

The analysis is based on *4-card Majors, Weak No-Trump (Strong NT mentioned), Transfers and Weak Two Openings in 3 suits.*

<p style="margin: 0;">♠ J75 ♥ QJ87 ♦ 976 ♣ 542</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♠ KQ863      ♠ VOID ♥ K10          ♥ A643 ♦ AKJ          ♦ Q10854 ♣ 1097        ♣ KQJ8</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♠ A10942 ♥ 952 ♦ 32 ♣ A63</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td></td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <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>5</td><td>6</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> </table>	HCP		4		16	12	8		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N						S						E	5	6	3	3	4	W	5	6	3	3	4	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Nil All</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>1♦</b></td> <td><b>1♠</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>X</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Thoughts on the bidding</b> When South overcalls, it's difficult for West to give up on a sizeable penalty in the hope of a possible slam and even harder to identify the spade void in partner's hand that is needed for 6♦ to make. So, I expect 1♠ doubled to be the most popular contract, followed by 3NT by West.</p> <p>For those of you that don't play 'Negative doubles', West's pass must seem very odd indeed but it's the only way for South to be penalised when double is being used to show the other two suits. When playing 'Negative doubles' the opener is obliged to re-open the bidding whenever they're in the pass-out seat and hold 2 or fewer of the suit overcalled.</p> <p><b>Thoughts on the play</b> Leading against 1♠ x West is likely to lead a top diamond. Those playing 'Ace for attitude' will wonder which card to lead. As it happens, the king works best as partner can show their 5-card holding and West will know it's safe to continue. On the ace lead, East will be fearful that the lead is from A-x and may discourage, leaving West to guess what to do next. But, as long as West doesn't lead a top spade and East doesn't lead a 4th diamond until all the side suit tricks have been taken then I don't see South escaping for better than -500</p>	West	North	East	South		<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♦</b>	<b>1♠</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>X</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>		
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<p style="margin: 0;">♠ J98764 ♥ J5 ♦ J5 ♣ J52</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♠ 3              ♠ 1052 ♥ A764        ♥ KQ32 ♦ KQ4         ♦ A972 ♣ AK1086     ♣ 73</p> <p style="margin: 0;">♠ AKQ ♥ 1098 ♦ 10863 ♣ Q94</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>16</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td></td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <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>5</td><td>4</td><td>6</td><td></td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>6</td><td></td><td>3</td></tr> </table>	HCP		4		16	9	11		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N						S						E	5	4	6		3	W	5	4	6		3	<p>Board 2 : Dealer East : NS Vulnerable</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left;">South</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>1♣</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>1♦</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>1♥</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>3♥</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>4♥</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Thoughts on the bidding</b> Those who play prepared minor suit openings have many variations subsequently, so I'll keep my suggested bidding natural. On this hand, natural bidders will end up with West playing the contract. It'll be East for prepared minor openers because they typically respond with a major in preference to a minor.</p> <p>On the auction given, West may well give thought to a control-showing, slam invitational bid of 3♠ over partner's (slightly aggressive) limit raise. The double fit in diamonds and hearts is a big plus and West has excellent controls. You'll get a great score if you push to slam on this hand but only because both trumps and clubs behave themselves</p> <p><b>Thoughts on the play</b> I expect both North and South to lead a spade and West will ruff the 2nd round. Being pairs, I think declarer should go for the maximum tricks and, despite the small risk of losing trump control will try to set up the club suit. Best is to cash the ♥A first, then to play the two top clubs and ruff a club. When all follow, cash one of dummy's top trumps to check that the suit breaks before fully drawing trumps and making 12 tricks.</p>	West	North	East	South		<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♦</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>4♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>
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♠ A4  
 ♥ KJ1072  
 ♦ 107  
 ♣ 8752

♠ KQ102                      ♠ 763  
 ♥ 94                              ♥ AQ3  
 ♦ KJ83                         ♦ A6542  
 ♣ K63                            ♣ 94

♠ J985  
 ♥ 865  
 ♦ Q9  
 ♣ AQJ10

HCP	
8	
12	10
10	

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

**Board 3 : Dealer South : EW Vulnerable**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
			<b>Pass</b>
<b>1NT</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding  
 The auction will vary depending on (a) the strength of your opening 1NT (b) whether or not you play 'inverted minors' (c) how aggressively you like to bid

That said, I'd be surprised to see more than a handful in game on this hand with those ending in no-trumps getting the best scores

Thoughts on the play  
 With every card sitting well for declarer your result will depend on whether North or South is on lead. Typically, North will lead the ♥J and declarer, with little confidence, will finesse. The ace and another diamond will follow (with declarer carefully throwing the ♦ 8 on the ace). The king and jack are then cashed and the carefully preserved ♦ 3 allows declarer to cash all 5 diamonds without using up the ♥A as an entry. South gets put under a lot of pressure and may well let go a couple of spades.

Declarer will discard a club and then lead a spade to the king.

Depending on South's discards, West should make 9 or 10 tricks

♠ VOID  
 ♥ KJ106  
 ♦ A7652  
 ♣ J1075

♠ AJ9542                      ♠ KQ108  
 ♥ AQ9                            ♥ 432  
 ♦ KQ4                            ♦ 10983  
 ♣ 6                                ♣ A4

♠ 763  
 ♥ 875  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ KQ9832

HCP	
9	
16	9
6	

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

**Board 4 : Dealer West : All Vulnerable**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>1♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>4♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding  
 North is very close to a takeout double but should ask themselves what they would bid if partner responds 1NT.

East's invitational response is, again, a little aggressive but there are three redeeming features (1) ruffing potential in clubs (2) excellent trump support (3) no wasted values (aces and kings are much better than queens and jacks when playing in a trump contract)

This time there is no double fit to encourage West to explore slam with marginal values.

Thoughts on the play  
 There's no information for North to work with, so the technically correct lead is the ♣J.

