

*The Regent
Premier Womens Pairs
24th and 25th August 2019*

Commentary on the Third Session Hands

Thanks to our commentators:

<i>Jeffrey Allerton</i>	<i>Mike Bell</i>
<i>Sally Brock</i>	<i>Fiona Brown</i>
<i>Simon Cope</i>	<i>David Gold</i>
<i>Frances Hinden</i>	<i>Ben Norton</i>

<p> ♠ 9 ♥ AQ10 ♦ J96543 ♣ Q103 ♠ AQ108 ♠ K52 ♥ K96532 ♥ J8 ♦ A7 ♦ Q102 ♣ 5 ♣ A8762 ♠ J7643 ♥ 74 ♦ K8 ♣ KJ94 </p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">HCP</th> <th colspan="5">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th>NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>9</td> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>13</td> <td></td> <td>10</td> <td>S</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>8</td> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>1</td> <td>-</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		9		N	-	2	-	-	-	13		10	S	-	2	-	-	-		8		E	1	-	4	2	2				W	1	-	4	2	1	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all David Gold</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>West</th> <th>North</th> <th>East</th> <th>South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♥</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2♣</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♥</td> <td>All pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Some Norths may open a weak 2♦, which is not my style with the poor suit and defensive values outside. This should also lead to a contract of 2♥ if South passes, but some East/West pairs will go on to 4♥ either under their own steam or perhaps getting pushed. To make ten tricks it is necessary to play a heart towards the jack, holding the trump losers to two. Those that play a heart to the king will make only nine tricks. +170 will be a decent score and +420 a near top. East/West losing 50 will be the main source of good scores for North/South: I guess 140 for East/West will be around average. There may be the odd penalty where South ventures into the auction in spades and gets taught a sharp lesson!</p>	West	North	East	South		Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥	All pass						
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♠Q10
 ♥KQ8754
 ♦J6
 ♣A52
 ♠4 ♠AJ98762
 ♥A10632 ♥9
 ♦Q972 ♦K854
 ♣874 ♣J
 ♠K53
 ♥J
 ♦A103
 ♣KQ10963

HCP		Makeable contracts						
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
	12		N	3	-	2	-	4
6		9	S	3	-	2	-	4
	13		E	-	1	-	3	-
			W	-	1	-	3	-

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable David Gold

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

There are many possible contracts here. 3♠ by East is about right at this vulnerability but some will overcall 4♠ giving N/S a likely +200 but possible +500 if North makes the bright play of the ♠Q when the suit is led from the dummy. This gives declarer a guess as to whether to play for KQ doubleton or QT doubleton.

The wrong-sided 3NT rates to come home with nine or ten tricks. Declarer wins the first trick with ♠K and has no choice but to knock out ♥A. The jack of hearts holds, but declarer can win the third round of clubs in dummy and lead ♥K, end-playing West. +500 for North/South should be the top score and -730 the bottom. Some North/South pairs will get in to trouble by playing in 4♥ which will not be a success. I expect many different results on the travellers for this board!

♠KJ85
 ♥974
 ♦106
 ♣A1076
 ♠3 ♠AQ94
 ♥J105 ♥863
 ♦K98732 ♦54
 ♣QJ9 ♣K852
 ♠10762
 ♥AKQ2
 ♦AQJ
 ♣43

HCP		Makeable contracts						
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
	8		N	1	1	2	3	2
7		9	S	-	-	2	3	2
	16		E	-	-	-	-	-
			W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable Sally Brock

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	All pass	

4♠ is a decent game for North/South, though it won't make this time with both spade honours and the ♦K wrong, and trumps breaking badly. Two off is the likely result after a diamond lead. Some Wests might open a weak 2♦ and that might lead to South reaching 3NT instead, but that is likely to go one down so long as West avoids a diamond opening lead. Strong no-trumpers may open 1NT as South and some Norths will pass for an excellent score.

