

ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need



Monday 7th November 2022

Together we can ...

... and by competing in this Simultaneous Pairs you have once again certainly shown that **together we can indeed do something to help make a difference** to children who really need our help.

Some of you will have played Face-to-Face and others online but all the results will be included in the overall scoring as usual, so don't worry!

Thank you so so much for coming along and joining in, playing and donating – please don't forget the donating bit though, will you – just go to :

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and you will see how you can do it – if you haven't already done so of course!

Many thanks indeed to Brian Senior for writing this set for us – I hope you found it interesting (and accurate!).

With very best wishes

Anna & Mark – the ECatsBridge Team

Board 1. None. Dealer North

♠ 10	
♥ K 6	
♦ A 10 7 6 5 4 2	
♣ 10 7 4	
♠ Q 9	♠ 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
♥ Q 10 5 4 3	♥ A
♦ K Q 8	♦ J 9
♣ K J 8	♣ A Q 2
♠ A K J	
♥ J 9 8 7 2	
♦ 3	
♣ 9 6 5 3	

The trick for E/W is to go plus on this deal, which will require someone to make a very good decision after North's 3♦ opening – a normal action at this vulnerability.

East will surely overcall 3♠ – the suit may be eight-high, but it is seven cards in length. With 13 HCP and a strong spade doubleton, it will only be a question of whether West raises to 4♠ or prefers 3NT. On competent defence, either of those contracts should be down.

For what it's worth, my preference with the West hand would be to play in 3NT. The hand contains strength in all four suits but lacks aces, both of which are points in favour of playing in NT. With seven strong spades, East would no doubt correct

to 4♠ over 3NT, but it would be ill-judged to insist on playing in an eight-high suit when the outside honours may enable partner to make nine tricks from the other suits.

Four Spades is always down one, while 3NT maybe be down two if declarer is put to a heart guess and goes wrong.

Board 2. N/S. Dealer East

♠ K 6 5 3	
♥ A 2	
♦ 10 9 7 6 3	
♣ 10 2	
♠ Q J 4 2	♠ 8
♥ 10 9 8 3	♥ K Q 7
♦ 8	♦ A J 5 2
♣ J 8 6 3	♣ A Q 7 5 4
♠ A 10 9 7	
♥ J 6 5 4	
♦ K Q 4	
♣ K 9	

East opens 1♣ and South has just enough to double, particularly holding four cards in both majors.

If playing a method where 1♣ promises four or more cards, West can make a pre-emptive jump to 3♣, putting North under pressure. North is in a tough position now. He doesn't want to pass when holding an ace and a king and two possible trump suits, but 3♣ is very committal on a weakish four-

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card suit, while 3♦ is safer but misses the top spot when partner does have four spades. A responsive double is a third possibility, but partner may think North is a little stronger if he doubles then converts a 3♥ response to 3♠. All in all, I think I would opt for the safest of the three calls, which is to bid my longest suit – diamonds.

N/S can make eight tricks in either a diamond or a spade contract, so if North is left undisturbed in 3♦ he can get out for down one and –100. With E/W cold for +130 in a club contract, that should not be too bad. A sharp matchpoint double from East nets +200, however, and should be a near top for E/W.

Everything changes if East's 1♣ does not promise the suit. That rules out the pre-emptive raise so, even if West finds a response, North will be able to bid at a more comfortable level – I would respond 1♠ were that an option open to me and then possibly compete in diamonds when E/W find their club fit. Again, 3♦ can be doubled for –200, while if South then corrects to 3♠, West can double that for the same outcome.

Board 3. E/W. Dealer South

♠ A 6 3 2	
♥ J 8	
♦ A J 9 6 4	
♣ K 4	
♠ K J 8 4	♠ 10 9
♥ 10 3	♥ A K Q 7 6 4 2
♦ Q 10 8	♦ 7
♣ A Q 5 3	♣ 9 8 2
♠ Q 7 5	
♥ 9 5	
♦ K 5 3 2	
♣ J 10 7 6	

If West opens a weak NT and North passes, East should transfer to hearts and West declare 4♥. It is better if East can transfer at the four level rather than having to bid 2♦ then raise the completion to game, as on a different lay-out the low-level transfer may make it easy for N/S to come into the auction and compete effectively, where the high-lever transfer shuts them out. On the actual deal, this does not matter.

If North comes in, perhaps with an Asptro or similar 2♦ to show spades and another, East may have to just bid the heart game himself, though some will still have transfers at their disposal.

Whether North comes in or not, very few N/Ss are likely to save in 5♦, which is down 500 if declarer gets the trumps right, so is a paying save if 4♥ is making.

Four Hearts by West sees North with no attractive lead, with a trump perhaps being the popular choice. Declarer can win the trump lead and take the spade finesse and the friendly spade position

means there are three spade winners and 11 in all. Played by East, a club lead nets a third defensive trick, which illustrates the benefit of transfers. To get three tricks against 4♥ by West, North needs to underlead the ace of diamonds at trick one and South to switch to a club, which is not really plausible.

Where West has to open one of a suit, most pairs will play the heart game from the East seat, the modern short club with transfer responses style maybe being the exception which gets West to play the contract.

Plus 650 should score well, with +620 being below average.

Board 4. All. Dealer West

♠ J 7 6 3	
♥ —	
♦ K 9 5 3	
♣ A Q 9 7 6	
♠ K Q 5 2	♠ A 8 4
♥ A 10 3 2	♥ Q J 8 6 5
♦ J 8 6	♦ A 4 2
♣ 10 4	♣ K 3
♠ 10 9	
♥ K 9 7 4	
♦ Q 10 7	
♣ J 8 5 2	

There should be two passes to East, who will open either 1♥ or INT, according to NT range.

Where East opens INT, he will occasionally play there, and South's choice of opening lead will be very important.

A low heart lead, fourth of your longest and strongest, costs the heart stopper and declarer wins cheaply and picks up five heart tricks to go with three spades, the ace of diamonds, and the king of clubs, so 10 in all. A club lead, however, not only sets up the defensive club winners, but also leaves South with fourth-round heart control. That probably holds declarer to eight tricks, though North is under some pressure to find discards when declarer plays on hearts.