Well done if you found the highly aggressive, but effective lead of the ♦ A

The best that West can do if North does lead the ♦ A is to drop the queen and hope that persuades North to switch. If they do and they select a heart, then 12 tricks will result.

On a club lead, South should play the ♣K to encourage the suit for later and declarer will win, draw trumps and play a diamond towards the K-Q. If they took the precaution of ruffing dummy's 2nd club at trick two though (thus making it clear that a club continuation is futile), they might persuade North to switch to hearts for fear that declarer holds ♥Q-x-x and is about to get a discard on dummy's diamonds. Of course, an astute North would know that declarer wouldn't have been so helpful if they had indeed held that hand.

♠ A3  
 ♥ VOID  
 ♦ QJ7  
 ♣ AQ1087652

♠ 1085                      ♠ K9  
 ♥ A105                      ♥ J98743  
 ♦ K432                      ♦ 9865  
 ♣ K43                        ♣ J

♠ QJ7642  
 ♥ KQ62  
 ♦ A10  
 ♣ 9

HCP	
13	
10	5
12	

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

**Board 5 : Dealer North : NS Vulnerable**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	<b>1♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>1♠</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♠</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding

I think that this one will result in some exciting auctions.

North is too strong to pre-empt and so opens 1♣. East may decide that their shape and vulnerability warrants a weak jump overcall. It wouldn't be my style because my points are in the wrong suits but it would definitely liven up this auction and make life very difficult for North-South, who are more likely to get to the making game of 4♠ if given the room.

If East does overcall 2♥, South will bid 2♠ and if West bids 4♥ North will have a very nasty choice to make (a) pass (b) bid 4♠ or (c) bid 5♣. My guess is that most would bid 5♣

Thoughts on the play

Against 5♣, the "obvious" heart lead gives the contract. Declarer will play an honour and ruff West's ace. Now a diamond finesse loses and the spade return won with the ace. Finally, a diamond to the ace allows a spade to be discarded on the winning heart and now it's all about not losing two club tricks. The correct line is to lead a club to the ace. This wins whenever the clubs are 2-2 or when there's a singleton honour. No other combination can be successfully catered for. It's worth stressing that your first duty as declarer is to make your contract and only then to look for overtricks.

A diamond lead and spade switch defeats 5♣

Against 4♠ by South, the seemingly passive lead of a spade is the most troublesome. Having tried the losing finesses in spades and diamonds, declarer will have to pin their hopes on a ♣K being with West thus making 5 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs.

♠ AQ93  
 ♥ K932  
 ♦ J10  
 ♣ K32

♠ 764                      ♠ K102  
 ♥ J84                      ♥ 106  
 ♦ K73                      ♦ A842  
 ♣ Q1098                    ♣ J754

♠ J85  
 ♥ AQ75  
 ♦ Q965  
 ♣ A6

HCP	
13	
6	8
13	

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

**Board 6 : Dealer East : EW Vulnerable**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		<b>Pass</b>	<b>1NT</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♥</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding

With 5-card major, strong no-trump players it'll probably be North rather than South declaring 4♥.

Thoughts on the play

West's lead of the ♣10 is reasonably clear-cut. East's lead is less so, as leading away from unsupported honours is such a high-risk strategy and East has one in every suit (tens are considered honours when leading). Here any suit could be right (though the diamond suit is less likely to be than the others). This is an ideal hand for the old-fashioned "suit nearest to the thumb" guideline!

Thoughts on the play

With the heart suit breaking, declarer has time to force out the two top diamonds and then take the spade finesse for an overtrick. No luck - 10 tricks.

I hope that you didn't bid to 3NT in the hope you'd get a better score. More often than not there's an extra trick to be had playing in your 4-4 major suit fit and so it is here.

♠ 96  
 ♥ Q83  
 ♦ J10  
 ♣ KQ6532  
 ♠ QJ1085      ♠ AK4  
 ♥ 1072      ♥ K54  
 ♦ 74      ♦ 862  
 ♣ 984      ♣ AJ107  
 ♠ 732  
 ♥ AJ96  
 ♦ AKQ953  
 ♣ VOID

HCP	
8	
3	15
14	

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

Board 7 : Dealer South : All Vulnerable

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1♦
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	Pass	?	

Thoughts on the bidding

When the bidding comes around to East for the second time s/he may well feel tempted to come into the auction with a takeout double. They didn't do this on the first round because that would guarantee partner 4-cards in both majors but the minimum diamond rebid changes things. RHO clearly doesn't have either major and opener isn't balanced enough to pass 1NT. All this increases the chances of partner holding a 5-card major and a takeout double now is not unreasonable. East-West may well now steal the contract in 2♠ going one down for a good result (two down double-dummy)

Thoughts on the play

West is likely to lead ♠Q against a diamond contract. Seeing just two spades in dummy, East should overtake with their ♠K in order to play a trump.

Declarer should win in dummy and, giving up on any hope of a spade ruff, should lead the ♣K instead. East covers, South ruffs and can now use dummy's remaining trump to get to dummy to discard a spade on the ♣Q. There's no sensible way to play the heart suit for more or less than 3 tricks, so declarer makes 10 in all.

♠ KJ3  
 ♥ K10853  
 ♦ 87  
 ♣ KQ9  
 ♠ Q84      ♠ A106  
 ♥ Q2      ♥ J7  
 ♦ KQJ92      ♦ A103  
 ♣ A65      ♣ J10432  
 ♠ 9752  
 ♥ A964  
 ♦ 654  
 ♣ 87

HCP	
12	
14	10
4	

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

Board 8 : Dealer West : Nil All

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♦	1♥	2♣	3♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Thoughts on the bidding

West may well elect to add value for their good 5-card suit and so open 1♦ when playing 12-14 or 1NT when playing 15-17. Over the latter, North's suit isn't good enough to compete at the 2-level and East will raise to 3NT

Should the bidding go as suggested though, South's 3♥ bid is pre-emptive and only available to those that play 'Unassuming cue-bids'.