♠A9
 ♥K43
 ♦J865
 ♣A986
 ♠K8652 ♠10743
 ♥10987 ♥J5
 ♦A ♦9432
 ♣543 ♣K107
 ♠QJ
 ♥AQ62
 ♦KQ107
 ♣QJ2

HCP		Makeable contracts						
			♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
	12		N	4	5	4	-	3
7		4	S	4	5	4	-	3
	17		E	-	-	-	1	-
			W	-	-	-	1	-

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable Sally Brock

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

I guess most Easts will lead a spade against 3NT, and now declarer can make only nine tricks (two spades, three hearts, three diamonds and a club). Those who are greedy and take a club finesse will regret it. A careful declarer first knocks out the ace of diamonds then wins the spade return and cashes the diamond suit, getting three club discards from West. Next she tries the hearts, finding West with four. Now West can't have the guarded king of clubs.

On any lead but a spade declarer will make eleven tricks.

South has a good hand facing a weak NT, but it is not worth a slam try, so there shouldn't be any pairs getting too high.

♠ Q8653
 ♥ K10532
 ♦ 9
 ♣ 107
 ♠ A72 ♠ KJ10
 ♥ AQ ♥ J4
 ♦ Q7542 ♦ K1083
 ♣ A95 ♣ KJ32
 ♠ 94
 ♥ 9876
 ♦ AJ6
 ♣ Q864

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	5	N	-	-	1	-
16	12	S	-	-	1	-
	7	E	4	5	-	2
		W	4	5	-	3

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable Sally Brock

West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
3NT	All pass		

Not a good hand for weak no-trumpers. A heart lead looks likely from South and that will lead to a quick one down when North's ♥K wins trick one and the suit is cleared. When South gets in with ♦A the defence can take three more heart tricks (though some care must be taken not to block the suit).

If strong no-trumpers open the East hand with one of a minor, West is likely to respond 1♦, or some artificial raise. Now North might come in to show the majors, and if South goes quietly East/West should be able to arrange for West to be declarer in 3NT. On a heart lead from North declarer wins and leads a diamond, and can next cash the top clubs to get a count before finessing with confidence against ♦J, coming to eleven tricks. However, South should respect North's intervention and bid 4♥. If East/West double that, as is likely, they will take it three off only if they lead three rounds of clubs early to set up a trump promotion, and even then the penalty will be less than a vulnerable game.

♠ K1092
 ♥ K7
 ♦ QJ5
 ♣ 9832
 ♠ J54 ♠ AQ
 ♥ Q98653 ♥ 42
 ♦ A7 ♦ K109432
 ♣ Q7 ♣ J105
 ♠ 8763
 ♥ AJ10
 ♦ 86
 ♣ AK64

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	9	N	1	-	-	1
9	10	S	1	-	-	1
	12	E	-	2	2	-
		W	-	2	2	-

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable Mike Bell

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	All pass		

South should open a weak NT, despite having all his values in two suits. Some will overcall 2♥ as West, despite the ropery hand, poor suit and vulnerability, while some Easts will get to overcall 2♦, if they play it as natural. Here, I would expect those who bid to fare better — 2♦ makes so long as declarer uses his entry to dummy to take a spade finesse, while in 2♥ declarer cannot be prevented from either ruffing her third spade or discarding it on a club.

What about 1NT? On a heart lead, South can make, but must play carefully. Say declarer wins the jack of hearts at trick one, and plays the ace-king of clubs; unless the nine or eight of clubs is unblocked from the dummy, declarer's hand now has no entries, and the ace of hearts may not score a trick.

♠ -
 ♥ 10
 ♦ AKQJ10987642
 ♣ 4
 ♠ A1082 ♠ Q975
 ♥ J953 ♥ AK6
 ♦ - ♦ 3
 ♣ Q9765 ♣ AK832
 ♠ KJ643
 ♥ Q8742
 ♦ 5
 ♣ J10

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	10	N	-	5	-	-
7	16	S	-	5	-	-
	7	E	5	-	3	5
		W	5	-	4	5

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all Mike Bell

West	North	East	South
Pass	6♦	Dble	All pass

Never having been dealt a solid eleven-card suit, I'm afraid I can't draw on a wealth of experience when recommending a course of action for this hand! You are cold for slam opposite the ace of clubs or the ace of hearts; with no other information, the chance of partner holding at least one of those cards is 56%, but West's opening pass improves the odds, and you will sometimes make on a mis-defence.

