

Board No 1				Dealer: North	Vul: None					
South	West	North	East		♠ 863					
		P	P		♥ QJ765					
1S	X	P	2D		♦ J2					
P	2NT	P	3D		♣ 1076					
P	3S	P	4C	♠ K95	<table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table>					♠ 10
P	5D	P	P	♥ AK4	♥ 932					
P				♦ KQ8	♦ 1097653					
				♣ KQ95	♣ A42					
					♠ AQJ742					
					♥ 108					
					♦ A4					
					♣ J83					

There is a danger here for West to get over-excited with 20 points and a stopper in spades, and encourage East to bid 3NT, when only 8 tricks are available. West's 2NT confirms a balanced 18-20 and East could pass that but should prefer to show the extra length in diamonds. Now the 3S cue bid asks if East has any extra strength and it is East's turn to cue bid the ace of clubs. This helps West to raise to game. Note that this is a difficult sequence to produce, but could be much easier to achieve if North, despite holding a 10 loser hand, raises to 2S over the takeout double. Now, East can make a free bid of 3D and the continuations from 3S to 5D shown above could be bid with much greater confidence.

TIPS:

- A cue bid of the opponent's suit asks for information.
- A cue bid of a new suit shows a feature such as an ace or singleton
- Bidding on poor values such as the raise to 2S can often benefit the opponents rather than your side, as all bids provide valuable information, such as the marked spade shortage in the East hand

Board No 2				Dealer: East	Vul: N/S					
South	West	North	East		♠					
			P		♥ K5					
1NT	P	3C	P		♦ AKJ62					
3H	P	4D	P		♣ AQJ1094					
4NT	P	5H	P	♠ 8743	<table border="1"> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td></tr> </table>					♠ Q10965
6NT	P	P	P	♥ QJ10	♥ 7642					
				♦ 973	♦ 854					
				♣ 765	♣ K					
					♠ AKJ2					
					♥ A983					
					♦ Q10					
					♣ 832					

North gets excited when South opens the bidding, because he knows a slam of some sort should be makeable. In his view a minor suit offers the best possibility, so he sets about forcing bids to show his shape. South in the meantime has virtually all his points in the major suits, and realises that NT offers the best resting place and in matchpoints, the better score. The grand slam could be bid – and made, if you play that the KC is always singleton – but more likely the club finesse will be taken, resulting in 12 tricks. Incidentally, if the KC is dropped, keep your hand up closer to your chest.

Board No 3	Dealer: South	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East
1D	P	1S	P
1NT	P	2C	P
2S	P	P	P

  

♠ AQJ105		♠ 6
♥ 64		♥ J1082
♦ 4		♦ AJ853
♣ 108763		♣ AJ2
♠ K943		♠ 872
♥ Q953		♥ AK7
♦ K76		♦ Q1092
♣ K9		♣ Q54

In the bidding sequence where opener rebids a weak 1NT, which shows a balanced hand with two or three cards in responder's major, there are three main ways of playing a rebid of 2C by responder

- Forcing for one round with invitational values such as the XYZ or New Minor forcing conventions. Thus a natural 2C rebid is not possible and with this hand responder would rebid a sign off 2S knowing there is at least a 5-2 or 5-3 fit opposite a balanced hand.
- 2C is natural and 4+ suit and also confirms 5 spades and is non-forcing
- 2C is Canape, showing 5+ clubs and 4 spades and is non-forcing. This works well in that the partnership has a choice between playing in a 5-3 minor or a 4-3 major when the opening hand has three card support for the major, a doubleton in a side suit for ruffs, and ideally a high honour in the major.

For this hand 2C may be bid with the second method, whereas the other two approaches will rebid a direct 2S knowing there is at least a twocard fit. All roads lead to Rome on this hand with 2S being the popular resting place.

Nearly all tables will attempt the difficult 2S contract, which requires trumps to behave. East is likely to make the safe lead of JH, won by the King. Declarer can see 4 spade tricks if the finesse works, and two top hearts plus a red suit ruff, only 7 tricks. The only hope appears to be establishing a club trick, so a spade is successfully finessed, and a club ducked. West may continue hearts, won by declarer and after a second spade finesse, a second club is played, won again by West. At this point the defence should be able to force dummy to ruff a red suit and prevent entry to the South hand. Thus declarer will lose 3 clubs, a diamond, a spade and a red suit loser. Minus one is better than East-West gaining a red suit part score.