Thoughts on the play

While 3NT has no play, 2NT is likely to come home.

North-South will take the first 5 heart tricks with declarer throwing one spade and two clubs. North exits with a top club but is hopelessly squeezed on the play of 5 diamonds.

On the final diamond they must choose what to discard from ♠K-J ♣Q with dummy holding ♠A-10 ♣J opposite declarer's ♠Q-8 ♦9

So, why does 'Deep Finesse' say that only 7 tricks are makeable? Well, it can see all 4 hands and knows that if South switches to a club at trick two, that West must win and now North can discard 1 spade and two hearts (carefully throwing the ♥10 but keeping the king) and thus avoiding the squeeze.

3♥ by North is destined to go one down, assuming that (a) the defence don't give declarer a ruff and discard and (b) that East knows enough to put in the ♠10 if, at any stage, partner leads a low spade and the three is played from dummy.

♠ AK  
 ♥ AKQ9762  
 ♦ 864  
 ♣ 5  
 ♠ QJ85  
 ♥ 843  
 ♦ 73  
 ♣ QJ82  
 ♠ 72  
 ♥ J  
 ♦ KQJ10  
 ♣ K109763  
 ♠ 109643  
 ♥ 105  
 ♦ A952  
 ♣ A4

HCP	
16	
6	10
8	

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

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW Vulnerable

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	<b>2♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♦</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♣</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding

Playing standard Acol, North simply opens a strong 2♥ and rebids 4♥ over partner's positive 2♠ response. Those playing 'Weak Twos' will open 2♣ to show some sort of a strong hand (which includes 8 playing trick hands). North's jump to 3♥ promises 9 playing tricks and a self-supporting heart suit.

South will do very well to sign-off in 3NT and so give their side the best pairs result. The lure of a possible slam, however, may well tempt South to bid their controls, thereby showing their slam interest. North has nothing to spare for their bidding so far, so signs off.

It is still possible, after North signs off in 4♥ to get to play in 5NT. It works as follows:

South bids 4NT, North shows their aces then South bids 5♠. This is the standard method of asking partner to sign off in 5NT and is particularly useful when minor suits are agreed and your ace-ask has taken you too high. It can only work however when (a) partner hasn't bid 5♠ in answer to 4NT and (b) spades aren't the agreed suit.

Thought on the play

East has an easy lead. Declarer wins in dummy and starts drawing trumps, noting the fall of East's jack.

The contract looks secure with 11 tricks guaranteed and it looks attractive to try for more. If the spades are 3-3 or there's a doubleton honour with East, then overtricks are available. But declarer will need to play off their top spades before drawing trumps (always a risk but worth it on probabilities). Dummy's ♥10 can then be used play a 3rd round of spades while the ♣A is still in dummy.

As it happens, there's no luck to be had, either good or bad, so 11 tricks will be standard.

♠ AQ32  
 ♥ J974  
 ♦ AK7  
 ♣ J7  
 ♠ 9864  
 ♥ A8  
 ♦ Q108  
 ♣ Q1094  
 ♠ K5  
 ♥ K5  
 ♦ J6543  
 ♣ K832  
 ♠ J107  
 ♥ Q10632  
 ♦ 92  
 ♣ A65

HCP	
15	
8	10
7	

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

Board 10 : Dealer East : All Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>
<i>Pass</i>	1♥	<i>Pass</i>	2♥
<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	

Thoughts on the bidding

Auctions will differ depending upon system. Weak & 4 players will open 1♥, South will make a minimum raise and North, with such poor trumps and two unsupported jacks, should pass.

If North does decide to make a try, then bidding 2♠ is best. Bidding a new suit after a minimum raise of a major is a 'Trial bid' asking for help in the suit bid. With fewer than 2 losers (using the 'Losing Trick Count'), responder should raise to game, with two losers responder goes to game with a maximum (8-9 points) and with 3 losers they sign off at the 3 level.

Things get a little more interesting for the strong no-trumpers. North opens 1NT and there's a strong argument for South to pass this. They're balanced and are close to maximum and such hands are often better played in no-trumps. 7 tricks, however, is the most that North can expect to make in 1NT. If South does transfer, then North, holding 4+ trumps is likely to make some sort of transfer break.

Thoughts on the play

East has unsupported honours in all four suits and should choose to lead from the longest, as this tends to give away less. Anyone who chooses to lead the ♠K on this hand deserves the bottom they achieve.

Otherwise there's nothing to the play. Declarer has to lose a spade, two hearts and a club.

♠ AQJ865  
 ♥ Q652  
 ♦ A10  
 ♣ 5  
 ♠ 102  
 ♥ KJ4  
 ♦ KJ8652  
 ♣ KJ  
 ♠ 973  
 ♥ A103  
 ♦ Q973  
 ♣ 1084  
 ♠ K4  
 ♥ 987  
 ♦ 4  
 ♣ AQ97632

HCP	
13	
12	6
9	

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

Board 11 : Dealer South : Nil All

West	North	East	South
			3♣
3♦	3♠	<i>Pass</i>	4♠
<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	

Thoughts on the bidding

South has a classic shape for a pre-empt, West will scrape an overcall, North is too strong not to bid, even though a change of suit is forcing, and East should stay silent because their diamond support is only an advantage if their side is playing the hand and they simply don't have a hand suitable for a sacrifice against 4♠, so shouldn't want to push the opponents there.

The spotlight falls on South. The general rule of thumb in this situation is to raise partner's major to game holding any 3-card support or with A-x, K-x or Q-x

Thoughts on the play

East is likely to lead the ♦3, hoping that partner can win and shoot back a heart.

