EBED

English Bridge
Education & Development

Sim Pairs

Commentary by John Williams

Thursday
5th September 2019

Welcome to the **English Bridge Education & Development** (EBED) Simultaneous Pairs.

The proceeds raised by this event will be used by EBED, **the national charity for the promotion and development of bridge,** in support of its objectives to promote the national learning program "**Bridge for All**" and especially to improve and develop the infrastructure for bridge teaching in England by expanding our support for EBTA – the **English Bridge Teachers Association**

EBED supplies "Bridge for All" teaching materials, organises Minibridge/Duplicate Bridge teacher training and club director training courses, administers the Junior Award Scheme and supports county organisations and individual volunteers at the local level to run youth events.

You can read more EBED's activities in the current issue of English Bridge and at www.ebedcio.org.uk. If you wish to know more about EBED or to arrange a donation/legacy in favour of the charity, please contact us via richard@ebedcio.org.uk

Do please encourage your friends to come to play in these events which are open to all and raise vital funds for our work.

We thank you so much for your support!

Donna Wright

Chief Executive
English Bridge Education & Development, Registered Charity No: 1153543

♠AKJ75
♥J1096
♦42
♣A10

♠10 ♠982
♥AK8752 ♥4
♦AJ87 ♦KQ9653
♣43 ♣K75

♠Q643
♥Q3
♦10
♣QJ9862

HCP	
13	
12	8
7	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	-	-	3	-
S	3	-	-	3	-
E	-	5	3	-	1
W	-	5	3	-	1

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

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

What a dramatic start to the set! It all comes down to whether East is man or mouse. A pass over 1♠ cannot be criticised, 2♦ is short of the necessary playing strength but a weak jump overcall of 3♦ can't be criticised either, if that's what you fancy. It could be a disaster or – as here - a triumph... It wouldn't be much of a stretch for West to leap all the way to game and with king of clubs well placed, eleven tricks are trivial. As for NS, they just need to be careful to avoid giving the opposition any second chances. However, a sacrifice over 5♦ (but not 4♥!) would save some points. That apart, second prize for EW is 3♥ making for +140. Again, there's no skill required in the play, with just two trumps, a spade and a club to lose.

+140 to EW will figure strongly on the traveller but +400 will be a rare triumph, as will +300. Well done to those brave souls who achieve either.

♠104
♥KQ1074
♦J7
♣8642

♠AKQ982 ♠753
♥AJ8 ♥93
♦Q ♦K10953
♣QJ9 ♣K107

♠J6
♥652
♦A8642
♣A53

HCP	
6	
19	6
9	

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

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

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

East has a clear choice between 1NT and 2♠ in response to partner's opening and neither is perfect. One always likes to hold 4-card support to raise partner directly, whilst 1NT risks wrong-siding any no-trump contract. The argument in favour of 2♠ is that partner should always be aware of possible 3-card support, plus you at least offer a ruffing value in hearts. 1NT also leaves partner with a rebid problem: 3♠ would be a distinct underbid, 4♠ a possible slight risk if opposite singleton or void, and 3NT equally risky with a singleton diamond. The answer would be to manufacture a game-forcing 3♣ rebid: again, partner should always be aware that this is a possible option when the rebid is in a minor. 3NT would be a distinctly lucky make after a heart lead, with both missing aces in the South hand, meaning that two hold-ups would serve. 4♠ is solid by contrast, and scores better anyway. Most will get this hand right, one way or another.

♠J10
♥KQ1092
♦65
♣Q982

♠A72 ♠98643
♥J63 ♥87
♦AJ97 ♦Q3
♣A106 ♣KJ43

♠KQ5
♥A54
♦K10842
♣75

HCP		
	8	
14		6
	12	

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

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

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

We hope no one thought of interfering with the West hand after an opening 1NT. This is a purely defensive hand with little trick-taking potential. Neither would later intervention be justified after the presumed transfer to hearts. OK, playing in spades would work out well for EW here but that's just luck.

Note the value of transfer bids here for NS. A speculative queen of diamonds from East, if on lead, would give declarer palpitations but West can cause no discomfort if on lead: indeed, if South is declarer he can quickly set up a spade winner in the North hand for a diamond discard. If system obliges South to open 1♦, then NS are much more poorly placed.