On that basis, 5♦ or a gambling 3NT are too pessimistic, while a 4NT opening (asking for specific aces) will get you too high when partner bids 5♠ to show the ace of spades, and that will probably deter a possible spade lead. Opening 6♦ is reasonable, as is opening 1♦ or 2♣ and hoping to guess well later.

♠ 10
 ♥ K10
 ♦ Q1097
 ♣ 1086543
 ♠ KQ75432 ♠ -
 ♥ A6532 ♥ Q9
 ♦ - ♦ AKJ6432
 ♣ J ♣ A972
 ♠ AJ986
 ♥ J874
 ♦ 85
 ♣ KQ

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	5	N	-	-	-	-
10	14	S	-	-	-	-
	11	E	-	2	2	2
		W	-	2	2	2

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable Mike Bell

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

Whenever I play in a sim pairs, someone remarks at some point in the evening, "funny hands tonight, because it's a 'sims'". The hands are actually randomly dealt, although I doubt anyone will believe me after this hand and the previous one!

South's overcall may tip opponents off to try to stop low. It feels natural for West to start with a pass, but when East rebids 2♦ or 3♦, West will be guessing whether to introduce her hearts. You may still have a great fit in hearts, so I think it is right to do so, despite the old advice to stay low with a misfit. Expect a very wide variety of contracts and results, with most going several off in 4♠, 5♦ or 3NT.

♠ A102
 ♥ AJ10
 ♦ Q942
 ♣ 542
 ♠ 54 ♠ J8763
 ♥ 73 ♥ K98542
 ♦ KJ10873 ♦ A
 ♣ KQJ ♣ 10
 ♠ KQ9
 ♥ Q6
 ♦ 65
 ♣ A98763

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	11	N	3	-	-	1
10	8	S	3	-	-	1
	11	E	-	2	1	-
		W	-	2	1	-

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable Fiona Brown

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

East is not suitable for a weak 2♥ given the five-card spade suit and an ace outside. South will open 1♣. West has a choice between 1♦ and 2♦. North will bid an invitational 2NT. South has a difficult decision at match-pointed pairs but 3♣ rather than pass is the winning choice on this hand.

After the ace of diamonds lead North has only seven tricks in 2NT—with two club stops West can set up diamonds before South's clubs are established. But 3♣ should make nine tricks with careful play: declarer can set up a heart for a diamond discard or a diamond for a heart discard.

♠ Q1052
 ♥ J32
 ♦ 10
 ♣ AQ752
 ♠ AK6 ♠ 874
 ♥ AQ87 ♥ K64
 ♦ KQJ964 ♦ A8753
 ♣ - ♣ 103
 ♠ J93
 ♥ 1095
 ♦ 2
 ♣ KJ9864

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	9	N	1	-	-	-
19	7	S	1	-	-	-
	5	E	-	7	6	1
		W	-	7	6	1

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all Fiona Brown

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

4♣ is a splinter showing shortage, and 4♥ is a cue-bid promising first or second round control — East is well worth this with his ace of diamonds. 5♣ confirms a void and East with a fifth trump but nothing else in the side suits to show bids 6♦. 6♦ is a good spot to reach. 7♦ relies on hearts being 3-3 which is 36%.

♠J1093
 ♥AKQ2
 ♦62
 ♣A43
 ♠Q7
 ♥1065
 ♦QJ953
 ♣K85
 ♠AK8642
 ♥93
 ♦K108
 ♣92
 ♠5
 ♥J874
 ♦A74
 ♣QJ1076

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	14	N	4	-	5	- 4
8	10	S	4	-	5	- 4
	8	E	-	1	-	1 -
		W	-	1	-	1 -

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable Fiona Brown

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

Over 2♠ South has a difficult problem. Pass seems unlikely to score well. Planning to bid 2NT Lebensohl and pass 3♣ is an option but not ideal. A take-out double shows more values than she has but has the advantage of finding the best fit. On this hand double will work well, since partner with an absolutely maximum will bid 4♥.

East will lead a top spade, then may either switch to diamonds or work out he can lead a small spade, removing an entry from dummy either way. The play is now awkward since dummy is short of entries: the practical approach is to run ♣Q at once, making it harder for East to duck smoothly with ♣Kxx.