This is a tricky hand for declarer to get right. They can see 6 spades tricks (probably), the ♦A and a diamond ruff plus the ♣A; the 10th trick may come either from a lucky break in hearts (A-K bare, J-10 bare or 3-3) or a simple club finesse. For those of you who follow such things, the chances of gaining a trick from the heart suit is about 42 percent, whereas the odds of the club finesse need to be weighed against the overcall. I have the utmost sympathy for anyone who guessed this one wrong.

♠ 7  
 ♥ A862  
 ♦ K107542  
 ♣ J5  
 ♠ QJ542                      ♠ A10986  
 ♥ KQJ10                      ♥ 9543  
 ♦ 63                              ♦ Q98  
 ♣ 82                              ♣ 6  
 ♠ K3  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ AJ  
 ♣ AKQ109743

HCP	
8	
9	6
17	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	6	1		6
S	6	6	1		6
E				1	
W				1	

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS Vulnerable

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♣</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♦</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♣</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♦</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>4♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>4NT</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>5♦</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>6♣</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	

Thoughts on the bidding

I've assumed here that East-West are silent throughout but those playing 'Ekrens' will have opened with the West hand and be in 4♠ before South's first bid. This is a lethal weapon (when it works) and will make it impossible to bid the slam.

Otherwise, those playing Standard Acol must either open this with 2♣ (game forcing) or just 1♣. Those playing 'Weak Twos' can bid as shown. I promise partner 9 playing tricks and a 6+ suit when I bid this way, so North can show their strength with a simple raise and the slam can be reached.

Those in 3NT should get a good score too, particularly those who receive a spade lead and so make 12 tricks. But it's unlikely that too many will get there. Maybe via 1♣ : 1♦ : 3♣ : 3♥ : 3NT

♠ QJ8  
 ♥ J95  
 ♦ QJ972  
 ♣ Q9  
 ♠ 3                              ♠ A1095  
 ♥ AQ64                      ♥ K83  
 ♦ AK8643                      ♦ 5  
 ♣ J10                              ♣ AK532  
 ♠ K7642  
 ♥ 1072  
 ♦ 10  
 ♣ 8764

HCP	
9	
14	14
3	

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

Board 13 : Dealer North : All Vulnerable

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	<b>Pass</b>	<b>1♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>1♦</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>1♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>2♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3NT</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>		

Thoughts on the bidding

West, having learned that partner is, most probably, 5-4 in clubs and spades, could have bid 3NT themselves but there are two reasons to use '4th suit forcing' first (1) to discover more about partner's strength and distribution as 6♦ should not be ruled out and (2) to allow for the possibility that East can bid no-trumps thereby protecting their black suit holdings from attack.

If you play '4th suit forcing' as a game-force then a 3NT response shows a minimum hand with a stopper (12-15) whereas 2NT would show 16+. If, however, you play it as a one-round force then 2NT shows a stopper with 12-13 and 3NT is 14+.

Note that West cannot be bidding hearts just in case partner has four, because with that hand East would have bid hearts before bidding spades.

Thoughts on the play

South has a difficult lead as they know that declarer holds length in both their suits. It's generally best in this situation to lead through dummy and, knowing that partner is likely to have length in diamonds may well choose to lead that suit.

Unless a spade is led, declarer will win and, if not already there, cross to dummy in order to lead the ♣J. They'll then be able to set up their 5th club for 11 tricks.

If South does lead a spade, however, declarer needs to be a bit more careful in order to achieve the same result. North will play the ♠J and East must duck. If North returns the ♠Q then declarer can win and set up an extra spade trick settling for 2 spades, 4 hearts, 2 diamonds and 3 clubs (via a club finesse).

<p>♠ 64 ♥ 75 ♦ KQ976 ♣ K942</p> <p>♠ 853                      ♠ KQ10972 ♥ Q9                        ♥ K2 ♦ A8542                    ♦ J3 ♣ Q85                      ♣ 1076</p> <p>♠ AJ ♥ AJ108643 ♦ 10 ♣ AJ3</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td></td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <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>3</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td></td></tr> </table>	HCP		8		8	9	15		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	3	2	4			S	3	2	4			E				1		W				1		<p><b>Board 14 : Dealer East : Nil All</b></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>West</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>North</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>East</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>South</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>2♠</b></td> <td><b>3♥</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>3♠</b></td> <td><b>X</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>4♥</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Thoughts on the bidding</u></p> <p>It's interesting to note that, if West passes over 3♥, North will probably pass too but if West bids North has an attractive takeout double which gets South into the making game.</p> <p>Neither East nor West should be tempted to sacrifice in 4♠ which should go for -500 and may go for more if declarer misguesses trumps.</p> <p><u>Thoughts on the play</u></p> <p>The play in 4♥ isn't going to challenge declarer who has plenty of time to force out the ♦ A for a club discard and cannot go wrong in trumps.</p>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>		<i>Pass</i>	<b>2♠</b>	<b>3♥</b>	<b>3♠</b>	<b>X</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>4♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	
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<p>♠ Q1087 ♥ 873 ♦ K1093 ♣ Q4</p> <p>♠ J5                        ♠ AK9 ♥ 4                        ♥ AQ10652 ♦ AQ865                ♦ 2 ♣ A9832                ♣ J107</p> <p>♠ 6432 ♥ KJ9 ♦ J74 ♣ K65</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>14</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td></td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <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>5</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>1</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>5</td><td>3</td><td>3</td><td>1</td><td>3</td></tr> </table>	HCP		7		11	14	8		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N						S						E	5	3	3	1	3	W	5	3	3	1	3	<p><b>Board 15 : Dealer South : NS Vulnerable</b></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>West</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>North</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>East</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>South</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>1♦</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>1♥</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>2♣</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>3♥</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>3♠</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><b>3NT</b></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td><i>Pass</i></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Thoughts on the bidding</u></p> <p>East has to choose between going slowly via a game-forcing 2♠ rebid or to show their good 6-card heart suit via the jump raise to 3♥. The latter looks more promising.</p> <p>West has to choose between showing their 5th club and giving partner the chance to bid 3NT. I've chosen the latter here but many won't.</p> <p><u>Thoughts on the play</u></p> <p>On this auction, South is likely to lead their 2nd highest spade. As declarer plans to play on clubs next but would like as many entries to dummy as possible after that, it's probably right to play small from dummy and hope that this forces the queen. North plays the ten however and declarer wins. Now East will go after their best chance of extra tricks i.e. clubs. South won't cover the ♣J and North will win and probably return the ♠Q. Declarer will be delighted that the nine is now a winner.</p> <p>Another club finesse follows, setting up the suit. Wanting to keep communications open between the two hands, declarer will probably take the diamond finesse now. All other finesses fail however and declarer should just make 9 tricks.</p>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>				<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♦</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>2♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♠</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3NT</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>		
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♠ 1032  
 ♥ KQ864  
 ♦ K32  
 ♣ 32  
 ♠ 9765  
 ♥ 5  
 ♦ 10965  
 ♣ KQJ7  
 ♠ AQ8  
 ♥ A1072  
 ♦ A84  
 ♣ 654  
 ♠ KJ4  
 ♥ J93  
 ♦ QJ7  
 ♣ A1098