In 2C, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> small clubs ensure entries for reaching the extra spade winner for the final trick to make the contract.

TIPS

- Always try to plan how a contract can be made assuming normal breaks, and if the latter does occur there may well be a good score as the bad break helps the opponents attain a better score their way.
- If you open with light values it is always helpful to play conventions which help you to either play in any safe part score and prevent the opponents reaching their best contract

Board No 4	Dealer: West	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East
	1C	P	1NT
P	P	P	

  

♠ AJ75		♠ K84
♥ Q107		♥ J4
♦ Q986		♦ 754
♣ J10		♣ Q9732
♠ 1062		♠ Q93
♥ AK3		♥ 98652
♦ K103		♦ AJ2
♣ A864		♣ K5

As many players employ inverted minor suit raises, it is normally best to jump to the three level with a weak raise when holding 6 cards when opener may only hold the minimum of three clubs. Hence East's best bid is 1NT. At game all it would be foolish for South to enter the bidding with 2H, and instead make the best lead of the 8H, second highest from an honourless suit. With both of declarer's unsupported kings well placed, the defence should come to six tricks.

TIP With more balanced hands and only five of opener's minor it is more profitable to bid 1NT than jump to the three level when partner may have only three trumps for the opening minor.

Board No 5	Dealer: North	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East
		1C	P
1D	P	1H	P
P	P		

  

<p>♠ K97 ♥ 93 ♦ AJ7 ♣ KJ872</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<p>♠ AJ4 ♥ A1084 ♦ K5 ♣ Q643</p> <p>♠ 10852 ♥ QJ65 ♦ Q96 ♣ A5</p> <p>♠ Q63 ♥ K72 ♦ 108432 ♣ 109</p>
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Although South has only 5 points there might be a better one level contract if opener has a four card major, especially when there might only be 3 clubs in the North hand. East may well lead 2S which will be won by the Jack when West plays the 7S. Declarer is likely to make 6 tricks by playing a club off the table. Winning with the JC West needs to find a trump switch forcing East to split honours. A second club will now be won by East, and a heart lead would now go into North's tenace, so instead a diamond may be lead to the ace for the return of a second trump. Winning with the AH declarer can now play another club. If East ruffs high and returns a trump, this helps declarer score three trumps, KD, and two spades for minus 50 when East-West have 3 one level makeable contracts.

TIP: With only two clubs and five points and at least 3-3 in the majors it may worth keeping the bidding open to steal a low level contract.

Board No 6	Dealer: East	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East
			P
P	1C	P	1H
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

  

<p>♠ A7 ♥ KJ5 ♦ Q10 ♣ AKJ843</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<p>♠ 106542 ♥ 932 ♦ AKJ4 ♣ 9</p> <p>♠ K ♥ AQ84 ♦ 87532 ♣ Q75</p> <p>♠ QJ983 ♥ 1076 ♦ 96 ♣ 1062</p>
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With 18-19 points, West has a choice of rebids between a jump to 3C or 2NT. With the red suit holdings it is probably better for the lead to come up to West, so 2NT is the better choice. The standard lead of KD allows North to examine dummy, and playing the lead of king for count and ace for attitude, discover partner's holding in diamonds. Playing normal count South will play the 9, to show an even number of diamonds, playing reverse count the 6D would be played. Seeing 5 diamonds in dummy and adding these to partner's doubleton North can safely cash the first three tricks, having noted the extra values in the dummy, disclosing that South is bereft of values. Failure to take this action will allow declarer to make 12 tricks.

TIPS:

- Try to right side the no trump contracts so that the lead comes into the most suitable hand.
- As defender, take time to plan the best line to help achieve the maximum tricks available

Board No 7	Dealer: South	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East	
P	1D	X	1H	♠ KQ4
P	P	1NT	P	♥ QJ8
P	2D	X	P	♦ AK83
P	P			♣ AQ8
				♠ A85
				♥ 53
				♦ QJ10954
				♣ K10
				♠ J1096
				♥ AK964
				♦ 7
				♣ 532
				♠ 732
				♥ 1072
				♦ 62
				♣ J9764

With 7 losers and a sound 6 card suit West makes a normal 1D opening, and later confirms minimum values by passing partner's 1H overall of the takeout double although North's 1NT is 18-20 West knows that there will be no values left in the South hand, and expects East's points to be well placed. North could also rebid 2NT over 2D and this should go one down.

