



Commentary
for the
IBU Autumn Simultaneous Pairs
Thursday 10th November 2022

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the IBU Simultaneous Pairs 2022, and for supporting the Irish Bridge Union.

The funds raised this year will be used to defray the costs of sending what we hope will be two IBU teams to the World Championships in Marrakech in 2023 – our Open Team will definitely be competing for the Bermuda Bowl, and our Women’s Team will very likely be competing for the Venice Cup (for the first time). So your entry fees will be going to a very good cause. Players from each of these teams have contributed a commentary this week, which means that those of you who play in Wednesday or Thursday’s sessions will have the opportunity to observe their analytical skills, and gauge your own bidding and play against Ireland’s best.

We hope that you enjoyed the chance to pit your bridge wits against your fellow players across Ireland (and for those still playing online, maybe overseas as well). As ever, the hands (which are randomly dealt by computer with no manual intervention) provided plenty of challenges. Many thanks to our expert commentator(s) **Monday** – Brian Senior; **Tuesday** – Enda Murphy; **Wednesday** the Irish Women’s Team, Rebecca Brown-O’Keeffe, Jeannie Fitzgerald, Diane Greenwood, Joan Kenny, Gilda Pender and Teresa Rigney; **Thursday** – members of the Irish Open Team, Hugh McGann, Adam Mesbur, and Tommy Garvey and **Friday** – Paul Delaney for their guidance through the maze. I hope that you have picked up some useful tips from their advice.

Don’t forget to check your standing in the national results at www.ecatsbridge.com/sims.

Harold Curran – President, Irish Bridge Union

Board 1. None. Dealer North

	♠ J 6 4		
	♥ K J		
	♦ 10 7 6 3		
	♣ Q 9 7 2		
♠ A 5 2		♠ K Q 9 7	
♥ 8 4 3		♥ Q 5	
♦ A K Q J 4		♦ 8 5 2	
♣ K 4		♣ A J 8 6	
	♠ 10 8 3		
	♥ A 10 9 7 6 2		
	♦ 9		
	♣ 10 5 3		
North	East	South	West
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

3NT is doomed and after a heart lead will be 2 down. Those playing weak NT will most probably bid 1NT-3NT with no interference. However, if playing strong NT, East will open 1♣ and now the South hands looks suitable for a weak 2♥ jump overcall or even a very light 1♥ overcall after which East -West will reach

either 4♠ or 5♦, both of which will easily make, in the case of 4♠ with overtricks.

In 4♠, on the singleton diamond lead, we have 12 tricks comprising 4 in spades, 5 in diamonds, 2 top clubs and a club ruff taken before drawing trumps.

Board 2. N/S. Dealer East

	♠ A 6 5		
	♥ J 9 6 3		
	♦ J 6		
	♣ Q 8 7 5		
♠ J 10 4		♠ Q 9	
♥ A Q 8 5		♥ 7 4 2	
♦ A K Q 3		♦ 10 8 5	
♣ A K		♣ 10 9 4 3 2	
	♠ K 8 7 3 2		
	♥ K 10		
	♦ 9 7 4 2		
	♣ J 6		
North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

A cautious 2NT or an adventurous and lucky 3NT? The final contract may depend on our NT ranges.

The bidding will often start with 2♣ – 2♦ – 2NT. Should East pass or raise?

If 2NT is 22-23, a pass in pairs is sensible but if it's 23+, then a raise to 3NT.

The fall of the ♦J in two rounds means 4 diamond tricks and an entry to dummy to finesse a heart. With a slow spade trick and AK of clubs all roads lead to 9 tricks in a no-trump contract.

Board 3. E/W. Dealer South

<p>♠ K 3 ♥ A K 10 7 ♦ A J 5 2 ♣ A Q 10</p> <p>♠ A 8 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ 9 8 6 4 3 ♣ 5 3 2</p> <p>♠ 10 9 7 ♥ J 5 4 3 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ K 9 4</p>	<p>♠ Q J 6 5 4 ♥ Q 9 6 ♦ 10 ♣ J 8 7 6</p>
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North	East	South	West
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
All Pass			Pass

The contract at most tables will either be 3NT or 4♥ by North/South. North opens 2NT and with a 3-4-3-3 shape South may choose to raise to 3NT or use Stayman finishing in 4♥.

