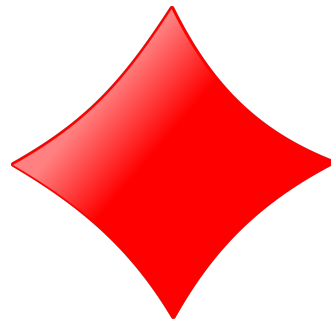
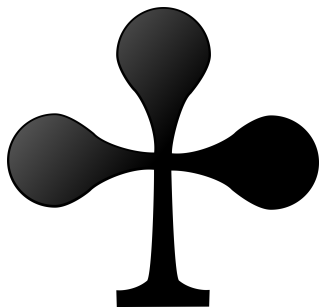
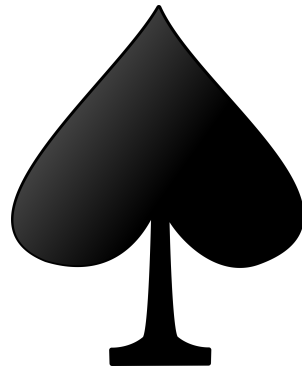


# **Club Stratified Sim Pairs**



***Wednesday***

***11<sup>th</sup> March 2020***

Welcome to the ninth 'Club Stratified Sim Pairs'. Our commentator today is Michael Byrne, experienced bridge teacher and writer.

How stratification works and which stratum you should be in. There are four strata:

1. Stratum 'A' is open to everyone but if either member of the pair is a Tournament Master or above you will be in this stratum and can only get master points from the overall ranking.
2. If both of you are below the rank of Tournament Master you will be 'B' stratum;
3. both below Master means you will be in 'C' stratum and
4. both below District Master will make you 'D' stratum.

Blue points and local points will be awarded to the top third of the overall ranking list. In addition the top third of each stratum will get blue points and local points. If you are entitled to overall points and points for your stratum, you will only get the higher of the awards – you won't get two lots of points! Master points cannot be allocated until after the event is finalised, usually about three weeks. Please keep your scorecard for that period. If we find any unusual scores we may need to contact the club scorer and also the players. Full results may be found at [www.ebu.co.uk/sims/](http://www.ebu.co.uk/sims/)

Whichever stratum you find yourself in, I hope you find this set of hands enjoyable and challenging.

Ian Payn, Chairman EBU

<p>♠ Q9652 ♥ 103 ♦ 1094 ♣ 754</p> <p>♠ AJ10                      ♠ 4 ♥ Q                              ♥ AK9854 ♦ QJ72                        ♦ A86 ♣ AKJ98                      ♣ Q63</p> <p>♠ K873 ♥ J762 ♦ K53 ♣ 102</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">HCP</th> <th colspan="6" style="text-align: center;">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2"></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th colspan="2">NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">18</td> <td style="text-align: center;">13</td> <td>S</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">7</td> <td>E</td> <td>7</td> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> <td>2</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>6</td> <td>6</td> <td>5</td> <td>2</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		2		N	-	-	-	-	-	18	13	S	-	-	-	-	-		7	E	7	6	6	2	5			W	6	6	5	2	5	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>You certainly can't complain the hands are dull with a possible grand slam on the first board!</p> <p>EW will surely get a free run, and certainly a small slam is on the menu, but there are a lot of issues to be sorted out, not least of which the question of what suit to play in.</p> <p>Everyone will start 1♥ - P - 2♣ and some Easts will be tempted to rebid 3♥, the powerful suit and partial club fit giving the hand extra bite.</p> <p>Assuming though that East rebids a simple 2♥ then West will have a tricky call, I am sure that at pairs some will choose a hasty jump to 3NT, they will play there for a poor score. If instead West bids 3♦ or 2♠ then that allows East to bid 3♣, if West then bids 3NT East is allowed to bid on, partner having shown some doubt about level or strain, 4♣ seems a good idea.</p> <p>7♣ is a fair final contract (a diamond lead taking out the entry to the hearts is best), but given how hard it was to get to even a small slam, 6♣ is more than enough at pairs. I would expect +1370/+1390 to be worth a lot of match points, well bid if you reached it.</p>
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<p>♠ AKJ9 ♥ 8 ♦ 10973 ♣ A874</p> <p>♠ 1043                        ♠ 62 ♥ J974                        ♥ A10652 ♦ K86                         ♦ J54 ♣ J92                         ♣ K53</p> <p>♠ Q875 ♥ KQ3 ♦ AQ2 ♣ Q106</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">HCP</th> <th colspan="6" style="text-align: center;">Makeable contracts</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2"></th> <th>♣</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♠</th> <th colspan="2">NT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> <td></td> <td>N</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td>S</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">15</td> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	HCP		Makeable contracts								♣	♦	♥	♠	NT		12		N	4	4	2	4	4	5	8	S	4	4	2	4	4		15	E	-	-	-	-	-			W	-	-	-	-	-	<p>Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <p>This time NS have the cards, 27 points and a 4-4 spade fit, and I would expect everyone to reach the same contract.</p> <p>A typical sequence might be 1♠ - P - 4♥ - P - 4♠, with 4♥ being a splinter bid, showing spade support and heart shortage. (If you see on the travellers at the end anyone playing in 4♥ as North then that will be the reason why).</p> <p>Alternatively, those playing a strong no trump will have a stayman sequence to 4♠, and those playing 5 card majors might open 1♣ and play 4♠ by North.</p> <p>The best lead for the defence is to bank their club trick and wait for their certain tricks from hearts and diamonds. Interestingly enough East must take the ♥A to hold it to 10 tricks, with this combination it is often right to duck the ♥A to avoid giving declarer two discards.</p> <p>There will plenty of declarers taking 11 tricks, (a heart to the ace and diamond switch for example) and the difference between +620 and +650 will be crucial.</p>
