



Commentary for the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs

Thursday 5th March 2026

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs 2026, and for your continued support for the Association.

The funds that you contribute via these Simultaneous Pairs will help the CBAI in its ongoing development work – training new teachers and new TDs, promoting the game and trying to attract new members, developing junior bridge, and so on. Many of the 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.

I hope that you enjoyed the chance to test yourself 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 difficult decisions. Many thanks to our expert commentators Jeannie Fitzgerald (Monday), Gay Keaveney (Tuesday), Brian Senior (Wednesday), Enda Glynn (Thursday), and our latest Grand Master Hilary D-L McDonagh (Friday) for their guidance through the fog. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice. Congratulations to anyone who ends up in the prizes; with over 1,000 pairs playing on most days, you've earned it!

Don't forget to check your standing in the national results at www.ecatsbridge.com/sims. You'll find the daily commentaries there too.

John Phelan
President, Contract Bridge Association of Ireland

In China, the USA and in most clubs West of the Ural Mountains 5-card majors are the norm. This analysis will be based on 5-card majors and a weak notrump.

Board 1 ♠ 2 Dealer N
 ♥ Q10964 Vul: None
 ♦ AQ93
 ♣ J62

♠ KJ93 ♠ Q4
 ♥ J3 ♥ AK852
 ♦ KJ108 ♦ 74
 ♣ AK4 ♣ 10983

♠ A108765
 ♥ 7
 ♦ 652
 ♣ Q75

The Bidding

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

The Bidding in this hand will vary. Some North players will open 2♥ showing hearts and a minor. South then will have a number of options. He may bid 2♠ (if the system allows a non-forcing 2♠ bid) or advance to three of a minor. If EW find a double none of those options will be a success. On occasions after two passes South may open 2♠ and the spotlight will be on West. He may pass or overcall 2NT showing 15 to 17 points. East will transfer to hearts and 3NT will often become the final contract.

The Play

Best defence to a 3NT contract by West will hold declarer to eight tricks. If North leads a spade South can win and switch to a heart. North has the diamond spots to prevent declarer from scoring more than one diamond trick. In theory declarer can score three spades, two hearts, one diamond and three clubs. But the defence will be one step ahead scoring one spade, one heart, two diamonds and one club. There will be many varying results but silent bidding from North South will frequently win the day.

Tip: Use your “toys” (bidding gadgets) sparingly.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 2 Dealer E
 Vul: N-S

<p>♠ A74 ♥ 10964 ♦ J732 ♣ 42</p>	<p>♠ J86 ♥ K7 ♦ A98 ♣ Q10985</p>	<p>♠ Q93 ♥ J832 ♦ K6 ♣ AJ76</p>	<p>♠ K1052 ♥ AQ5 ♦ Q1054 ♣ K3</p>
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The Bidding

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

With a good 5-card suit and some nine and ten spot cards, North may be tempted to upgrade his hand and advance over the 1NT opening. The 2♣ bid is non promissory Stayman as the immediate response of 2NT will frequently show a transfer to diamonds – holding six cards in the suit. South will accept the game invitation holding a good fourteen points. More cautious partnerships will not advance beyond 1NT.

The Play

On a likely heart lead declarer will win in dummy and lead the club 10. When that scores, he will follow with a second club. East will win the Ace and continue hearts. Declarer will win and make the key play of a low diamond to the 8. East will continue hearts and once more declarer will finesse in diamonds. He can now cash the diamond Ace. That play is a fatal blow to East as he has to find a discard. If he discards a heart declarer can cash the club Queen and follow with a spade to the ten. If he discards a spade declarer can make a winning guess in the suit by playing a spade to the ten and leaving the club Queen in dummy. The declarer now scores one spade, two clubs, three hearts and three diamonds. The defence can score a trick in each suit. All of the above is double dummy and most unlikely to be found at the table. If your opponent brings home 3NT without three declarers doing the work congratulate him.

