

♦♠NORTHERN IRELAND BRIDGE UNION ♥♣



*Second Interclub – Heat B*

*23<sup>rd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022*

*Commentary by Ian Hamilton*

**1**

♠ K654  
 ♥ A976  
 ♦ K2  
 ♣ A83  
 ♠ Q983  
 ♥ QJ104  
 ♦ J6  
 ♣ J62  
 ♠ 102  
 ♥ K32  
 ♦ A8543  
 ♣ KQ4  
 ♠ AJ7  
 ♥ 85  
 ♦ Q1097  
 ♣ 10975

 Dealer: North  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

With north maximum for a weak NT opener or rebid most N/Ss should be in 3NT by north, though some might stay low. East will usually start with a heart.

West gets on lead twice in diamonds and can return a major. If hearts declarer must win and knock out the remaining diamond, hearts entryless. Should west try a spade declarer ducks, cutting off the last spade winner.

Thus, 3NT should be successful, but may not be in practice. Certainly, overtricks will be very rare.

**2**

♠ Q73  
 ♥ Q42  
 ♦ Q5  
 ♣ KQ754  
 ♠ 8  
 ♥ J1053  
 ♦ AJ108  
 ♣ J983  
 ♠ K964  
 ♥ 987  
 ♦ 9762  
 ♣ A10  
 ♠ AJ1052  
 ♥ AK6  
 ♦ K43  
 ♣ 62

 Dealer: East  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

This time 1NT looks the likely resting place, whether west opens the strong variety, or east replies 1NT to a west 1♠.

West struggles, a club from north setting up the suit when south wins the 10 and ace, then switches to a spade. Declarer only makes the obvious seven tricks.

With south on lead clubs can only be set up with the loss of a trick, a spade a better start. Double dummy, this can be ducked to the 8, and declarer manage eight tricks. In practice, he won't.

Around the room I suspect there will be anything from seven to nine tricks recorded E/W, in a tricky hand for all concerned, more so the defence.

**3**

♠ 9652  
 ♥ K42  
 ♦ 63  
 ♣ KQJ2  
 ♠ A104  
 ♥ 9763  
 ♦ AQ10  
 ♣ 1098  
 ♠ Q3  
 ♥ Q1085  
 ♦ 9852  
 ♣ A43  
 ♠ KJ87  
 ♥ AJ  
 ♦ KJ74  
 ♣ 765

 Dealer: South  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

Acol could come off second best on this one, south opening 1NT and playing there. Although the diamond suit is well placed, and a heart lead may give up a trick, entries are at a premium and declarer will do well to make eight tricks.

5 card majors find the 4:4 spade fit, should have an easier time, and ought to be able to avoid losing more than two trumps and the minor suit aces.

Of course, some might manage to make 150 N/S, but it will be hard work.

**4**

♠ 32  
 ♥ AQ5  
 ♦ KQ7  
 ♣ A10642  
 ♠ 6  
 ♥ J92  
 ♦ J105432  
 ♣ K95  
 ♠ AQJ10975  
 ♥ K63  
 ♦ 96  
 ♣ 7  
 ♠ K84  
 ♥ 10874  
 ♦ A8  
 ♣ QJ83

 Dealer: West  
 Both Vulnerable

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

A fair few will get to 3NT when north's 1♣ or strong NT is overcalled by east with spades, south having game values and a spade stop.

3NT is there with an overtrick so long as declarer takes his winners via a club finesse and resists the heart one. It looks as if east can be endplayed to lead hearts, but the entries aren't there. However, west needs to lead spades to save two overtricks. He mightn't.

Should east essay 3♠ and be doubled declarer can escape for minus 500, losing a spade, club, two diamonds and two hearts. However, this does require the heart 9 to be finessed to allow a heart trick by force. If not -800 won't score well.

**5**

♠ 9832  
♥ A42  
♦ KJ74  
♣ K8

♠ AKQ1075  
♥ J103  
♦ Q  
♣ Q43

♠ J  
♥ KQ5  
♦ A1098653  
♣ J6

♠ 64  
♥ 9876  
♦ 2  
♣ A109752

Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

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

This could be a bidding battle between partners, east bidding and re-bidding spades, west likewise with diamonds. Many will simply end in 3NT.