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<p>♠ AJ6 ♥ 6 ♦ J9 ♣ QJ65432</p> <p>♠ 2                      ♠ 1084 ♥ K94                    ♥ QJ10872 ♦ AKQ7543             ♦ 1082 ♣ AK                      ♣ 7</p> <p>♠ KQ9753 ♥ A53 ♦ 6 ♣ 1098</p>	<p>Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <p>South will kick off with a bid of spades - the question is, how many? It looks like a perfect 2♠ opener although some will choose 1♠ and some 3♠ (Put me down for a light 1♠ opener).</p> <p>West has a power house and over 2♠ should overcall 3♠ (asking for a stopper) North will bid 4♠, expecting it to be a good save against the likely final contract of 4♥.</p> <p>East will have little idea of what to do, expecting his partner to no doubt have solid clubs (oops) it wouldn't be outlandish for him to ward partner off bidding by doubling, but that will fail spectacularly as 4♠ can't be beaten.</p> <p>Most East's will pass and West might double or put his faith in his long suit by bidding 5♦, a good contract only beaten on a heart ruff.</p> <p>If EW find their way to 5♥ then this is only beaten by specific defence, diamond lead, win the ♥A and put partner in with the ♠A for a ruff.</p> <p>The scores on this one will be hard to predict but if you got a plus score then well done, if that plus score is a game then especially well done!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ J10 ♥ 1032 ♦ AK96 ♣ K854</p> <p>♠ 86                      ♠ K75432 ♥ AKQ4                 ♥ 65 ♦ Q1075                 ♦ - ♣ J76                      ♣ AQ1092</p> <p>♠ AQ9 ♥ J987 ♦ J8432 ♣ 3</p>	<p>Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <p>EW have an "easy" 4♠ contract losing just 3 spade tricks, but as usual the curse of superficial analysis strikes, as the play is very interesting indeed.</p> <p>The bidding offers a lot of scope as well, most West players will open 1NT (weak) and East will transfer to spades and then...?</p> <p>It is easy to count your points, get to 9 and pass 2♠, equally it is easy to count your losers (ugh) get to 5 and then decide you are worth a drive to game!</p> <p>Probably 4♠ is a decent punt at teams bridge, at pairs perhaps a prudent raise to 3♠ might be a bit more cautious, which partner will (should!) hastily pass.</p> <p>There is interest in the play as on a neutral diamond lead West will ruff and come to hand with a heart. If he then plays a spade to the king and ace 9 tricks are the limit, as he lacks the entries to pick up the clubs. (No North player would cover the jack when he can see AQ109 on the table, if East is declarer it is harder).</p> <p>The best thing to do is duck a spade at trick two, then use the first entry to take two club finesses, when South ruffs with the queen declarer can then duck out the A♠ and repeat the club finesse for ten tricks. Easy? I think not!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ AJ9 ♥ Q ♦ 105 ♣ AQ109542</p> <p>♠ 1085                    ♠ Q432 ♥ J84                      ♥ K1096532 ♦ AQJ964                ♦ 8 ♣ 6                          ♣ K</p> <p>♠ K76 ♥ A7 ♦ K732 ♣ J873</p>	<p>Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>I confidently predict that North will open 1♣ and East will bid hearts, however the level is less clear, and the height of the pre-emption will have a bearing on the final contract.</p> <p>Let's imagine first that East bids 3♥, now South (buoyed by the club fit no doubt) might try 3NT, West has to save against this in 4♥, giving North a problem between pass, 5♣ and 4NT (to play).</p> <p>Instead if East bids 2♥ then West can raise and North will rebid clubs, no doubt South will have doubled or raised clubs himself. A 4♥ overcall similarly will see South double and North bid 5♣, although now West might press on to 5♥.</p> <p>If North plays in 5♣ sadly a diamond lead and 3 rounds of the suit will hold him to ten tricks, promoting the singleton ♣K, a cruel fate.</p> <p>If instead East plays in hearts then a club lead and ♠J switch (a flashy "surrounding play" to trap the queen) is required to hold it to 8 tricks.</p> <p>The best result for NS is if they end in no trumps, as if they get clubs right then an easy ten tricks are available, although if they get clubs wrong they lose 9 tricks – now EW make 3NT!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ 964 ♥ KQ9 ♦ 1073 ♣ 9875</p> <p>♠ AKJ ♥ J742 ♦ AKJ ♣ K64</p> <p>♠ 7 ♥ A1086 ♦ Q9642 ♣ QJ3</p> <p>♠ Q108532 ♥ 53 ♦ 85 ♣ A102</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>6</td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><th></th><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>2</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>5</td><td>2</td><td>5</td></tr> </table>	HCP		5	9	20	6	Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	E	4	5	5	2	5	W	4	5	5	2	5	<p>Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>After a pass from East, South will open 2♠ and West (far too strong for an overcall of 2NT) will choose between a blunderbuss bid of 3NT or a double, intending to bid no trumps later.</p> <p>If West doubles then East has a few choices of what to respond, if playing Lebensohl he can bid 3♦ or 3♥ (to show 8-11 points, non forcing but constructive), or cue bid 3♠ if he wants to drive to game (showing 4 cards in the other major and no spade stopper).</p> <p>The interesting thing about this hand is that both hearts and no trumps make exactly the same tricks, 13 easy winners once you have lost two first. At teams bridge you wouldn't give this hand a moments thought, but at pairs the difference between 660 and 650 is vitally important.</p> <p>Normally on these 4-4 fit deals it is when the suit is 4-1 that you need to play in no trumps, but here even with the suit breaking well the no trump bashers get all the match points – well done if that was you!</p>