Some Wests will use Stayman and may be tempted to invite game when the heart fit comes to light. East will have an easy decision to accept the invitation.

Where East opens 1♥, West has a limit raise to 3♥, and East a close decision whether to go on to game or not.

The four-nil heart split should mean that nine tricks are the limit in a heart contract, declarer having to lose two diamonds, a club and a heart. Nonetheless, a few people will make 4♥ for a huge score, while +170 will also score very well. With a fair number

going down in game, I wonder if even +140 will score above average?

Board 5. N/S. Dealer North

<p>♠ 9 7 5 ♥ K 7 ♦ 7 4 3 2 ♣ 10 8 7 2</p> <p>♠ 8 6 ♥ A 10 4 3 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ Q 9 5 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q 10 ♥ Q J 9 8 6 ♦ A J 10 ♣ K 3</p>
<p>♠ A J 4 3 2 ♥ 5 2 ♦ Q 6 5 ♣ A J 6</p>	

The contract will usually be 4♥, played by East.

East will often open 1♥ and West raise over South's 1♠ overcall. Holding five hearts, 16 HCP, and a couple of potentially valuable tens, East should invite game and West, with a complete maximum for his initial simple raise, will accept. Indeed, some Wests may stretch a fraction and cuebid 2♠ at their first turn to show a constructive raise to 3♥.

Other Easts will open a strong NT. That should silence South, and now West will use Stayman then invite game when East shows hearts, with East accepting and going on to the heart game.

South is likely to lead a trump, as everything else looks rather unattractive. North will win the ♥K and switch to a spade to the king and, probably, ace. Declarer will South's switch back to hearts and play around the black suits, leaving the crucial diamond guess as late as possible. Eventually, the fact that South overcalled, coupled with his unwillingness to lead diamonds at any time, should see declarer play him for the queen, thereby making the game.

Not everyone will make 4♥, but I would expect a clear majority to do so.

Board 6. E/W. Dealer East

<p>♠ 9 7 5 ♥ Q 5 ♦ K 10 7 5 ♣ 9 7 5 3</p> <p>♠ K 8 ♥ A J 7 6 ♦ 9 6 2 ♣ Q 10 8 6</p>	<p>♠ A 4 3 2 ♥ K 10 8 4 ♦ 8 4 3 ♣ A J</p>
<p>♠ Q J 10 6 ♥ 9 3 2 ♦ A Q J ♣ K 4 2</p>	

If E/W are playing a weak NT, that is East's normal opening bid and it should end the auction. South has an obvious spade lead, which declarer can win in dummy with the king to take the club finesse.

The ♣K is offside and, assuming that South wins the king, he can then clear the spades, establishing two winners for himself. Declarer can win the spade, cash the ace of clubs, and play a heart.

This is the key moment in the play. If declarer plays king and another heart and finesses the jack, that will lose to the queen and the defence will take four diamonds and two spades for down two and a dreadful score for E/W. It is more natural, however, to start hearts with a low one to the ace so that the clubs can be cashed before a decision is made as to whether to take a finesse on the next round or cash the king to ensure the contract. On this occasion the queen appears on the second round so declarer comes to four heart tricks and nine in all.

Those playing a strong NT will open one of a suit as dealer and will find the heart fit. A heart partscore will be played by West, which makes the defence somewhat easier as South can easily find the necessary diamond switch after winning the ♣K. Eight or nine tricks should be made depending on how declarer plays the trumps.

Board 7. All. Dealer South

<p>♠ J 9 5 3 ♥ A 8 6 5 2 ♦ Q ♣ K Q 5</p> <p>♠ A K 8 2 ♥ J 10 9 7 4 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ 9</p>	<p>♠ 10 6 ♥ — ♦ A K J 10 9 6 ♣ A J 10 8 3</p>
<p>♠ Q 7 4 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ 7 4 3 ♣ 7 6 4 2</p>	

E/W can make 7♦, however, if your opponents should get to the grand slam, you should ask them where they got a copy of the hands from before starting the session. Yes, 13 tricks are available, but only because of the rather friendly lie of the minor suits.

In reality, the question is likely to be whether E/W can get to a small slam or even to game.

North is likely to open 1♥ in third seat and East has to decide whether to overcall 2♦, or to make an Unusual 2NT overcall to show both minors. My personal preference is for the simple 2♦ overcall, as there will surely be more bidding and if I next bid my second suit I give a good idea of the two suits' relative lengths/strengths, something which is less easy to do after starting with 2NT. Anyway, each to his own in such matters.

South will compete with 2♥ if available, otherwise should pass, and West will show diamond support at the minimum level. I would not expect to hear anything more from N/S, and East might jump to 5♦.

True, there may be three losers, but East has a very shapely hand and partner is marked with some values by the opposition's relatively modest competition – it's just whether those values are where East needs them to be or if they are wasted. If East instead merely makes a game try, for example by overcalling 2♦ then following up with 4♣ over West's competitive raise, West is unlikely to accept the invitation when holding only three small trumps and a singleton in partner's second suit. Game will therefore sometimes be missed.

If anyone bids to 6♦, they should score very well indeed.

Board 8. None. Dealer West

<p>♠ A K 9 7 2 ♥ 9 6 ♦ K J 2 ♣ K 6 4</p>	<p>♠ Q J 10 5 3 ♥ A K ♦ Q 10 ♣ J 7 5 3</p>
<p>♠ 8 6 ♥ 8 7 4 3 ♦ A 8 7 4 3 ♣ A 2</p>	<p>♠ 4 ♥ Q J 10 5 2 ♦ 9 6 5 ♣ Q 10 9 8</p>

Double dummy, N/S can make seven tricks in clubs, hearts, or NT, while E/W can make seven tricks in diamonds or spades. Nobody can go to the two level with any confidence of being successful.