Diamonds are held to eight tricks on a unlikely club lead, declarer losing two trumps, as well as the three tops, but may go plus 110 in practice.

Spades do better. Declarer cannot set up a club or diamond trick in time, unless allowed two heart entries to dummy or the defence lead clubs, nine tricks the theoretical limit. In practice, many will probably make ten, again maybe plus.

Defending 3NT north does his best on the club 10 lead, ducking. Should east win the queen north's king can be overtaken by south, and the suit run after north wins the heart ace. However, east can duck, blocking the suit. A great double coup were it to happen. It won't, the end result most having 600 or 630 on the card, and a good E/W score.

**7**

♠ A104  
♥ AQ  
♦ Q10765  
♣ 1064

♠ J732  
♥ J94  
♦ J4  
♣ AK85

♠ KQ865  
♥ K107  
♦ 983  
♣ QJ

♠ 9  
♥ 86532  
♦ AK2  
♣ 9732

Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

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

We could see this passed out, though west has a borderline 1♠ opener and north a thin weak NT or 1♦.

Where spades are opened or overcalled E/W may get too high, the 3 level costing 100-200 on a diamond lead, heart switch and subsequent ruff. Where 1NT is passed out and spades led declarer needs to take his eight top tricks and retire.

North could end in 2♥ after a transfer sequence. This is not comfortable on a spade lead, but can score 110, a plus score, but worse than 120 in NTs. Diamonds are the spot, though rarely reached, 130 possible, two spades ruffed and the trump knave dropping.

I bet there are some managing 110 E/W in spades for a great result.

**6**

♠ K109  
♥ K863  
♦ J1054  
♣ 92

♠ Q432  
♥ QJ42  
♦ 9  
♣ KQ107

♠ J76  
♥ 97  
♦ AKQ873  
♣ A3

♠ A85  
♥ A105  
♦ 62  
♣ J8654

Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

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

E/W could play this in 2♦ after west rebids his suit. 2♦ just staggers over the line when the defence take their four top tricks and trump winner.

A few could not unreasonably upgrade west to a strong NT, and end up in game, and this could result anyway, there being 24HCP and a good six card suit on offer. 3NT should comfortably be beaten thanks to the uneven diamond split. Indeed, if north leads hearts 3NT is two light.

It is a bit unlucky that east has only a singleton diamond. With even a doubleton 3NT needs only a 3:2 diamond break and would be a 68% shot. As it is it needs diamonds 3:3, which occurs only 35% of the time.

**8**

♠ K10  
♥ A97432  
♦ 53  
♣ AQ10

♠ QJ76  
♥ J10865  
♦ Q7  
♣ 72

♠ 98  
♥ K  
♦ 109864  
♣ KJ985

♠ A5432  
♥ Q  
♦ AKJ2  
♣ 643

Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

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

N/S could end in either 3NT or 4♥, having the values for both. East has a variety of unappetising leads against either. 3NT should succeed, so long as declarer double finesses clubs.

In 4♥ it looks as if east has four unassailable trump tricks. However, declarer can succeed by taking a club finesse, then ruffing (or over-ruffing) two spades in north and cashing winners. East gets end-played in trumps after ruffing a plain card, north shortened in trumps. This just might happen when east shows up with short diamonds.

Well done anyone with 420 on the card.

**9**

♠ AJ107  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ 10752  
 ♣ Q652  
 ♠ K5  
 ♥ 1053  
 ♦ KQ643  
 ♣ AKJ  
 ♠ 9632  
 ♥ KQJ62  
 ♦ A  
 ♣ 974

 Dealer: North  
 E-W Vulnerable

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

East can open 1♦ or a strong NT. South might overcall NT with the majors, otherwise bid 1♥. Over a 1♥ overcall west presumably essays 1NT and plays there. The major-showing bid is more awkward, and I can see some wests doubling, eventually defending 2♣x by north.