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<p>♠ QJ732 ♥ K86 ♦ Q6 ♣ 1092</p> <p>♠ K1096 ♥ J1074 ♦ A852 ♣ 8</p> <p>♠ 85 ♥ AQ5 ♦ 1093 ♣ A6543</p> <p>♠ A4 ♥ 932 ♦ KJ74 ♣ KQJ7</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>14</td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><th></th><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	HCP		8	10	8	14	Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-	E	-	2	2	2	1	W	-	2	2	2	1	<p>Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>A more sedate part-score here, with NS having the advantage in high card strength but EW making up for it with their good fits in the major suits...hang on a minute!</p> <p>You may need to look twice at deep finesse here, because the bad splits in the side suits and location of the ♥A mean that it is EW that can make a part-score in either of their 4-3 fits or indeed their 4-2 spade fit!</p> <p>In practice a lot of EW pairs will remain silent and NS will (unfortunately) get the auction to themselves.</p> <p>Those playing weak no trump will no doubt bid 1NT - 2♥ - 2♠ - all pass (some East players might give passing thought to a protective take out double, but few will actually have the bottle to do it) and now the singleton club is on lead and 3 down will follow on sensible defence.</p> <p>Those playing a strong no trump may fare better, after 1♣ - 1♠ - 1NT North might take the view to pass and now South will come to 6 tricks and scramble one off for a fair score.</p> <p>Unusually the top score goes to those who passed throughout and defended accurately and I would expect -300 to be fairly frequent on the traveller.</p>
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<p>♠ A5 ♥ A1043 ♦ Q10975 ♣ 106</p> <p>♠ J42 ♥ K75 ♦ 43 ♣ A9742</p> <p>♠ Q9876 ♥ Q ♦ AJ ♣ KQJ83</p> <p>♠ K103 ♥ J9862 ♦ K862 ♣ 5</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>7</td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><th></th><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> </table>	HCP		10	15	8	7	Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	-	3	4	-	-	S	-	3	4	-	-	E	3	-	-	2	-	W	3	-	-	2	-	<p>Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <p>Once again the side with the paucity of high card values is the one that can make a game contract, whilst the side with the 8 card spade fit and 23 points between them can make nothing!</p> <p>West will pass and North should pass (hands with 4♥/5♦ are not as convenient to open light as hands with 5♥/4♦) East will open 1♠ 3<sup>rd</sup> in seat. (I think the last of those that opened 1♣ as East are no longer with us sadly)</p> <p>After that South will pass and West should raise to 2♠ (yes, even those playing acol with 4 card majors), it will be up to North to come in with a pre-protective double or other such nonsense to get his side into the auction.</p> <p>If East tries for game in clubs then West will surely accept, but 4♠ is too high, with 4 top losers and a possible club ruff.</p> <p>Since most will play in spades the lead will prove critical. A heart lead to the ace and trump switch is the only real way to let through ten tricks, a club lead is the only real way to hold it to 8, then a diamond switch after getting the first ruff.</p>
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<p>♠ 109 ♥ A543 ♦ 104 ♣ AK1096</p> <p>♠ 732                      ♠ A54 ♥ Q108                    ♥ 962 ♦ AQ762                  ♦ J9853 ♣ 42                        ♣ 75</p> <p>♠ KQJ86 ♥ KJ7 ♦ K ♣ QJ83</p>	<p>Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable</p> <p>A return to the more traditional deal here, since the side with 27 points between them can make game in 3 strains.</p> <p>North will surely open 1♣ and South will bid spades, then when North rebids his clubs, South has a choice of actions. The best bid is probably 2♥ (forcing for one round) but many will choose dramatic leaps to game, either 5♣, 4♠ or 3NT, all of which are hasty and horrible.</p> <p>3NT will probably escape a quick death, South can win the diamond lead and cash the club suit, but if the defence don't make any errors with their discards one off two off will be the result after the heart finesse loses.</p> <p>5♣ is easy, with the spade suit providing discards for the losing hearts, and 4♥ will make ten tricks as well, but the highest scoring contract is 4♠, so well done to anyone that go there. I rather suspect that my praise is less of a reward than the enormous number of match-points the contract will yield though, bypassing the peasants in 5♣, and risk takers in 3NT.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ K64 ♥ AQ8 ♦ 109762 ♣ J2</p> <p>♠ Q1087                    ♠ AJ5 ♥ J95                        ♥ 10762 ♦ KQ85                    ♦ J43 ♣ 73                        ♣ 986</p> <p>♠ 932 ♥ K43 ♦ A ♣ AKQ1054</p>	<p>Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <p>There's a famous quote from Henry IV Pt II "In 3NT doth a long minor suit oft belong" and this hand is a perfect example of it. Not only is 3NT the highest scoring game, it is the only game that makes, since a club contract has too many losers.</p> <p>I would expect all experienced partnerships to get there, a common sequence might be 1♣ - 1♦ - 3♣ - 3NT, carefully protecting the ♠K. (Today this isn't vital but give one of South's spades to West and now a high spade lead through the king would result in NS losing the first five tricks).</p> <p>With East on lead a low heart will surely be led, North has time to cash 6 clubs and lead up to the spade before releasing the last of the red suit stoppers. It would be wrong (at pairs at least) to cash ten tricks and then lead a spade up as you would hold yourself to ten tricks even when the ♠A was right, West coming down to winners in the red suits and the ♠A to take the last 3 tricks.</p> <p>Since nearly every player in the room will record 630 you had better be sitting NS, experience tells me that the odd pair will miss game, and NS will score above average for +630, EW below.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ K83 ♥ 9863 ♦ Q4 ♣ A753</p> <p>♠ A97                        ♠ J1065 ♥ AQ                        ♥ K105 ♦ AJ765                    ♦ K1083 ♣ KQ2                      ♣ J4</p> <p>♠ Q42 ♥ J742 ♦ 92 ♣ 10986</p>	<p>Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>Another no trump hand now, and this time I am sure 3NT will be the contract at almost every table. 2NT - P - 3NT seems so universal I can't imagine anything else, but people do have a way of surprising me, even now.