The play should be fun for West as North will eventually be end played to lead a black suit to supply the final trick.

TIPS:

- Open with sound suits and light values and let partner know the limits of the hand early on.
- Be careful making penalty double when partner is marked with few values

Board No 8	Dealer: West	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East	
	1D	P	1H	♠ 86
P	2S	P	3D	♥ A1087
P	3NT	P	P	♦ 7532
P				♣ Q86
				♠ AKJ2
				♥ Q
				♦ KJ98
				♣ A973
				♠ 74
				♥ KJ652
				♦ AQ10
				♣ 1054
				♠ Q10953
				♥ 943
				♦ 64
				♣ KJ2

West's jump to 2S shows 4 spades with 17-18 points and an unbalanced hand which would have been portrayed with a jump to 2NT. East shows the good 3 card support for diamonds in case partner holds more than four, and bidding concludes with the no trump game. With three suits bid North will lead the 6C and South should play the JC. If North has only the QC then this play cannot lose, and if West ducks, there is an inference that South also holds the KC. With stoppers in clubs declarer will win at trick one and play to set up heart tricks, losing just two clubs and one heart.

TIP: With extra values opener can make a jump bid which simultaneously confirms both the high points and the shape of the hand.

Board No 9	Dealer: North	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East			
		P	1D			♠ 9832
1S	P	2S	3C			♥ K1054
4S	P	P	P			♦ K6
						♣ J73
				♠ 764		♠ A
				♥ Q987632		♥
				♦ 43		♦ J109872
				♣ 9		♣ AQ10862
						♠ KQJ105
						♥ AJ
						♦ AQ5
						♣ K54

Disappointing for declarer after a normal bidding sequence, to run into a simple defence to defeat the contract after a singleton club lead. East wins with the ace of clubs, returns the club 10 to ask for a heart back, resulting in a one trick set.

TIP: Clear signals in defence and trust in partner produce best results.

Board No 10	Dealer: East	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East			
			P			♠ AK10865
P	1C	2S	3H			♥ 42
P	3NT	P	P			♦ J73
P						♣ 52
				♠ QJ9		♠ 732
				♥ K		♥ QJ1096
				♦ AK95		♦ Q8
				♣ QJ643		♣ A97
						♠ 4
						♥ A8753
						♦ 10642
						♣ K108

Playing the Good-Bad 2NT convention, West has an easy 3NT rebid after partner shows decent values and 5+ hearts. With South limited to a single spade and holding the two key cards of the AH and KC, nine tricks are safe.

TIPS:

- The Good-Bad 2NT convention is very helpful when opponents take up bidding space. The 2NT is a transfer to 3C when responder holds weaker values, and after opener accepts the transfer responder has three options :
  - pass shows long clubs
  - new suit is a weak long suit
  - raise of partner's suit is weak
 The good part of this is that all direct bids at the three level will confirm extra values
- The Good 2NT is the opposite, whereby all three level bids are weak, and 2NT is for stronger hands

Board No 11	Dealer: South	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East
P	P	1D	2H
2S	3H	4S	P
P	P		

  

♠ 94		♠ 108
♥ Q964		♥ AKJ1083
♦ AJ32		♦ 94
♣ K53		♣ J97

  

♠ AQ32		♠ KJ765
♥ -		♥ 752
♦ K10765		♦ Q8
♣ Q842		♣ A106

With only 11 points but 6 losers North should always open 1D. Many players employ weak jump overcalls so East will probably use this weapon, and over South's 2S West will give a single raise in hearts (double raise if non-vulnerable). On a trump lead declarer need to set up diamonds to ensure 11 tricks, and if hearts are lead there is the option of ruffing 3 hearts in dummy. The favourable lie of the KC helps with the overtrick.

**TIPS:**

- Use the losing trick count as well as just points as it is always a helpful method of hand evaluation
- Be careful of the vulnerability in competitive bidding

Board No 12	Dealer: West	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East
	P	1S	P
4S	P	4NT	P
5D	P	6S	P
P	P		

  

♠ 5		♠ J
♥ J963		♥ 10742
♦ J10873		♦ KQ9
♣ A63		♣ J10854

  

♠ AK9742		♠ Q10863
♥ AK8		♥ Q5
♦ A52		♦ 64
♣ 2		♣ KQ97

South has 5 trumps and 7 losers and bids game immediately as there is no other feature worth showing. North may check on whether South has the missing ace of clubs before signing off in the small slam. TIP: With full game values but no key feature in the hand bid game straight away as this gives no further information to the defence.

