

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION♥♣



First Interclub – Heat A

20th - 22nd September 2020

Commentary by Ian Hamilton

1

♠ QJ8652
♥ A6
♦ J8
♣ Q109

♠ 74
♥ 852
♦ K10964
♣ A75

♠ K3
♥ Q9
♦ Q753
♣ J8432

♠ A109
♥ KJ10743
♦ A2
♣ K6

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	1	6	6	6
S	1	1	6	6	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Some will open north a weak 2♠ or Multi, others stretch to open 1♠. In the event it is probably immaterial which is selected, 4♠ being declared by north or south.

With the cards lying very kindly the defence need to grab the club ace at trick one or declarer can run thirteen rapid tricks when both majors play for six tricks. With east on lead a club could well be selected. After the Multi sequence south could declare, and west is most unlikely to find it.

Could any play 3NT, where the same twelve or thirteen tricks are possible?

2

♠ Q98
♥ QJ97
♦ K9654
♣ 9

♠ K75
♥ K84
♦ 103
♣ KQJ86

♠ J10432
♥ 532
♦ Q
♣ 10754

♠ A6
♥ A106
♦ AJ872
♣ A32

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	5	4	-	3
S	-	6	4	1	3
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

Where south opens a strong NT he will usually declare 3NT when Stayman fails to elicit a heart fit.

Where 1♦ is opened north doubles west's 2♣ overcall, and may now be wary of no trumps, despite south rebidding 2NT. It is important that 3♦ is played as forcing in this scenario, allowing the diamond game or even slam to be declared. Some may still prefer 3NT.

South's 3NT is in jeopardy on west's top club lead. It can make if declarer simply runs diamonds. West must either bare a major suit king or let a winning club go, allowing a heart to be set up. It goes light if an early heart finesse is taken.

Embarrassing to be off in game with slam cold by south, west unable to play spades and hearts providing a pitch.

3

♠ Q10
♥ KQ9
♦ K7653
♣ J84

♠ J8532
♥ A853
♦ 102
♣ K9

♠ AK7
♥ J76
♦ AQ984
♣ 107

♠ 964
♥ 1042
♦ J
♣ AQ6532

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

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

Some could try 3♣ on the south cards and might even play there, losing just 50.

Assuming south passes north's 1♦ makes it awkward for E/W in a different way, east having no sound overcall (unless he stretches to 1NT), south responding either 1NT or 2♣. The former won't be a success on a spade lead, possibly as many as four light.

E/W have actually game available in spades, thanks to the fortuitous lie of trumps and the minor suits. However, I can see many defending and those E/Ws that do declare may not reach game.

First opener's advantage may be to the fore, making it difficult for E/W to get their just desserts, defending part-score with a game on.

4

♠ 1083
♥ A65
♦ Q8
♣ AJ953

♠ A94
♥ KQ2
♦ A9
♣ Q10842

♠ J2
♥ 1093
♦ K107543
♣ K6

♠ KQ765
♥ J874
♦ J62
♣ 7

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

Again, opening first may buy the contract, either west's strong NT passed out, or his 1NT rebid after 1♣/1♦, south too weak to show his majors. E/W are actually better in diamonds, and might get to 3♦ playing transfers over 1NT, or even 2♦ if east simply repeats his suit. Nine tricks are possible with a winning view in hearts.

Defending 1NT north could credibly lead either black suit, a spade best, south eventually getting on lead with a diamond. A club works nearly as well, removing dummy's only entry at the cost of a trick. However, the defence and play are intricate and I can see some light, others making as many as nine tricks.

N/S are better declaring, if they can get into the auction, eight tricks there in spades, at the risk of pushing E/W to the makeable 3♦. High stakes at game all.

5

♠ K94
 ♥ A9
 ♦ QJ105
 ♣ KQ97
 ♠ A1053
 ♥ Q108643
 ♦ 82
 ♣ 3
 ♠ Q8762
 ♥ 2
 ♦ A6
 ♣ 86542
 ♠ J
 ♥ KJ75
 ♦ K9743
 ♣ AJ10

 Dealer: North
 N-S Vulnerable

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

We have another hand where, despite favourable vulnerability, it is tricky for E/W to intervene, and they might help the oppo anyway if they do. The north strong no trumps will largely declare 3NT, defeated on a spade lead.