</p> <p>The quest will be for the precious overtricks and the play simply revolves around the pay in the diamond suit. After a neutral-ish heart lead (the ♥8 stands out like a sore thumb, the 4<sup>th</sup> best club is definitely inferior) West will have little to go on, he might try a bit of fishing in clubs but with no clues to guide him the percentage play of cashing the Ace then King must be right.</p> <p>In theory this board should be 50% as every declarer chalks up +460, but years of (bitter) experience have made me realise it is always right to be the declaring side on the so called "flat boards" as plus scores always score well.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ Q1085 ♥ 1052 ♦ KJ653 ♣ 9</p> <p>♠ 972                      ♠ K3 ♥ 83                         ♥ KJ96 ♦ 1097                     ♦ A42 ♣ 108542                 ♣ AQ63</p> <p>♠ AJ64 ♥ AQ74 ♦ Q8 ♣ KJ7</p>	<p>Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Any dreams East has of making a delicate game or slam will be dashed as he comes to term with what unadulterated rubbish his partner holds, and he reigns himself in during the bidding.</p> <p>After two passes East will open 1♣ (weak no trump traditional acol), 1♥ (weak no trump modern acol) or 1NT (strong no trump) and there the paths diverge. The strong no trumppers will probably get passed out (although North might back in with a double, which is often used as a 4 card major and a longer minor suit, if South passes that it could lead to some fun) they will go several off although North's failure to get the lead may prove to be their saving grace.</p> <p>The 1♣ and 1♥ openers will see South bid 1NT, North should try stayman and is then worth a raise of spades, game should be reached.</p> <p>4♣ is one of those contracts that is better than it looks, with the missing values marked with East the play should prove straight forward.</p> <p>A heart appears to be the only lead from West to hold South to 10 tricks in spades, helping East set up a trick for his KJ9 by leading through the ten in dummy.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ A74 ♥ K975 ♦ A1074 ♣ A7</p> <p>♠ KQ863                      ♠ 52 ♥ A6                         ♥ Q832 ♦ K83                         ♦ QJ5 ♣ K83                         ♣ J1095</p> <p>♠ J109 ♥ J104 ♦ 962 ♣ Q642</p>	<p>Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <p>Another strong no trump for North now, so again the paths diverge. The 1♦ and 1♥ openers will have their bid passed around to West (whilst I am all in favour of responding light this South hand seems too flat and feeble to work any magic with) who will presumably bid 1♠. That might actually end matters, as although some East players might dredge a 1NT response up from somewhere it scarcely seems worth it.</p> <p>The strong no trump players will open one and then get the dummy, West being advised not to overcall at the two level on a 5332 hand.</p> <p>Playing in spades West will have a helping hand from the lead, either a heart or the ace of clubs give the contract a kick start, certainly a heart lead appears to allow 9 tricks. A club lead makes the play quicker but North will still come to a trick in each suit, as well as his partner's trump trick for 8 tricks.</p> <p>No trumps will make 6 tricks by NS and probably 7 for EW so it is a normal NS minus board. Any NS pairs that do get a plus score will have earned it and will do very well as a consequence.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ Q1032 ♥ 8 ♦ J542 ♣ A1043</p> <p>♠ AJ8                         ♠ K65 ♥ QJ642                     ♥ AK95 ♦ 83                         ♦ AQ1096 ♣ KQJ                         ♣ 2</p> <p>♠ 974 ♥ 1073 ♦ K7 ♣ 98765</p>	<p>Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <p>East will open 1♦, and West will respond 1♥ – no controversy so far. Now East will have to decide how many hearts to raise to, 3♥ seems right on values but the powerful shape and crisp honours may tempt some into a splinter bid of 4♣. That might be enough to make West try blackwood and I am afraid there is no recovery from that, 6♥ is simply on the diamond finesse which is wrong.</p> <p>Do I therefore have sympathy with any bold EW pairs who have stretched too high and fallen too short? I'm afraid not, no. For starters a slam that is said to be "on a finesse" is rarely anything but. Here for example if the suits break badly then you might go down even when the diamond finesse is right.</p> <p>Also, since some of your peers will make a mess of the play then stopping in game and chalking up +680 is already worth a good score, bidding a thin slam is simply trying to guild the lily.</p> <p>The key to success at pairs in a big and varied field is simply to bid the same contract as everyone else and then make more tricks as declarer.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ K10764 ♥ 875 ♦ Q7 ♣ 1075</p> <p>♠ QJ952      ♠ - ♥ 962      ♥ AKQJ10 ♦ 10      ♦ K6543 ♣ J642      ♣ AQ8</p> <p>♠ A83 ♥ 43 ♦ AJ982 ♣ K93</p>	<p>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <p>South has a weak no trump this time and after 1NT - P - 2♥ (spades) East has a choice of actions. He could double which some people play as penalties of 1NT, or double to show hearts, bid 2♠ for take out, or bid 2♠ as a Michaels Cue bid!</p> <p>If East doubles then South will bid 2♠ (which most play as showing a 3 card fit for spades) and then East will have another go. He might double again which will lead to a sweaty 2♠ doubled which appears to drift one off (although EW will have to get clubs into the game fairly early doors) or bid his diamonds, West might then give preference to hearts which could encourage East to bid on to game. Where South opens 1♦ North will respond 1♠ and East overcall a heavy 2♥, alternatively a double followed by a bids of hearts might be chosen.</p> <p>As declarer East can't make more than 9 tricks legitimately, the best lead for NS being a trump. (Some will manage ten tricks but only with a little help from their friends, the ♠A is a good start for declarer but they will still need care from there)</p> <p>Those Easy players that do overbid to game and are allowed to make it, don't expect me to congratulate you, just take your 90% score and head quietly to the back of the lunch queue.