Board No 13	Dealer: North	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East		
		P	P		♠ KQ54
					♥ A874
1C	P	1H	P		♦ J73
2H	P	2S	P		♣ 109
4H	P	P	P	♠ A96	
				♥ 1065	
				♦ A1094	
				♣ J87	
					♠ 1082
					♥ QJ
					♦ KQ862
					♣ Q64
					♠ J73
					♥ K932
					♦ 5
					♣ AK532

North with 8 losers makes a further try with the 2S trial bid. Now all of South's points are working, the diamond singleton is a real asset and the JS offers spade support. The tight game is reached, and with all suits breaking kindly the contract is an easy make.

TIP: Trial bids are useful in conveying where values lie which may be helpful for game, and where the three level part score will still make if there are insufficient values to bid game.

Board No 14	Dealer: East	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East		
			P		♠ 1074
					♥ AJ104
P	1D	P	1H		♦ K32
2C	2D	3C	3D		♣ K107
4C	P	P	4D	♠ K86	
P	P	X		♥ Q8	
				♦ AQJ10954	
				♣ 3	
					♠ A53
					♥ 976532
					♦ 876
					♣ A
					♠ QJ92
					♥ K
					♦
					♣ QJ986542

East has poor hearts and two outside aces so should not open with a weak 2H. Holding 4 spades South should hold back on pre-empting with 3C, leaving West to open proceedings with a quiet 1D. South now has the opportunity to show the long clubs over East's 1H response, and the competitive bidding continues up to the four level, where North-South reach a makeable 4C. At this point, at love all, East is likely to make one more bid and get doubled by North for one off, a good save against 130.

If South does make a pre-emptive opening of 3C West will still compete, whereas an opening 4C bid may buy the contract. However, some players use an opening 4C bid to show a strong eight card heart suit. This leaves an opening five clubs which is a poor bid missing the two top honours.

#### TIPS

- Don't open weak two bids in the majors with poor suits and all the points outside the major
- Avoid pre-empting in a minor when holding a 4 card major (North's 4 hearts could have been 4 spades)
- Do sacrifice when the odds are in your favour that the action will lose less than allowing the opponents to make their part score

Board No 15	Dealer: South	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East
1S	P	1NT	P
2D	P	2S	P
P	P		

♠ 87653  
♥ A10  
♦ Q96  
♣ 1097

♠ Q2  
♥ KQ9832  
♦ 73  
♣ 865

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♠ 4 ♥ J765 ♦ AKJ4 ♣ Q432
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♠ AKJ109  
♥ 4  
♦ 10852  
♣ AKJ

South's opening 1S is automatic and even though North has this goodish heart suit, 1NT is the correct holding bid. South is not very proud of his Diamond suit but needs to show his shape.

North then has a decision to make – whether to show his heart suit or just give preference to Spades where he knows they will be in a 5-2 fit at least.

If he bids 2H, South should know he has 6 cards in hearts, and might just pass.

On balance, giving preference to 2S has my vote. If I had the Jack of Hearts instead of the 9 – 2H would shade it.

Board No 16	Dealer: West	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East
	1C	P	1H
2D	X	P	2H
P	P	P	

♠ J107  
♥ AK3  
♦ Q96  
♣ QJ65

♠ 963  
♥ J952  
♦ 743  
♣ 843

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♠ KQ54 ♥ 108764 ♦ J10 ♣ K10
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♠ A82  
♥ Q  
♦ AK852  
♣ A972

South makes a non-vulnerable overcall in the sandwich position, and West makes a support double to show 3 hearts. Playing support doubles, West would have to pass the 2D and wait for East to re-enter the bidding with a takeout double, and West can now convert this to penalties by passing.

Due to the strong intermediary cards in the minors, plus the 4-1 heart break, the 4-3 spade contract makes one more trick than the 5-3 heart contract. This is because three small hearts from East's hand can be disposed of on West's minor suit winners.

TIP: Support doubles help to confirm three card trump support in a competitive auction, without sacrificing the opportunity to inflict a penalty double at a later stage.