Against 3NT, the 'normal' small spade lead gives an easy 10 tricks. Getting greedy and finessing a heart will mean 9 tricks (provided you cash 9 before taking the heart finesse). Taking the heart finesse when playing 3NT, though unsuccessful here, looks the correct option given those in 4♥ will be making 12 tricks if it is correct and what looks like 11 tricks if not.

Against 4♥ by North, the most probable lead is the singleton diamond. North will win, cash the heart Ace, enter dummy with a club then take the losing heart finesse. Now East/West need to find a spade to the Ace followed by a diamond ruff. On the ♠Q switch by East, West will hopefully see the only chance of another trick is to try to give his partner a diamond ruff (so overtaking with the ace) and hold the contract to 10 tricks.

Board 4. All. Dealer West

<p>♠ K 9 4 ♥ K 4 ♦ A Q J 8 ♣ A K 10 9</p> <p>♠ Q 7 ♥ 8 7 3 ♦ K 5 4 2 ♣ J 7 3 2</p> <p>♠ J 10 5 3 2 ♥ A J 9 5 ♦ 6 ♣ Q 5 4</p>	<p>♠ A 8 6 ♥ Q 10 6 2 ♦ 10 9 7 3 ♣ 8 6</p>
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North	East	South	West
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	3NT	All Pass

East/West will be silent throughout. At most tables, North will open 2NT and the final contract will depend on how much science North/South have and whether they find the 5-3 spade fit or play 3NT. If playing Stayman or basic Puppet Stayman then 3NT is the most probable contract. However, with all three finesses (spade, heart, diamond) outside 12 tricks can be made in both NT and spades.

Board 5. N/S. Dealer North

<p>♠ K Q 10 3 ♥ K Q 10 ♦ A 4 ♣ 8 6 5 4</p> <p>♠ J 6 4 ♥ A 3 2 ♦ Q 10 8 5 3 2 ♣ J</p> <p>♠ 9 7 5 ♥ 8 7 6 5 ♦ 9 6 ♣ Q 9 7 2</p>	<p>♠ A 8 2 ♥ J 9 4 ♦ K J 7 ♣ A K 10 3</p>
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North	East	South	West
INT	Dbf	All Pass	

Many routes will lead to 3NT by East. If North opens 1♣ (or 1♠ for those playing 4-card majors) East has a INT (15-18) overcall which West should raise to 3NT.

If North/South are playing weak NT then East has a clear double. INT doubled can be held to 4 tricks for -800 on accurate defence (Ace of clubs lead, followed by King of diamonds switch) but that is not easy to find. However, -500 will be enough for an excellent result. South with 4-4 may be able to escape to 2♣. This can be doubled and held to 6 tricks but it

is more likely that East/West will bid on and play 3NT.

3NT rates to make 10 tricks (5 diamonds, 3 clubs, 1 in each major suit) On a club lead, there is a chance of 11 tricks. At trick 1, J of clubs wins in dummy, then a diamond to the King, cash one top club and play the ♦J, won by North whose best option is to return a club. On the run of the diamonds North is squeezed in the majors, thus 11 tricks for 460 and a good score but less than those who get a penalty for 500 or 800.

Board 6. E/W. Dealer East

<p>♠ K J 9 7 ♥ 9 7 ♦ Q 9 8 7 3 ♣ 9 6</p> <p>♠ A 6 3 ♥ K 10 8 6 5 2 ♦ 6 ♣ J 7 4</p>	<p>♠ 10 5 ♥ A Q J 3 ♦ A K J 5 2 ♣ K 8</p> <p>♠ Q 8 4 2 ♥ 4 ♦ 10 4 ♣ A Q 10 5 3 2</p>
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North	East	South	West
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
	4♥	All Pass	

East opens 1♦ and West bids 1♥. East has a straightforward raise to 4♥.