+110 to NS is likely to prove a popular score, though.

♠A1075
♥Q942
♦1087
♣Q5

♠9642 ♠KQJ83
♥65 ♥KJ103
♦AKJ3 ♦Q
♣J93 ♣1076

♠-
♥A87
♦96542
♣AK842

HCP		
	8	
9		12
	11	

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

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

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

1♠ will be a universal choice of opening for East, holding both majors, which gives South a problem: he's clearly worth a bid but double is dangerous with only three hearts and overcalling in a minor is equally unsatisfactory: only five cards in either case and the diamonds are anaemic to say the least. The practical alternative – but only because partner has already passed – is an unusual 2NT offering both minors, weak. The chances of game being missed are minimal.

Partner would prefer diamonds, of course, which looks disastrous missing all four top honours. Bizarrely, this plays OK for one down, given that otherwise EW may get to play 2♠ in comparative comfort, scoring 110 instead of 100. However, West is likely to get in first over 2NT – and go down in 3♠.

Mixed bag of results here, probably.

♠1063
♥A10763
♦J
♣AJ86

♠J854 ♠AKQ72
♥KJ2 ♥9
♦AQ84 ♦K92
♣104 ♣Q532

♠9
♥Q854
♦107653
♣K97

HCP		
	10	
11		14
	5	

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

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

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

A classic case of a Lucas 2-bid in action. 2♥ shows 6-10 HCPs, 5 hearts and 4+ in a minor. Note that virtually all the points are in the two suits and there is an outside singleton. Some pairs insist on 5-5 distribution when vulnerable (as here) but that's purely a matter of style. The 4♥ raise is obviously pre-emptive. EW seem sure to contest with 4♠, despite West's unpromising heart holding. As might be expected, either game contract could succeed or fail. In 4♥, declarer has firstly to play for split honours in trumps by running the queen or finessing the 10. Then he has to avoid a club loser by cashing the ace and following with the jack to pin the 10 (still a trick short against careful defence but one or even two down is fine unless doubled). In 4♠, declarer has merely to play a heart to the jack rather than the king (much simpler and with the odds). Exciting, though. NS have given themselves an outside chance of a huge result by bidding 4♥ and need only to avoid a 500 loss.

♠Q5
♥109863
♦K742
♣A6

♠KJ84 ♠9763
♥74 ♥AQ5
♦J8 ♦105
♣Q10732 ♣KJ95

♠A102
♥KJ2
♦AQ963
♣84

HCP	
9	
7	10
14	

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

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

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

The auction would appear to be standard and the result equally so – an amazingly lucky eleven tricks in either red suit, thanks to trumps 2-2 and ace and queen of hearts being both onside. It's a frustrating hand for the defenders because however they play, declarer can avoid either a club or spade loser.

Those who don't take full advantage of the layout will be disappointed with their +170.

Those who stretch to game will be very few - and very happy!

♠AK1073
♥8752
♦7
♣K93

♠9862 ♠Q5
♥QJ3 ♥K10964
♦Q5 ♦AJ982
♣Q642 ♣10

♠J4
♥A
♦K10643
♣AJ875

HCP	
10	
7	10
13	

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

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

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

North is awkwardly placed at his second turn. One would hope for a sixth spade for 2♠ and the hand is a shade top-heavy for the bid otherwise. 2NT might be OK but should feature better hearts, and 3♣ lacks a fourth trump. The only sensible alternative is a fourth-suit-forcing 2♥, after which South has an easy 3♣ bid and North an equally easy pass. Note that fourth suit is a one-round force at the two level but a game force one level higher. 3♣ will surely make for a solid plus so it's just a question of how many tricks can be garnered. Spades might score better but is a less likely resting place, whilst no-trumps is probably both unlikely and comparatively unsuccessful.

A good run-of-the-mill pairs board.