Board No 17	Dealer: North	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East			
		1D	2S		♠ 5	
X	P	3C	P		♥ A63	
3NT	P	P	P		♦ AKQ83	
					♣ KJ32	
				♠ 862		♠ QJ10974
				♥ KJ874		♥ 10
				♦ 542		♦ 107
				♣ 94		♣ A765
					♠ AK3	
					♥ Q952	
					♦ J96	
					♣ Q108	

East has the perfect hand for a weak jump overcall, which South can double to confirm 4 hearts and values, and can then rebid 3NT with the major suit stoppers. Declarer has only to establish clubs in order to wrap up 11 tricks.

TIP: Over an opponent's major suit overcall it helps if a takeout double guarantees four trumps in the other major.

Board No 18	Dealer: East	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East			
			1C		♠ Q109	
2S	3H	4S	P		♥ A75	
P	P				♦ K10976	
					♣ A6	
				♠ 7		♠ KJ8
				♥ KQ10962		♥ 4
				♦ Q42		♦ A53
				♣ J54		♣ Q109872
					♠ A65432	
					♥ J83	
					♦ J8	
					♣ K3	

After South's weak jump overcall and West's free bid of 3H North stretches with a jump to game and the KH is played. Declarer can now place East with the AD, KS and QC and either one or both black Jacks or the QD. Winning with the AH declarer leads the QS, covered by the king and ace, and a second spade is captured by East's Jack. In order to gain entry to West's hand in order for hearts to be cashed the 10C is returned. Declarer wins in hand, and takes the diamond finesse, eventually making 11 tricks.

TIP: When in a tight contract take time to place the cards, and assume a favourable lie to secure the contract.

Board No 19				Dealer: South	Vul: E/W
South	West	North	East		
1H	2H	4H	4S		♠ A1093
P	P	X	P		♥ A10873
P	P				♦ Q2
					♣ Q7
				♠ J8765	
				♥ KJ4	
				♦	
				♣ A10853	
					♠ KQ2
					♥
					♦ J87643
					♣ J962
					♠ 4
					♥ Q9652
					♦ AK1095
					♣ K4

Over South's 1H opening West's cue bid is the Ghestem convention whereby:

- The cue bid shows 5-5 in the two extreme suits, spades and clubs over 1H
- 2NT shows 5-5 in the lowest two suits, both minors over 1H
- 3C shows 5-5 in the two remaining suits, spades and diamonds over 1H
- When the opening bid is clubs, which is often a short suit, many players use the 2C overcall as natural, and substitute the cue bid with 2D

The advantage of this convention is the precision of knowing both suits immediately, unlike the Michaels cue bid which shows the other major and a minor rather than a specific minor. Ghestem helps East to "sacrifice" in 4S based upon the double fit in the black suits. As North-South have a non-vulnerable game on their way, going two light in 4SX is not a good save. If you hold it to one off, it is a great save, and this is possible if N/S take their eye off the ball.

It is difficult for South to bid on over the double when the KC looks doomed and partner is marked with decent spades, but 11 tricks can be made in 5H.

TIP: Having an agreed convention to describe two suiter hands in competition is essential and Ghestem fits the bill well.

Board No 20				Dealer: West	Vul: Both
South	West	North	East		
	P	1S	P		♠ K10952
2H	P	3D	P		♥ K2
3NT	P	P	P		♦ AKQJ3
					♣ 2
				♠ J84	
				♥ 1073	
				♦ 104	
				♣ A10985	
					♠ AQ3
					♥ 865
					♦ 97
					♣ J7643
					♠ 76
					♥ AQJ94
					♦ 8652
					♣ KJ

Pairs bring out the greedy instinct in players – with NT offering the best return for your investment. South knows that they have a diamond fit, but is also aware that he needs to protect the club position. North then is aware that South had some ammunition in Clubs, so with the solid diamond suit and the heart K in reserve, he passes – hoping for the top score.

And home it rolls! Even if West leads a Spade to his partner's Queen and a Club comes back, the Jack should be finessed.

The safer contract is 4H, and perhaps North should offer it over 3NT from South!

Board No 21	Dealer: North	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East			
		P	P		♠ Q876	
					♥ A954	
2NT	P	3C	P		♦ 103	
3D	P	4D	P		♣ Q98	
4H	P	P	P	♠ 1053		♠ J94
				♥ Q102		♥ 83
				♦ A74		♦ J98652
				♣ KJ105		♣ 64
					♠ AK2	
					♥ KJ76	
					♦ KQ	
					♣ A732	

Playing Puppet Stayman over 2NT openings allows responder to check for either four or five card majors in the strong opening hand. With neither, opener rebids 3NT and with a five card major, he bids that major. Holding one or both four card majors opener bids a conventional 3D, and if responder has just the one major suit now bids the major suit not held. This latter move ensures that the strong hand always plays the contract when there is a major suit fit, or returns to 3NT when there is no fit. Finally, over 3D responder holding both majors raises to 4D, thus allowing opener to bid and play in game where there is a fit.