Those opening an Acol 1♦ may get a 1♠ overcall, and support from west, putting no trumps out of the frame, 5♦ the likely spot when south has great support, though he probably doubles first, looking for a heart fit.

5♦ should suffer the same fate as 3NT, defeated one trick, east leading his singleton heart and getting a ruff after finding west's ace.

Will any let 5♦ home or lead clubs against 3NT, also ceding the game?

6

♠ AK
 ♥ 6543
 ♦ J1095
 ♣ K108
 ♠ Q754
 ♥ 87
 ♦ Q72
 ♣ 7432
 ♠ 108632
 ♥ AKJ
 ♦ K
 ♣ AQ96
 ♠ J9
 ♥ Q1092
 ♦ A8643
 ♣ J5

 Dealer: East
 E-W Vulnerable

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

Where west passes east's 1♠ north protects with a double and the heart fit is established. West will usually compete to at least 2♠, maybe allowing E/W to buy it.

Modern theory is for west to make a weak jump to 3♠ at his first bid, though I would be wary of this with the flat hand at adverse vulnerability. In the event east has a strong hand and needs to be disciplined to avoid getting too high opposite any support from partner. His diamond holding should warn him off, but may not.

This hand is a fine judgement call all round, E/W able to make 3♠ but not game. N/S can afford to be doubled and defeated one trick in 4♥, losing 100 rather than 140.

7

♠ K9
 ♥ K865
 ♦ A976
 ♣ KJ6
 ♠ J10654
 ♥ Q2
 ♦ K42
 ♣ Q98
 ♠ AQ87
 ♥ J4
 ♦ QJ103
 ♣ 1032
 ♠ 32
 ♥ A10973
 ♦ 85
 ♣ A754

 Dealer: South
 Both Vulnerable

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

N/S should find their heart contract here, likely unopposed, after either north's 1♦ or weak NT opener. Some just might get to game when the 5:4 fit is established and north has nice cards in south's trial bid suit, clubs.

The cards lie well, particularly should north declare, trumps playing for no loser, and the clubs 3:3 with the queen onside. Thus north can rack up eleven tricks, a spade loser going on the 13th club. A spade lead from west holds south to ten tricks.

Will many bid the thin game in this nice hand for transfers?

8

♠ 7
 ♥ AK742
 ♦ AJ3
 ♣ K1052
 ♠ A1082
 ♥ 9653
 ♦ Q104
 ♣ A4
 ♠ KQJ95
 ♥ 108
 ♦ K
 ♣ QJ873
 ♠ 643
 ♥ QJ
 ♦ 987652
 ♣ 96

 Dealer: West
 Neither Vulnerable

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

The value of cards in the right or wrong place is demonstrated here when east overcalls north's 1♥ with either spades or Michaels/Ghestem.

There is now every chance that E/W will get too high when west has four card trump support and fitting cards in east's minor. Sadly, for E/W so long as the heart tops are taken immediately there are four losers in a spade contract.

Again, like #6, the singleton diamond king proves useless. Had east held the heart king or his singleton been in hearts there would have been game on.

Will many manage to get the brakes on?

9

♠ K10963
♥ 8
♦ J10
♣ 98742

♠ J8
♥ Q4
♦ AK962
♣ KQJ5

♠ Q5
♥ J1097652
♦ 87
♣ 63

♠ A742
♥ AK3
♦ Q543
♣ A10

Dealer: North
E-W Vulnerable

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

East hasn't close to an adverse vulnerability 3♥ opener, so south will get first shot with either his strong NT or Acol 1♠ opener. West is best advised to keep silent over the strong NT, but could well overcall 1♠ with 2♦.

Over 1NT north transfers to spades, and should play no higher than 3♣, even if south breaks the transfer. After the south Acol 1♠ and overcall, many will bounce to 4♣.

Now the spotlight is on west to find the lead. The "safe" club king allows an overtrick when trumps divide.

The late American pairs expert Barry Crane wouldn't, he always advocating the lead of the ace/king. This gets the money, a third round promoting a trump trick, and there is still a club to lose.