Where west declares no trumps neither major suit lead seriously troubles declarer, so long as diamonds are played first from east, picking up the singleton ace, nine tricks ensuing.

2♠ by N/S cannot be beaten. The standard lead against this sort of auction is a trump, but a diamond is more likely to emerge from east. Not that it matters.

Will there be many 470s on the card?

**10**

♠ A10843  
 ♥ Q10942  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ A3  
 ♠ J62  
 ♥ AKJ8  
 ♦ 7  
 ♣ KQJ109  
 ♠ KQ95  
 ♥ 3  
 ♦ AJ6542  
 ♣ 74  
 ♠ 7  
 ♥ 765  
 ♦ KQ1083  
 ♣ 8652

 Dealer: East  
 Both Vulnerable

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

This time N/S will not land on their feet should north show a major two suiter over west's 1♣. Should they declare hearts even making six tricks is a major struggle, and a decent penalty forthcoming for E/W. However, any intervention makes it awkward for E/W to get to 3NT, so losing a penalty might not be a disaster.

E/W stop both majors, and the defence can't get diamond tricks, so 600 or 630 is there if E/W can get to 3NT. However, the stops are divided, so it is tricky.

I can see some E/Ws light in club or diamond contracts, in a hand difficult to predict the outcome.

**11**

♠ 952  
 ♥ KQ3  
 ♦ 109853  
 ♣ A3  
 ♠ K8763  
 ♥ AJ5  
 ♦ A4  
 ♣ 987  
 ♠ A10  
 ♥ 987  
 ♦ QJ2  
 ♣ KJ1054

 Dealer: South  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

A few south's will open and conceivably end in north's 1NT, though east may overcall 2♠ at love all. Where south passes east could declare either 2♠ or 1NT, depending on methods.

East's 1NT is beaten on the club knave lead, so long as the defence make an early heart switch. By contrast, 2♠ should not lose more than three clubs, a heart and a spade.

Looks a good one E/W if they can play in spades.

**12**

♠ 9  
 ♥ AQ9  
 ♦ 92  
 ♣ A1087542  
 ♠ AKQ6432  
 ♥ J1065  
 ♦  
 ♣ 63  
 ♠ J1087  
 ♥ K84  
 ♦ A10873  
 ♣ 9  
 ♠ 5  
 ♥ 732  
 ♦ KQJ654  
 ♣ KQJ

 Dealer: West  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

E/W will surely declare 4♠ at most tables, possibly in one bid, though east has enough for a raise of 3♠ to game anyway. A few might try 5♣ as north and avoid being doubled. Even if they are it could be profitable.

Defending spades, so long as the defence are careful, they should take two heart tricks and a club. However, declarer might manage to eliminate north's minors. Should north now fly in with the ace on a middle heart lead he is now endplayed to cede an eleventh trick.

5♣ gets close by N/S, and could make. East needs to find ace and another diamond or better still, a low one for a ruff, west switching to hearts. On any other switch the defence still have a chance, but east must duck the first diamond, or the suit can be ruffed good.

**13**

♠ A8762  
♥ A976  
♦ Q9  
♣ 42

♠ KQJ105  
♥ 1085  
♦ J  
♣ AQJ6

♠ 94  
♥ 3  
♦ K87652  
♣ 9875

Dealer: North  
Both Vulnerable

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

West will be in 4♥ at most tables, responding in the suit to east's 1♠, and being raised.

On any lead declarer should play a spade next, setting up dummy's side suit. The defence can then try and establish a diamond by switching to the suit - this doesn't work, as east can ruff the second round and north has no further diamonds to embarrass declarer, who can even cross-ruff home now.

Alternatively, the defence can lead and continue trumps, allowing declarer an easy ride, setting up winners.

Declarer can therefore make eleven tricks. However, not knowing of the splits, some could easily go wrong and fail to make the maximum, or even the contract.