♠AQ92
♥AK10
♦KJ
♣J964

♠J86 ♠K74
♥954 ♥J7632
♦A643 ♦1072
♣1072 ♣53

♠1053
♥Q8
♦Q985
♣AKQ8

HCP	
18	
5	4
13	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	5	3	5	5
S	5	5	3	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

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

If the 2NT rebid shows 15-19 in today's normal style, then South's 3♠ reply is game-forcing with only three-card support. This leaves North with a choice between a forward-going 4♣ (OK at teams) and a practical 3NT (more likely at pairs).

Note that 6♣ depends solely on a successful spade finesse, so those who overstretch will feel themselves to be a shade unlucky. However, for 6♣ to be a good proposition, South would need a little more playing strength, which would be shown by a final slam try over 3NT. So, all in all, sympathy for those who go minus should be in short supply.

+460 should score a little above average for NS.

♠KQ109
♥J982
♦AQ8
♣AK

♠AJ64 ♠83
♥1063 ♥AKQ74
♦KJ973 ♦106
♣6 ♣Q954

♠752
♥5
♦542
♣J108732

HCP	
19	
9	11
1	

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

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1♥	All Pass	

Every so often, good bridge practice turns round and hits you in the face.

Why is it important to open 1♥ here and not 1♠? Simply because opening 1♠ is likely to lose the heart suit (to rebid 2♥ after a 1♠ opening would promise a 5-card spade suit). The converse, opening 1♥ and then supporting spades without promising five hearts, is acceptable and normal for the simple reason that this does NOT risk losing the spade suit. It's all quite logical, if you think about it. West should bear in mind that partner could have overcalled and hasn't, which is a good reason for staying quiet. Any declarer going down in 1♥ is going to feel foolish and frustrated. Such is life. The consolation is that he is unlikely to be alone. In addition to that, the only makeable contract for NS (2♣) is completely unreachable. So, the traveller will have a strange look about it. Lots of multiples of 50 in the minus column for the great majority of NS pairs.

♠A63
♥Q42
♦AKQ4
♣1052

♠K72 ♠1054
♥A85 ♥K1073
♦109865 ♦J73
♣64 ♣AK9

♠QJ98
♥J96
♦2
♣QJ873

HCP	
15	
7	11
7	

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

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	All Pass	

If North chooses to raise spades rather than rebid 1NT (influenced perhaps by his poor clubs) he will be in a makeable contract producing +110, probably. However, the usual and most justifiable reason for raising partner's suit with three cards is that a ruff is obtainable in the hand with short trumps - not the case here.

The only question is whether, after a 1NT rebid, South should attempt to play in clubs. This is not recommended since a 2♣ bid might tempt partner to assume five spades opposite. Furthermore, the 1NT bidder, as here, might well be well stocked in diamonds, and no-trumps tend to score appreciably more per trick than clubs.

+120 in no-trumps, the most likely result, is also the most likely good score. Simples!

♠-
♥AQ976
♦A6
♣AK10862

♠10976 ♠AQJ532
♥8 ♥103
♦J82 ♦10974
♣QJ974 ♣5

♠K84
♥KJ542
♦KQ53
♣3

HCP	
17	
4	7
12	

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

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♣	Pass	5♦
Pass	6♣	Pass	7♥
All Pass			

A simple exercise in slam bidding. 3♠ is a splinter bid (some would use 3NT as a void splinter, therefore 3♠ promises a singleton loser in spades, but let's not get into such niceties). 4♥ is a clear sign-off. 4♠ confirms a void spade. 4NT is RKCB and 5♣ promises 0 or 3 of the five aces. 5♦ asks for the queen of trumps and 6♣ shows that card plus king of clubs. South now knows enough about key cards to bid the grand. Of course, North could embark on a quite different (and simpler) sequence by forcing in clubs initially before supporting hearts, then taking control: 1♥-3♣-3♦-3♥-4♥-5♣-5♦-7♥. Every experienced pairing would expect to bid the grand here. If you happen to miss it, please don't argue about fault but take the opportunity to discuss good methods for the future!