With values in three suits West will probably start by leading a small spade as this is less likely to give away a trick against 4H. Declarer should in East's Jack with the ace, and play the KD, which West needs to take, otherwise the Queen will be discarded on the 13<sup>th</sup> spade after two rounds of trumps have been drawn.

Assuming West takes AD and continues spades declarer has a choice of plays. If the trump finesse is taken the contract depends on a favourable lie of the KC. Another option is to cash two top trumps and the QD, and now play on spades, discarding a small club. If West trumps in or discards, a trump lead end plays west to lead a club way from the king.

As there has been no information from the bidding or the lead to suggest bad breaks, then taking the trump finesse is best as this offers two chances, rather than just one.

#### TIPS:

- Puppet Stayman offers several options for finding both four and five card majors in opener's hand and avoids the weaker responding hand declaring the final contract.
- In the play two chances are better than one, unless there is definite information in the bidding to play differently.

Board No 22	Dealer: East	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East
			1C
1H	4S	5H	5S
X	P	P	P

♠ AQ108754  
♥ 64  
♦ 105  
♣ Q7

♠ 932  
♥ J1087  
♦ A732  
♣ K10

♠ KJ6  
♥ 9  
♦ K986  
♣ A6432

♠  
♥ AKQ532  
♦ QJ4  
♣ J985

This is a highly competitive hand with both sides having solid game contracts, with North–South being able to make 11 tricks against only 10 for East-West. Knowing when to bid at the five level can be assisted to some degree by the Law of Total Tricks. This states ‘the number of total tricks available on any deal is equal to the total number of trumps’. On his deal North knows that in the South hand there are at least 5 hearts, and more likely six, as there is at most one spade. This makes 9 or 10 trumps for North-South, with seven spades in the West hand, and probably 3 in the East hand. If the total number of trump tricks are 19 or 20 then it is safe to bid at the five level by either side. This is because your side will make your contract, or if it fails, the other side’s contract will have made. Hence it is logical for East to bid 5S.

TIP: The Law of total tricks may help in competitive bidding situations.

Board No 23	Dealer: South	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East
P	P	1C	1S
2C	2S	3C	P
P	3S	P	P
P			

♠ J1054  
♥ K1062  
♦ 9532  
♣ 4

♠ K6  
♥ 984  
♦ AKQ7  
♣ AQ82

♠ AQ932  
♥ J73  
♦ 104  
♣ K76

♠ 87  
♥ AQ5  
♦ J86  
♣ J10953

Fortune favours the brave!  
 If East throws in a spade overcall of North’s 1C or 1D, West with very few points, can chip in a few times to reach the optimum spot of 3S. While East wishes his partner would shut up, everything is nicely positioned and 9 tricks rolls home.  
 A double from West at his third turn to bid would net the top score, (3C\*-1) but how likely is that??

Board No 24	Dealer: West	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East	
	1S	P	1NT	♠ 6
P	2D	P	2S	♥ Q975
P	P	P		♦ 10942
				♣ 8764
				♠ KQ952
				♥ K82
				♦ AK65
				♣ 5
				♠ A83
				♥ J63
				♦ Q83
				♣ KJ103
				♠ J1074
				♥ A104
				♦ J7
				♣ AQ92

This hand is all about hand evaluation. With 11 points but 10 losers East's best initial bid is 1NT. Over West's 2D a simple rebid of 2S again keeps the bidding low. Any stronger rebid leads to 4S which makes only 9 tricks. With the spade fit it is difficult to play in 3NT, which requires declare to eliminate three hearts and two diamonds in South's hand, before cashing three top spades and end playing South to lead clubs into the East hand. Fair play to anyone bidding and making 3NT.