♠74
 ♥6
 ♦954
 ♣QJ107643
 ♠AKJ92
 ♥K83
 ♦Q
 ♣AK95
 ♠1086
 ♥Q972
 ♦KJ10872
 ♣-
 ♠Q53
 ♥AJ1054
 ♦A63
 ♣82

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	3	N	1	-	-	-
20	6	S	1	-	-	-
	11	E	-	3	3	3 4
		W	-	3	3	3 4

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable Simon Cope

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

Whilst some may open the North hand or the East hand with a pre-emptive bid, North is a little under strength for a vulnerable pre-empt, and East is far too playable in the majors. South should open 1♥ with such a good suit, and West is too strong for a simple overcall, so should double first. East can jump to show some points and a good diamond suit, after which 3♠ from West should be forcing (partner showed some points and we are showing a strong hand). East raises to 4♠. However, this may not prove to be a success - with North on lead and an obvious heart start, South will have to make a decision whether to win the ace of hearts or whether to play the ten. When North leads ♥6, it could be from various holdings - but looking at the menacing diamond suit in the dummy South may choose to win the ace (on which West should play the ♥8 or even ♥K to try to deceive the defence). Having taken her ace South should play the ♥J back asking for a diamond, hoping partner can ruff twice for down one. Anyone making a game East/West should score very well.

♠103
 ♥Q1085
 ♦AQ7
 ♣KQ74
 ♠AQ92
 ♥32
 ♦K10642
 ♣109
 ♠K65
 ♥AJ976
 ♦853
 ♣J6
 ♠J874
 ♥K4
 ♦J9
 ♣A8532

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	13	N	4	-	1	- 2
9	9	S	4	-	1	- 2
	9	E	-	1	-	-
		W	-	1	-	-

Board 14: Dealer East: Love all Simon Cope

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1NT	All pass	

Some Wests may choose to open in third seat, and those who do pass will be tempted to protect North's 1NT, especially at love all, either with a conventional double or with a natural 2♦ bid, which works poorly if it pushes North-South into 3♣ making ten tricks. But the contract will usually be 1NT by North.

On the normal 4th highest ♥7 lead, North can win cheaply with ♥8 and should probably fire a heart straight back. When East wins this, she has to work out what to switch to — a low spade is best (and not without logic) since West can win with the ace, returning to two to East's ♠K to get a third spade through dummy's jack — holding declarer to two. If East chooses, she may continue hearts to knock out declarer's stopper, at which point declarer has two hearts, five clubs and a diamond, and may be able to work out from the discards to finesse the diamond queen for nine tricks and an excellent score.

♠KQ73
 ♥8
 ♦AKQ108
 ♣K54
 ♠10854 ♠96
 ♥10743 ♥KJ92
 ♦742 ♦963
 ♣A10 ♣QJ86
 ♠AJ2
 ♥AQ65
 ♦J5
 ♣9732

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
17		N	4	6	2	6
4	7	S	4	6	2	6
12		E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable Simon Cope

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

After a weak no-trump opener from South, North employs Stayman to see if partner has a spade fit, and when partner bids 2♥ he can bid 3♦ — in the old days this was a weak hand with long diamonds, but now most people can show that hand directly, so they play this as game forcing with 5+ diamonds and inferentially four spades. Over 3♦ South has no fit for either diamonds or spades, so bids 3NT. Having failed to find a fit which might produce slam, North should pass and let South get on with the play. On a spade lead, declarer has ten top tricks, and anyone brave enough may choose to win the spade jack (to leave the defence in the dark about the ace) and lead a club to the king — this could be wrong as the defence may be able to cash four club tricks, but even when they can they may not realise it. That will produce eleven top tricks: if declarer is confident that the king of hearts is onside he may finesse hearts for twelve and a huge score!