♠976532
♥A4
♦Q82
♣92

♠AK108 ♠J4
♥98 ♥K32
♦J93 ♦107654
♣J643 ♣K105

♠Q
♥QJ10765
♦AK
♣AQ87

HCP	
6	
9	7
18	

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

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

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

This is difficult. South would like to game-force when his spade queen is improved by partner's initial response but he's probably a tad short for that: the game force rebid would be 3♣ presumably but the suit isn't great and there aren't quite enough quick tricks overall to justify the action. 3♥ is equally a shade of an underbid but, especially at pairs, it usually pays to be circumspect.

North now needs to take up the slack but he can justify a jump to game because ace and another trump is a strong holding, there is a likely ruffing value in clubs and queen of diamonds might prove helpful (and how!). Altogether more pairs will reach game than fail to do so and will be rewarded with an overtrick, thanks to the winning club finesse. If you do miss game, though, don't fret.... You've been thoughtful and on another day, might have scored very well.

♠104
♥97
♦AJ64
♣AKQJ8

♠KQ9 ♠AJ8632
♥AK1043 ♥Q2
♦1053 ♦K92
♣107 ♣43

♠75
♥J865
♦Q87
♣9652

HCP	
15	
12	10
3	

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

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

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

A delicate auction with an uncertain outcome. West's change of suit at the two level is usually played as natural and encouraging (2♣ is an obvious alternative but fails to bring two suits into focus. East is certainly encouraged by the evidence of a double fit of sorts and the king of diamonds figures to be well placed, but caution dictates a measured response (perhaps wrongly?). West does well to still invite game in spades (hopefully East has kept in tempo to avoid any later intrusion by the TD) and game should then be reached. Of course, West may prefer to jump to game in spades directly over 2♠. Any who reach 4♠ (marginally superior to 4♥?) are to be congratulated. Those who fall short shouldn't beat themselves up. Maybe half the field will get there and the need for a good board may come into play. +620 is likely to be comfortably above average.

♠KJ952
♥A53
♦QJ7
♣97

♠106 ♠3
♥KQ876 ♥J10942
♦86542 ♦A103
♣10 ♣AQ43

♠AQ874
♥-
♦K9
♣KJ8652

HCP	
11	
5	11
13	

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

Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all

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

Most would agree that East is worth an opening bid, despite his poor suit, and 3♥ by partner represents a perfect pre-emptive raise (2♠ would show a value raise to the three level). North is caught betwixt and between: with a stronger hand he could cue-bid 4♥, agreeing spades; as it is, he needs to choose between 3♠ and 4♠. There are two possible reasons for going to game: (1) you have at least a 10-card fit, which suggests a 10-trick contract (called "bidding to the level of the fit"); (2) another rule of thumb which might apply here is – if you think you're likely to bid again after your 3♠ and their 4♥, go the whole way straight away. South might overcall 2♣ in the first place but might equally be deterred by the problem of then having to bid spades twice to show five. NS's methods may allow South to employ a 2♥ Ghestem overcall (any strength), in which case North has the same guess to make. Bidding game here is likely to be a more universal action than on the previous board. If both sides get both boards right, well done all round!

♠108
♥742
♦76432
♣Q102

♠96
♥AJ105
♦105
♣AK985

♠AKQ73
♥KQ9
♦QJ8
♣J4

♠J542
♥863
♦AK9
♣763

HCP	
2	
12	18
8	

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

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

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

If you don't already play 2♦ in this sequence as a one-round force, consider that it needs to be so, since partner might be forced to reply at the three level. It's what is often called a "waiting bid" and should be treated as such. 2♥ is the best bid now available to West since (a) it denies three spades and (b) it shows where secondary values lie (although East has denied biddable hearts himself). 3NT then shows a good hand (better than bidding it immediately over 2♣). Nothing more remains to be said.

There is nothing to the play as declarer has to fall back on top tricks when spades refuse to break 3-3. Note that this is not a hand where East should consider jumping to 2♠ initially, just because he has a lot of points. There are too many possible resting places and the subsequent auction will become confused.

♠J9
♥KJ10942
♦Q75
♣53

♠1042
♥86
♦AJ1094
♣1062

♠K653
♥AQ75
♦3
♣AJ97

♠AQ87
♥3
♦K862
♣KQ84

HCP	
7	
5	14
14	

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

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

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

North's 2♥ opening is impeccable. The vulnerability is right, the suit is respectable and his right-hand opponent has passed so East may be under pressure. As it happens, no one has anything worthwhile to add.