What to lead against 4♥? The unbid club suit would be the natural choice and gives the first two tricks to the defence. South should now switch to a spade, which will probably hold declarer to 10 tricks (unless declarer takes the diamond finesse with the risk of going down).

Board 7. All. Dealer South

<p>♠ A 7 6 4 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ A 6 ♣ A J 9 3</p> <p>♠ K 10 8 5 3 ♥ Q ♦ 7 4 ♣ Q 10 6 5 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 2 ♥ K 6 4 2 ♦ K J 9 2 ♣ K 4</p> <p>♠ J ♥ A J 10 7 3 ♦ Q 10 8 5 3 ♣ 8 7</p>
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North	East	South	West
		2♥	All Pass

A competitive part score board where East/West should compete to 2♠ and North/South bid on to 3♥. Play and defence of both the heart and spade part-scores are complex and we may see a wide variety of results.

This is a good board for pairs playing weak 2-suited openings. If South has one of these in the bag, he can open 2♥ showing 5 hearts and a 5(4)-card minor with less than opening values. It is not clear that anyone has another bid and that may be the final contact. However, if South passes and East/West have this option then a 2♠ opening by West will put the pressure on North/South. South should probably compete in 4th position over 2♠. 2NT showing 2 suits is the best option and over North's 3♣, South will bid 3♦ to show diamonds and hearts. North will then correct to 3♥.

If both South and West pass then can East/West get into the auction?

Board 8. None. Dealer West

<p>♠ 4 3 2 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ 9 8 2 ♣ 9 8 6 2</p> <p>♠ A Q J 7 ♥ — ♦ Q J 10 6 5 ♣ J 7 5 3</p> <p>♠ 10 8 ♥ K J 6 4 ♦ A K 4 3 ♣ K 10 4</p>	<p>♠ K 9 6 5 ♥ A Q 8 7 3 2 ♦ 7 ♣ A Q</p>
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North	East	South	West
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣*	Pass	3♣**
Pass	3♠***	Pass	4♠****

* 4th suit forcing (a game forcing relay)

** Bidding out shape

*** Strong slam interest setting spades as trumps

**** Minimum

This is a reasonably natural auction, which will allow us to stop in game.

The spade game by West is likely to be the contract at most tables. A trump lead or a club

lead and a trump switch after South wins trick 1 with the ♣K will hold the contract to 10 tricks.

Any pairs that get higher will struggle with no play for more than 10 tricks on correct defence.

Board 9. E/W. Dealer North

<p>♠ A 10 9 8 7 6 3 ♥ J 8 ♦ 10 9 8 ♣ 7</p> <p>♠ J ♥ A 9 5 ♦ Q 5 ♣ A Q 10 9 5 4 3</p>	<p>♠ 4 2 ♥ K 10 6 2 ♦ J 7 6 4 2 ♣ J 2</p> <p>♠ K Q 5 ♥ Q 7 4 3 ♦ A K 3 ♣ K 8 6</p>
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North	East	South	West
3♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

There are a few variations possible in the bidding.

North might open Multi or 2♠ or perhaps 4♠.

I don't like 2♠ (or a Multi) at all. North has a 7-card suit and is opening at favourable vulnerability. Both suggest 3♠. For me, opening 4♠ is too much but better than 2♠.

South might respond 3NT instead of 4♠ and that could work out well especially on a club lead.

And finally, West might enter the auction. But for West the vulnerability is a big disincentive. As it happens 5♣ doubled is likely to go 2 down.

The play:

In 4♠, a diamond lead defeats the contract while a heart lead gives the 10th trick.

However, even on a diamond lead the defence needs to be hot. Declarer wins and plays a low heart from the table. West must hop up the ace and play a second diamond so that East's heart king provides an entry to cash the winning diamond. If West plays low, the jack loses to the king and East continues a diamond. But North can cross to hand and lead a second heart ducking into West's nine. Later, a heart ruff brings down the ace for a diamond discard. If East covers the 8 of hearts, North must play the queen from table but the spots are such that the 7 becomes established with a ruff.