Tip: In the pairs game caution is advised. One can be more adventurous in teams.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 3 ♠ 6 Dealer S
 ♥ 9 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AK1087642
 ♣ 852

♠ J974 ♥ K86 ♦ 9 ♣ K10763	♠ AQ10832 ♥ J743 ♦ 3 ♣ AQ
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♠ K5
 ♥ AQ1052
 ♦ QJ5
 ♣ J94

The Bidding

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

North with a good 8-card suit is well worth a 2♦ bid on the first round of bidding. East will enter the fray with a bid of 2♠, and South has a number of options. Playing a weak notrump a 2NT rebid would show a stronger hand so he decides on 3♦. West competes with 3♠. North comes again with 4♦ and there the matter should rest. North has a lot of small cards outside the diamond suit and his hand in the context of the bidding does not merit a forward going action.

The Play

If EW advance to 4♠ that contract can be defeated. The diamond queen lead will be overtaken by North and a heart ruff can be organised. The spade King is the fourth trick for the defence. If NS advance to 5♦ there are four tricks for the defence as a club ruff can be organised. It is difficult to judge the best course of action in high level competitive auctions. Some North players will jump to 5♦ on the first round of bidding. That bid will put pressure on East who will do well to observe a vow of silence. If East ventures in at the 5-level South has a straight forward penalty double. A bid of 5♦ by NS is two levels too high but sometimes opponents will rescue you as may happen here.

Tip: Take the late Paddy Walsh's advice: "The 5-level belongs to the opponents" in a competitive auction.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 4 Dealer W
 Vul: Both

<p>♠ 86 ♥ Q9742 ♦ 103 ♣ Q863</p>	<p>♠ ♠ 75432 ♥ AJ1063 ♥ K85 ♦ 974 ♦ AQJ2 ♣ AKJ42 ♣ 10</p>	<p>♠ AKQJ109 ♥ ♥ ♦ K865 ♣ 975</p>
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The Bidding

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

The bid of 2♦ by South is 4th suit forcing to game. North shows at least five/five in clubs and hearts. South has shown a strong hand with his fourth suit forcing bid. With poor diamonds he settles for game in spades. It would be a mistake for North to bid 3NT as he may not have access to the spade suit in a NT contract.

The Play

6♠ is a trick short. The club finesse works but the four one break in that suit means declarer is a trick short. One diamond can be discarded on heart Ace but there are two diamond losers. South's poor diamond holding sends out a note of caution.

Tip: Try and evaluate the quality of your suits when thinking of making a forward move.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 5 ♠ A52 Dealer N
 ♥ K53 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 9642
 ♣ A108

♠ Q643 ♥ AQJ862 ♦ A7 ♣ J	♠ K107 ♥ 9 ♦ K108 ♣ Q97632
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♠ J98 ♥ 1074 ♦ QJ53 ♣ K54	
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The Bidding

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	INT	Pass
2♥	All pass		

A straightforward auction will see West declare the contract in 2H. East has limited his hand with a bid of INT on the first round of bidding. Playing the 2 over 1 convention a response of 2♣ would show twelve points plus and a game going hand. Many players not playing 2 over 1 will respond 2♣ to the opening bid of 1♥. Over West's rebid of 2♥ East should certainly get off the bus and pass.

The Play

North's best lead is the diamond 6 second highest from four small. The diamond 2 is not recommended as it should show an honour card in the suit if not a singleton. A passive defence is the best option in this hand and let declarer fend for himself. When North gets in on the heart King he should continue diamonds. Panic should not set in by cashing spade Ace. Left to his own devices declarer will play a spade to the 10. The defence will score two spades, one heart and one club holding declarer to nine tricks.

Tip: Passive defence is often the best option.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 6 ♠ AKJ63 Dealer E
 ♥ 42 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AJ7
 ♣ 743

♠ 9752 ♥ 76 ♦ 106 ♣ J10952	♠ 1084 ♥ A5 ♦ KQ854 ♣ KQ8
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♠ Q
 ♥ KQJ10983
 ♦ 932
 ♣ A6

The Bidding

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

With a good 7-card suit South will most likely bid 3♥. The downside of the hand is three small diamonds and the singleton spade Queen. North with three quick tricks should raise to 4♥. Even if East opens INT South should overcall 3♥ and the final contract will usually be 4♥.

The Play

If West leads a diamond declarer should rise with the Ace and discard two losing diamonds on the spade honours. Eleven tricks will be the normal result.