Some Norths will open 1NT and play there, but I would expect the majority of Easts to take a look at the vulnerability and compete with 2♠ – particularly if their methods allow them to show spades and a minor, rather than merely spades. Two Spades should be defeated, but it will require that the defence plays trumps at some point to prevent club ruffs in the dummy.

Other Norths will open 1♠, which should silence East, and North will respond 1NT and is likely to play there. 1NT played by South is in considerable jeopardy after a low diamond lead. To make the contract, declarer has to rise with the king and, while the diamonds are still blocked, knock out West's club entry – all rather implausible. In practice, declarer will play either the two or jack from dummy, losing to East. The diamond continuation will then see the suit cleared and the defence will have four diamond tricks to go with two top hearts and the ace of clubs for down one at least one.

Board 9. E/W. Dealer North

<p>♠ J 6 4 3 ♥ Q ♦ A Q 4 3 ♣ 9 7 6 2</p>	<p>♠ 10 2 ♥ J 10 7 6 ♦ J 8 7 6 5 2 ♣ 5</p>
<p>♠ A K 8 7 ♥ K 5 ♦ K 10 9 ♣ A K 10 3</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 5 ♥ A 9 8 4 3 2 ♦ — ♣ Q J 8 4</p>

Double dummy analysis tells us that E/W can make either 3♦ or 2NT.

If it goes three passes to West, he will usually open 2NT and play there, East having no way to get out into 3♦. Two No Trump may well be making double dummy, but it looks to be a lot of hard work to achieve eight tricks if the defence is accurate.

More often than not, however, South will open either 1♥ or 2♥ in third seat and West will double.

Say that the opening bid is 1♥; West doubles and North bids 1♠, giving East the chance to pass to show a weak hand. South may rebid 2♣ or 2♥, but is most likely to choose a simple spade raise, over which West may bid 2NT. East, having already limited his hand by passing over 1♠, can now bid 3♦ to show a long suit, and West should pass it out.

If South opens 2♥, West is a bit too strong for a 2NT overcall so will again double. Without any kind of artificial aid, East will respond 3♦ and West, having no idea if partner has any high cards, will guess to bid 3NT, which should be defeated. Most tournament pairs will play Lebensohl, such that a 2NT response to the double shows a weak hand while a hand with, say, 8+ HCP, would bid its longest suit immediately. So East bids 2NT, asking West to bid 3♣, over which East intends to bid 3♦ to show a weak hand. But with 20 HCP, all in aces and kings, many Wests will be tempted to gamble out 3NT rather than do as requested. After all, weaker than 8+ also includes 5-7, when 3NT could be on.

Board 10. All. Dealer East

♠ K 7 5 2	
♥ K J 10 3	
♦ Q 9 8 6	
♣ 3	
♠ 10 9 4	♠ A J 8 6 3
♥ 9 6	♥ 7
♦ 4	♦ K J 10 5 3
♣ J 10 9 7 6 5 2	♣ K 4
♠ Q	
♥ A Q 8 5 4 2	
♦ A 7 2	
♣ A Q 8	

This should be one of the flatter boards in the session, with N/S almost universally playing a heart game and making 11 tricks.

East will open 1♠ and many Souths overcall 2♥. West may make an aggressive raise to 2♠ but most will pass, and either way North can raise to 4♥. South is close to going on in search of slam, but North had stronger ways of getting to 4♥ so South should settle for game.

Some Souths will think they are too good to risk a 2♥ overcall being passed out so will start with a double. With a dubiously placed ♠K, the North hand is only really worth an invitational response, probably 3♥, and South can go on to game. It would be a stretch, but not a huge one, for North to drive to game facing a take-out double, and in that case he might respond with a 2♠ cuebid rather than a jump in hearts. South will bid hearts, North raise to game, and this time South will be very tempted to bid on. There is some risk now of going minus.

Board 11. None. Dealer South

♠ 6	
♥ 8 7	
♦ A Q J	
♣ Q 9 8 7 6 4 2	
♠ Q J 10	♠ A 9 8 2
♥ K 9	♥ J 10 5 4 2
♦ 5 4 3 2	♦ K 10 9 8
♣ A 10 5 3	♣ —
♠ K 7 5 4 3	
♥ A Q 6 3	
♦ 7 6	
♣ K J	

The popular spot should be 3♣, played by North.

Those playing Acoll will have an easy time of it. South opens 1♠, North responds 2♣, and South rebids 2♥. Holding a seven-card suit, North is not interested in choosing between partner's suits, and instead repeats the clubs. Holding a minimum opening, South passes out 3♣ and, while that can go down if declarer doesn't get the play right, it cannot be defeated if he does.

Those playing two-over-one game-forcing will have to start the North hand with either a natural and invitational jump to 3♣, which South will pass out, or a (semi-)forcing INT response. The latter will see South rebid 2♥ and now North can introduce the clubs.

On the face of it, all roads should lead to 3♣, but perhaps East will get involved with a take-out double at some point in the auction? If so, E/W can do quite well in their four-four diamond fit, making eight tricks, so that 3♦-1 is a good save against 3♣ making, even if North doubles 3♦, as he surely should.

Board 12. N/S. Dealer West

♠ Q 9 8	
♥ J 10 8 5 4 3	
♦ K Q 10	
♣ 4	
♠ J 5 3 2	♠ A K 7 6 4
♥ A 7	♥ 2
♦ 9 5 4	♦ A 8 3 2
♣ K J 9 8	♣ 10 6 2
♠ 10	
♥ K Q 9 6	
♦ J 7 6	
♣ A Q 7 5 3	

N/S are cold for 4♥, while E/W have a cheap save in 4♠ doubled, which should be down only one.

After a pass from West, North will often open 2♥ and East will overcall 2♠ – better than a take-out double when the spades are both longer and stronger than the other suits. South cannot be sure who can make what, but a jump to 4♥ is the practical call, and that bullies West into bidding 4♠. North can double this to suggest defending – the weak hearts hardly encourage him to bid on – and South should accept that decision.