**TIP:** With good points and excessive losers recognise the limitations of the hand and bid with care.

Board No 25	Dealer: North	Vul: E/W
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South	West	North	East	
		P	P	♠ 853
1C	P	1H	P	♥ QJ984
2NT	P	3D	P	♦ A5
3H	P	4H	P	♣ 752
P	P			♠ K64
				♥ 1032
				♦ K42
				♣ QJ1092
				♠ J10972
				♥ A6
				♦ J976
				♣ 83
				♠ AQ
				♥ K75
				♦ Q1083
				♣ AK64

South will open either 1C or 1D, depending upon agreement when 4-4 in the minors and in either case will then jump to 2NT over 1H to confirm 18-19 balanced. A three level bid of the other minor is conventional to check if opener has 3 card support for the major, and thus the 5-3 fit is established and game bid. On the likely JS lead declarer has time to try the finesse, but after the C switch needs to play AD and small to 10D to establish the QD for an early club discard. Now trumps can be safely tackled.

**TIPS:**

- Ensure you have agreement on which minor to open when 4-4 in the minors. If you always open 1D with five cards, and thus have to open 1C with only two, there is less ambiguity for the 1D opening, but more uncertainty about the 1C opening. Bridge is a game of choices.
- Play some version of check back over opener's jump rebid of 2NT
- As declarer, make sure to set up essential discards of side suit losers before losing the tempo by tackling drawing trumps too soon

Board No 26	Dealer: East	Vul: Both
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South	West	North	East			
			1H		♠ AJ98652	
P	1NT	2S	P		♥ A75	
P	3D	P	P		♦ 86	
P					♣ Q	
				♠ 3		♠ Q74
				♥ Q		♥ K10983
				♦ J109754		♦ AKQ
				♣ AJ982		♣ 105
					♠ K10	
					♥ J642	
					♦ 32	
					♣ K7543	

If North decides to jump to 3S over 1NT this is likely to win the bidding battle, with the added bonus that 9 tricks are available. As the spade suit lacks honours many will compete with just 2S, and then keep quiet. On the sequence above it is more difficult for N/S to bid again at game all with few values. Some E/W partnerships may play 2NT over 2S in this competitive position as showing 5-5 in the minors, and may end up going down one in 3C rather than plus one in 3D. On the other hand, playing 2NT as a relay to 3C, which can be passed with long clubs, or converted to 3D with long diamonds works better in this instance, as a double of 2S can then be takeout showing both minors. Moreover, playing this way allows an immediate bid of 3D over 2S to confirm a stronger invitational hand where game may be possible.

TIP: It is essential to have bidding agreements for these frequently arising competitive situations.

Board No 27	Dealer: South	Vul: None
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South	West	North	East			
P	1H	P	1S		♠ 104	
P	4D	P	4S		♥ 1053	
P	P	P			♦ 8652	
					♣ QJ73	
				♠ KJ62		♠ AQ875
				♥ AKQ72		♥ 98
				♦ 4		♦ KJ73
				♣ A109		♣ 64
					♠ 93	
					♥ J64	
					♦ AQ109	
					♣ K852	

West has only 5 losers and a strong trump fit in spades so jumps to 4D to signal the singleton and a hand with slam potential. For East this is bad news as the diamond honours are now worthless, and so game is the limit.

TIPS:

- When strong trump fits are found, being able to show outside shortage helps to judge whether or not slam prospects are worth exploring further.
- Some players can distinguish between singletons and voids in this situation by showing singletons with a direct bid of the suit, and bidding one level higher than the agreed major suit to confirm an outside void. Thus, 3S over an agreed heart fit leaves room for responder to enquire where the void lies by asking with 3NT. Now 4C/D confirms a minor suit void and 4H the spade void. If responder has no immediate interest in voids the sign off of 4H is available. When spades is the agreed major 3NT asks for the void and this time 4C/D/H show the void.

Board No 28	Dealer: West	Vul: N/S
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South	West	North	East	
	1S	P	2D	♠ A854
P	2NT	P	3NT	♥ AJ7432
P	P	P		♦ 64
				♣ 10
				♠ QJ1097
				♥ Q105
				♦ J92
				♣ AQ
				♠ K632
				♥ 6
				♦ 873
				♣ KJ854

A solid 1S opener and with that empty heart suit, North passes, leaves West rebidding 2NT to show a minimum hand. East really doesn't want to introduce that "thin" club suit, so just raises to 3NT. A heart lead gives 2 tricks in hearts, 5 in diamonds, and 2 in clubs if the finesse is taken. Alternatively, you can play to establish spade winners in West, resulting in 10 tricks.

**Many thanks to Grand Masters Maureen & Bob Pattinson who have prepared this excellent commentary for you.**