Tip: With a good 7-card suit bid them up. Forget the “toy” of 2♦ showing a single major.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 7 ♠ 1095 Dealer S
 ♥ KJ93 Vul: Both
 ♦ J63
 ♣ Q103

♠ 73 ♠ Q84
 ♥ AQ82 ♥ 654
 ♦ Q2 ♦ K1098
 ♣ AK654 ♣ J87

♠ AKJ62
 ♥ 107
 ♦ A754
 ♣ 92

The Bidding

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

Some East players will be tempted to bid 3♣ over 2♠. East has only three clubs and the spade Queen is unlikely to be a useful card. If East bids 3♣ South and North should pass. Neither has anything extra and they have only an 8-card fit. It is a common mistake in such auctions to bid on to 3-level which frequently will not turn out well.

The Play

Against a 2♠ contract East will lead the Club 7. West does best to switch to the diamond Queen at trick two. There are eight tricks for NS in a spade contract. 3♣ doubled for EW will cost 500.

Tip: With an 8-card fit compete just to the 2-level in a competitive auction. With a 9-card fit you may advance to the 3-level.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 8 ♠ A4 Dealer W
 ♥ Q9 Vul: None
 ♦ Q96432
 ♣ A65

♠ Q10752 ♥ 10843 ♦ 10 ♣ 1097	♠ K3 ♥ A75 ♦ K75 ♣ KQJ83
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♠ J986
 ♥ KJ62
 ♦ AJ8
 ♣ 42

The Bidding

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

Non vulnerable West with a singleton diamond might venture 3♣. North has six diamonds but holding a minimum hand should pass. A bid of 3♦ would show a better hand. South who has doubled already for takeout can now securely bid 3♦ knowing his partner has a diamond suit and no primary support for a major. The one danger of West bidding 3♣ on minimum values is that his partner may bid again and 4♣ doubled will not be a success. East has only five clubs and should not advance to the 4-level.

The Play

Defending against 3♦ East will lead the club King. Declarer can win and play the heart Queen. That will set up a spade discard. A club continuation will force the dummy and the diamond King will eventually score the third defensive trick. Ten tricks for NS are the likely outcome. Against 4♣ doubled a trump lead and continuation is best. A spade finesse in the later play will allow East discard a loser but seven tricks will be the most he can manage. Conceding 500 on a part score hand is never good business.

Tip: Be careful of a bridge too far.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 9 ♠ AQ32 Dealer N
 ♥ 10 Vul: E-W
 ♦ J6
 ♣ AKQ752

♠ 764 ♥ 9 ♦ A754 ♣ J10843	♠ K ♥ AKQJ8752 ♦ K983 ♣
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♠ J10985
 ♥ 643
 ♦ Q102
 ♣ 96

The Bidding

West	North	East	South
	1♣	4♥	Pass
Pass	4♠	5♥	5♠
Pass	Pass	X	All Pass

East bids 4♥ on the first round of bidding. A double is dangerous with a singleton spade as partner with a different hand may misjudge the subsequent auction. North at favourable vulnerability will in all likelihood bid 4♠ and East will come again with a 5♥ bid. With five spades South may elect to bid 5♠ which is a good sacrifice against a making 5♥.

The Play

East will lead the heart Ace and switch to the diamond three. Now the spotlight will switch to West. It will be interesting to see how many West players find the switch to a low club which will promote the spade King as the fourth defensive trick. West should find that play as the bidding indicates declarer has in all probability six clubs. Conceding 300 should score very well for NS against a making 650 for EW.

Tip: Watch out for clues in the bidding to find the best defence.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 10 ♠ AQ1093 Dealer E
 ♥ K32 Vul: Both
 ♦ 976
 ♣ 109

♠ KJ82 ♥ Q10 ♦ J8 ♣ AQ742	♠ 74 ♥ AJ6 ♦ AK1054 ♣ K83
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♠ 65
 ♥ 98754
 ♦ Q32
 ♣ J65

The Bidding

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

The response of 2NT by East on the second round of bidding holding just two small spades is not ideal, but at least it has the advantage of showing a 15-to-17-point count. The next bid by West will be 3♠ showing a game going hand with at least five clubs and four spades. 3NT played by East will usually be the final contract.