If the defence start off with a trump or the Jack of clubs followed by another club, North ruffs and plays a spade to the queen and a low heart. West cannot play the ace or its easy to set up a heart trick, so the jack loses to king. Now East switches to diamonds but its too late. Dummy wins and plays another low heart, West wins with the 9 and continues diamonds but declarer can now ruff a heart setting up the queen. Declarer can draw the last trump ending on the table and there are 10 tricks. The play is similar on a spade lead.

Would I fault a non-diamond lead? Definitely not. It's one of those hands where any lead could be right and hindsight is a great thing.

Board 10. All. Dealer East

<p>♠ 8 6 5 ♥ Q J 9 4 ♦ A 8 5 ♣ 9 8 4</p> <p>♠ J 9 ♥ A K 10 2 ♦ K 7 6 2 ♣ A J 7</p>	<p>♠ K Q 7 4 3 2 ♥ 7 ♦ J 10 3 ♣ K 3 2</p> <p>♠ A 10 ♥ 8 6 5 3 ♦ Q 9 4 ♣ Q 10 6 5</p>
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North	East	South	West
Pass	2♠*	Pass	2NT**
All Pass	3♣***	Pass	4♠

- * Weak 2
- ** Strength enquiry
- *** Strong with a feature in clubs

Most of the field will play in 4♠. East/West will make an overtrick if they guess the diamond correctly. If East plays the hand, after drawing trumps and discarding a diamond on the ♥K, the ♦J should be led to encourage South to cover. If South does not cover, it is a guess.

Guess right for a good score and wrong for a poor one.

Board 11. None. Dealer South

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

North	East	South	West
1♠	2♥	Pass	1♦
Pass	6♥	All Pass	3♠

The suggested bidding is a bit contrived. 3♠ by West shows a very strong hand with a heart fit.

6♥ is a very good contract.

If North/South compete, a big penalty is possible if they get too frisky. North/South are unlikely to make more than 3 tricks in 2♠ and that's a potential 1100. The main problem for East/West is identifying the working diamond void. It's not easy to show a void in partner's opening suit. I think many of the pairs who do reach the slam will have guessed well in the auction.

If (say) a club is led, East should test the hearts before taking a spade ruff. When the hearts are 3-1 it's best to draw trumps and lead the ♦K intending to discard if North plays low. That guarantees 12 tricks and as the cards actually lie results in 13 tricks. A thoughtful East might decide to play Ace and another heart to protect against the possibility of a club ruff. There is something to be said for playing as safely as possible when you believe you are in a contract that most of the other pairs will not reach.

Board 12. N/S. Dealer West

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

North	East	South	West
INT	2♥	3♣	1♥
3♦	All Pass		Pass

East's bid of 2♥ creates a problem for South. My preferred method is to play transfers in this position. 2NT would show clubs, 3♣ shows diamonds etc. Double is general values. That has the advantage of letting the strong hand play the contract and also means you can make the bid whether you are weak or strong. With a strong hand you bid again after the transfer is completed.

West might compete to 3♥ and this contract plays very well with both major suit kings well placed.

On the ♣A lead against 3♥, 9 tricks should not be a problem.

This is not a good hand for followers of the law of total tricks (Larry Cohen). The 'law' states that the total number of tricks on a deal is equal to the total number of trumps. This suggests that when both sides have an 8-card fit the total tricks available are 16. But on this deal the total is 18.

Against 3♦, East leads a heart. West wins and advances the ♠Q. North covers and East wins and plays a spade back to the ten. West now tries a heart. Declarer (North) can probably tell from the carding that the ♥Q is wrong. So North wins and plays King and a low diamond. If East plays low it costs nothing to play low and this protects against two trump losers. With 4 certain losers, North must play for both clubs to be right. That results in 9 tricks.

Cohen, I am guessing, would argue that the reason the law is wrong on this deal is that East/West have a good fit in a side suit, spades, which increases their tricks by one and that North/South benefit from the favourable position of the club honours.