♠9874
 ♥763
 ♦A432
 ♣KQ
 ♠A10 ♠K632
 ♥J1098 ♥A52
 ♦K7 ♦65
 ♣76542 ♣J1098
 ♠QJ5
 ♥KQ4
 ♦QJ1098
 ♣A3

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
9		N	-	2	1	3
8	8	S	-	2	1	3
15		E	1	-	-	-
		W	1	-	-	-

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable Frances Hinden

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♦	All pass	

3NT is a poor contract on a club lead, but it makes with both the ♦K and ♥A onside. The entry position is such that, playing 3NT on a club lead, South must play a heart to the king at trick two. He can then use ♦A to get to dummy to play a second heart up and come to nine tricks. West might be tempted by the sequence to lead a heart after which ten tricks will sometimes be made. No reward for good bidding here when even with two balanced hands 3♦ still looks like the best match-point spot single dummy. Ironically 3♦ can be beaten if West finds the inspired lead of ♠A, but it will make ten tricks on the normal lead of the ♥J. Whilst nine HCP opposite a strong NT opening or rebid (15-17) is often enough to bid game, the short KQ of clubs are a very poor holding even with four-card diamond support and this is worth only an invitation. South has a minimum and should pass – the five card suit is nice, but he has only one ace and one king.

♠9865
 ♥KJ9876
 ♦K4
 ♣A
 ♠KQ3 ♠A1074
 ♥AQ2 ♥1043
 ♦AJ972 ♦-
 ♣Q5 ♣J109876
 ♠J2
 ♥5
 ♦Q108653
 ♣K432

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
11		N	-	-	-	-
18	5	S	-	-	-	-
6		E	4	-	2	3
		W	4	-	2	3

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all Frances Hinden

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

West knows he is likely to have the best hand at the table but has no convenient call over 1NT: 2♦ should be less balanced with a better suit. Protecting 2♥ is also not very descriptive, but West will suspect that East/West are making a part-score and defending 2♥ off one or two will not be a good result at love all — if North/South were vulnerable it would be easy for West to pass throughout and take undertricks at 100 a time. East will bid spades rather than clubs because they score better, although clubs would be much easier to play; the heart lead at trick one will make the play a bit awkward for East in spades. As it happens, 3NT by West makes ten tricks comfortably with the favourable layout of the North/South cards: the defence cannot duck the first round of clubs, nor can they set up North's heart suit, nor can they attack the spade entries to the long clubs. Any East/West who get to the no-trump game deserve their good score.

♠ K5
 ♥ 9864
 ♦ A843
 ♣ KQ9
 ♠ J3
 ♥ 1053
 ♦ KQ52
 ♣ A742
 ♠ 10962
 ♥ 2
 ♦ J10976
 ♣ 1086
 ♠ AQ874
 ♥ AKQJ7
 ♦ -
 ♣ J53

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
12		N	3	1	6	5	3
10	1	S	3	1	6	5	3
17		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 18 : Dealer East: NS vulnerable Frances Hinden

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣	Pass	6♥
All pass			

Not the easiest of slams to get to once North starts with a 2♦ response. South's 2♥ rebid is forcing in modern Acoll after a two-level response (although he can pass North's 2NT bid or preference to 2♠). With such a good spade holding, North is easily worth a jump to game but not strong enough to go via fourth-suit forcing, which shows a slam try. South is worth a move, but then has a guess over 5♣ – it's not a good idea to cue bid shortage in partner's suit and it won't help partner decide whether to bid slam or not. 6♥ is a gamble; it might be hopeless or it might be huge just depending on how much partner has wasted in diamonds. However, holding the top four trump honours South knows it will be difficult to persuade North to bid a slam. The play is straightforward for twelve tricks in hearts; it's just a matter of bidding it.

♠ K1065
 ♥ AJ973
 ♦ AJ
 ♣ KQ
 ♠ Q843
 ♥ Q10654
 ♦ 74
 ♣ 76
 ♠ AJ7
 ♥ -
 ♦ KQ9865
 ♣ A432
 ♠ 92
 ♥ K82
 ♦ 1032
 ♣ J10985

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
18		N	2	-	2	-	1
4	14	S	1	-	2	-	-
4		E	-	2	-	-	-
		W	-	2	-	-	-

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable Ben Norton

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♥	2♦	Pass
Pass	Dble	2♥	Dble
2♠	All pass		

When North re-opens with a double East would like to compete further, showing a take-out of hearts, but passing and then doubling 2♥ would see partner pass for penalties too often, so East might resolve the problem by bidding 2♥ himself for take-out. South doubles to show heart support and West's 2♠ ends the auction.