The Play

On the likely lead of the heart 8 (2nd highest from bad suits) declarer can enter dummy and take a diamond finesse. South should switch to a spade and the spotlight will be on North. He will have heard the rebid of 2NT from East showing 15-17 points. He can ask the question where are the points that East possesses. He will realise he has good diamonds and the club King. North after this assessment will cash the spade Ace and hold declarer to ten tricks. The lead of the heart 8 clarifies that South has no honour in the suit. I suspect holding EW to ten tricks will be a good result for NS. If South finds a spade lead East will need to finesse a heart to score ten tricks.

Tip: From a poor 5-card suit with no honour lead the second highest.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 11 ♠ 864 Dealer S
 ♥ K Vul: None
 ♦ AQ10965
 ♣ KJ3

♠ AKQ92 ♥ Q9742 ♦ ♣ AQ9	♠ J105 ♥ A653 ♦ 84 ♣ 10765
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♠ 73
 ♥ J108
 ♦ KJ732
 ♣ 842

The Bidding

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

North makes a weak jump overcall which best describes the hand. What will East do? As the late Sean Glynn (who composed great Bridge pamphlets) was wont to remark “I will not be silenced” so he will drum up a bid of 3♠. With 5-card support South will raise to 5♦. The spotlight turns to West. To save the day he must bid 5♥ not 5♠ as the heart contract works out best. It is frequently best in these types of hands to show a second suit if feasible to enable partner to make the right decision at a high level.

The Play

5♥ plays better than 5♠. Playing in hearts after ruffing the diamond lead declarer can play a heart to the Ace and a heart to the Queen. Top spades will follow, and South will ruff and switch to a club. Declarer may take a losing club finesse but in the subsequent play two clubs can be discarded from dummy on good spades. Playing in spades there are no discards and 5♠ will go one light. This hand shows the value of pre-emptive bids.

Tip: Bid a second suit where possible to help partner make the right choice in a highly competitive auction.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 12 ♠ 1096 Dealer W
 ♥ A832 Vul: N-S
 ♦ J107
 ♣ J65

♠ AJ73 ♠ 852
 ♥ J76 ♥ K109
 ♦ Q542 ♦ A983
 ♣ 94 ♣ Q87

♠ KQ4
 ♥ Q54
 ♦ K6
 ♣ AK1032

The Bidding

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

The INT rebid by South will show 15 to 17 points and East West have no reason to enter the fray. South is top heavy for his INT rebid. Many South players with a good 5-card suit may upgrade to 2NT in their re-bid showing 18 to 19 high card points. There is a danger that North might now bid 3NT. But with a flat six count that bid is not recommended.

The Play

All will depend on the choice of lead by West. The choice is between spades and diamonds and spades is the better suit. There is one slight clue that may come into play. South has bid clubs and not supported hearts. He will likely have spades and if West chooses to lead a diamond he will win the watch. After a diamond lead declarer can make just eight tricks. He can enter dummy on the heart Ace at trick three and the club finesse will lead to five tricks in that suit.

On a spade lead there are nine tricks – two spades, five clubs and one trick in each of the red suits. It is a difficult defensive hand and West can hardly be faulted for leading a spade.

Tip: Try and figure out which of your partnership suits is best to lead. I like the maxim: "Lead our suit not theirs."

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 13 ♠ K65 Dealer N
 ♥ 2 Vul: Both
 ♦ Q943
 ♣ A9863

♠ AQJ4 ♥ KJ94 ♦ J1065 ♣ K	♠ 1082 ♥ Q10763 ♦ A87 ♣ Q5
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♠ 973
 ♥ A85
 ♦ K2
 ♣ J10742

The Bidding

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

In the balancing position some intrepid South players will bid 3♣. When The Bidding will come back to East with a fifth heart he will bid 3♥. That should end the auction. North should resist the temptation to support clubs. His partner has not opened nor entered the fray over the East bid of 1♥. With a 9-card fit EW are in order to advance to the 3-level in a competitive auction. If NS advance to 4♣ a timely double will lead to plus 200 for EW.