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ 72 ♥ K1095 ♦ K52 ♣ KQJ5</p> <p>♠ J1043      ♠ Q986 ♥ AQ      ♥ J864 ♦ AJ76      ♦ 84 ♣ 1073      ♣ 982</p> <p>♠ AK5 ♥ 732 ♦ Q1093 ♣ A64</p>	<p>Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <p>Those West player that confidently open 1NT will have to keep looking confident if they want to avoid a double, with partner having such modest assets now is not the time to encourage NS to come into the auction.</p> <p>Those playing strong will (of course) open 1♦ (1♠ for some maybe?) and now NS will definitely enter the auction. After 1♦ - P - P (this East hand is one I would respond on holding both majors, but I appreciate that is not the mainstream choice) South will bid 1NT and North raise to game, the same is true for the 1♠ openers, although East might be more tempted to raise of course.</p> <p>9 tricks should be made by NS in no trumps either as defenders or declarer, assuming you play West for the ♥A (leading one to the King) and the ♦J (running the ten). As defenders the ♣K will be led to trick one, then a club to South's ace and the ♦10 switch, NS will have time to get to hearts before the two spade stoppers are dislodged.</p> <p>Since I would expect a few NS pairs to bid and make game I doubt 1NT Passed out and 3 off will be the end of the world, but since some will stop short of game and others might go down, -300 will not have the ring of a great board to it.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ A10853 ♥ Q82 ♦ 42 ♣ AK7</p> <p>♠ J974      ♠ KQ62 ♥ 4      ♥ 1063 ♦ 6      ♦ KJ103 ♣ Q1098532      ♣ 64</p> <p>♠ - ♥ AKJ975 ♦ AQ9875 ♣ J</p>	<p>Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <p>Just another routine, run of the mill 6-6 hand here and a possible (grand) slam. Most Norths will open 1♠ and South will respond 2♥, North should raise to 3♥ whatever system is in place. South can't bid 3♠ now (that is natural not a cue bid) so will try 4♣ and over the return to 4♥ will know a diamond control is missing. He might as well have a pop at 6♥ regardless, as even if partner has the wrong cards and the opponents guess to cash the ♣A you will still be on a diamond finesse at worst.</p> <p>Here West might make it easy for you with a singleton diamond lead (although leading a short suit when you have only one trump is rarely successful) and South will need to play with care. To make 13 tricks he needs to draw one round of trumps and then ruff two diamonds in the dummy, this is far fetched and few will do it. Not withstanding the fact that this lay out is very unlikely (less so if West has pre-empted in clubs?) it also risks your safe slam, best play to ensure 6♥ is to cash one top diamond and then cross to dummy and lead a low diamond ducking, giving up the possible overtrick. Well done if you bid and made slam, those that risked everything for +1010 will be glowing with pride....not so fast, someone in the country will have bid and made a grand slam!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ A3 ♥ AQ105 ♦ 109764 ♣ 64</p> <p>♠ KQ2                      ♠ 10875 ♥ KJ9763                  ♥ 82 ♦ K                            ♦ AQ53 ♣ Q83                        ♣ A102</p> <p>♠ J964 ♥ 4 ♦ J82 ♣ KJ975</p>	<p>Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable</p> <p>After two passes West will open 1♥ and East respond 1♠, West has a choice between rebidding 2♥ (showing 6) and 2♠ to show some support for partner. I suspect in a poll between experts there would be support for both views, but 2♥ will be the universal choice for most players tonight.</p> <p>Over this East might pass, bid 2NT or raise to 3♥, if he makes a game try then West will surely accept, the ♥9 proving too alluring to resist.</p> <p>Playing in a heart contract 8 tricks seem obvious on any lead, the defence taking one spade, 3 trumps and one further trick in the black suits (only Ace and another spade allow 9 tricks).</p> <p>Those in no trumps have a hopeless task, only if the defence lead a club and return them allowing East to set up hearts, even then it will require a mis-defence from North to get close to 9 tricks.</p> <p>The real winners will be the tigers sitting North that pounce with a penalty double after the opponents have an invitational auction to game, as +300 will not trouble the scorers!</p>																																										
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<p>♠ KQ5 ♥ 874 ♦ 8653 ♣ K43</p> <p>♠ A9                            ♠ J10742 ♥ AJ1096                    ♥ Q ♦ 10                            ♦ KQ74 ♣ AQJ86                    ♣ 1095</p> <p>♠ 863 ♥ K532 ♦ AJ92 ♣ 72</p>	<p>Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable</p> <p>West will open 1♥ and East respond 1♠, of that I am certain. Now the paths will diverge as various conventional and judgement calls come into play. West should rebid 2♣ and East does best to pass this - misfit hands need more than 25 points to make game, so even if West has 16 or 17 points you are unlikely to miss anything by passing.</p> <p>On a trump lead (automatic on this auction, although perhaps the heart holding will tip North off) 11 tricks are easy, building up a diamond trick to pitch a spade and taking a ruffing finesse against North's ♥K. Only a spade lead gets the defence the 3 tricks to which they are entitled.</p> <p>Alternatively a lot of players will jump to 3♣ which is not only game forcing but also a complete overbid. East will probably tread water with 3♦, and EW are in a horrible mess. The best they can do is end in 3NT as East, and now the 2♦ lead might give declarer a chance, there are loads of tricks available but with two kings to be lost the defence have time to set up some spade and diamond tricks of their own.</p> <p>Well done if you bid and made game – who cares what deep finesse says anyway!</p>																																										