The play is straightforward: East will probably lead his singleton and get a cheap ruff to go with two more trumps and a club. Pity West doesn't hold the ace of clubs! So the diamonds have been cleared up and a winning spade finesse awaits to complete eight tricks.

The weak two bid is hardly needed since North will have his chance to bid anyway, so 2♥ will be a very common spot. EW will have to take their medicine and avoid overstretching when vulnerable.

This should be a quiet and uneventful board. Really?

♠J832
♥10
♦1032
♣109765

♠1096
♥J9765
♦J
♣AKJ3

♠KQ
♥832
♦KQ854
♣Q82

♠A754
♥AKQ4
♦A976
♣4

HCP	
1	
10	12
17	

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

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	Pass	1NT	Dble
Redble	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	Pass	Dble
All Pass			

Goodness knows what's right on this death-trap of a board. North is technically obliged to pass at his second and third turns because South is unlimited and he could have any EW contract defeated in his own hand. Once 1NT has been doubled for penalties it's also normal to play all subsequent doubles for penalties too. South will surely chance that partner can add at least one extra trick. In practice, defeating 2♥ doubled is a perilous affair. North needs to lead a spade or a trump so that South can clear dummy's trumps whilst still holding ace of diamonds when spades are attacked, to set up a second winner in the suit. None of this may happen if North decides to bail out into 2♣. NS do best to play a spade part-score and if anyone manages that they'll score a bundle.... A good hand to sit out!

♠A1064
♥QJ98652
♦10
♣9

♠KQJ83 ♠75
♥AK ♥74
♦K9 ♦QJ876
♣AJ106 ♣Q873

♠92
♥103
♦A5432
♣K542

HCP		
	7	
21		5
	7	

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

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Whoever sits out board 17 may well sit out 18 as well – and breathe a sigh of relief. Otherwise, North will have to decide whether to risk 3♥ over 2NT – a fair enough shot when non-vulnerable against vulnerable but this is the other way round. Some brave souls won't be deterred, however, and will suffer a sure minus score (provided the defenders remember to avoid allowing a spade ruff in dummy). This will feel bad but only if they lose 500. Otherwise, just look what happens when West wins the opening heart lead and places king of spades on the table. North can take the first or second round of spades before clearing the hearts. Declarer then takes his spade queen if necessary before laying down king of diamonds. South can take his ace whenever he likes after declarer overtakes the 9 with the jack but declarer will always end in dummy whenever diamonds are exhausted, to pick up the entire club suit by leading the queen, unblocking the 10 when South ducks, and pinning the 9. Eleven tricks, no less! However, this is all double dummy and MAY not be found at every table! What do you think? (I know the answer to that!)

♠AJ7432
♥A8
♦J9764
♣-

♠Q5 ♠10986
♥643 ♥KQ9
♦K532 ♦AQ
♣A954 ♣KQJ6

♠K
♥J10752
♦108
♣108732

HCP		
	10	
9		17
	4	

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

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

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

A 1NT overcall typically promises 15-17(18) HCPs and the usual game invitation when partner holds two suits is a range enquiry of 2♠. Here 3♣ then promises 16+ points, a club suit and possibly a higher-ranking second suit. Reaching 3NT is clear-cut. What is less clear-cut is how to approach the play. A spade lead is likely so there are only two further stops to worry about, and South has to switch. The only danger is enjoying your spade winner whilst North still holds ace of hearts. However, the bidding has marked North with that card so an immediate attack on hearts is best by leading the suit from dummy twice. In the absence of an original spade lead there is the small chance of a swindle by crossing to ace of clubs and leading a low spade off dummy. Would North decide to rush in with the ace and switch to hearts? Probably not, but stranger things have happened! All in all, however, this looks like a near-universal +600 to EW.