The Play

The play in 3♥ contract will be interesting. The defence will probably start with the club Jack and after winning with the Ace, North will switch to a low diamond. Declarer can play low and win a diamond continuation (nothing else is better) wherever necessary. Trumps can now be attacked and there is no quick access to the North hand to obtain a diamond ruff. Frequently East will make nine tricks. It appears that the initial lead of the diamond King is necessary to defeat the 3♥ contract. The club Ace is an entry to score a diamond ruff.

In 4♣ doubled the defence have four tricks – two spades, one club and one diamond.

Tip: When partner balances the bidding don't get excited.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 14 ♠ A7 Dealer E
 ♥ 86543 Vul: None
 ♦ QJ
 ♣ 8542

♠ KJ842 ♠ 96
 ♥ AKQ72 ♥ J10
 ♦ K7 ♦ 10965432
 ♣ Q ♣ K7

♠ Q1053
 ♥ 9
 ♦ A8
 ♣ AJ10963

The Bidding

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

* The 2♦ bid is the Ghestem convention. There are three principles worth remembering when availing of the Ghestem convention. A cue bid shows the extremes (the two suits furthest from each other). A jump to 2NT shows the next two suits. A jump in the minors shows the exclusive suits.

Eg

- 1♣ - 2♣* : 2♣ shows at least 5/5 in Diamonds and spades.
- 1♣ - 2NT* : 2NT shows the next two suits, diamonds and hearts, again at least 5/5.
- 1♣ - 2♦* : 2♦* shows the exclusive suits hearts and spades, likewise at least 5/5.
- 1♦ - 3♣* : 3♣ is not a suit – it shows the exclusive suits hearts and spades, at least 5/5.

To use the Ghestem convention you must have at least five cards in each of the two suits. A double by the user in the subsequent auction shows a strong Ghestem bid.

With a 7-card suit in the above auction and no great fit for either major, East can introduce his diamond suit. 3♦ is the only making contract for EW.

The Play

North will probably lead the club 5. Examining the club spots South should recognise that this is the second highest from a poor suit. South will play club Ace and switch to his singleton heart. When declarer wins in dummy and plays a diamond South must be alert and rise with the diamond Ace. He can put his partner in on the spade Ace and obtain a heart ruff holding declarer to nine tricks. 3♦ is the only making 3-level contract for EW. Many EW pairs will unsuccessfully play a 3-level contract (or higher) in one of the majors.

Tip: Use the Ghestem convention. Remember a 3♣ overall over 1♦ is not clubs but shows at least 5/5 in the unbid suits – both majors.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 15 Dealer S
 Vul: N-S

♠ 1087 ♥ Q4 ♦ 86 ♣ Q7543	♠ KQJ4 ♥ K98 ♦ KJ105 ♣ J2
♠ 2 ♥ A10762 ♦ A9743 ♣ A8	♠ A963 ♥ J53 ♦ Q2 ♣ K1096

The Bidding

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

East bids 1♠ first. He is too strong for an immediate 4♥ bid. It also gives space to West to describe his hand further. East has a good fit for both his partner's suits – however his club jack doubleton is not a useful contribution and a straightforward bid of 4♥ on the second round of bidding describes his hand.

The Play

North will likely lead a low club and the defence have three tricks – a spade, a club, and a trump. If he woodenly leads a spade declarer will make an extra trick.

Tip: Attacking leads are favoured in most auctions. Leading doubletons or mud frequently lose a tempo and rarely lead to a successful defence.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 16 ♠ 108 Dealer W
 ♥ 106 Vul: E-W
 ♦ J965
 ♣ Q9852

♠ A762 ♥ J3 ♦ A1074 ♣ K73	♠ KQ943 ♥ AQ7 ♦ 83 ♣ A64
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♠ J5
 ♥ K98542
 ♦ KQ2
 ♣ J10

The Bidding

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

Some pairs playing a weak NT with a meagre twelve points may pass on the first round of bidding. A Pass from West in this hand on the first round of bidding cannot be faulted. If West opens 1NT East will transfer to spades. West is not strong enough to jump to 3♠ which will usually show a maximum for first bid and a 4-card spade fit. South having paid his entry fee will double 2♥ as it is passing him by. When West now bids 2♠ that bid will always show at least 3♠. If he had only two, he would pass and let partner judge the best course of action going forward. If South bids 3♥ over 2♥ he will meet his Waterloo running into a penalty of 800. Wandering into the bidding in these types of hands is not winning bridge and will frequently be punished.