Board 13. All. Dealer North

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

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	3NT	Dbl
4♣	4♦	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

After two passes, South will open 1♣ or 3NT (gambling). 3♣ is possible but this hand is much too good for that. After a 1♣ (or 3♣) opening, it's routine for East/West to reach 4♥ or 4♠. The contracts are identical. A 3NT opening is more testing. For East/West, a good idea is to play double as a strong balanced hand and 4♣ as takeout for the majors. If West doubles and North rescues to 4♣ then it's useful for a double by East to show balanced values and to use 4♦ as takeout for the majors.

These methods allow East/West to play 4 of a major. Declarer has a guess in diamonds for the 11th trick. He should probably guess correctly as South holds long clubs. If South holds 7 clubs and North only 3, then South has 6 cards that might be include the ♦J while North has 10.

If North/South are allowed to play in 4♣ doubled, 8 tricks are routine. That's only 300 for E/W which is likely to be a poor match-point score.

Board 14. None. Dealer East

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

North	East	South	West
	4♥	All Pass	

East's hand seems much too good for a 3♥ opening, so I would open 4♥. Neither North or South have enough to bid over either 3♥ or 4♥. Remember, double is takeout not penalty. South is too weak and North's hand is unsuitable. North also knows his partner is short in hearts and yet South did not bid over East's opening. South's normal lead is a spade and the defenders should cash their 4 winners and then play a third round of clubs forcing dummy to ruff. That promotes a trick for the ten of hearts. There are other routes to two down.

Strangely, if East opens 3♥ and North makes the very aggressive bid of 3NT in the fourth seat, it turns out this contract can be beaten only on a spade lead. North wins and must play a heart to cut the communications beaten the East/West hands. But now West can set up his spades before the diamonds have been established. On a normal top heart lead, East can take 3 heart tricks but a diamond switch sets up 9 tricks for declarer and so does a spade, the ten of spades proving to be a big card.

Board 15. N/S. Dealer South

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

North	East	South	West
Pass	2♦	Pass	INT
All Pass		Pass	2♥

Clearly for those playing a weak no-trump the auction will go differently. Some players will regard the West cards as too good for a 15-17 INT opening. I agree the hand looks too good. I would upgrade the hand and open 1♣ intending to rebid 2NT (18/19).

If West opens 1♣ North will bid 1♠. East is not strong enough to bid 2♥. So East doubles to show some values and South will bid 2♠. West continues with 2NT and that's likely to be the

final contract. Many partnerships play weak/strong 2NT in this position. What that means is an immediate bid of 3♣ or 3♥ by West shows a good hand while 2NT is a transfer to 3♣ showing a weaker hand with clubs or heart support (if he has hearts, West continues with 3♥ after partner completes the transfer).

In this case West will probably chance 3nt.

If North was in the protective seat (that is - he is to bid after two passes) he might protect with 2♠ but vulnerable, opposite a passed partner, and with an unlimited hand on his left, pass (over 2♥) is right.

North leads the king of spades against 2♥ and West should duck. North is stuck now and as the cards lie a trump switch is best. This goes to the Queen, King, and Ace. Now West can run the 9 of hearts picking up the suit without loss. After drawing the last trump, he leads a club. South goes in the Queen intending to switch to a diamond but West wins with the Ace and exits on a club putting North on lead. Whatever North plays West wins and concedes a club. Dummy's diamonds are discarded on the winning clubs. The same tricks are available on the ♣J switch (instead of a trump) provided West ducks, South does not get a chance to play diamonds until it is too late.

If North does bid spades, East/West should compete to 3♥ and they should double 3♠ if North/South venture that high. Most defences lead to at least two down.

Board 16. E/W. Dealer West

	♠ K 7 3 2		
	♥ K Q		
	♦ 9 8 2		
	♣ A 8 5 4		
♠ Q J 5		♠ A 10 8 4	
♥ J 10 6		♥ A 7 4	
♦ K J 7 4		♦ A Q 3	
♣ J 10 2		♣ 9 7 3	
	♠ 9 6		
	♥ 9 8 5 3 2		
	♦ 10 6 5		
	♣ K Q 6		
North	East	South	West
1♣	Dbl	1♥	Pass
All Pass			INT

The 1♣ opening is often 2 or 3 cards so West should bid INT instead of 1♦.