HCP	
8	
6	14
12	

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

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW Vulnerable

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>1NT</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>Pass</b>			

Thoughts on the bidding

Scores on this board are likely to differ depending upon the systems played and players attitude to risk.

East-West playing strong NT will probably play in 1NT by East, with no intervention. Those playing weak & 4 will open 1NT and play there unless North overcalls with their 8 count, which they should in order to protect their partner, who couldn't compete immediately without the points for a penalty double or a biddable 5+ suit.

Having passed initially, North also knows that partner will know this is protective.

Thoughts on the play

This is a most interesting hand for those studying end-plays.

Those Easts in 1NT will do best if they keep South on lead. South's club lead is won in dummy and a diamond played to the 8 and jack. South will probably switch to a small heart, which declarer wins and plays another club.

If South ducks this, to sever communications with dummy, then declarer wins in dummy and plays ace and another diamond. North wins, plays back a heart to South's nine but must allow South's jack to hold (or create an extra trick for declarer's 10). South is now end-played.

The best they can do is play ace and another club, declarer pitching their losing heart. Now all declarer need do is to play a spade from dummy and cover whichever card North produces to end-play South and make the contract.

A similar fate awaits all Easts defending 2♥. The best lead is a club, which declarer ducks. West won't want to create a ruffing finesse against them, so will switch; probably to diamonds. Wanting to cut down on declarer's entries, East will play low unless/until North plays the ♦ K but then will win and play another club, declarer this time winning with the ace. Now a heart is led to the king and ace and another club forces declarer to ruff.

A heart to the jack gives the bad news but all is not lost. The play of the club suit so far should tell declarer who has the missing honour. If they think it's East, then they ruff a club, cash their diamonds and lead a spade to the king for 9 tricks (East must have the ace for their opening bid). If they think it's West, as here, they play a heart to the king, cash their diamonds and then exit with their last heart. East is now end-played to open up the spade suit and so give two tricks in that suit.

♠ AJ8654  
 ♥ 94  
 ♦ QJ  
 ♣ A42  
 ♠ 92  
 ♥ K875  
 ♦ 8765  
 ♣ KQ10  
 ♠ KQ7  
 ♥ AJ1062  
 ♦ AK10  
 ♣ J7  
 ♠ 103  
 ♥ Q3  
 ♦ 9432  
 ♣ 98653

HCP	
12	
8	18
2	

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

Board 17 : Dealer North : Nil All

West	North	East	South
	1♠	X	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Thoughts on the bidding

East has a balanced 18 point hand when RHO opens 1♠ and is too strong for a direct 1NT overcall (even if you play 16-18 the good 5-card heart suit is a big plus). So, East doubles intending to show their strength later by ignoring partner's choice of suit.

West, however, makes a single jump raise to 3♥ which promises 4+ hearts and 8-10 points (where 2♥ would show 0-7) and East happily pushes on to game.

Note how useful it is for West to know that partner's double either promises 4 hearts or 16+ points. If you still use double to show opening points and use suit overcalls to show weaker hands then please consider looking at this alternative approach.

Thoughts on the play

The diamond lead, while initially appearing to be a bad one, actually costs nothing at all because declarer can just as easily discard dummy's losing diamond on a club. 11 tricks should be standard

♠ K97643  
 ♥ KQ  
 ♦ QJ7  
 ♣ QJ  
 ♠ AQJ10  
 ♥ 432  
 ♦ 105  
 ♣ A643  
 ♠ VOID  
 ♥ AJ9865  
 ♦ K632  
 ♣ 852  
 ♠ 852  
 ♥ 107  
 ♦ A984  
 ♣ K1097

HCP	
14	
11	8
7	

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

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		2♥	Pass
3♥	?		

Thoughts on the bidding

If East-West play 'Weak Two' openings then I'd expect some excitement on this board. Otherwise, there's a good chance that North will play in 2♠ (being a great score) or 3♠ (which if undoubled, should be above average)

After East opens, however, and West raises, North has to be very disciplined not to compete with their 14 HCP and 6-card suit.

If North does bid 3♠ then either East will revalue their hand and bid 4♥ or they'll pass thus allowing West to double.

Thoughts on the play

Thoughts on the play (4♥ by East)

On the normal spade lead, declarer will be able to dispose of two losing clubs and a losing diamond. The 2-2 trump break will then mean that their 3rd diamond can be ruffed in dummy and 10 tricks made. The only lead to defeat 4♥ is an unlikely club lead.