The Play

There is little to the play. No lead can damage declarer, and the defence will score just two tricks. There is a useful club discard on a heart. In a heart contract for NS there are just six tricks. If NS insist on playing the hand in 3♥ double and take the money is best.

Tip: To wander into the auction at least have a good suit. Do not make unnecessary noise.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 17 ♠ 932 Dealer N
 ♥ 74 Vul: None
 ♦ 10962
 ♣ K652

♠ KJ104 ♥ AJ9 ♦ 87 ♣ AQ84	♠ AQ6 ♥ 106532 ♦ KQ3 ♣ 93
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♠ 875
 ♥ KQ8
 ♦ AJ54
 ♣ J107

The Bidding

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

With good outside controls East is just about worth a 1♥ opening. Many proponents of the game outside the West of Ireland prefer to open 1NT with these types of hands. I am playing bridge for over fifty years and the major suit opening (holding 5 cards) has proved successful and does not in my experience lead to difficulty. The rebid of 2♥ may only show five and West will bid 4♥. A useful tool in EW armoury on such hands is the bid of 2NT by West on the second round of bidding, to show two hearts a game-forcing hand. A jump to 3NT by West will show just one heart. If you open 1NT on this type of hands and opponents intervene in spades in a competitive auction the 8- or 9-card fit in the other major can be lost.

The Play

South may lead the Club Jack and after an unsuccessful finesse North will switch to the diamond 10. East has the entries to double finesse in the trump suit and there are just three losers, a club, a diamond and one trump. Note that North should select the diamond 10 as a low diamond switch would show an honour. If EW play a 3NT contract a low diamond lead will hold declarer to nine tricks.

Tip: Follow the West of Ireland technique. Playing a weak NT open your 5-card major suit. Do not open 1NT with a singleton. The 1NT opening bid should always show a balanced hand.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 19 ♠ Q108 Dealer S
 ♥ 84 Vul: E-W
 ♦ KQ1065
 ♣ 652

♠ AK72 ♥ AK3 ♦ 72 ♣ QJ104	♠ 6543 ♥ QJ975 ♦ A9 ♣ A9
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♠ J9
 ♥ 1062
 ♦ J843
 ♣ K873

The Bidding

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

North with a good suit overcalls 1♦. East has a choice of doubling (showing both majors) or bidding 1♥. As there is better texture in the heart suit the 1♥ bid is favoured. South with 4-card diamond support ups the ante with a 3♦ bid. That is not showing a good hand. With a better hand he can make an unassuming cue bid. West now has a choice of bids. Double would show a strong notrump type of hand and is a possibility. However, West chooses the 3♥ bid and 4♥ is the final contract. 5♦ by NS is a bridge too far conceding 800.

The Play

A diamond will be led by South. Declarer will win, draw trumps, and is now faced with a dilemma. Does he play the over-caller for the club King and take a simple finesse in the club suit. The winning play on the hand is Ace and another club and South is powerless. If he takes the club King declarer's two losing spades will disappear on the established Club. If he declines to take the club King, there is no club loser for declarer. The second line suggested is unlikely as declarer is more likely to place North, who has overcalled, with the club King.

Tip: With 4-card support for partner's overcall jump and up the ante.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 20 ♠ QJ432 Dealer W
 ♡ 94 Vul: Both
 ♦ J93
 ♣ AK5

♠ 1076 ♡ AQ10653 ♦ 42 ♣ 109	♠ K85 ♡ KJ72 ♦ Q1076 ♣ Q7
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♠ A9
 ♡ 8
 ♦ AK85
 ♣ J86432

The Bidding

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

Some North players will enter the fray on the first round of bidding, but I think an immediate overcall of 2♠ suggests a stronger hand. In the balancing position North introduces his spade suit and with opening points South will introduce his club suit. That bid will usually show a fall-back position in spades if partner does not have club support. It is difficult for NS to find the winning bid of doubling 3♥ for penalties. If North enters the fray immediately there are many hands when partner may misjudge the subsequent auction and advance too high.