Whatever the lead, West is likely to make 9 tricks with 1 heart, 4 diamonds and 4 spades.

A 4-card major opening by North (1♠) might lead to a very different result.

If East elects to bid, INT is possible. Now West, expecting another point or 2, raises to 3NT and the same 9 tricks are available.

Another possibility is a weak no-trump opening. If East doubles, South will transfer into hearts or bid hearts directly depending on the methods used after the double, and East/West will again probably end up in 3NT because West will expect a slightly better hand from partner.

Board 17. None. Dealer North

	♠ A K 2		
	♥ A K 9 8		
	♦ Q 10 5		
	♣ J 4 3		
♠ 9 8 7 6 3		♠ Q J 5	
♥ J 4		♥ 10 7 6 3	
♦ 8 7		♦ K 9 3	
♣ A 9 7 6		♣ 10 8 5	
	♠ 10 4		
	♥ Q 5 2		
	♦ A J 6 4 2		
	♣ K Q 2		
North	East	South	West
INT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

North will open a strong no-trump and south will raise directly to 3NT. There are 12 tricks available with little difficulty via the diamond finesse regardless of the lead – so maybe this will be one of those rare flat boards right across the room?

Even if North/South are playing weak no-trump, there is no reason for East/West to get involved in the auction, so I would expect the same result. Of course, if any over-bidders reach slam in diamonds or no-trump, they will achieve a great result on the friendly lie of the cards.

Board 18. N/S. Dealer East

<p>♠ A 4 ♥ 10 4 2 ♦ 10 8 3 ♣ A Q J 9 8</p> <p>♠ 6 5 ♥ 7 ♦ Q 7 6 5 4 2 ♣ 7 6 4 3</p> <p>♠ K J 9 2 ♥ A Q 9 8 6 ♦ A J ♣ K 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 10 8 7 3 ♥ K J 5 3 ♦ K 9 ♣ 10 5</p>
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North	East	South	West
Pass	1♣	1♠	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4NT*
All Pass	5♥**	Pass	6♥

* Roman Key Card Blackwood

** 2 key cards without the Q

6♥ for North/South looks excellent if you can avoid a diamond lead - you just need to bring in the hearts for one loser.

The play on a diamond lead is a lot more interesting, but declarer should still prevail. It might go something like three rounds of clubs in an effort to pitch the losing ♦J. As East ruffs in on the third round, declarer overruffs and goes back to dummy with a spade to the Ace for a fourth club. East ruffs in again and you can overruff and cash the heart Ace – which leaves two hearts and a club in dummy to take care of your losers and the defence just score the heart King.

Board 19. E/W. Dealer South

<p>♠ A 4 ♥ Q J 9 6 5 ♦ Q 10 4 ♣ 10 7 5</p> <p>♠ Q 9 7 ♥ A K ♦ A K 9 2 ♣ A K 8 2</p> <p>♠ J 6 5 2 ♥ 10 8 2 ♦ J 7 3 ♣ 9 6 3</p>	<p>♠ K 10 8 3 ♥ 7 4 3 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ Q J 4</p>
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North	East	South	West
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♣
Pass	3NT	All Pass	2NT*

* 23 points

East/West will inevitably end up in 3NT and this would be a pretty boring board in teams. However, in pairs, the number of tricks is crucial. On a heart lead, West will make ten tricks by playing a spade to the King and then one back to the nine. The best play for eleven tricks is to finesse North for the ♠J ... but on this layout, any of those intrepid (or foolhardy depending on your perspective) declarers will suffer the ignominy of going down.

Board 20. All. Dealer West

<p>♠ Q 8 7 6 3 2 ♥ 8 3 2 ♦ 7 6 4 ♣ 5</p> <p>♠ — ♥ J 10 9 7 5 ♦ K 10 8 5 3 ♣ A J 10</p> <p>♠ A 4 ♥ 6 4 ♦ A Q 9 ♣ K 9 8 7 4 2</p>	<p>♠ K J 10 9 5 ♥ A K Q ♦ J 2 ♣ Q 6 3</p>
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North	East	South	West
Pass	4♥	All Pass	2♥

The most likely contract is 4♥ by East/West.