**14**

♠ J8752  
♥ 1083  
♦ AQ4  
♣ K9

♠ 3  
♥ AQ9642  
♦ 1063  
♣ J72

♠ 964  
♥ J75  
♦ J52  
♣ A863

Dealer: East  
Neither Vulnerable

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

West might be tempted to try game over east's Multi or Weak Two in hearts. However, there is a distinct lack of high cards outside of spades, and the defence should either get a spade over-ruff, a club ruff or two diamond tricks to defeat 4♥.

Where east passes the same decisions occur, whether west opens a strong NT or Acol 1♠.

It is close whether to try for game with west's hand. Were the spade and diamond queens reversed 4♥ would have had a much better chance. Such is the luck of the game.

**15**

♠ QJ10  
♥ 83  
♦ A92  
♣ KJ653

♠ A84  
♥ AQ10974  
♦ 107  
♣ Q7

♠ 7652  
♥ 5  
♦ Q6543  
♣ 1084

♠ K93  
♥ KJ62  
♦ KJ8  
♣ A92

Dealer: South  
N-S Vulnerable

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

South has a pretty thin strong NT, and might prefer a minor, while Acol opens 1♥ (or a weak NT). Either way, game should still eventuate, 3NT the obvious spot.

Double dummy, there are eleven tricks, but most will not fall the doubleton club queen, being held to 630. Luckily, with spades and diamonds doubly stopped, and both hearts onside, there is very little scope for much other than 630 on most cards, with maybe the odd 660.

Not the most exciting hand around.

**16**

♠ J5  
♥ 6432  
♦ K108  
♣ K942

♠ 84  
♥ Q97  
♦ A963  
♣ Q763

♠ 10972  
♥ 1085  
♦ Q752  
♣ 105

♠ AKQ63  
♥ AKJ  
♦ J4  
♣ AJ8

Dealer: West  
E-W Vulnerable

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

Again, N/S will be in 3NT after south opens 2♣ and rebids 2NT, showing 23-24 balanced. North hasn't quite enough to invite slam.

The field will be happy enough with 430 or 460, but Deep Finesse has a ball, running the club knave, pinning the 10, and guessing diamonds correctly.

There might be a few with 490 on the card, west starting with a club, but I reckon these will be a rarity. Yet another uninspiring hand. Sorry guys.

**17**

♠ 986  
♥ 85  
♦ KQ10765  
♣ 96

♠ AK10753  
♥ J7  
♦ J94  
♣ 103

♠ QJ  
♥ A1032  
♦ 3  
♣ AQJ854

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

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

E/W can actually make a lot of tricks in spades, trump honours dropping, and there being no defensive diamond communication.

In practice, few will bid beyond 2♣ after an east Weak Two, or west 1♥ overcall of a south 1♣ opener. At love all south might well compete with clubs.

I can see south being left to declare 3♣ at several tables, probably losing 150, an improvement on allowing E/W to score 170 or 200 in spades - the latter needing the heart 9 to be finessed).

Should be a lot of scores E/W on this one.

**18**

♠ Q1084  
♥ AKJ98  
♦ 75  
♣ Q10

♠ K3  
♥ Q10765  
♦ K8  
♣ K986

♠ AJ72  
♥ 4  
♦ Q9432  
♣ J53

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

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

West might well be left to declare his 1NT response to an east 1♥ here, and should make at most six tricks on a spade lead.

Elsewhere, east might pass and north open 1♥, south's 1♠ response raised. South's 2♣ provides a better N/S score, at least 110 on the card so long as trumps are played early, obviating an east over-ruff in diamonds.

A good illustration of the light opener allowing a "steal", losing 50 against a part-score available to the opponents.

**19**

♠ J72  
♥ Q642  
♦ KJ63  
♣ K3

♠ KQ86  
♥ J10  
♦ 5  
♣ A109876

♠ 109  
♥ A87  
♦ AQ1097  
♣ Q42

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

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

The vulnerable E/Ws may not get into the auction here, allowing south to try to make his weak NT. Where 1♦ is opened north responds 1♥, but now east can comfortably overcall 2♣, and maybe get declaring.

In this scenario N/S can outbid clubs with their nine card diamond fit, and could still get the upper hand. E/W can actually make 3♣ (if the fit can be found) or 4♣, but might well sell out.