The Play

There are twelve tricks in a club contract and any pair bidding a club slam will score well. The second heart can be ruffed and two top clubs will be cashed. A spade finesse can follow, and the favourable spade situation can be availed of to discard two diamonds. The 4♠ contract is more problematic but with favourable breaks in the black suits it will scramble home.

Tip: When a new suit is introduced by partner, it will usually show some tolerance for partner's suit as a fall-back position.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 22 ♠ J94 Dealer E
 ♡ AQ962 Vul: E-W
 ♦ Q
 ♣ K853

♠ K72 ♡ K85 ♦ K983 ♣ A92	♠ A1083 ♡ 74 ♦ J1075 ♣ 1074
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♠ Q65
 ♡ J103
 ♦ A642
 ♣ QJ6

The Bidding

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
INT	2♥*x	All Pass	

The bid of 2♥ by North shows hearts and a minor. South has a good hand with some hearts and good minor support. North has limited his hand with the bid of 2♥ – showing less than fifteen points. South may give a courtesy raise to 3♥ but that should end the auction. The advantage of the 3♥ bid is that North with better distribution may advance to 4♥. But a 4♥ contract is destined for failure.

The Play

The key to the defence in this hand is not to panic and open the spade suit. There are three spade losers and the club Ace. The opening salvo of diamond Jack is best and continuous diamond leads will leave declarer a trick short. I suspect there will be occasions when the defence will panic and open the spade suit letting out ten tricks. It will also be necessary for EW to give count in the club suit so that West can hold up until the third round.

Tip: Be ready for passive defence in tight part score hands.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 23 ♠ A85 Dealer S
 ♥ AQ965 Vul: Both
 ♦ 832
 ♣ 32

♠ J7632 ♥ 32 ♦ J1074 ♣ A9	♠ Q104 ♥ KJ4 ♦ Q5 ♣ 108754
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♠ K9
 ♥ 1087
 ♦ AK96
 ♣ KQJ6

The Bidding

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

2♦ is game forcing check-back. A 2♣ rebid would command a bid of 2♦ and a 2♥ bid now would be game invitational. Declarer can pass with minimum values or bid game in notrump or the major suit as appropriate. In the West of Ireland with two 4-card minor suits we open the lower on the first round to facilitate finding a fit. South is worth a jump to 3♥ to show a near maximum hand. There will be many no-trump contracts as well but 4♥ will score better.

The Play

The Play is interesting. After a club lead and continuation declarer needs to proceed carefully. As a club ruff lurks on the horizon the winning play is to negotiate a spade ruff in dummy early followed by playing the Ace and another heart (spurning the finesse). The losing diamond can be discarded on a good club for ten tricks. If declarer takes trump finesse, then on a club continuation he must decline to play the club honour. In the later play he can discard his losing diamond on the winning club.

In a NT contract a spade lead from West will leave declarer with too much to do. East has two heart tricks and with West holding the club Ace the notrump game is destined to fail.

Tip: Put into your bidding armoury the following:

1♣	1♥
INT	2♦*x

1♣	1♥
INT	2♣*

2♦ game forcing check-back.

2♣ commands 2♦ from partner and is followed by a game invitational bid – usually 2♥ which can be passed. With a maximum hand the opener can bid game in hearts or notrump as appropriate.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 24 ♠ Q3 Dealer W
 ♥ J106 Vul: None
 ♦ AQ83
 ♣ AQ43

♠ 10876 ♥ 9753 ♦ 4 ♣ 8765	♠ K5 ♥ AKQ2 ♦ KJ6 ♣ KJ102
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♠ AJ942
 ♥ 84
 ♦ 109752
 ♣ 9

The Bidding

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

West without a point does well to keep a vow of silence after his partner's strong bidding. South is short in points but with two 5-card suits opposite a rebid showing 15 to 17 points deserves to get value for his entry fee. East with nineteen high card points does the best he can with a bid of 2♥ on the second round of bidding.