10

♠ AQ1097
♥ J9
♦ K108
♣ K97

♠ J82
♥ A104
♦ Q4
♣ AJ643

♠ K65
♥ 73
♦ J632
♣ 10852

♠ 43
♥ KQ8652
♦ A975
♣ Q

Dealer: East
Both Vulnerable

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

West has too poor a suit to overcall south's 1♥ with 2♣, so N/S should have the auction to themselves. It is close whether south rebids 2♦ or 2♥ over north's 1♠. With such a weak opener 2♥ looks best.

It is now unlikely that north will declare 3NT, beaten on the club lead, 4♥ preferred, the 6:2 fit usually the better spot anyway.

It looks as if eleven tricks could be there if a spade can be disposed of on a club and the suit ruffed good. However, west can remove a dummy heart entry by leading trumps after the club ace, or disrupt entries with the diamond queen, either holding the contract to 620.

However, I bet someone manages 650 on a club lead and spade switch.

11

♠ 8632
♥ J108
♦ 1052
♣ K93

♠ AQ107
♥ 9
♦ QJ976
♣ 1076

♠ KJ4
♥ KQ5
♦ 4
♣ AQJ852

♠ 95
♥ A76432
♦ AK83
♣ 4

Dealer: South
Neither Vulnerable

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

South's 1♥ could be passed to east, or overcalled a thin 2♦ by west. East has an easy 3NT after the overcall, but must double in the protective seat in the former case, too strong for a simple 2♣. East should still be able to drive to 3NT, but I can see some languishing in part-score.

Barry Crane leads a top diamond and takes the first three tricks. Mere mortals lead a heart, allowing declarer to use a west spade entry to run the club 10, wrapping up 460.

There can be a lot of matchpoints available by simply cashing out your winners in defence, though this may sometimes result in letting home beatable contracts.

12

♠ J105
♥ K7
♦ J96
♣ 98652

♠ 9764
♥ 632
♦ A73
♣ K43

♠ 3
♥ QJ109854
♦ Q842
♣ J

♠ AKQ82
♥ A
♦ K105
♣ AQ107

Dealer: West
N-S Vulnerable

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

Unlike #9 east has a decent favourable vulnerability preempt in hearts, making it awkward for south, who either doubles or makes the pragmatic bid of 4♠.

The top spot is of course 3NT, but this will rarely be declared. The doublers see north bidding 4♣ and hoping to see three green cards. Not to be - south surely either raises to game or tries 4♠.

The play in either black suit likely involves declarer giving up on the club finesses and playing the suit from the top. A diamond goes on the heart king, and diamonds guessed for eleven tricks.

Will any norths pass the double of 3♥, where only a paltry 300 can be collected?

13

♠ Q52
♥ 108642
♦ A82
♣ A10

♠ AK874
♥ J53
♦ 9
♣ 9842

♠ 10963
♥ Q9
♦ KQ76
♣ KQ5

Dealer: North
Both Vulnerable

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

Orthodox wisdom is to always transfer into a 5 card major over 1NT, and north is likely to do so over south's weak variety, 2♥ resulting, beaten when the third round of spades is ruffed. There are three further trump losers. With such a poor suit perhaps north should pass 1NT.

5 card majors should fare better, north responding 1♥ to 1♦ and having to pass the 1NT rebid, not being in the invitational range.

1NT proves much better, declarer in theory able to hold losers to three hearts and the top spades, though in practice may make only seven tricks.

Should E/W foolishly intervene they are liable to lose 200+, unlikely to find their best spot in clubs.

14

♠ Q10764
♥ AK2
♦ A532
♣ 10

♠ A5
♥ Q
♦ Q10987
♣ 98632

♠ KJ932
♥ J10963
♦ J
♣ J7

Dealer: East
Neither Vulnerable

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

North is better to overcall 1♠ rather than doubling west's 1♣, not risking playing in a poor heart fit. Whatever east does south surely leaps to 4♠ with his great fit and absence of defensive values.

N/S may well buy it in 4♠, making eleven tricks at many tables. To get three tricks east has to lead a heart, win the first trump, then play a club to west for a heart ruff. A good rule is - when you don't lead partner's suit the lead is a singleton.

E/W are much better "sacrificing" in 5♣, and may do so where west is known to have real clubs. On a normal spade lead this makes, south not on opening lead with his singleton. Few norths will find the diamond ace lead and continuation, at least beating 5♣ by 300 when south ruffs and leads to north's heart entry for a repeat.