Although par is for N/S to be defeated in 4♦, in practice many will be allowed to make 110 (or 90 in 1NT). I can't see that many vulnerable E/Ws advancing far enough in a black suit, where they also need to guess hearts correctly to make their maximum entitlement.

**20**

♠ 9862  
♥ KJ53  
♦ K52  
♣ Q4

♠ 1054  
♥ AQ104  
♦ 983  
♣ 876

♠ AKQ  
♥ 97  
♦ AQJ10  
♣ A1052

♠ J73  
♥ 862  
♦ 764  
♣ KJ93

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

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

This looks like a universal 3NT by east after his 2NT opener. N/S do best to lead a black suit. A diamond is a particularly damaging start, allowing declarer to pick up the suit for four tricks and make nine tricks in all.

Left alone, declarer is best to give up on the diamond finesse, setting up three tricks by ceding the king. That brings the tally to eight tricks, though declarer could conceivably be held to seven by taking a second losing heart finesse to north, stranding the heart ace entryless in dummy.

Scope for scores either way here.



**21**

♠ J85  
 ♥ KQ76  
 ♦  
 ♣ AK7643  
 ♠ Q10963  
 ♥ AJ8  
 ♦ 854  
 ♣ 95  
 ♠ 952  
 ♥ AKQ9632  
 ♣ Q82  
 ♠ AK742  
 ♥ 1043  
 ♦ J107  
 ♣ J10

 Dealer: North  
 N-S Vulnerable

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

We could have fun here when east jumps in diamonds over north's 1♣. South might feel it is now or never and bid spades, quite likely raised to game. Sadly, the 5:0 break seriously damages declarer's prospects, and he may well be doubled.

Where E/W are left to declare diamonds they cannot be prevented from making nine tricks. South can ruff east's club queen away with a high trump, but declarer simply pitches a heart from dummy and gets a ruff of the suit in dummy instead.

Looks like largely scores E/W, maybe some being penalties.

**22**

♠ QJ103  
 ♥ J875  
 ♦ 1087  
 ♣ Q6  
 ♠ K984  
 ♥ KQ103  
 ♦ AQ4  
 ♣ K2  
 ♠ 2  
 ♥ A942  
 ♦ J9653  
 ♣ A84  
 ♠ A765  
 ♥ 6  
 ♦ K2  
 ♣ J109753

 Dealer: East  
 E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	6	6	2	6
W	1	6	6	2	6

Whether west opens an Acol 1♥ or a strong NT shouldn't stop E/W finding their 4:4 heart suit game. North's spade lead doesn't hurt.

With the diamond king doubleton the suit can be brought in and a black suit ruff is available in either hand. Those that ruff clubs may be able to pick up the trump suit when south shows out on the second round. Any that ruff a spade will struggle to do so.

Most will make eleven tricks. Will many manage the twelfth by getting trumps right?

**23**

♠ AQ  
 ♥ AK983  
 ♦ A642  
 ♣ 107  
 ♠ J8762  
 ♥ J1042  
 ♦ Q8  
 ♣ Q2  
 ♠ K10954  
 ♥ Q  
 ♦ 1097  
 ♣ KJ54  
 ♠ 3  
 ♥ 765  
 ♦ KJ53  
 ♣ A9863

 Dealer: South  
 Both Vulnerable

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

This time it should be N/S in 4♥, north opening the suit and getting support or preference from south, whether or not east overcalls unsoundly in spades.

Deep Finesse manages eleven tricks by safety playing trumps after the queen falls and also felling the off-side diamond queen. The field will hopefully make ten tricks most of the time, but some will fail by playing trumps from the top.

There could be those in 3NT by north. A spade lead helps somewhat, but goes a way towards establishing defensive winners. After declarer ducks the second heart and sees the break some may settle for nine tricks by playing diamonds from the top and getting the bonus of overtricks.