The Play

The cards lie unfavourably for NS. In a spade contract there are two heart losers, two spade losers and two diamond losers. Any side that scores a plus will fare well. If NS can land in a diamond contract they will fare exceptionally well as nine tricks can be negotiated.

Tip: Sometimes even with 19 high card points you have to bail out.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 25 ♠ Q104 Dealer N
 ♥ K9763 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A2
 ♣ K72

♠ AKJ83 ♥ A105 ♦ 75 ♣ A105	♠ 65 ♥ J842 ♦ QJ64 ♣ 963
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♠ 972
 ♥ Q
 ♦ K10983
 ♣ QJ84

The Bidding

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	INT*x
2♠	All Pass		

South on the second round of bidding may be tempted to compete and bid 3♦. That will not be a success. North's pass indicates a minimum hand with just five hearts. West with a good sixteen count competes with a bid of 2♠. That should end the auction. A plus score for either side will be a positive result.

The Play

Competing against 2♠ North may start with a heart. The defence will score one spade, one heart, two clubs and two diamonds provided declarer plays spades from the top. Against 3♦ the defence will start with top spades and the best declarer can do is scramble seven tricks. A competitive double of 3♦ by West will win the watch.

Tip: Many favour balancing the bidding. Good judgement is required as it can be dangerous.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26 ♠ Q852 Dealer E
 ♡ 10952 Vul: Both
 ♦ K9
 ♣ 987

♠ AKJ9 ♠ 1074
 ♡ AJ43 ♡ 87
 ♦ 54 ♦ AQ832
 ♣ AJ4 ♣ Q63

♠ 63
 ♡ KQ6
 ♦ J1076
 ♣ K1052

The Bidding

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

Over West's rebid of 2NT showing 18 – 19 high card points East has a comfortable raise to 3NT. All roads appear safe for EW landing in 3NT and no higher. There is no primary suit fit and just 27 points between the two hands.

The Play

North will likely lead a heart, and declarer will follow with a diamond finesse. When this is successful a low spade to the Jack is the best play preserving an entry in that suit in dummy. Declarer should score a comfortable nine tricks – 2 hearts, 2 clubs, 2 diamonds and three spades. 4♠ will score better but it is not easy to land there.

Tip: Preserve your entries in dummy to enable you take a finesse in later play.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 27 ♠ 108 Dealer S
 ♥ AK953 Vul: None
 ♦ AK
 ♣ KQ75

♠ AQ7 ♠ J95432
 ♥ 108762 ♥ J
 ♦ 72 ♦ QJ1086
 ♣ 1093 ♣ 8

♠ K6
 ♥ Q4
 ♦ 9543
 ♣ AJ642

The Bidding

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♥	3♣*x	Pass
3♠	X	Pass	X
All Pass			3NT

East wheels out the Ghestem convention. 3♣ shows at least five/five in the exclusive suits – spades and diamonds. West does the best he can with a bid of 3♠. North's double shows a strong hand and South chooses to bid the notrump game. West may lead a diamond. Declarer can win and run his clubs which will put West in difficulty as he has to find two discards. If declarer reads the cards correctly, he can end up with twelve tricks. An initial spade lead makes life easier for declarer.

Tip: It is frequently best to run your long suit and take note of discards.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	-	4	-	1
S	6	-	5	-	6
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

Board 28 ♠ J9732 Dealer W
 ♥ 942 Vul: N-S
 ♦ KQ6
 ♣ K3

♠ AQ86 ♥ AQ6 ♦ 1092 ♣ J92	♠ 1054 ♥ KJ10 ♦ J873 ♣ A84
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♠ K
 ♥ 8753
 ♦ A54
 ♣ Q10765

The Bidding

West	North	East	South
INT	Pass	Pass	Pass

The weak notrump opening by West will silence everyone and South in the pass out position is too weak to enter the fray.

The Play

On a likely spade lead declarer plays low from dummy (second hand plays low) and wins the first trick with the spade Ace. The play of the diamond ten places North in a quandary. Neither defender has a productive switch. In the later play declarer can play a low spade to the 10. All roads will lead to eight tricks.

Tip: Sometimes in defence and bidding it is best to take your medicine.

Makeable Contracts

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