2♠ is not a pretty contract. On the normal ♣K lead declarer will go either one or two off. He wins the ♣A and concedes a club to North, who does best to switch to a low heart, but that might be a bit fanciful. In reality going one off in 2♠ is about right. 3♦ isn't much better, as East will end up losing a spade, a trump and three clubs even with optimal play. On some days North might even double 2♠ to protect his expected plus score in 2♥. Likely scoring the match-points 'kiss of death' of +200.

♠ 108
 ♥ J42
 ♦ K1095
 ♣ A642
 ♠ Q542
 ♥ AQ9865
 ♦ Q43
 ♣ -
 ♠ AKJ96
 ♥ 3
 ♦ 876
 ♣ Q873
 ♠ 73
 ♥ K107
 ♦ AJ2
 ♣ KJ1095

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
8		N	2	-	-	-
10	10	S	2	-	-	-
12		E	-	-	3	4
		W	-	-	3	4

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable Ben Norton

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

West will probably open 1♥. Some may pass; opening 2♥ is certainly not best. After the 1♠ response from partner, West is probably worth no more than a raise to 2♠. Some might opt for a game try of 3♣ with the East hand, which would collect a 4♠ bid from West, but holding a singleton heart, passing seems percentage. South won't overcall 2♣ lacking a sixth card in the suit, and is unlikely to protect over 2♠.

South does best to lead a diamond, but in reality he will probably select a trump. Declarer decides to set up dummy's hearts, and having avoided a diamond lead it would be a shame to take a losing heart finesse, so declarer's best line is to play to the ace, aiming to ruff the suit good. This will gain when hearts are 3-3 or either defender has Kx, and East will still be all right when a defender has ♥Kxxx providing trumps are 2-2. Declarer ruffs a heart, plays a trump to the queen, and ruffs another heart. Thanks to the even heart break eleven tricks are then easy.

♠Q98652
 ♥AJ943
 ♦-
 ♣K9
 ♠KJ3 ♠10
 ♥K ♥Q752
 ♦KQ643 ♦AJ1085
 ♣AJ73 ♣852
 ♠A74
 ♥1086
 ♦972
 ♣Q1064

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	10	N	-	-	2	3
17	7	S	-	-	2	3
	6	E	2	4	-	1
		W	2	4	-	1

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable Ben Norton

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

Some Souths would respond 1NT, but others prefer to raise partner's suit with Hxx, even holding a flat hand. West doesn't really have a bid, but might try 2NT to show the minors, which would undoubtedly get his side to 5♦. North just bids game opposite known support, and will probably play there if West passed originally.

The defence needs to force declarer repeatedly in diamonds to beat 4♠ double-dummy, but in practice East will just lead a heart or a club. Declarer is fine on a heart lead, simply playing a trump to the ace and one back, but on a club lead West inserts the jack and North has to decide how to use dummy's only entry, the ♠A. He would like to take two heart finesses, and as such may decide to play for a 2-2 trump split, so that the ♠7 will become an entry. The winning line of playing a trump to the ace and one back would lead to defeat when West holds ♥Hxx even on a 2-2 trump split (unless declarer takes the anti-percentage view to start hearts from hand) but succeeds here with trumps 3-1 only because a heart honour falls under the ace.

♠864
 ♥Q7
 ♦AQJ
 ♣KQ1075
 ♠A97 ♠K52
 ♥KJ4 ♥6532
 ♦K109874 ♦652
 ♣2 ♣863
 ♠QJ103
 ♥A1098
 ♦3
 ♣AJ94

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	14	N	4	1	3	4
11	3	S	4	1	3	4
	12	E	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable Jeffrey Allerton

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

North has an awkward call after South's 2♥ rebid (2♦ shows a good club raise: as this has forced to the two-level 2♥ doesn't show any extras but does show an unbalanced hand). 2NT perhaps ought to be forcing as there is a guaranteed club fit, but I wouldn't like to risk it without discussion. Or North might be tempted to bid 3NT directly over 1♦, but there's no reason partner can't have a singleton in a major so he ought to offer clubs as a possible spot. The biggest risk in the auction is that South gets excited and looks for a club slam, or thinks 5♣ will be safer than 3NT with a singleton diamond. The challenge in the play is for East/West not to concede eleven tricks. On a diamond lead, West must not play the king (or East must win the first spade and play a heart). A good hand to lead top from three low which West can read as a high card, denying an honour; a MUD lead of ♦5 could be from ♦Q65.