♠K7543
♥8
♦A72
♣J754

♠AQJ86 ♠92
♥Q9 ♥K107654
♦Q64 ♦J109
♣A63 ♣K2

♠10
♥AJ32
♦K853
♣Q1098

HCP		
	8	
15		7
	10	

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

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1♠	Pass	1NT	All Pass

The auction will be common-place, leaving East wishing there had been a route to 2♥. The only possible one is for West to manufacture a 2♣ or 2♦ rebid, then trust partner to hold six hearts for his next bid. This is all a bit far-fetched so the usual battle for tricks in no-trumps will probably ensue. A chancy heart to the 9 gains nothing on this lay-out, but declarer will still play on hearts, losing two of them. The worst scenario to avoid is to also lose two clubs, two diamonds and a spade. The chances of taking four heart tricks are slim, so who knows?

There will be many variations in the play and it's impossible to envisage all the possible outcomes. Suffice it to say that there will be a mix of scores to EW ranging from -50 to +120. The big favourite is +90.

♠AK93
♥-
♦Q1093
♣AKJ52

♠Q65 ♠J87
♥KQ53 ♥A10842
♦84 ♦AJ75
♣Q876 ♣4

♠1042
♥J976
♦K62
♣1093

HCP	
17	
9	10
4	

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

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1♣	1♥	Pass
2♣	Dble	Pass	Pass
2♥	Dble	Pass	3♣
3♥	All Pass		

West clearly has a heart raise but is betwixt and between. 3♥ might suggest better shape and fewer points and 2♥ is an underbid, so an unassuming cue-bid, asking how good partner's overcall is, fits the bill. North's double could be taken as (a) a good hand, (b) good clubs or (c) take-out of hearts, or, as here, all three at once. East's next bid is unclear and may well depend on partnership agreement: in isolation, pass must be beyond reproach because he doesn't want to advance any particular opinion. West is right to give a simple heart raise and now North's doubling message is clear – a strong take-out. South has an obvious 3♣ bid and West is left with a nasty choice between pass and 3♥: he has a decent defensive hand, after all. As it happens, the winning choice is 3♥, assuming North would make 3♣, but no blame should be attached to a pass. I hope all this makes sense....

♠Q104
♥J765
♦J10832
♣6

♠AK6 ♠J853
♥Q9 ♥AK84
♦Q654 ♦AK9
♣A542 ♣108

♠972
♥1032
♦7
♣KQJ973

HCP	
4	
15	15
6	

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

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

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

Difficult! If a 3NT rebid promises a balanced 15-17 and a 2NT rebid an open-ended 15-19, as previously suggested, then 3NT looks right: the snag is that it also suggests no further interest in the majors and there is a 4-card spade suit as yet unmentioned. However, the suit is poor and it may be more important to limit the hand immediately. That certainly works well here.

Anything higher than 3NT is dangerous, particularly after the obvious club lead. Winning the second round is revealing but suggests that other suits are unlikely to break kindly. And so it proves. There are limited options in the play, the best being to put North on lead to cash two diamonds, throwing two spades from hand and a club from dummy. The best North can do then is exit with a small heart, having discarded one earlier, but he might try a low spade. You never know. Nine tricks? Ten tricks? Double-dummy freaks will enjoy working out how eleven are possible. Not me!

♠AQ1094
♥Q98
♦A32
♣J2

♠K32 ♠86
♥65 ♥AK102
♦K1086 ♦QJ974
♣A1097 ♣43

♠J75
♥J743
♦5
♣KQ865

HCP	
13	
10	10
7	

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

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

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

Raising partner's spades with only 3-card support is always more comfortable when it's remembered that a 1♠ opening promises either five spades or 15+ points. Here it's a clear-cut choice anyway. Some players these days always then raise to 3♠, by no means an invitation (that would be shown by a trial bid in another denomination) but as a barrage to discourage EW from backing into the auction safely. Note that here East might risk a T.O. double over 2♠, despite the vulnerability, in the hope of playing in hearts or diamonds. This isn't as risky as it looks because partner is marked with some values. It's justified here in that EW can actually take nine tricks in diamonds. It's also pointless in that North will usually push on to 3♠ and make it. But you never know – and it's good to be aware of the opportunities these manoeuvres can create.