Thoughts on the play (3♠x by North)

When you hold a 6-card suit headed by the ace and partner has shown support, it's often best to lead the ace in the absence of any better lead. This allows East a safe exit in hearts at trick 2.

As long as declarer either (a) finesses in diamonds or discards diamonds on clubs and (b) plays a spade to their king at some stage, then 8 tricks will follow

♠ Q7  
 ♥ AK1032  
 ♦ 642  
 ♣ Q93  
 ♠ 10843  
 ♥ Q65  
 ♦ A83  
 ♣ J72  
 ♠ AJ6  
 ♥ J7  
 ♦ Q10  
 ♣ AK8654  
 ♠ K952  
 ♥ 984  
 ♦ KJ975  
 ♣ 10

HCP	
11	
7	15
7	

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

**Board 19 : Dealer South : EW Vulnerable**

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			<i>Pass</i>
<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♥</b>	<b>2♣</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>3♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♥</b>
<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	

Thoughts on the bidding  
 Another highly competitive board. Whatever doubts North may have for opening their 11 count (and holding 2 unsupported queens in side suits is good reason for doubt), the fact that North is non-vulnerable against vulnerable, third-in-hand, with a suit they'd like led should dispel them.

At this vulnerability, East's 2-level overcall promises 13-15 HCP with an excellent suit (probable 6 when it's a minor)

If North's opening guarantees a 5-card suit (and not all 5-card major players do when third-in-hand) then South can raise immediately, otherwise they'll make a negative double. It's good tactics for West to 'up the ante' here as the vulnerability makes it attractive for the opposition to go one higher. Note that 3♣ is more clearly obstructive if your partnership play 'unassuming cue-bids'.

South's final bid can be made based on this logic - for Weak & 4 players - North's pass over 3♣ suggests a minimum hand, yet they didn't open 1NT, so their hand isn't balanced and so they must hold 5 hearts.

Thoughts on the play  
 East will start with a top club but won't like what they see in dummy and may take a while to make their choice of 2nd card - what would you play?

As it happens, the only choice that should cost is to play a trump, which allows declarer to play that suit without loss. East should rule out that option, however, because it's not dummy's ruffing power that should worry East - it's that diamond suit and their own badly placed ♦ Q-10.

So my choice would be to play a spade next (probably ace and another), hoping to get as many tricks as possible in that suit before diamonds are set up.

Declarer wins in hand and can either ruff one club and discard the other or play to set up diamonds. The former seems safest.

Once the club losers are taken care of, declarer can play 2 rounds of trumps and a diamond towards the K-J-9. When the 10 appears from East, North has no guess since only if East holds the ♦ Q can two diamond losers be avoided.

♠ Q87  
♥ 86  
♦ KJ94  
♣ K865

♠ A943  
♥ KJ105  
♦ AQ7  
♣ Q10

♠ J5  
♥ AQ73  
♦ 1062  
♣ A942

♠ K1062  
♥ 942  
♦ 853  
♣ J73

HCP	
9	
16	11
4	

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

**Board 20 : Dealer West : All Vulnerable**

West	North	East	South
<b>1♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>4♥</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding  
All systems are likely to get to 4♥ unopposed.

Thoughts on the play  
Unless East-West play Weak and 5, North will be on lead and having three suits with unsupported honours, should lead their 4th suit - i.e. trumps

Notice how much simpler declarer's job becomes if North decides to lead their 4th highest diamond or club. All declarer needs to do is to avoid drawing trumps until their two losing spades are ruffed.

On a trump lead, however, declarer is likely to go one down. It is possible to end-play North but the declarer is more likely to try for a finesse with both failing.

♠ Q98743  
♥ J962  
♦ Q72  
♣ VOID

♠ AKJ5  
♥ 1084  
♦ 964  
♣ A92

♠ 2  
♥ Q75  
♦ KJ5  
♣ KJ10863

♠ 106  
♥ AK3  
♦ A1083  
♣ Q754

HCP	
5	
12	10
13	

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

**Board 21 : Dealer North : NS Vulnerable**

West	North	East	South
	<b>Pass</b>	<b>1♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>1♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>
<b>3♣</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>

Thoughts on the bidding  
This hand will show up/off players' differing styles of hand evaluation.

Some North's, despite the vulnerability, poor trump suit and the 4-card other major, will open theirs with a 'Weak Two' and, if East values their hand to bid 3♣, West will bid 3NT. If East passes and West bids a protective 2NT then East again must decide to sign-off in 3♣ or raise to 3NT

If North passes, however, some East's will pass, some will open 1♣ and a few will open 3♣.

If East opens 1♣, West will do well to treat their hand as invitational but many will push to 3NT.

If East passes then South will open; an opening 1NT (12-14) being the most likely to keep East-West out

Thoughts on the play  
3NT by East-West is unlikely to make on natural play & defence and even 3♣ requires declarer to finesse South for the queen without first cashing the ♣K.

There is one point of interest in the defence to 3♣ though. If South leads a top heart, then North must discourage to get South to switch and the suit selected must be spades (though strength). So, if North-South play 'Ace for attitude etc' then it's the ace that South must choose to lead.

If allowed to play in spades, North-South should make 8 tricks and can make an overtrick if they guess when playing towards the A-10-x to insert the ten.