Some Norths may not like to open with a weak two bid on such a poor suit and when vulnerable. If so, they will pass, East open 1♠, and South make a take-out double. As a raise to 3♠ would normally be played as pre-emptive, West instead bids 2NT, showing a constructive raise to at least 3♠, and North has an easy 4♥ bid. It is now necessary that East save in 4♠, as otherwise E/W will get a very poor score by letting 4♥ play and make.

Board 13. All. Dealer North

<p>♠ K Q 3 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ J 4 2 ♣ Q 9 6 2</p> <p>♠ 10 2 ♥ A Q J 10 9 8 2 ♦ A 10 9 ♣ 4</p>	<p>♠ 9 8 4 ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ Q 8 5 ♣ 10 8 5 3</p>
<p>♠ A J 7 6 5 ♥ — ♦ K 7 6 3 ♣ A K J 7</p>	

N/S can make 4♠ on any lead. Though the diamonds lie badly for declarer, he can eventually set up the thirteenth card for his tenth winner – if he needs it. West may well give the tenth trick immediately by leading the ace of hearts. Actually, N/S can also make 10 tricks in NT. Even on a none-heart lead, declarer can eliminate West's black cards then duck a diamond to him, and he has to give a trick to one of the red kings.

South will open 1♠ in third seat and West overcall the number of hearts that takes his fancy. I can see different players opting for any of 2♥, 3♥ and 4♥.

If West overcalls 2♥, North makes a negative double, South cuebids 3♥, and North bids 4♠ – or perhaps, if facing a five-card opening, North just bids 3♥ over 2♥ and South bids game.

If West overcalls 3♥, again North can bid 3♠ if facing a five-card opening, but otherwise has to start with a double. South can cuebid 4♥ in response to that, and North bid 4♠.

The one that is tricky for N/S is the 4♥ overcall. Playing five-card majors, North might stretch slightly to bid 4♠, but what about those playing four-card majors? North can make a negative double, but what does South do now? If he commits to spades, all well and good, but he has two other four-card suits, and it will be tempting to play in one of those, bidding 4NT to ask North to pick a minor. A passive trump lead should beat the resulting 5♣ contract, with only a diamond lead offering a chance to make it (a heart trick is of no benefit as it only allows the fourth diamond to be discarded).

Board 14. None. Dealer East

<p>♠ Q 10 4 3 2 ♥ K 8 3 ♦ 10 7 ♣ 8 7 6</p> <p>♠ 6 ♥ A 9 2 ♦ K Q 8 3 ♣ J 10 9 5 3</p>	<p>♠ A J 9 8 7 5 ♥ K 7 6 5 4 ♦ A ♣ 2</p>
<p>♠ K ♥ J 10 ♦ J 9 6 5 4 2 ♣ A K Q 4</p>	

The East hand is very shapely. East will open 1♠ and, playing Acol, West will respond 2♣. East rebids 2♥, West bids 2NT, and East bids 3♥, which West raises to game.

Playing two-over-one game-forcing, West will have to respond 1NT, then most will rebid 2NT over East's 2♥, and it will continue 3♥ – 4♥. A few, playing matchpoints, may pass out 2♥, which could be the winning action facing a five-four minimum opener.

Say that South cashes a top club and switches to a trump to cut down on spade ruffs in the dummy. Declarer will win the ace and cash the diamond and spade aces then play a small spade. South can ruff in front of dummy but has no effective return. Declarer will be able to crossruff to his heart's content and should come to 10 tricks despite the bad spade split.

If South fails to cash a club at the start, he will probably not actually lose it. Declarer would win a trump lead in dummy as he intends to take ruffs with the nine and two. A diamond to the ace followed by ace and another spade will permit South to once again ruff in front of dummy, and he can now cash the club. Yes, declarer could win the heart lead in hand, cash the ace of diamonds, then play a heart to the ace to take a club pitch on the king of diamonds, but that would be an unnatural line and would lead to only one spade ruff in dummy.

Board 15. N/S. Dealer South

<p>♠ A J 7 6 5 ♥ A K J 8 ♦ A 10 ♣ A 5</p> <p>♠ 3 ♥ Q 9 6 4 2 ♦ 7 4 ♣ Q J 10 8 6</p>	<p>♠ 10 8 4 ♥ 10 7 5 ♦ J 9 2 ♣ 9 7 4 3</p>
<p>♠ K Q 9 2 ♥ 3 ♦ K Q 8 6 5 3 ♣ K 2</p>	

N/S have a grand slam in any of three different denominations. The easy one to get to is 7♠.

South opens 1♦, North responds 1♠, and South raises to 3♠, upgrading from the raw point count of 13 because of the nice distribution. North asks for key cards, finds the missing ♠K, so asks for the queen of spades. The exact details of what happens next will vary from pair to pair, but South will say that, yes, he does have the queen, and something else besides, and North should be in a position to bid the grand.

What about 7NT? This is, after all, matchpoint pairs, and there are 14 top tricks in NT if diamonds behave. To get to 7NT with confidence will probably require that North is in a position to bid 5NT to invite Seven at some stage of the auction. That invitation may be to 7♠, of course, but if South judges that his partner should have at least ace-doubleton diamond, he may be able to gamble out 7NT instead.

A three-two split is a shade over a 68% chance, but actually 7NT is noticeably better than that as, if the hand with four diamonds also has the queen of hearts, it can be squeezed to provide the thirteenth trick.

Board 16. E/W. Dealer West

♠ K 7 5 4	
♥ Q 10 7 3	
♦ 6	
♣ Q 8 5 3	
♠ A 10 8	♠ Q 9 2
♥ K 8 5	♥ A J 6 4 2
♦ A K 9	♦ 8 7 5 2
♣ J 10 7 6	♣ K
	♠ J 6 3
	♥ 9
	♦ Q J 10 4 3
	♣ A 9 4 2

E/W have a combined 25 HCP, but there is no making game as the cards lie. Anyone who stops short of game and goes plus should therefore score well on the board.