♠A832
♥Q95
♦74
♣QJ107

♠Q1076
♥1064
♦Q
♣A8543

♠J
♥J82
♦AK98653
♣K9

♠K954
♥AK73
♦J102
♣62

HCP	
9	
8	12
11	

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

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	All Pass

This looks very conservative all round and may not be replicated at the table. South will be slightly tempted to double 1♦ for takeout, holding both majors, but should be deterred by the nasty thought of partner possibly responding 2♣, leaving him high and dry. Having got that far, there's no good reason for anyone to do more than leave East to play 2♦, which will make nine tricks with ease but no more.

Boards like this are a valuable part of the game, offering respite all round from the hurly-burly of pairs play. No one is likely to object to an average score of 110 to EW. Roll on the next board...

♠A86
♥42
♦K95
♣AK863

♠QJ97
♥A9753
♦A7
♣J2

♠K1052
♥K86
♦1083
♣Q97

♠43
♥QJ10
♦QJ642
♣1054

HCP	
14	
12	8
6	

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

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1NT	Pass	Pass
2♣	Dble	2♠	All Pass

Just as consecutive boards can be highly dramatic, so can consecutive boards be soporific.

Whatever device is available to show both majors, every EW pair here will surely find their way to 2♠ and play there. If the gadget of choice is 2♣, as it often is, North is offered the chance to double, showing a decent hand with five clubs, just in case South has enough length and strength to compete. This isn't a bid which could be misconstrued, surely. However, South is unable to co-operate and that seems to signal end of auction with East's 2♠.

There's really nothing more to say.

♠K3
♥Q987
♦653
♣AJ84

♠A10842
♥KJ5
♦AK9
♣Q3

♠J965
♥32
♦J10
♣K10976

♠Q7
♥A1064
♦Q8742
♣52

HCP	
10	
17	5
8	

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

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

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

Left to their own devices EW will possibly bid as above, 3♣ being a fairly normal trial bid. However, despite his help in clubs, East may decide to sign off in 3♠ as the rest of his hand is hardly encouraging. That leaves West guessing: the heart says 4♠, the head says pass. Of course, West may have avoided the problem in advance by bashing 4♠ at his second turn.

A heart lead will simplify matters enormously as the only danger to a spade contract (given the kindly trump break) is a mis-guess in hearts. A diamond lead would be possible, given that all alternatives are risky) and equally helpful. A 4♠ contract is 50%: it may or may not be bid and may or may not be made. The odds slightly favour ten tricks being made, so +620 will be well above average, +170 somewhat below and anything else poor.

♠8743
♥1076
♦K7
♣KQJ10

♠A102 ♠Q5
♥AQ4 ♥98532
♦Q42 ♦965
♣9654 ♣832

♠KJ96
♥KJ
♦AJ1083
♣A7

HCP	
9	
12	2
17	

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

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all

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

Raising trumps on four small is not an inviting prospect but then neither is the alternative of 1NT, with the heart suit so exposed to attack. When South raises spades to the three level, North has no particular reason to suggest 3NT as an alternative spot, possibly exchanging the frying pan for the fire, so 4♠ by North will be the popular choice – and an unlucky one if East finds a heart nearest his thumb.

In the unlikely event that South gets to play 4♠, he will encounter two inescapable spade losers but no damaging heart opening lead, so he has only to lead trumps from dummy twice to prevail. As it happens, 3NT is a lucky second prize because the ten of hearts provides a stop and there is no entry to the long hearts in East's hand. -50 in 4♠ will probably be close to average, with +420 a fortunate top and +400 a rare second prize.