Some Wests will open showing hearts and a minor, which East would raise to 4♥, but most Wests will pass if they do not have this club in their bag. If West passes, I hope that no Norths are tempted to open a weak two such a horrible suit (and no points!) If they do, it should go pass, pass, double for takeout by West, gleefully left in by East.

If East gets to open a strong no-trump, West will transfer and 4♥ will again be the final contract. If East is playing a weak no-trump, they will open 1♠ and South may well bid 2♣ – although ideally you would like a better suit. Now everybody has options, and the auction could end in three no-trump, 4♥, or even 2♣ doubled.

The cards could not lie better for East/West and they should take eleven tricks in no-trump and eleven or twelve tricks in hearts (it takes a club lead and the threat of a ruff to stop twelve tricks). At least 800 is available for two of a

black suit doubled, so North/South do best to keep their heads off the chopping block this time.

Board 21. N/S. Dealer North

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

North	East	South	West
1♥	Dbl	Pass	INT
Pass	4♠	Pass	All Pass

If North opens 1♥, East should double and then bid spades on the next round (showing a hand that was too good for an immediate spade overcall). I would expect that all East/Wests will find their way to 4♠ regardless of whether North opens or not.

As often is the case in pairs games, the play is as important as the bidding and East's task is to make eleven tricks. This involves taking the heart finesse and making sure that you only lose two club tricks. I doubt that all declarers will get the timing right and would expect a nicely over average score for making eleven tricks.

Board 22. E/W. Dealer East

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

North	East	South	West
Dbl	Pass	Pass	INT
	All Pass		

After two passes, West might open a weak no-trump and North would double this for penalties with no one else having anything further to add. The lack of entries to the South

hand means that North will eventually be endplayed to give a club or a diamond trick to a careful declarer rendering one no-trump unbeatable. In fact, unless North leads a spade or a top heart, declarer can actually abscond with eight tricks. Of course, there will be plenty of less careful declarers who play on the minors themselves and fail in one no-trump.

If West is playing a strong no-trump, they will open 1♦ and North will overcall INT. They are likely to make the same number of tricks that they would have made on defence and should find that minus fifty translates to a solid above-average score on the board.

Board 23. All. Dealer South

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

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

A likely uncontested auction might start something like 1♦ – 1♠ – 2♣ – 2♥ (fourth suit game forcing) – 3♦ ... and now auctions will diverge as some Norths will re-bid the strong spade suit and some will bid 3NT.

For those finishing in 3NT, they will likely get the 'telegraphed' heart lead, so the defence have three tricks on winning the ace of diamonds. I think that 630 will prove disappointingly under average for North/South.

The play in diamonds should be equally quick with a simple twelve tricks available as the Ace pops up when you lead up twice in trumps. Of course, if you are playing in diamonds, it better be in slam as 620 will be a very poor result while 1370 will be excellent.

The lucky three-three spade break means that twelve tricks are also available in spades – though the play is a bit tricky on a heart lead and you need to time it well. A majestic (if somewhat fortunate!) 1430 will be a top and a success story in the bar. I would guess that

650 will prove about average on this hand, losing to the slams and the 680's, but beating people who play in no-trump or five diamonds (or go down in six spades).

Board 24. None. Dealer West

<p>♠ J 8 6 ♥ Q 9 8 ♦ A 10 9 8 6 4 ♣ 3</p> <p>♠ A 4 2 ♥ A K 3 ♦ 5 ♣ A J 8 6 4 2</p> <p>♠ K 10 7 5 ♥ 10 7 5 4 2 ♦ Q ♣ Q 10 5</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 3 ♥ J 6 ♦ K J 7 3 2 ♣ K 9 7</p>
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North	East	South	West
1♦	INT	Pass	1♣
All Pass			3NT

I guess the auction might go something like 1♣ from West, 1♦ from North, INT from East, raised to 3NT by West. (I don't think that East/West should expect to get rich from 1♦ and should not try for a penalty.)