If West opens a strong NT, East may transfer to hearts then jump to 3NT to offer a choice of games. Some will go on to 4♥ over that, but my inclination would be to play 3NT as the West hand is 4-3-3-3, so no ruffing potential, and has a solid stopper in every suit.

If West opens 1♣ and rebids 1NT, East will usually check back for a five-three heart fit and bid 4♥ on finding one.

It looks as though there should be a loser in each suit in the heart game, so down one, while the lead of either black suit against 3NT allows the defence to establish sufficient tricks to come out on top, also by the odd trick. Just as a plus score should

score very well for E/W, so should be down two score very badly.

Board 17. None. Dealer North

	♠ A	
	♥ 7 6 5 2	
	♦ 10 9 6 5	
	♣ J 10 6 2	
♠ K J 8 5 3		♠ 7 6 4
♥ A 8 3		♥ 9
♦ K Q 8		♦ J 4 2
♣ 9 8		♣ A Q 7 5 4 3
	♠ Q 10 9 2	
	♥ K Q J 10 4	
	♦ A 7 3	
	♣ K	

When I started out in bridge, the auction at almost every table would have begun with two passes to South, who would open 1♥. In today's more aggressive world, there will be a number of Easts who open 3♣, giving South a decision. Over a 1♣ opening South would start with a 1♥ overcall, planning to come again as the auction developed to get the rest of his hand into the action. But at the three level I would expect a majority to opt for the more flexible take-out double, which loses the fifth heart but gets all three suits into the game.

If North gambles out a pass of the double, 3♣ doubled can be made with a good view in one of the black suits, but will sometimes be down one. If North takes out the double, he will presumably opt to bid the major. South should not go on to game over a 3♥ response to his double. Yes, if the ♣K was in a different suit so pulling its weight, but not with the actual hand, which is a working 12-count.

Three Hearts proves to be the limit for N/S, and +140 should score well.

Where East passes, South will open 1♥, West overcall 1♠, and North raise to 2♥ or a semi-preemptive 3♥, according to style. As long as they are on the same wavelength, South should not go on to game unless facing a rather optimistic three-level limit raise. But some good judgement will be required after East competes in spades. E/W can make 3♠, though it will require a good view in one of the black suits not to be down one. And if South doubles 3♠ for penalties and North turns up with the ace of spades, declarer might take a view to drop the king of clubs. Well done to anyone who does make 3♠, doubled or not.

Board 18. N/S. Dealer East

♠ K Q 5	
♥ Q 8 4 2	
♦ K 7 5	
♣ Q 7 5	
♠ J 10 2	♠ A 9 7
♥ K J 9 6 5	♥ 7
♦ 10 4 3	♦ Q J 8 6 2
♣ K 4	♣ A 10 6 2
♠ 8 6 4 3	
♥ A 10 3	
♦ A 9	
♣ J 9 8 3	

The popular auction will be 1♦ – 1♥ – 2♣ – 2♦ – Pass, all from E/W. Neither East nor West has any reason to deviate from this simple natural auction, while neither North nor South has the distribution to justify getting involved – particularly at the prevailing adverse vulnerability.

I wonder at how many tables the final contract will not be 2♦ by East?

Two Diamonds makes exactly at double dummy, but that requires that the defence plays trumps to prevent club ruffs in the dummy. I wouldn't be surprised to see a fair number coming home with an overtrick. E/W can also make INT, while N/S can make nothing above the level of 1♣, and will never play there, of course.

Board 19. E/W. Dealer South

♠ A K 10	
♥ Q 9 3	
♦ Q 10 7 5 4	
♣ K 3	
♠ 5 4 3	♠ J 7 2
♥ K J 8 4	♥ A 10
♦ A 8 3	♦ 9 2
♣ 10 9 4	♣ A J 8 7 6 2
♠ Q 9 8 6	
♥ 7 6 5 2	
♦ K J 6	
♣ Q 5	

There will be two passes to North, who will often open INT, holding one of those hands which tempts both those playing weak NT and those playing strong NT to open INT. East would like to overcall in clubs, but few pairs these days can bid a natural 2♣, while 3♣ looks dangerous at unfavourable vulnerability and facing a passed partner. Three Clubs can be beaten easily enough, but will sometimes be allowed to make.

The majority of Easts will pass, and be glad they have done so. They will lead a low club and declarer will win dummy's queen and play a diamond. West can get the contract down two by rising with the ace and returning a club. More likely, West will duck and declarer score a diamond trick. Declarer is now

in a position to cash out for down one, but will probably try a second diamond, and West will be back in a position to win and get the contract down two.

Now, suppose that North opens 1♦. East will probably overcall 2♣ and South make a negative double. West has enough to compete to 3♣, either immediately or after his opponents have settled in their chosen spot. The likely diamond lead should beat 3♣ a trick, but that will not always prove to be the case.

If North plays in 2♦, that should make exactly. Two Spades is also makeable, though double dummy this must be played by North, as a heart lead puts the defence in control when South is declarer.

Board 20. All. Dealer West

♠ J 10 6	
♥ A 4	
♦ K 8 6 4 3	
♣ K 10 6	
♠ K 5 4	♠ 8
♥ 8 7 6 5	♥ Q J
♦ 7 5	♦ A J 10 9 2
♣ 9 8 7 4	♣ A Q J 3 2
♠ A Q 9 7 3 2	
♥ K 10 9 3 2	
♦ Q	
♣ 5	

The two shapely hands seem to suggest that this could be quite an exciting deal, but actually the vast majority of tables are likely to reach 4♠ on the N/S cards and make 10 tricks – not so exciting after all.

If North opens a weak NT, East can overcall 2NT to show the minors, and West will not be interested at this vulnerability. South can jump to 4♠, or start with some kind of cuebid and show both his suits, but once North admits to spade support will bid the spade game.

If North opens 1♦, East may even pass, though many will overcall 2♣. South will bid spades, North raise to 3♠, and South go on to game.

Finally, if North passes, East will open 1♦. South may make a two-suited overcall or may, with spades both longer and stronger than hearts, prefer to start with a 1♠ overcall then show hearts later if need be. North should make an invitational response and, with such a shapely hand, South will accept the invitation.