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<p>♠ 1085 ♥ K875 ♦ K ♣ K9654</p> <p>♠ Q9743                      ♠ AK62 ♥ AJ10                        ♥ 62 ♦ AJ63                        ♦ Q85 ♣ Q                            ♣ A1072</p> <p>♠ J ♥ Q943 ♦ 109742 ♣ J83</p>	<p>Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable</p> <p>EW have enough points for game and a 9 card spade fit and nearly everyone will play in 4♠.</p> <p>A common auction will be 1♠ - P - 2NT, showing a game forcing raise with 4 card support. (This is one of the most useful conventions so if you don't play it at the moment then it might be worth adding it to your armoury)</p> <p>West will show club shortage and East will give a look but most will then stop in game. Holding nothing in the red suits East knows he needs partner to have a lot of fillers, likewise West can see his hand is a little empty with too many queens and jacks.</p> <p>On a heart lead West will probably play one back and discard a diamond from dummy then take the diamond finesse, he can then draw trumps and ruff the last diamond in dummy.</p> <p>The best lead seems to be a trump, now declarer will have to work a little harder for 11 tricks, there are three red finesses to take and trumps to be managed as well. Anyone who made a slam, well done but you probably got the King diamonds lead or just had a good peek.</p>																																										
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<p>♠ QJ985 ♥ AQ43 ♦ K ♣ 653</p> <p>♠ 1064                      ♠ A7 ♥ J10762                    ♥ 985 ♦ 87                            ♦ QJ53 ♣ Q97                        ♣ AK104</p> <p>♠ K32 ♥ K ♦ A109642 ♣ J82</p>	<p>Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable</p> <p>NS have a nice spade fit but must be careful not to get overboard, as with 4 top losers game has almost no chance.</p> <p>Every North will surely open 1♠ and East should double (the absence of a 4<sup>th</sup> heart is a shame but not fatal), South will show diamonds (or a good spade raise if playing 5 card majors). North can then show his hearts and South can jump to 3♠ and invite game, North's quick pass may give him cause for concern but the defence is so easy to beat 4♠ that he will soon be relieved.</p> <p>Even if East leads the ♣A and then switches to trumps 4♠ will still go down, but on a top club lead it is so natural to continue the suit that I am sure 9 tricks will be almost universal, in which case the match points go to those who stopped safely in 3♠, or whose opponents pressed on to game and went down.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ 1072 ♥ Q ♦ AQJ109 ♣ Q962</p> <p>♠ J85                            ♠ KQ943 ♥ K10963                    ♥ A4 ♦ 6                                ♦ 7543 ♣ J1087                        ♣ A5</p> <p>♠ A6 ♥ J8752 ♦ K82 ♣ K43</p>	<p>Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable</p> <p>A humble part-score now, with the spade suit ruling the roost once more.</p> <p>After 1♠ from East, South will pass (if your ex-partner overcalled 2♥ then don't complain to me, just fire them) and West will raise to 2♠, the right bid whatever system is in place.</p> <p>North has a pleasant diamond suit now and some will flirt with the idea of a bold overcall or 2NT for the minors but most will pass as will East, now the spotlight will be on South. At favourable vulnerability you should always be reluctant to let your opponents play where they want to do, a protective double seems a good plan. This might result in NS buying the hand in 3♦, and however many tricks it makes that will be a better score than letting them make 2♠ for 110 or 140.</p> <p>East might bid on of course, and now you have a chance at a plus score. East can always make 8 tricks (the defence can either take a heart ruff or stop a diamond ruff but not both) but 9 is a struggle unless the defence is soft.</p> <p>There will be plus scores on both sides of the travellers and perhaps a few penalties to boot, make sure you got one of the pluses!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ J10762 ♥ AQ ♦ 1076 ♣ A103</p> <p>♠ A54                            ♠ Q8 ♥ KJ8                            ♥ 6543 ♦ AQJ3                         ♦ K854 ♣ KQ8                         ♣ 542</p> <p>♠ K93 ♥ 10972 ♦ 92 ♣ J976</p>	<p>Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable</p> <p>Another gentle part-score hand, although EW won't believe that as they hold 25 points between them and stoppers in every suit.</p> <p>It seems hard to imagine an auction other than 2NT - 3NT (ok I admit, most will bid stayman en route) and North will lead a spade. Whether he chooses the jack or the 6 West will go up with the queen and feel sad when the king is produced.</p> <p>From here the best declarer can manage is 4 diamond tricks, one club and one spade for a disappointing 3 down.</p> <p>There is no legitimate way to make another trick, and after giving it my best analysis I can't see any way that North will get his discards wrong and let through a 7<sup>th</sup> trick, but rest assured some defenders will find a way.</p> <p>A flat board at -300? We shall see, but in the meantime experience tells me that being on the right side of a "flat board" with +300 is always better than being on the wrong side!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ K3 ♥ 10854 ♦ 1062 ♣ Q952</p> <p>♠ QJ2                      ♠ 8765 ♥ AQ632                    ♥ KJ ♦ KQ543                    ♦ AJ97 ♣ -                            ♣ J64</p> <p>♠ A1094 ♥ 97 ♦ 8 ♣ AK10873</p>	<p>Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all</p> <p>EW have 24 points and a 5-2 heart fit, but that is the suit they must play in if they want to make game.</p> <p>After 1♥ - P - 1♠ South will come charging in with 2♣ and West can rebid 2♦ (some will double to show 3 card spade support, and hope that East doesn't have a marginal penalty pass), and East will raise to 3♦.</p> <p>The obvious move now is for West to continue with 3♠, suggesting 3541 or this shape, and now East might choose 4♥ with 9 points all working and a strong doubleton.</p> <p>In practice if East chooses 5♦, or chooses 4♦ and West re-raises himself to game then that will make as well, North is a long way off trying a speculative K♠ lead required to get the ruff need to beat it.</p> <p>It looks like 6♦ can be made on a club lead by reversing the dummy and ruffing 3 clubs in hand, but this requires the hearts to be 3-3 (or North to throw one) and won't work on this lay out.</p>																																										