♠972
 ♥AK98
 ♦J103
 ♣J105
 ♠KQ643 ♠AJ108
 ♥J7432 ♥Q5
 ♦A6 ♦K975
 ♣4 ♣932
 ♠5
 ♥106
 ♦Q842
 ♣AKQ876

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	9	N	3	2	-	-
10	10	S	3	2	-	-
	11	E	-	-	2	4
		W	-	-	2	4

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable Jeffrey Allerton

West	North	East	South
			1♣
2♣	Dble	4♠	All pass

A lot of decisions in the auction after South's 1♣ opening. The West hand is not that attractive for a Michaels cue bid showing 5-5 in the majors, but it may be important to show both suits. North's double shows values of some sort, and East has a clear 4♠ bid (♥Q is a big card when partner has shown five of them). At some tables South will pass and 4♠ will get doubled by North (potentially leading to -790 for North/South). However, with a 4-6 shape it looks right to take some action on the South hand: if double implied club support he can bid 5♣, but if the double of 2♣ just showed high cards then South may view to bid 4NT over 4♠, offering diamonds or clubs. Bidding is the winning action, as 5♣ is only one off unless East/West find their diamond ruff, and even then it is still cheaper than defending 4♠ undoubled making. East needs to play 4♠ carefully to make ten tricks, starting on the heart suit before touching trumps. As long as the first heart play comes from West, the friendly location of the ♥AK allows the contract to make comfortably.

♠ KJ10982
 ♥ 10
 ♦ K108
 ♣ J73
 ♠ A53 ♠ Q64
 ♥ QJ6 ♥ 8753
 ♦ A954 ♦ QJ7
 ♣ KQ9 ♣ A84
 ♠ 7
 ♥ AK942
 ♦ 632
 ♣ 10652

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	8	N	-	-	-	1
16	9	S	-	-	-	1
	7	E	-	1	1	3
		W	1	1	1	3

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all Jeffrey Allerton

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

Playing weak no-trump, it's always inconvenient to have a strong NT in a competitive auction. You might agree that a 2NT rebid here shows a strong balanced hand rather than (say) a 4252 minimum opening, which would make this type of auction easier. However East/West get there, they are 25-high with two balanced hands and are likely to play in 3NT. This makes with diamonds 3-3 but it's a poor contract as it is likely to need spades 6-1 and South to have two of the three key high cards (king of diamonds, ace and king of hearts). After a spade lead won by the queen declarer will run the queen of diamonds, but if North ducks that it's not easy to know the right line from here: perhaps a heart towards hand is best. Eventually it will come down to making three diamond tricks; the disadvantage of ducking the first diamond finesse is that declarer now can't go wrong in the suit – if North wins the king, declarer will later have to decide if they are 4-2 (finesse against the 10) or 3-3 (drop it).

♠ -
 ♥ K85
 ♦ KJ42
 ♣ KJ9754
 ♠ A85 ♠ KJ742
 ♥ AJ64 ♥ Q102
 ♦ A87653 ♦ 10
 ♣ - ♣ Q1032
 ♠ Q10963
 ♥ 973
 ♦ Q9
 ♣ A86

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	11	N	2	-	-	-
13	8	S	2	-	-	-
	8	E	-	2	2	3
		W	-	2	2	3

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable David Gold

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

I would overcall 1♠ for the following reasons: lead-worthy suit, space consuming and decent shape to compete. South may pass or bid 1N, and West will likely commit to 4♠, a fair contract. Despite the 5-0 break it is close to making. Still, one off is the normal result giving North/South an excellent score for +200. Those Easts who do not overcall will avoid trouble, since South will respond 1♠ and West will double (my choice) or overcall 2♦. Then East/West should make a small plus score in two of a red suit or perhaps collect 50 from 3♣ by North. The odd East/West may even make 590 if North/South mess up the defensive timing.