Board 21. N/S. Dealer North

♠ Q 7 4 3	
♥ 8 7 4	
♦ K Q 8	
♣ 9 8 2	
♠ K 10 8 5	♠ J 9
♥ A 9 6	♥ K Q J 10 3
♦ J 10 4	♦ 9 6 3 2
♣ J 6 4	♣ 10 5
♠ A 6 2	
♥ 5 2	
♦ A 7 5	
♣ A K Q 7 3	

At many tables there will be two passes to South, who will open 1♣ – the hand is a little good for a 15-17 NT with its two aces and strong five-card suit. North will respond 1♠ and South rebid 2NT, which North will probably raise to game.

There are nine top tricks, so West has to find a heart lead to beat 3NT, and many Wests will not do so, meaning that there could be a significant number of +600s on the scoresheet. If West does find the heart lead, E/W should score very well for +100.

Some Souths will rebid only 1NT and play there for +120 or +150, and then there are those Easts who, like myself, see a weak 2♥ opening in their cards. That will steer N/S away from 3NT, which is of course doomed once West knows to lead a heart, but where the bidding will end is far from clear. Will West raise competitively to 3♥ or will N/S have a free run?

E/W can make seven tricks in a heart contract but may make only six if declarer gets the spade wrong. Meanwhile, N/S can make 4♣ very easily, and 3♠ with a little more work.

Board 22. E/W. Dealer East

♠ 7	
♥ A 9 7 6 5 4 2	
♦ —	
♣ A Q J 8 5	
♠ K Q 6	♠ 10 9 8 5 4 3
♥ Q 8	♥ —
♦ K Q 9 3	♦ J 10 5 4
♣ 10 7 6 4	♣ 9 3 2
♠ A J 2	
♥ K J 10 3	
♦ A 8 7 6 2	
♣ K	

I wouldn't expect East to open with a weak two bid at this vulnerability, despite the six-four shape. Traditionalists may be disturbed by the implication in that last sentence that I WOULD consider a 2♠ opening at some other vulnerability. Welcome to my world.

South will open 1♦ and North respond 1♥ after a pass by West, who has the wrong shortage for a take-double. East continues to pass and South raises to 3♥. North is well worth a slam try now and the obvious and most convenient one is a 3♠ cuebid. That should elicit 4♣ from South and, whether that is the king or a shortage, it is good news for North, who can in turn cuebid 4♦.

North has not been able to use Blackwood as yet due to the fact that a two ace/key-card response would leave him guessing whether it was the useful ♥K and ♠A, or whether one of those cards was missing and South held the ♦A. Now, however, South can cuebid 4♠ and North can finally take control with 4NT then bid 7♥ on finding three key-cards in partner's hand – the spade cuebid is surely a high card rather than a shortage, as the latter would mean that neither opponent had bid despite their having an 11-card spade fit.

Seven Hearts will score pretty well, as grand slams always do, but can the top spot of 7NT be reached? Yes, it can. Once all the key-cards are known to be present, North can follow up with 5NT, inviting Seven and asking about kings. When South shows the ♣K, North can count 13 tricks in NT.

Board 23. All. Dealer South

♠ Q 5 4	
♥ Q 10 9 6 5	
♦ 10 2	
♣ J 6 3	
♠ 7 3	♠ A 9 8 2
♥ 7 2	♥ K J 8 4
♦ A 9 7	♦ K J 5
♣ K Q 10 8 7 5	♣ 4 2
♠ K J 10 6	
♥ A 3	
♦ Q 8 6 4 3	
♣ A 9	

South will usually open 1♦ and many Wests will overcall 2♣. If they play there, it should simply be a matter of overtricks, but East has an opening hand facing a vulnerable two-level overcall. East will surely bid some number of NT. If 2NT, West may go back to the relative safety of the chunky six-card club suit and East should respect that decision and leave him to play there.

Some Easts will be sufficiently optimistic to jump to 3NT. A spade lead beats 3NT, but nine tricks are easy on a diamond lead, simply by using the jack and king of diamonds as entries to hand to lead up to the clubs twice, and leaving the ♦A as an entry to the long clubs.

I don't expect a huge number of +600s, so bidding and making 3NT should score very well.

Board 24. None. Dealer West

♠ 10 5 4 2		
♥ K 10 6		
♦ 10 7 3		
♣ 8 5 2		
♠ 9 7		♠ A Q J 8
♥ J 7		♥ A 8
♦ A 9 5		♦ K Q 8 4
♣ A J 10 9 6 4		♣ Q 7 3
♠ K 6 3		
♥ Q 9 5 4 3 2		
♦ J 6 2		
♣ K		

As the cards lie, E/W can make slam in either minor or in NT. That isn't to say that you would want to be in a slam – at least not until after you'd made it – but if you should happen to get there it can be made.

West has a borderline opening bid. Some will pass, some will open 3♣, and perhaps the biggest group will open 1♣.

Where West passes, East will open whatever suit is dictated by the system, but almost everyone is likely to end up in 3NT, where 12 tricks are available. True, N/S can compete in hearts, but East is balanced and the partnership has plenty of high cards so 3NT is the most likely outcome.

A 3♣ opening is also likely to result in a final contract of 3NT as that will be what East responds.

But things are much less clear if West opens 1♣ and rebids 2♣ (assuming a pass from South). With 18 HCP and a reasonable club fit, East might well be tempted and, if he succumbs and drives to slam will be richly rewarded.

Board 25. E/W. Dealer North

♠ J 9		
♥ A Q 8 6		
♦ K 8 3		
♣ Q 10 8 5		
♠ A Q 6 4 2		♠ K 10 5
♥ 9 7 4		♥ K 10 5 3 2
♦ A 2		♦ 9 6 4
♣ 9 7 6		♣ A 3
♠ 8 7 3		
♥ J		
♦ Q J 10 7 5		
♣ K J 4 2		

North has a weak NT and, if that is what he opens, he is likely to buy the contract, as the vulnerability will discourage both East and West from being too enterprising on their 5-3-3-2 hands and moderate five-card suits.