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<p>♠ 4 ♥ A86 ♦ KQ982 ♣ K864</p> <p>♠ AJ1063                    ♠ 9852 ♥ J52                        ♥ K94 ♦ 75                         ♦ A6 ♣ QJ5                        ♣ A1092</p> <p>♠ KQ7 ♥ Q1073 ♦ J1043 ♣ 73</p>	<p>Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable</p> <p>With the points split 20/20 the spade suit proves to win the auction yet again, as EW can make no fewer than ten tricks with my favourite suit as trumps.</p> <p>North will open 1♦ and East has a marginal double, most will pass. South will reply 1♥ and West should overcall 1♠, despite the modest point count it must be right to get the strong suit into action.</p> <p>North should either raise to 2♥ (if playing acol) or make a support double if playing a system that includes that piece of kit, in truth most players will rebid 2♣ in a selfish effort to play the hand.</p> <p>East will show some sort of good raise, but even so it is hard to see EW getting to game regardless of what happens.</p> <p>Even on a diamond lead West can pick up trumps (two finesses is the right play but only just, the opening bid might prove a distraction in that regard) and then take 4 club tricks, the ♥K will produce the 10<sup>th</sup> trick.</p> <p>Since almost no-one will bid game +170 will score well for EW, beating those that defend diamond contracts which they haven't doubled.</p>																																										
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<p>♠ K974 ♥ J42 ♦ Q4 ♣ J964</p> <p>♠ AJ853                    ♠ 106 ♥ K76                        ♥ Q1098 ♦ 5                            ♦ J10983 ♣ Q1083                    ♣ K5</p> <p>♠ Q2 ♥ A53 ♦ AK762 ♣ A72</p>	<p>Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable</p> <p>South has a fine hand but partner (as usual) is a disappointment and he must be careful not to get too high.</p> <p>Those playing a strong no trump might be tempted to upgrade out of one, that is to say they might want to open 1♦ and then jump to 2NT to show 18-19, my advice is not to at pairs. The reward for bidding and making thin games is best seen at teams bridge, at duplicate pairs bid low and make lots of tricks, you will still get a good score.</p> <p>Opening 1NT here will see West bid something to show spades and a minor suit, NS don't need to double this to score better than they would in 1NT (+100 beating +90) and the defence is pretty easy (3 aces and 3 trump tricks).</p> <p>Back in weak no trump world South will open 1♦, West bid 1♠ and North will dredge up 1NT. Partner will raise to 2NT and on the ♠10 lead North must cover, this brings him up to 7 tricks but an 8<sup>th</sup> will be hard to come by, if declarer plays on diamonds, a hasty switch to clubs might lead to +120 but many will go minus in practice – well done to the under-bidders!</p>																																										
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<p>♠ AK63 ♥ K10 ♦ J853 ♣ K108</p> <p>♠ 5                      ♠ Q10942 ♥ Q984                ♥ A532 ♦ K102                 ♦ 976 ♣ QJ752               ♣ 9</p> <p>♠ J87 ♥ J76 ♦ AQ4 ♣ A643</p>	<p>Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>South has a 4333 12 count, but advocates of the losing trick count will no doubt see 9 losers and pass hastily.</p> <p>Everyone else will open 1♣ or 1NT and North will raise to game after checking for a spade fit (either by bidding the suit or using stayman).</p> <p>3NT looks like a struggle, if South plays it on a low club lead then he will normally mis-guess by playing the 8, hoping that the lead is from Q9xx(x) or J9xx(x), unlucky and with a key entry gone to the South hand he will be struggling.</p> <p>There are 9 winners available (three spades, two clubs, three diamonds and a heart) but this requires losing the lead so many times that surely the defenders will find the heart switch and develop 5 tricks.</p> <p>Perhaps those that pass as South then raise to game unexpectedly (a method that used to be popular in parts of Yorkshire) will hit the jackpot, East no doubt leading a spade, now diamonds 3-3 gives you 9 easy tricks.</p>																																												
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<p>♠ 943 ♥ QJ7 ♦ AQ974 ♣ 72</p> <p>♠ J1062                ♠ AQ8 ♥ 1063                ♥ A85 ♦ K102                 ♦ 853 ♣ AKJ                 ♣ 9643</p> <p>♠ K75 ♥ K942 ♦ J6 ♣ Q1085</p>	<p>Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable</p> <p>Another gentle part-score, with the points split relatively evenly and no one at the table having a singleton.</p> <p>West will open either 1NT or 1♣ and this will determine whether the auction is long or short. Those that open 1NT will buy it and get a diamond lead, after a spade finesse loses the defence can cash 4 diamond tricks and switch to hearts, but declarer has 7 easy tricks, and an 8<sup>th</sup> is available if he stakes the farm on the club finesse.</p> <p>Those that open 1♣ will see North bid 1♦ and East be stuck for a bid, double is a good bid, showing 4-4 in the majors or 3-3 and 10+ as here. West will rebid 1NT and now North (on a very good day) might find a heart lead. If hearts are ducked twice then South must remember to overtake and fire the ♦J through, North can win and exit with a heart, now when the spade finesse loses it is disaster! The defence will take 4 diamonds, 3 hearts and one spade for two down, and all the match points for NS. Well, maybe not all the match points, some NS pairs might buy the hand in 2♥ and find every card lying where they need it for a miraculous +110.</p>																																												