<p>♠ 87 ♥ J83 ♦ A10982 ♣ K102</p> <p>♠ Q53                      ♠ KJ1042 ♥ 10964                    ♥ 2 ♦ 64                         ♦ QJ75 ♣ 9865                    ♣ A4</p> <p>♠ A96 ♥ AKQ75 ♦ K3 ♣ Q73</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">HCP</td> <td colspan="5">Makeable contracts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>♣</td> <td>♦</td> <td>♥</td> <td>♠</td> <td>NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>N</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>1 3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>S</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>1 3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>18</td> <td>W</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	HCP	Makeable contracts					8	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	2	N	2	3	4	1 3	12	S	2	3	4	1 3		E					18	W					<p><b>Board 22 : Dealer East : EW Vulnerable</b></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>West</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>North</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>East</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>South</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1♠</td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td>3♦</td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td>4♥</td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Thoughts on the bidding</u> South is too strong for a direct overcall of 2♥ and so doubles first. North shows their 8-10 points by jumping one round of bidding and South shows their 17+ hand by changing suit</p> <p><u>Thoughts on the play</u> The route to 10 tricks here is simply to arrange to ruff a spade in dummy. The subsequent run of hearts is going to make East very uncomfortable and, if South reads their discards cards correctly, an end-play should result in an overtrick.</p>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>			1♠	X	<b>Pass</b>	3♦	<b>Pass</b>	3♥	<b>Pass</b>	4♥	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>			
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<p>♠ AJ98 ♥ K10932 ♦ 103 ♣ Q3</p> <p>♠ Q106532                ♠ K ♥ VOID                    ♥ J75 ♦ Q62                     ♦ AJ974 ♣ K765                    ♣ J1084</p> <p>♠ 74 ♥ AQ864 ♦ K85 ♣ A92</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">HCP</td> <td colspan="5">Makeable contracts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>♣</td> <td>♦</td> <td>♥</td> <td>♠</td> <td>NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>N</td> <td></td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>S</td> <td></td> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>E</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>13</td> <td>W</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	HCP	Makeable contracts					10	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	7	N		4	1	3	10	S		4	1	3		E	2	2			13	W	2	2			<p><b>Board 23 : Dealer South : All Vulnerable</b></p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>West</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>North</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>East</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>South</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td>2♦</td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td>4♥</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Thoughts on the bidding</u> For those playing Weak &amp; 4, South's hand poses the eternal question of what to bid when dealt a 5-card major in an otherwise balanced hand in your 1NT range.</p> <p>The general guideline is: if your major is strong enough to be rebid and possibly mistaken for a 6-card suit then open your major. Otherwise, open 1NT</p> <p>North transfers to hearts, expecting to have to bid 2♠ next thus showing their shape and invitational+ values. Holding 4+ hearts South should make a transfer break. Without discussion with partner, I suggest that simply jumping to 3♥ is best but regular partnerships should assign meanings to all bids up to and including three of the suit.</p> <p><u>Thoughts on the play</u> When you find yourself in the position of having to lead from suits, all having unsupported honours, then it's generally best to lead from the longest suit. Here a diamond lead works ok but a club lead gives declarer an overtrick.</p> <p>On a spade lead, declarer mustn't be deluded into thinking that the spade suit holds prospects for overtricks. If they play the ♠8 at trick one, East will win and cash the ♦A, West discouraging. Now the ♣J follows and South mustn't be greedy for, if they let the club run then a spade ruff will surely follow.</p> <p>The point here is that any potential you might see in the spade suit is an illusion. The most it can generate for declarer is one discard and neither a diamond nor a club discard helps improve your trick count.</p> <p>The only card that matters on this hand is the location of the ♦A. Once it's with East, game should be made.</p>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>				1NT	<b>Pass</b>	2♦	<b>Pass</b>	3♥	<b>Pass</b>	4♥		
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			1NT																																																		
<b>Pass</b>	2♦	<b>Pass</b>	3♥																																																		
<b>Pass</b>	4♥																																																				

♠ KQ  
 ♥ 10654  
 ♦ KQ32  
 ♣ J87  
 ♠ 6  
 ♥ AK83  
 ♦ J986  
 ♣ AQ93  
 ♠ J853  
 ♥ QJ2  
 ♦ A10  
 ♣ K542  
 ♠ A109742  
 ♥ 97  
 ♦ 754  
 ♣ 106

HCP	
11	
14	11
4	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N					
S					
E	6	4	4	1	4
W	6	4	4	1	4

Board 24 : Dealer West : Nil All

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

Thoughts on the bidding  
 Weak & 4 players, who were taught to open the suit below the singleton when 4-4-4-1, will open 1♥ on this hand and then find themselves stuck for a rebid when partner responds 1♠ - if they bid 1NT they're promising 15-16 and a balanced hand; neither of which they have, and if they bid 2♣ they're promising 5 hearts.. This is why the more modern approach is to always open 1♦ when 4-4-4-1 unless your singleton is diamonds; then open 1♣

East's rebid is either 3♣ or 2NT. With a balanced hand and stoppers in the un-bid suits 2NT looks best.

Thoughts on the play  
 South's spades are such that I expect them to be led despite East's bid. Luckily for East, the suit is blocked and, those brave enough to try it can winkle an overtrick by playing a diamond towards the A-10 before cashing hearts and clubs. It actually is entirely safe to do this and to put in the ten if North plays low because 4 tricks is all that the defence can take even if the finesse loses.

♠ 94  
 ♥ 95  
 ♦ AK654  
 ♣ J542  
 ♠ AKJ1075  
 ♥ Q  
 ♦ 103  
 ♣ AKQ6  
 ♠ 2  
 ♥ 108643  
 ♦ Q9872  
 ♣ 83  
 ♠ Q863  
 ♥ AKJ72  
 ♦ J  
 ♣ 1097

HCP	
8	
19	2
11	

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

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW Vulnerable

West	North	East	South
4♠	Pass	Pass	1♥
	Pass	Pass	Pass

Thoughts on the bidding  
 I expect most Souths to open with this hand, non-vulnerable and in third position. Whether South opens or not, West has to decide how to value their collection. Most will conclude that it's worth a game-force and bid accordingly. This probably isn't the time, however, to double first and then bid 4♠ (which shows a much stronger hand than an immediate raise to 4♠) because it might allow the opponents to discover a fit/ show values and thereby find a sacrifice

Thoughts on the play  
 The less adventurous bidders among you will get a good result from this board. In theory, declarer can lose 1 spade, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and a club, so if you managed to stop in 2♠ you're guaranteed a plus score.