East will lead a heart to dummy's bare jack, and declarer can play on diamonds to set up four winners in that suit, or can play one round of

diamonds then switch to clubs. Either line of play comes to six tricks, but the defence has a couple of chances to switch their attention to spades and cash five of those to go with the two minor-suit aces.

If North has to open 1♣, however, East can overcall 1♥. As such 1♣ openings are often made on three- or even two-card suits when playing a strong NT, South may have to make a negative double now, while if the partnership style is that this promises four spades he will have an awkward problem, maybe just competing with 2♣ and hoping for the best. West can show the spades then the heart support if South passes or doubles over 1♥. If South bids 2♣, West may have to double as either 2♥ or 2♠ would be more committal.

Where will it all end up? It isn't totally clear, but E/W come to an extra trick in spades compared to hearts – nine as opposed to eight – while N/S come to eight tricks in either minor. Plus 140 should score very well for E/W, while any plus score should be OK for N/S.

Board 26. All. Dealer East

♠ Q J 8 7 5		
♥ 7 6		
♦ 6 5		
♣ A J 3 2		
♠ K 4		♠ A 6 3
♥ A K 4		♥ Q J 10 8 2
♦ 9 8 4 2		♦ A J 10
♣ K 7 6 5		♣ Q 8
♠ 10 9 2		
♥ 9 5 3		
♦ K Q 7 3		
♣ 10 9 4		

Those two well-placed tens, backing up their jacks to create handy honour combinations, make the East hand a little good for a weak NT opening. I would open 1NT if that showed 15-17, but 1♥ if playing a weak NT.

Facing 13 good points, game should always be reached whatever the opening bid, but the opening might affect which game is chosen.

A 1NT opening will probably be raised straight to 3NT. A spade lead should ensure that there are no overtricks, while a tenth trick is definitely up for grabs if South leads a diamond.

If East opens 1♥, even if that only promises four cards, it will be natural for West to check for a five-three fit then bid the heart game. Only a diamond lead allows an overtrick, so +620 will be the popular outcome. That means that the opening lead against 3NT, where a diamond lead may seem far more attractive than against 4♥, will swing a lot of matchpoints, –600 pretty good, –630 pretty bad.

Board 27. None. Dealer South

<p>♠ A J 9 4 ♥ 9 8 6 5 4 2 ♦ K J 2 ♣ —</p> <p>♠ 10 8 ♥ J 7 ♦ Q 4 ♣ A J 10 9 8 3 2</p> <p>♠ 7 6 3 ♥ A K Q 10 ♦ 7 3 ♣ K Q 7 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q 5 2 ♥ 3 ♦ A 10 9 8 6 5 ♣ 6 5</p>
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North can make 11 tricks with hearts as trumps, South only 10 – double dummy. So, what is the difference?

West can lead a spade at trick one and now, even if he gets the diamond guess right and takes the ruffing club finesse, declarer has to lose two spade tricks as well as the ace of diamonds.

East has no effective opening lead. If East leads a spade it just speeds the play up and declarer can easily hold his spade losers to one, so let's suppose that East leads a club to the king, ace and ruff. Declarer can draw trumps then lead a diamond to the jack and ace, win the return and play king of diamonds and ruff the last diamond. Cash the queen of clubs then lead a spade to the eight, nine and queen, and East must either give a ruff and discard or lead back into the ♠AJ to give the eleventh trick. Declarer should, in real life, take an extra club ruff along the way, just to make sure that East doesn't have a third club with which to get off lead.

If South opens 1NT, West may overcall 3♣ – 2♣ would not be natural for most pairs. That bullies North into bidding 3♥, and South raises to game.

If South opens 1♥, West again overcalls 3♣, and North is worth a 4♣ bid on the way to the heart game. Most tournament pairs would play this as merely showing a hand too good for a simple 4♥ bid, rather than actually guaranteeing a club control, while if West overcalls only 2♣ North's 4♣ would now show club shortage.

And finally, if South opens 1♣, it will depend on E/W's agreements as to whether West can make a natural club bid or not. It shouldn't matter though, as all roads appear to lead to 4♥.

Board 28. N/S. Dealer West

<p>♠ A 9 7 ♥ K 6 4 3 ♦ 4 3 ♣ A 10 7 6</p> <p>♠ J 10 8 6 5 3 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ K 10 7 ♣ Q</p> <p>♠ K 4 ♥ A J 10 7 ♦ A Q 8 5 ♣ K 4 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 2 ♥ Q 2 ♦ J 9 6 2 ♣ J 9 8 5 3</p>
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At this vulnerability, West has what to me looks like a completely routine weak 2♠ opener. This will usually run round to South who, with a flat 17 HCP and spade stopper, will overcall 2NT.

Actually, it is N/S who can make 2♠, on the three-two fit, but that is irrelevant as nobody is going to play a spade contract. North may raise the 2NT overcall to game, or may use Stayman along the way and find the four-four heart fit. I can understand those who just raise to 3NT, as even when there is a heart fit there will often be the same number of tricks available in NT as in hearts, and using Stayman when there is no fit may make the defence easier than the straightforward raise to 3NT. Nonetheless, my preference is to use Stayman. The North hand contains a weak doubleton, so if there is a heart fit there is a good chance of an extra trick via ruffing in dummy, and also the fact that North's high cards are all aces and kings, good for suit play, is another pointer in favour of looking for a fit.

Whatever the contract, after the weak two opening it is natural to get the hearts right. That brings the trick total up to nine in 3NT, and careful play should produce a tenth via a minor-suit squeeze on East.

However, +630 may not be good enough if a significant number of N/Ss play the heart game. There, declarer can take two diamond ruffs and concede just one trick in each minor, so score +650. Or, indeed, he can take only one diamond ruff and then squeeze East between his two minor-suit lengths once again.