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<p>♠ J98 ♥ 43 ♦ KQ862 ♣ Q87</p> <p>♠ AQ53                ♠ K62 ♥ K6                    ♥ J872 ♦ AJ10975            ♦ 3 ♣ 5                      ♣ K10962</p> <p>♠ 1074 ♥ AQ1095 ♦ 4 ♣ AJ43</p>	<p>Board 29 : Dealer North : All vulnerable</p> <p>Yet another part-score hand, although this time with plenty of shape flying around.</p> <p>South will open 1♥ 3<sup>rd</sup> in hand and West has a choice between a mainstream 2♦ overcall and an off beat double, intending to convert clubs to diamonds.</p> <p>Assuming most choose the 2♦ bid North will pass (licking his lips no doubt) and this will travel round to South. Whilst re-opening with a double is normally a good idea here he would be advised to pass, as with North being a passed hand it isn't clear to whom the hand belongs.</p> <p>With spades breaking well and the diamond pips with West there isn't any defence to 2♦, even on a heart lead to the 9 and king West can just play a club to the ten, he will eventually make 3 spades and the ♥K and come to either 4 trump tricks (two club ruffs in hand and then an endplay, or just North being trump bound).</p> <p>Since this line of play relies on North holding the diamonds, those that aren't doubled might go down, whereas in a cruel twist of irony those that are doubled are likely to make it.</p>																																												
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<p>♠ 987 ♥ AKJ654 ♦ 972 ♣ 6</p> <p>♠ K5                      ♠ AJ10642 ♥ Q32                      ♥ 107 ♦ J                              ♦ K65 ♣ Q1098543              ♣ J7</p> <p>♠ Q3 ♥ 98 ♦ AQ10843 ♣ AK2</p>	<p>Board 30 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <p>2♠ from East will surely be the choice of every played who holds the cards (except those that play multi 2♦) and then South has a fairly easy 3♦ overcall. (Change the spade holding to Kx from Qx and now a few might try 2NT but that's another matter).</p> <p>North will bid 3♥ and South should bid 3♠, asking for more information, as from his point of view both 3NT and 4♥ could be right, North now has a choice between bidding 4♥ and 4♦. Stick me down for 4♥ as it will at least get a good score when it makes, although over 4♦ from South North might try 4♥ himself. Played by North the best lead (double dummy) is the J♠ as now 3 rounds promotes the ♥Q to hold it to ten tricks, whereas on a neutral club or trump lead North can take a lot of finesses and make no fewer than 14 tricks!</p> <p>In practice a high diamond lead from East might put North off the finesse (as he will fear a ruff and immediate two trick set), that will hold declarer to +420 which might be bad for NS, although some won't be in game so we shall have to see!</p>																																																
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<p>♠ AQ9532 ♥ J1082 ♦ 53 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ J10                      ♠ 764 ♥ Q4                      ♥ 76 ♦ 1094                      ♦ AQ62 ♣ AKJ643              ♣ Q1097</p> <p>♠ K8 ♥ AK953 ♦ KJ87 ♣ 82</p>	<p>Board 31 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable</p> <p>The benefits of a double fit have rarely been seen as widely as they are on this deal, where with just over half the deck between NS can make most of the tricks in either of their long suits.</p> <p>The first decision falls to North – should they open a weak 2♠? Holding strong spades and weakish hearts some will succumb temptation, but since the double fit is key to making all those tricks it will not turn out well. In fact unless South is tuned onto the same wavelength and makes a try for game it might well be that NS defend a club part-score after West protects with 3♣ and East makes a try for game.</p> <p>Alternatively North might start with a disciplined pass allowing South to open 1♥ in 3<sup>rd</sup> chair, West will overcall 3♣ and North can choose from 3♠ as a fit jump, 3♥ limit raise (for those that play it that way), 3♥ pre-emptive (for those that play it the other way!) and 4♥, a practical call after a long nights bridge.</p> <p>West will cash a top club against 4♥ and switch to the 10♦, he doesn't then 12 tricks are available if South gets trumps right.</p>																																																
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<p>♠ K97 ♥ AK63 ♦ K73 ♣ A32</p> <p>♠ J43                      ♠ A1082 ♥ Q4                      ♥ 10 ♦ Q10954              ♦ 62 ♣ Q54                      ♣ KJ10986</p> <p>♠ Q65 ♥ J98752 ♦ AJ8 ♣ 7</p>	<p>Board 32 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable</p> <p>A traditional hand to end with now, NS have ten hearts and 25 points between them, so 4♥ seems a sensible and likely contract.</p> <p>After a 1♥ opening by North, East might bid 2♣ (not much point facing a passed hand really but it's always fun to join in) and South will bid 4♥ or 4♣ (splinter) according to taste. If 4♥ is chosen then everyone will pass and East will lead a non spade (nothing's tempting but a diamond seems most likely to be cost free) which leaves declarer with ten easy tricks.</p> <p>You'll notice 11 tricks are possible double dummy, this involves endplaying either defender in a way I haven't before. Draw trumps and eliminate clubs then lead a spade to the king, win the diamond exit with the king and play a spade to the queen. If West keeps the ♠J then throw him in to lead a diamond into the AJ, if West unblocks then cash the other top diamond and throw East in to give a ruff and sluff. (And no, I didn't use deep finesse to find this out – hard work is good for the soul)</p> <p>After a splinter of 4♣ I have every sympathy with a North that drives to slam, he has perfect working cards, just sadly the wrong shape.</p>																																																
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