♠ 32
 ♥ A964
 ♦ 872
 ♣ AQ102
 ♠ Q84 ♠ KJ5
 ♥ QJ10 ♥ K82
 ♦ AQ96 ♦ 1054
 ♣ 975 ♣ KJ84
 ♠ A10976
 ♥ 753
 ♦ KJ3
 ♣ 63

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	10	N	-	-	-	-
11	11	S	-	-	-	-
	8	E	3	3	3	2
		W	3	3	3	2

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable Sally Brock

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Pass	2NT	All pass

In reality, in a weak no-trump field I would expect this deal to be passed at most tables. West might open 1NT in third seat but that looks dangerous vulnerable. If West is to open, 1♦ looks best with the intention of passing any bid partner makes – though he won't be happy when partner bids 2NT! However, South has a normal spade lead and after that if declarer takes every possible finesse in the minors she'll come to ten tricks.

♠KJ832
 ♥Q73
 ♦65
 ♣974
 ♠4 ♠A10
 ♥1054 ♥AJ8
 ♦AKJ97 ♦Q8432
 ♣AK106 ♣Q85
 ♠Q9765
 ♥K962
 ♦10
 ♣J32

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
6		N	-	-	-	-
15	13	S	-	-	-	-
6		E	6	6	3	1
		W	6	6	3	1

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all Mike Bell

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♦	All pass

Some Easts will have a forcing raise available over partner's 1♦ opening; the others will be stuck for a bid. 2♣ is the best of a bad lot, there's no rush to bid 3NT yet.

2♠ over 2♣ would be a game-forcing reverse, so 3♠ should be a splinter, perfect for the hand. If you don't play this, 4♣ looks best, despite bypassing 3NT. Either of these will put East/West well on their way to a 6♦ contract.

Over West's response to Blackwood, East will be wondering if a grand slam is making. 5NT would announce possession of all of the aces (or key cards), but East shouldn't risk it if partner's response can take them past 6♦ when it is the last making contract.

♠102
 ♥943
 ♦K108
 ♣AKQ52
 ♠K4 ♠AQ9875
 ♥KJ752 ♥Q6
 ♦QJ743 ♦92
 ♣7 ♣J104
 ♠J63
 ♥A108
 ♦A65
 ♣9863

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
12		N	2	-	-	1
10	9	S	2	-	-	1
9		E	-	1	1	2
		W	-	1	1	2

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable Fiona Brown

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

Many Wests with this shape at favourable vulnerability will open 1♥ (or 2♥ if playing Lucas). It would be risky for North with a 5-card suit and a balanced hand to overcall 2♣. If East/West are playing 2♠ as a weak jump then East can bid 1♠ and over the 2♦ rebid bid 2♠ to show a constructive six-card suit with 9-11 points. Otherwise East will probably bid that way anyway, showing a bit less.

A trump lead makes life difficult for East. Win in hand and play a heart – whether or not South ducks, declarer will make two hearts and six spades for the contract.

♠J98
 ♥K1076
 ♦K6
 ♣AKJ2
 ♠Q763 ♠A42
 ♥85 ♥A2
 ♦Q943 ♦AJ10
 ♣Q54 ♣108763
 ♠K105
 ♥QJ943
 ♦8752
 ♣9

HCP		Makeable contracts				
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
15		N	-	-	3	-
6	13	S	-	-	3	-
6		E	1	1	-	1
		W	1	1	-	1

Board 29 : Dealer North : All vulnerable Simon Cope

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Dble	3♥/4♥
All pass			

After North opens 1♥, East wants to get into the auction but can't overcall such a poor five card club suit at the two levels. A takeout double is a much better way in — a good maxim is that it is usually wrong to overcall at the two level holding a weak no-trump. South now has to choose between an aggressive 4♥ and a more cautious 3♥, catering for North to hold only four hearts in a strong no-trump. West would like to bid spades, but it is a big bid at the three level with poor shape and spot cards and only a four-card suit. 3♥ was pre-emptive (2NT over the double shows a sound raise) so North should pass it. On the likely club lead, declarer has nine tricks so long as he doesn't lose two spade tricks, and once he finds out that hearts are 2-2 he can discard spades from dummy.

Strong no-trumpers should stop in 3♥, after 1NT from North, 2♦ transfer and 3♥ from North to show a minimum with four trumps.

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