♠9652
♥J54
♦Q852
♣52

♠J8 ♠Q7
♥A103 ♥98762
♦K64 ♦A9
♣QJ764 ♣A1083

♠AK1043
♥KQ
♦J1073
♣K9

HCP	
3	
11	10
16	

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

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

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

This is a knife-edge pairs auction. East's hearts are not good enough for a light opening at his first turn but the situation is different when 1♠ comes round, making 2♥ a reasonable shot, non-vulnerable. South may risk 2♠ (though he'd like a sixth card in the suit) and West will probably try 3♥. That's awkward for North, with four trumps to offer partner, plus a smattering of points. On the other hand, persisting with 2♠ (if that's what he did) wasn't the strongest action partner could have taken. There may be a small plus score from defending 3♥ but doubling it is not really an option. On the other hand, 3♠ might or might not make and minus scores on hands like these can be ruinous. The defence has three chances against 3♠, ie lead the ace of hearts and, when invited to switch, try a diamond or a club. If a diamond it's bingo, if a club it had better be the queen, leaving partner little choice but to win and try ace and another diamond: then a diamond ruff is again the only option. Bingo again! Meanwhile, those who defend 3♥ have an easier route to follow.

♠K
♥1097
♦653
♣AQ10983

♠Q10983 ♠J7
♥K6 ♥532
♦109 ♦AJ8742
♣K654 ♣72

♠A6542
♥AQJ84
♦KQ
♣J

HCP	
9	
8	6
17	

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

Board 29 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

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

North will feel more comfortable having passed originally before bidding clubs at the 2-level. South's 2♥ is a one-round force and 3♣ is to play. However, South can force to game with fourth-suit at the three level, then raise hearts to game with some confidence.

There are no problems in the play provided declarer adopts the simple line of ruffing spades in dummy. Results will vary between ten and eleven tricks, ten being favourite. A well-controlled auction with no need for chancy leaps, is what makes for success here.

♠J954
♥A2
♦AJ62
♣653

♠Q1082 ♠63
♥K986 ♥1075
♦873 ♦KQ109
♣A2 ♣Q1097

♠AK7
♥QJ43
♦54
♣KJ84

HCP	
10	
9	7
14	

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

Board 30 : Dealer East : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	1NT
All Pass			

This is the common-sense auction, particularly at pairs. North may be tempted to visualise partner with a maximum 1NT and four spades, in which case a thin game may be on, but this is pie in the sky really and will surely get what it deserves here.

A spade lead will work badly for the defence and is likely to result in an overtrick in 1NT. After a cagey diamond lead, on the other hand, declarer will be mightily pleased to bring in +90.

A spade part-score works best for NS perhaps, but this seems unreachable except for strong no-trumpers, who might just start 1♣-1♠-2♠.

There should be a variety of small plus scores for NS – enough to make interesting reading.

♠QJ
♥K642
♦AK973
♣95

♠A2 ♠K84
♥J873 ♥Q109
♦Q104 ♦J62
♣J1076 ♣AK42

♠1097653
♥A5
♦85
♣Q83

HCP	
13	
8	13
6	

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

Board 31 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

This doesn't look like a vulnerable weak two-bid from South but responding in spades and then rebidding them paints a clear picture of a weak 6-carder and North will be very happy with this. 2♠ plays like a dream.

Trump leads leave declarer facing the possibility of three club losers but even this is negotiable here with ace and king of clubs both onside.

It's difficult to see beyond +140 for NS on this deal. But as always, you never know....

♠AK10985
♥53
♦K
♣9876

♠4 ♠QJ6
♥K1074 ♥J9862
♦AQJ962 ♦73
♣Q5 ♣AK3

♠732
♥AQ
♦10854
♣J1042

HCP	
10	
12	11
7	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	-	4	4	-	4
W	-	4	4	-	4

Board 32 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

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

After Wests's opening bid, North might decide to write off his king of diamonds and make life awkward for the opposition with a weak 2♠. This is successful in that East has enough for a T.O. double but the playing strength and poor-ish heart suit rule out a 3♥ bid. Over a 1♠ overcall East might risk a 2♥ response or make a conservative T.O. double (his suit is poor, as we already said).

After a double West can save the day by bidding hearts himself. Note that this doesn't promise reversing values, once partner has indicated that he holds at least four hearts: it's just the equivalent of raising 1♥ to 3♥ in competition. Will East now go on to game? On the one hand he's certainly stronger than he might be. On the other hand, he will know that partner is bidding under duress. It's touch and go so there will be some +170s on the sheet to go with the triumphant +620s. What NS must do is avoid the trap of saving in spades. This will produce a well-deserved -500 or -800 for EW, depending on the level!