15

♠ J108543
♥ 3
♦ A864
♣ 102

♠ AK62
♥ 6
♦ Q1032
♣ QJ54

♠ Q9
♥ AKJ1092
♦ 5
♣ K986

Dealer: South
N-S Vulnerable

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

N/S could regret opening here, south starting with 1♥, and north showing his spades. North could well end up rebidding his own suit, certainly over a 2♣ rebid, and maybe over the alternative 2♥.

Defending spades east does best to cash top trumps then switch to his heart, holding north to six tricks. A diamond lead allows a diamond ruff in dummy.

2♥ plays even worse, and could finish light three.

East might ruin the party at some tables, doubling east's 1♠ for takeout with his minors, bailing N/S out of trouble, they declaring their diamond part-score for 90 or 110. If N/S bid again they surely get doubled.

16

♠ A4
♥ J9632
♦ 6543
♣ 43

♠ Q10762
♥ AK
♦ J109
♣ A105

♠ KJ983
♥ Q87
♦ 82
♣ KQ9

Dealer: West
E-W Vulnerable

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

You need to be brave or foolish to bid spades over an east weak 1NT here, and south will certainly regret it if west makes a "values" double, left in. N/S are far better to defend 1NT, so long as north finds the heart switch after winning his spade ace.

Where east opens 1♠ west could stretch to 2♣, though a heavy 1NT looks wiser, else east finds himself in 2NT, quite probably defeated one trick.

This is an example of where system can somewhat arbitrarily skew results, in this instance Acoll likely getting the better of it.

I can see few E/Ws getting to the best spot of 3♣, where 110 is possible.

17

♠ A432
 ♥ K76
 ♦ Q1064
 ♣ 76
 ♠ KQJ8
 ♥ 52
 ♦ 92
 ♣ KQ532
 ♠ 109
 ♥ J10984
 ♦ AJ53
 ♣ 109

Dealer: North
Neither Vulnerable

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

Some easts will pass and west open 1♣ or his weak NT. East still has enough to invite game after Stayman or his 1♠ and west's 1NT rebid. With west maximum he should advance, so 3NT should be reached.

Where east opens 1♣ west surely ends up at the helm of 3NT, whether or not south pokes in with a skimpy 1♥ overall. Indeed, this could induce north to lead a heart, rather than the winning diamond, allowing an overtrick.

Will many miss this one or be allowed to make 430?

18

♠ AKJ643
 ♥ Q543
 ♦ Q4
 ♣ 4
 ♠ 2
 ♥ 9
 ♦ AKJ109652
 ♣ KQ5
 ♠ 97
 ♥ 10872
 ♦ 87
 ♣ AJ1093

Dealer: East
N-S Vulnerable

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

Where east opens 5♦ this is surely passed out, and the defence could go wrong on a spade lead, trying to cash a second round. North needs to switch to his singleton and get a ruff. A heart opening lead lets 5♦ home immediately, whereas the club ace should beat it.

Some could try the gambling 3NT - the suit is not solid, but the eighth card makes up for the lack of the queen. This spot has no defence if west sticks it, overtricks possible if south finds the wrong opening lead or switch after the club ace.

The gambling 3NT has the added virtue in possibly goading north into trying 4♣. If doubled, the carnage could be unpleasant, at least 1100 available.

19

♠ J10652
 ♥ AQ632
 ♦ 53
 ♣ 9
 ♠ AK3
 ♥ K975
 ♦ 10986
 ♣ K4
 ♠ Q4
 ♥ AKQJ7
 ♣ AJ10862
 ♠ 987
 ♥ J1084
 ♦ 42
 ♣ Q753

Dealer: South
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	7	1	3	5
W	6	7	1	3	5

We have a nice bidding challenge here, west opening 1♣ and hoping to reverse into diamonds. North could well bid spades or use Michaels, making it tricky. East may double to begin with and west has to be careful to make his values clear. Maybe a jump to 5♦ is best, unless there is a clear cue bid available of north's suit.

One way or another it could be mighty difficult to judge the perfectly fitting cards and get to the diamond slam, where all the tricks are available - maybe possible if N/S are silent, well-nigh impossible where he isn't.