The ♦Q lead makes life pretty easy for East, but the play is very tricky on a heart lead. Let's suppose the ♥4 is ducked to the Queen and the ♦10 is switched. It seems pretty normal to play the Jack, here losing to the singleton Queen. South puts you in dummy with a heart and now declarer actually goes down unless they guess the club.

All in all, despite there being ten tricks available to good guesses, I would be pleased to score plus 400 and move onto the next board.

Board 25. E/W. Dealer North

<p>♠ Q 10 9 5 ♥ A 2 ♦ J 5 3 ♣ A Q 9 7</p> <p>♠ A K 4 3 ♥ Q 9 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ K 8 3 2</p> <p>♠ 8 7 6 ♥ K 10 7 6 4 ♦ 10 ♣ J 10 6 5</p>	<p>♠ J 2 ♥ J 8 5 3 ♦ A Q 9 8 6 2 ♣ 4</p>
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North	East	South	West
1♣	1♦	1♥	Dbl
Pass	2♦	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

There are many possible bidding sequences. North might open INT or 1♠ or 1♣ but whatever the opening, East/West should reach 3♦ or 3nt. West's double of 1♥ shows points with 4 spades. Against 3nt, if South has bid hearts, North might lead Ace and another heart. South wins and, seeing no future in hearts, plays the ♣J. This allows the defence to take 4 club tricks and 2 hearts scoring 200 points and a good match-point score.

3♦ is clearly a safer spot. If South leads the ♣J and continues the suit, East can win and play a heart to the nine. Even if that loses to the ten East can win any return, draw trumps, and eventually set up a heart trick.

Board 26. All. Dealer East

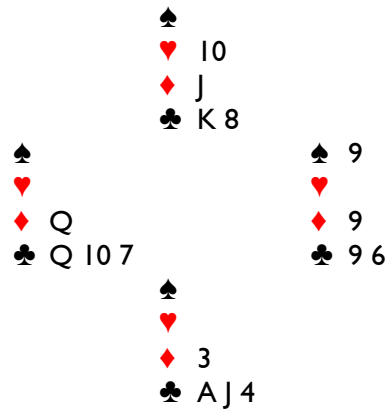
<p>♠ K 10 6 ♥ A Q 10 4 2 ♦ J 6 2 ♣ K 8</p> <p>♠ Q 5 4 ♥ J 5 3 ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ Q 10 7 5</p> <p>♠ J 7 ♥ K 9 8 ♦ A K 3 ♣ A J 4 3 2</p>	<p>♠ A 9 8 3 2 ♥ 7 6 ♦ 10 9 8 5 ♣ 9 6</p>
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North	East	South	West
2♦	Pass	INT	Pass
3NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
	Pass	4♥	All Pass

After a pass by East, North/South should reach 4♥. Assuming a strong no-trump opening, this will normally be played by South via a transfer sequence.

Any lead except trumps costs a trick. But most Wests will lead their 4th best club. This runs to the Jack and South should immediately draw trumps. Then the ♣K is cashed and a diamond is led to the Ace. Now South plays the ♣A discarding a diamond and ruffs a club setting up the fifth club as a winner. Another diamond to the King is followed by the last club discarding a spade and declarer leads a spade towards dummy. It's a 50-50 guess as to who has the Ace or Queen. And like an earlier hand, a good guess will lead to a good score.

Played from the North hand 4♥ is much more difficult. The ten of diamonds lead gives nothing away and attacks the entries to the strong hand. In theory North can still make twelve tricks but that's unlikely. The winning line is win with the ♦A and immediately lead the ♠J. That's covered by the Queen, King, and Ace. East plays another diamond. Dummy's King wins. A spade is led to the ten and a spade is ruffed. Now declarer plays off all his trumps. The end position looks like this:



When North plays the ten of hearts, discarding a small diamond from the table, West has to come down to 2 clubs. North can cash the Ace and King of clubs dropping the Queen for a well deserved 12 tricks.