$ might be better as the hand is a bit too strong. East will bid Is and West raises that to 24. East's hand is worth an invite of some sort especially given the 9-card fit that can facilitate game frequently being made on less than the expected 25 HCPs . Over an invite West is definitely worth an accept with the 6loser hand, with all the points in their two suits
and ruffing values. It is unfortunate that in theory the defence has four tricks to cash off the top, but in practice the game might have some outside chances. On the expected diamond lead North must switch a heart at trick two which is not the most unreasonable defence as they are unlikely to have chances to get tricks elsewhere and can see potential discards coming for declarer on the working club finesse.

## Karel

P l\& ?. Ok who likely owns the contract and what is it? E/W have the balance of points almost certainly and are a strong favourite to make some number of spades. We can't outbid them so we need to make it awkward. I does nothing. $2 \checkmark$ why? $3>$ is surely the right bid. What does East do over 3४? 3s is forcing. Double is takeout. Pass? They are in a horrible spot. Pass is probably best and over the double bid 3 . So is $3 \checkmark$ the right call for North?
The Zia's of this world have imagination AND the willingness to look foolish. What about a INT overcall!?? If East doubles, we retreat to $2 \vee$. East might elect to double that too, who knows. If they succeed in getting to spades we've lost nothing. If they pass out INT, we've got a result, as we have five tricks for - 100 and a total top!! I doubt anyone in Ireland will bid INT though ...


## Isabel

The auction will likely start with three passes to South who will open I $\downarrow$, a IV overcall from West should be met with a is response as advancer can tolerate playing in $2 \vee$ and as here there is the potential for a spade fit. South will come in with $2 \%$ and East will now bid 24. North is aware of the double minor suit fit but should ideally have a fourth diamond or a fifth club to venture to the 3 -level. East should simply pass as his partner was unable to open the bidding so there is likely no future in game. South would lead a top diamond (preferably the King to get a count signal from their partner). After two rounds of diamonds they must play clubs as otherwise Declarer will be able to establish hearts by after drawing trumps playing $A K$ and taking the ruffing finesse to pitch two clubs and just lose three minor suit tricks. After the defence presumably cash two clubs Declarer's path to making an overtrick is simple enough in this instance as when trumps are 2-2 they have two ruffs in dummy.

## Karel

Third-in-hand openers raise their head again. While Isabel's auction will probably occur at many tables, under NO circumstances should you pass with East's hand after two passes. It's clear South has a strong hand and if you pass you give them an easy ride. What suit do you want led? A spade of course. How do you get that? Easy ... just bid them!! You could choose to open 14 or 24 but you should never pass. Over 1 4 South will call $2 \downarrow$. West has a brilliant fit for spades and cuebids $3 \diamond$ to show it. North has nothing to say. East converts to 3s and South now does what? Who knows - nothing looks especially appealing. Partner could well be bust on this auction and the opponents might be missing game.

Right let's cross our fingers and open 24. (You may be thinking l'd cross my toes too, because double might well end in disaster.) Phew, South bids $3>$ and we're off the hook. West bids 34. Is North going to bid? I think not.

| Makeable Contracts |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  | $\underline{0}$ | $\checkmark$ | $\varphi$ | 4 | NT |
|  | = | = | $=$ | $=$ | $=$ |
| N | 3 | 3 | - | - | - |
| S | 3 | 3 | - | - | - |
| E | - | - | 2 | 3 | - |
| W | - | - | 2 | 3 | - |