Will any manage to have at least 940 on the card? Any succeeding in getting to the Grand will have done supremely well.

20

♠ A2
 ♥ Q976
 ♦ K72
 ♣ AK53
 ♠ Q1087
 ♥ J52
 ♦ A1064
 ♣ 94
 ♠ J9654
 ♥ A103
 ♦ Q8
 ♣ Q108
 ♠ K3
 ♥ K84
 ♦ J953
 ♣ J762

Dealer: West
Both Vulnerable

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

North's strong NT is presumably passed out. Where an Acol 1♥ is opened it is south at the helm. East is near certain to lead spades, and west probably will, putting declarer under immediate pressure.

I guess many will go down, but there is a classic play available. North wins and leads a heart, which east must duck, or the whole suit is good. Now a diamond to the king follows, which again west must duck, or two tricks result when the queen falls. Having stolen two tricks declarer now clears clubs and can claim seven tricks whatever the defence do.

Will any find the double Morton's Fork? N/S actually do better in clubs, 110 available on similar lines, diamonds played and the defence eventually having to open up hearts.

21

♠ AK985
 ♥ J98
 ♦ 7
 ♣ A432
 ♠ 1063
 ♥ Q103
 ♦ KQ106
 ♣ K108
 ♠ Q42
 ♥ K2
 ♦ 98432
 ♣ J96
 ♠ J7
 ♥ A7654
 ♦ AJ5
 ♣ Q75

 Dealer: North
 N-S Vulnerable

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

Most will be in 2♠ by north after either a direct raise, or after 1♠/1NT and preference. West just might bid his poor hearts, and in theory E/W do best to do so, advancing to 3♥ and being beaten one trick.

However, north hasn't made 2♠ yet, and could easily fail to do so, on either a trump lead or a diamond force. He can scrape home by running the heart 9, playing east for the 10, and setting up clubs.

Will many manage to have 110 on the card N/S?

22

♠ Q1098532
 ♥ KQ95
 ♦ A10
 ♣
 ♠ AK74
 ♥ 10742
 ♦ 42
 ♣ AK7
 ♠ J6
 ♥ A863
 ♦ KJ93
 ♣ Q106
 ♠ J
 ♥ Q8765
 ♣ J985432

 Dealer: East
 E-W Vulnerable

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

North will bid his spades over either a west weak NT or 1♣ opener, but may not get to game unless south has already scraped up a 1♦ or understrength weak NT. East may well compete with clubs, but would be wise to avoid overdoing it lest he lose a penalty.

Those declaring spades should make eleven tricks, picking up west's hearts. Some could be doubled when west thinks he has four top winners and enough trump length to inconvenience declarer - he hasn't.

23

♠ KJ10986
 ♥ A98
 ♦ 1096
 ♣ A
 ♠ 4
 ♥ KJ1076
 ♦ Q7
 ♣ 98763
 ♠ Q53
 ♥ Q5
 ♦ J852
 ♣ KQ104
 ♠ A72
 ♥ 432
 ♦ AK43
 ♣ J52

 Dealer: South
 Both Vulnerable

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

This time south really has an opener, and north has spades for the third hand in a row. 4♠ looks the spot, by south when a weak NT and transfers are used, by north otherwise.

On this one by no means everyone will manage ten tricks, it needing trumps finessed against west, an anti-percentage play.

Without an improbable heart lead declarer just might scrape home anyway by managing to get three diamond tricks. However, the suit gets blocked, and it needs the diamond length along with spade length in the defensive hands - it is easier just to finesse trumps.

Will many survive?

24

♠ J92
 ♥ AQJ7
 ♦ J10642
 ♣ K
 ♠ A10
 ♥ 652
 ♦ 853
 ♣ Q7654
 ♠ KQ863
 ♥ 1083
 ♦ AK7
 ♣ A10
 ♠ 754
 ♥ K94
 ♦ Q9
 ♣ J9832

 Dealer: West
 Neither Vulnerable

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

East could overcall north's 1♦ with either 1NT or 1♠, but it is hard to see beyond part-score being declared.

As luck would have it there are nine tricks in either spades or no trumps, spades splitting evenly, the defence unable to run enough hearts, and the club king singleton.