The only way that I can see declarer escaping with 9 tricks is if North starts by cashing two diamonds before switching to a heart and South then playing a second top heart. Now declarer can ruff, play ace, king and another club, ruffing in dummy, ruff a diamond back to hand in order to play trumps.

♠ 74  
 ♥ A10983  
 ♦ K953  
 ♣ J9  
 ♠ AK62                      ♠ 953  
 ♥ KQJ                        ♥ 654  
 ♦ 10                            ♦ Q62  
 ♣ AKQ105                   ♣ 8763  
                                  ♠ QJ108  
                                  ♥ 72  
                                  ♦ AJ874  
                                  ♣ 42

HCP	
8	
22	2
8	

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

**Board 26 : Dealer East : All Vulnerable**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>
<b>1♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♦</b>
<b>2♠</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>
<b>3♥</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>4♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>
<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>		

Thoughts on the bidding  
 I expect to see many different opening bids with West's hand. It's tempting to open 2NT and this will make on the likely heart lead.

Others will choose to show a strong hand with clubs. The problem with this approach is that you only have 8 playing tricks and Acol doesn't allow you to show that without committing you to 9 tricks. The third choice, and my preference, is to open 1♣. It seems to give you the best chance of getting spades into the picture later. For, if partner cannot muster a response then the opposition may well overcall (as here).

If East had bid over 1♣ then West's 2♠ bid would be game-forcing, but now it just shows a very strong hand. Knowing that East has club support should embolden West to keep trying for game and the subsequent 3♥ is intended (a) to cater for East holding 5+ hearts and (b) to show stops in case East has the diamonds stopped.

Thoughts on the play  
 In no-trumps, on a heart lead, West will win with the king and play off 5 rounds of clubs, putting severe strain on North/South. Well done to any Wests who made 9 tricks and to any North/Souths who did better.

There is no such excitement in clubs. 10 tricks are always there.

♠ A3  
 ♥ 543  
 ♦ 74  
 ♣ AKQJ42  
 ♠ J54                        ♠ K109  
 ♥ KJ876                    ♥ Q109  
 ♦ A83                        ♦ Q5  
 ♣ 93                         ♣ 108765  
                                  ♠ Q8762  
                                  ♥ A2  
                                  ♦ KJ10962  
                                  ♣ VOID

HCP	
14	
9	7
10	

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

**Board 27 : Dealer South : Nil All**

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>
<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>1♦</b>
<i>Pass</i>	<b>2♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>2♠</b>
<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♣</b>	<i>Pass</i>	<b>3♦</b>
<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	<i>Pass</i>	

Thoughts on the bidding  
 Unless you have Weak 2-suited openings available to you, consider passing highly distributional weak hands when NOT non-vul vs vul. You will often get the chance to show your two suits later (if you have 2-suited overcalls available)

If South opens 1♦ then I expect many poor souls to end up in 3NT. Otherwise, it's a battle between North's clubs and South's diamonds with the most successful being the unselfish Norths.

I don't think many will get to the game in diamonds.

Thoughts on the play  
 In 3NT, West has no reason not to lead a heart and declarer should decide to go off gracefully. They can see 8 tricks if the clubs break and no sure slow trick. Unfortunately the clubs don't behave and 3NT may well fail by 3 tricks.

In diamonds, however, declarer can discard their losing heart on a top club (the only trick needed from that suit!). Now a spade is played off dummy. When next in, declarer ruffs a spade and finesses the diamond for 11, very lucky, tricks.

<p>♠ K10742 ♥ 7 ♦ 742 ♣ QJ106</p> <p>♠ AQJ9                      ♠ 865 ♥ 1065                      ♥ J98432 ♦ Q9                            ♦ KJ ♣ K854                      ♣ 97</p> <p>♠ 3 ♥ AKQ ♦ A108653 ♣ A32</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">6</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">12</td><td style="text-align: center;">5</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">17</td><td></td></tr> </table> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; 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 style="text-align: center;">4</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">2</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">3</td><td style="text-align: center;">4</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td></td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">1</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	HCP		6		12	5	17		Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	4	4		2	4	S	4	4		3	4	E			1			W			1			<p><b>Board 28 : Dealer West : NS Vulnerable</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>West</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>North</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>East</b></td> <td style="width: 25%;"><b>South</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>1NT</b></td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td><b>2♦</b></td> <td><b>3♦</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td><b>3♠</b></td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td><b>3NT</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td><b>Pass</b></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Thoughts on the bidding</u> Thoughts on the bidding If West opens a 12-14 no-trump then East will transfer and South can either double (showing diamonds) and then bid 3♦ later or bid 3♦ immediately. Which would you take to be stronger when vul v/s non-vul?</p> <p>With diamond support, ruffing potential in hearts and a partner prepared to bid for 9 tricks in diamonds opposite a potential bust in your hand, North should be prepared to go to 4♦ but should show their 5-card spade suit en-route.</p> <p>The spade bid is music to South's ears and 3NT looks like an automatic reaction.</p> <p>If West opens a prepared 1♣ and East passes, South should double and, over North's 1♠ response, bid 2♦, showing this strong hand. North should raise to 3♦ and 3NT reached again.</p> <p>If West opens a prepared 1♣ and East bids a weak 2♥ then South bids 3♦ and we're back to the same auction as the before.</p> <p><u>Thoughts on the play</u></p> <p>Against 3NT, West may try a sneaky ♠Q lead, but with the ♠K-10 in dummy, declarer won't be fooled and will play the king. Now two rounds of diamonds set up that suit and declarer must finish with 10 tricks.</p>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>1NT</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>2♦</b>	<b>3♦</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3♠</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>3NT</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Pass</b>	
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**Many thanks to Ranald Milne, recently elevated to Grand Master, for his excellent commentary.**