Board 29. All. Dealer North

♠	Q 10 7 2		
♥	10 5 2		
♦	J 8 7		
♣	10 9 4		
♠	—	♠	K J 8 6 3
♥	A K Q 7 6 3	♥	9 8
♦	A 10 6 2	♦	Q 5 4 3
♣	Q J 2	♣	A 3
	♠	A 9 5 4	
	♥	J 4	
	♦	K 9	
	♣	K 8 7 6 5	

Not that you would want to be in slam but, double dummy, East can make 12 tricks with either red suit as trumps. That takes some rather exotic twisting and turning to achieve and I would be amazed were anyone to both bid and make a slam.

The likely contract is 4♥ played by West, after South opens 1♣ in third seat. West may overcall 1♥ and East respond 1♠, after which West will drive to game, or West may think his hand a shade too good for a simple overcall and start with a double. There is a slight problem with this latter approach. If East responds at anything up to the three level, West can follow through with a heart bid to show his hand-type, but some Easts will jump all the way to 4♠, and now West has to correct to 5♥. To make 11 tricks after a club lead, declarer must play South for king-doubleton diamond.

The risk of missing game by starting with a simple 1♥ overcall is largely illusory. West has a spade void, so how likely is it that nobody is going to bid over 1♥? It doesn't matter who bids spades, West gets a second chance and can show substantial extra values by doubling or perhaps by jump-rebidding in hearts.

Board 30. None. Dealer East

	♠	A Q		
	♥	K 10		
	♦	K 10 9 8 2		
	♣	K J 9 6		
♠	10		♠	K 9 6 3 2
♥	Q 9 6 4 3		♥	A 8 7 5
♦	J 7 6 4		♦	A Q
♣	Q 4 3		♣	10 7
	♠	J 8 7 5 4		
	♥	J 2		
	♦	5 3		
	♣	A 8 5 2		

East will open 1♠ and West respond INT in hope of improving the contract. North cannot really make a take-out double when holding only a doubleton in the other major, so should choose between a 2♦ overcall and a pass, waiting to see what might develop. East will rebid 2♥ whatever North's action, and now West must decide whether

to raise or to pass, content to have found a better spot than 1♠. Despite the five-card heart support, I would opt for passing – there is no premium on bidding thin games at matchpoints.

Whether North overcalled 2♦ on the first round, or passed, when 2♥ comes round he should compete, either by bidding 3♣ if he has already shown diamonds, or via a double or unusual 2NT overcall if he still needs to show both minors. One point to consider is that South should not expect his partner to be five-five in the minors as he could then have overcalled 2NT over West's INT.

East has bid all he's got already but, if N/S compete to 3♣, West should certainly compete to 3♥. That will usually end the auction.

Three Hearts makes exactly, while North can make 10 tricks in a club contract, but will often make only nine, while South can make nine tricks in clubs. The difference is that West can establish an extra defensive trick by leading the singleton spade at trick one.

Board 31. N/S. Dealer South

		♠	J 10 7 5	
		♥	A K 5	
		♦	K 5	
		♣	K Q J 4	
♠	K Q 9 8 2	♠	A 6	
♥	4	♥	Q 10 9 8 3	
♦	9 8 3	♦	J 7 4 2	
♣	A 10 6 2	♣	9 5	
	♠	4 3		
	♥	J 7 6 2		
	♦	A Q 10 6		
	♣	8 7 3		

If North opens 1♠, South will respond INT and North raise invitationally to 2NT. As I have said previously, there is no premium for bidding thin games at matchpoints. While South might go on to game at Teams, he should probably settle for partscore at Pairs. However, it is a close decision whether to go on to 3NT or to pass 2NT.

If spades have been bid by dummy, West may lead a low club. That is won in dummy and declarer has no particularly attractive suit on which to play. He would like to leave diamonds alone for now, as they are his way to get backwards and forwards between the two hands, so he may play on hearts. However, when he cashes the ace and king and West shows out, he may switch his attention to clubs, as setting up the ♥J also allows East to set up the fifth heart as a defensive winner. It's all rather messy.

Declarer can make eight tricks by getting the diamonds right, finessing the ten on the second round, so coming to two clubs, two hearts and four diamonds, but not everyone is going to find the winning play.

If North opens 1♣ and East passes, South will respond 1♦♥ and West overcall 1♠. North rebids 1NT and plays there. The defence clears the spades and there are eight tricks for a quick +120.

If East overcalls 1♥, South may bid 1NT, which would be raised to game, but more likely passes and West bids 1♠. North may rebid 1NT now or, if he passes, South can reopen with a double or with 1NT. All these roads seem to see N/S declare some number of NT.

Finally, what happens if North opens a 15-17 NT? There will be two passes to West, who should overcall 2♠, whether that is a purely natural bid or it shows spades and a minor. Two Spades will come round to South who has a classic reopening double, and North can leave that in for penalties and collect +300 and a lot of matchpoints.

Board 32. E/W. Dealer West

♠ K 2 ♥ 9 6 5 2 ♦ 7 4 3 2 ♣ Q 9 3	♠ A 10 6 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ Q 10 5 ♣ A J 7 6	♠ J 8 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ A J 9 8 6 ♣ 10 5 2
♠ Q 9 7 5 4 3 ♥ Q J 8 ♦ K ♣ K 8 4		

If East opens 1NT and South passes, West should raise to 3NT. Of course, South will almost always overcall 2♠ or whatever bid is required by the agreed methods. West may make a take-out double and East respond 2NT, perhaps raised to game by West.

If East opens 1♣, South has a clear 1♠ overcall and West has a problem. I would double and worry about the consequences later, but those who play that this guarantees four hearts – the big majority – will rule out double for precisely that reason. They will usually opt for 2♦, which is a bit of an overbid. There will be no harm done today, however; East will rebid 2NT and, as that shows a strong NT or similar, West is likely to raise to game.

3NT is just a matter of overtricks. If South leads a spade to the king and ace, declarer will test the diamonds at trick two and the king will hop up. Five rounds of diamonds makes a bit of a mess of the South hand and, if declarer reads the position correctly, an eleventh trick can be made.