The end result should be a lot of 140s and 150s on the card, few bidding it up to get 400.

25

♠ KJ9752
 ♥ KQ5
 ♦ 10
 ♣ 1092
 ♠ 843
 ♥ A832
 ♦ AK96
 ♣ J3
 ♠ AQ10
 ♥ J7
 ♦ 543
 ♣ A8764
 ♠ 6
 ♥ 10964
 ♦ QJ872
 ♣ KQ5

 Dealer: North
 E-W Vulnerable

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

The Multi could see some action, north's opener relayed to 2♥ by south and converted to 2♠. Now east is reasonably safe entering the auction with a double, west marked with hearts. In practice, west probably bids diamonds, pushing south to the 3♠ spot he likely bids over a north Weak Two opener anyway.

Here the Law of Total Tricks - the sum of both sides longest fits - works perfectly, the total being 18, and both sides able to make nine tricks in their respective contracts.

Will everyone get the judgement right here, N/S bidding to the 3 level - the level of their fit? E/W can bid to the four level, losing only 100 if the opponents are sporting enough to desist from doubling.

26

♠ A9742
 ♥ K85
 ♦ AK9
 ♣ 92
 ♠ Q3
 ♥ 9
 ♦ 86542
 ♣ AK1075
 ♠ K65
 ♥ AJ764
 ♦ Q1073
 ♣ 8
 ♠ J108
 ♥ Q1032
 ♦ J
 ♣ QJ643

 Dealer: East
 Both Vulnerable

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

South is best to simply raise north's 4th seat 1♠ to the 2 level, 1NT a distortion. This may well silence everyone, though east just could double in the protective position, planning on converting a 3♣ bid to 3♦, and hoping west has the wit to bid hearts if not holding diamonds.

E/W can get over the line in 3♦ on cross-ruff lines, alternatively setting up clubs if the opponents play trumps, the club 7 growing up if south splits his honours.

Defending spades east needs to lead the heart ace or a club, west switching to his singleton. The defence get two clubs, the heart ace, and either two heart ruffs or a trump promotion.

Will any E/Ws go minus, letting 2♠ home?

27

♠ 10982
 ♥ J62
 ♦ AK986
 ♣ 5
 ♠ AQJ
 ♥ Q1075
 ♦ 2
 ♣ Q9832
 ♠ 73
 ♥ AK93
 ♦ Q54
 ♣ KJ64
 ♠ K654
 ♥ 84
 ♦ J1073
 ♣ A107

 Dealer: South
 Neither Vulnerable

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

Where west opens 1♣ E/W will surely get to either 4♥ or 5♣, even if north scrapes up a 1♦ intervention. East can double 1♦, finding the fit, with the fall-back of supporting clubs were west to bid spades - or simply bid 1♥ himself.

Where east is the opener with a weak NT east declares 4♥ after Stayman, but where he opens 1♣ it could be west in charge, west responding in the suit.

4♥ by east is the best spot, as south may well not find the club ace and another lead to hold it, eleven tricks ensuing otherwise when the spade finesse succeeds.

Sadly, this is another example of the arbitrary nature of system affecting results.

28

♠ A3
 ♥ 63
 ♦ 8765
 ♣ J8742
 ♠ 62
 ♥ KJ9742
 ♦ A10
 ♣ 965
 ♠ KJ10854
 ♥ 85
 ♦ K2
 ♣ KQ10
 ♠ Q97
 ♥ AQ10
 ♦ QJ943
 ♣ A3

 Dealer: West
 N-S Vulnerable

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

A west Weak Two in hearts or the Multi could see south intervening with 2NT. This will be in dire straits on a club lead. East having club and diamond entries to get west's suit going. A heart lead only beats it one, a spade better but not as good as the club, which could see 400 on the card.

Left to play 2♥ E/W can guess the black suits correctly to make ten tricks if south doesn't get a club ruff, but in practice may well be held to 140 or 110.

This hand is an example where action or inaction can prove costly, rather a theme on the set, which it is hoped proved enjoyable.

Ave HCP	N 10.04	S 10.00	E 9.89	W 10.07	Balanced	N 12	S 13	E 10	W 14
Voids/singletons	N 1/12	S 0/9	E 1/15	W 1/10	7+ suit	N 1	S 0	E 4	W 0