**24**

♠ 2  
 ♥ 63  
 ♦ KQ8432  
 ♣ Q643  
 ♠ A1086  
 ♥ A987  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ J1098  
 ♠ QJ753  
 ♥ KQ5  
 ♦ A75  
 ♣ 52  
 ♠ K94  
 ♥ J1042  
 ♦ J106  
 ♣ AK7

 Dealer: West  
 Neither Vulnerable

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

East will surely open a third seat 1♠ and get support from west, even if south doubles. However, I can see few bidding the thin game, there when the trump finesse works and the heart cards fit well. I suppose north might compete in diamonds and effectively push some into 4♣.

Indeed, eleven tricks could result where three rounds of clubs are played, or if a top heart is led.

It looks like largely 170s E/W.

**25**

♠ KJ875  
♥ KQ1075  
♦ 96  
♣ 3

♠ 32  
♥ J963  
♦ Q843  
♣ 1092

♠ AQ10964  
♥ 8  
♦ K  
♣ J7654

♠ A42  
♥ AJ10752  
♣ AKQ8

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	4	-
S	-	-	-	4	-
E	3	5	2	-	1
W	3	6	2	-	1

This could prove to be a competitive affair, south opening 1♠ and being raised to game by north after west's double. A further double by west could be passed by east, losing 590. East does much better to try a red suit, diamonds working better, but hearts perhaps chosen in practice, they being the more likely red suit held by west.

Although E/W can make game in diamonds when the trump king falls singleton (there being no entry for a finesse), in practice there could easily be a lot of E/W minuses where the wrong options are taken.

West can actually make slam in diamonds by eliminating the black suits and end-playing north in hearts, but we won't see that - will we?

**26**

♠ AK  
♥ J1076  
♦ AJ862  
♣ J9

♠ 42  
♥ A3  
♦ K105  
♣ AK10764

♠ Q8765  
♥ KQ954  
♦ 7  
♣ 83

♠ J1093  
♥ 82  
♦ Q943  
♣ Q52

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

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

Having opened with clubs east won't be enthused when west shows both majors, probably getting preference back to spades. East is better persisting with clubs, where at least there is an eight card fit.

Meanwhile, N/S may well have found their diamond fit, where they can make eight tricks, with little prospect of more or fewer.

With E/W able to put 110 on the board in any of three strains, with varying degrees of difficulty, N/S could do better simply losing 100 in 3♦. They could be better off defending.

Fine judgements required.

**27**

♠ A7  
♥ J43  
♦ QJ8  
♣ QJ543

♠ 106  
♥ A75  
♦ 76543  
♣ AK10

♠ KQ9832  
♥ 96  
♦ 92  
♣ 987

♠ J54  
♥ KQ1082  
♦ AK10  
♣ 62

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

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

N/S have a 5:3 heart fit and 24HCP, and could easily overstretch to 4♥ or 3NT. Either way west is likely to be on lead.

A lack of aces proves the biggest issue, west having all the entries, plus a diamond suit to establish defending no trumps. Declarer cannot make nine tricks in no trumps without west getting five first, nor ten in 4♥ before west finds a spade switch for the fourth defensive trick.

Those that settle for part-score look the winners here.

**28**

♠ 62  
♥ 963  
♦ K7432  
♣ 1097

♠ AK9743  
♥ A102  
♦ J6  
♣ 63

♠ QJ  
♥ J7  
♦ AQ10985  
♣ 542

♠ 1085  
♥ KQ854  
♦  
♣ AKQJ8

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

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

We finish with another borderline hand, E/W having a decent spade fit, and close to game values. In practice, south might well have bid either or both of clubs and hearts, or doubled.

At the table north may well not lead diamonds for a ruff, nor south underlead his club honours for another, so ten tricks could eventuate.

Indeed, E/W could be better defending a N/S contract, 200 or at least a plus score highly probable.

Borderline games and improbable defences prove rather a theme on the set, which it is hoped proved enjoyable.

Ave HCP	N 10.07	S 10.00	E 9.93	W 10.00	Balanced	N 16	S 15	E 9	W 14
Voids/singletons	N 1/5	S 1/13	E 1/11	W 2/9	7+ suit	N 1	S 0	E 2	W 2