



Commentary for the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs

Tuesday 5th March 2024

Dear Bridge Player,

Thank you very much for playing in the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs 2024, and for your continued support for the Association.

The funds that you contribute via these Simultaneous Pairs will help the Association in the rebuilding work ongoing as we emerge from the covid hiatus – training new teachers and new TDs, promoting the game and trying to attract new members, and so on. Many of our input costs, like costs generally these days, are increasing significantly, so your support for this event, and for the various live competitions run during the season by the CBAI, is greatly appreciated.

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 always, the hands (which are randomly generated by computer with no manual intervention whatsoever) provided lots of tricky problems. Many thanks to our expert commentators Paul Delaney (Monday), Enda Murphy (Tuesday), Fearghal O'Boyle (Wednesday), Brian Senior (Thursday), and Karel De Raeymaeker and one of his junior protegeés, Isabel Burke (Friday) 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.

And finally, this note gives me a chance to repeat the theme of my presidential year: *"Please cherish and nurture your club's beginners and novices – they are the future of our game."*

Gordon Lessells

President, Contract Bridge Association of Ireland

Board 1	♠	AJ52	Dealer N
	♥	1096	Vul: None
	♦	843	
	♣	972	
♠	876	♠	Q93
♥	A84	♥	KQ72
♦	AKJ5	♦	62
♣	K84	♣	AQ53
	♠	K104	
	♥	J53	
	♦	Q1097	
	♣	J106	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	INT	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

You've got to be kidding me. A whole year gone since I last favoured you lot with my pearls of wisdom!! And all in return for a pittance that would give usury a bad name. I really must re-evaluate my priorities and / or get a life.

And it's not like much has happened since last time. Just the two wars have broken out, and

I'm betting on China to bring up the trifecta. They've been too placid for too long. Here's hoping. After all, it was Confucius who said "may you live in interesting times".

You know the drill by now. We're playing Weak NT, 5-card majors and Weak 2s in 3 suits. Marquis of Queensbury Rules. Our signals are smiles and snarls. I'm analysing the hands as if I were playing with myself (do stop it!!) against myself and myself.

This hand could deliver a great start for Weak NTers. The room will declare 3NT from one side or the other. If West declares, a spade lead will limit them to 9 tricks. With East declaring, South will likely lead a diamond. A conservative East will pop the Ace and cash out, making 10 tricks. If the ♦10 is led, it could be from 109xx in which case cashing AK would bring down North's doubleton Queen, resulting in 11 tricks. If a fourth-best ♦7 is led, East should reason it is unlikely to be from 10987, so the finesse of the Jack becomes very attractive – 11 tricks will be a very good score.

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

Board 2	♠	Q954	Dealer E
	♥	J9	Vul: N-S
	♦	Q976	
	♣	1065	
♠	AKJ10	♠	7
♥	1086543	♥	A7
♦	1084	♦	A53
♣		♣	AKJ9874
	♠	8632	
	♥	KQ2	
	♦	KJ2	
	♣	Q32	

West	North	East	South
		1♣	P
1♥	P	3♣	P
3NT	P	P	P
=====			

Not an easy hand to bid, the problem arising on West's second bid. He's void in partner's suit but he's got 6 hearts and a chunky spade suit. Pass is out of the question so it's 3H or 3NT. I think 3♠ would overstate West's values. 3♥ isn't forcing. As West I punt 3NT in the reasonable hope that I'll get a spade lead.

In practice North will very likely lead a spade. West wins the ♠10, cashes the AK, enters dummy in hearts and clears the clubs. That's 3NT made and I think it should score well. There are 11 tricks in 4♥ – well done if you got there – but I think the majority will not. Just in passing, East is not good enough for a 2♣ strong opener, even though the hand likely contains 8 tricks♥.

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

Board 3	♠	Q4	Dealer S
	♥	QJ874	Vul: E-W
	♦	K3	
	♣	9753	
♠	KJ97	♠	1086
♥	109632	♥	
♦	Q87	♦	AJ10962
♣	K	♣	Q1084
	♠	A532	
	♥	AK5	
	♦	54	
	♣	AJ62	

West	North	East	South
		1♣	
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣*	2♦	2♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

*2♣ = transfer to 2♦, invitational values

Ugh!! Filthy layout for N/S. Damage limitation time. 2♣ from North is artificial and mandates 2♦ from South, promising invitational values. East has a shapely hand and may try 2♦, at the very least indicating the lead. South can show heart support with 2♥ and now North should devalue the ♦K and let it rest in 2♥. Even 2♥ goes down one. But I expect carnage in the N/S scorecard to be the general experience. Even if East doesn't bid diamonds, 4♥ is not a great contract, and at Pairs you're usually best to try to get positive scores.

I forgot to tell you that our wine companion of choice for the session is Casillero del Diablo (The Devil's Locker), a positively impish Chardonnay. I'm nosing it appreciatively even as we speak. You hardly thought I'd be churning this stuff out stone cold sober, now did you? I should have told you earlier – mea culpa (or should that be mea gulpa?)

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

Board 4	♠	6	Dealer W
	♥	A762	Vul: Both
	♦	KJ83	
	♣	AQ96	
♠	QJ1094	♠	832
♥	J853	♥	Q1094
♦	Q	♦	A10742
♣	852	♣	7
	♠	AK75	
	♥	K	
	♦	965	
	♣	KJ1043	

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3nt
Pass	Pass	Pass	

4441 shapes can be tricky to bid. Opening 1NT with a singleton is not technically illegal but is heavily discouraged. Some people (me!) like to play that 1♦ shows 5 – so they have to open 1♣ and rebid 2♣. If you only promise four for 1♦ you can open 1♦ and rebid 2♣. 2♥ is fourth suit forcing and all roads likely lead to 3NT. 10 easy tricks.

5♣ is solid but 3NT+1 scores better. 6♣ is far from the worst contract in the world, it is unlucky to fail via a diamond ruff. Quelle dommage!!

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

Board 5	♠	K52	Dealer N
	♥	AJ96	Vul: N-S
	♦	KJ932	
	♣	A	
♠	AQ	♠	J10983
♥	875432	♥	Q
♦	A1087	♦	4
♣	J	♣	1086542
	♠	764	
	♥	K10	
	♦	Q65	
	♣	KQ973	

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

660 should be a common score, unless N/S can penalise 2H for a big number. In the given auction, 2NT is 15-17. After unblocking the ♣A, diamonds should start with K from North, then leading to the Queen exposes the 4-1 break and allows a finesse against the ten. Et voila – Robert is your mother's brother!

Since there's nothing to this hand, let's talk politics. Specifically, let's talk about America. Regardless of your leanings, I'm sure you'll agree they're in a doom loop. If you're a Republican, your party has been captured by an idiot with an IQ of about 4. If you're a Democrat, you have to see that Biden has gone gaga.

Hard to believe that in a country with 332 million souls, this pair is the best they have to offer. 60 years ago (I'm writing this in 2023), my father took me to see JFK deliver remarks in my native Wexford. O tempora, o mores!

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NTt
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	4	3	1	5
S	1	4	3	1	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-
=====					

Board 6 ♠ 1042 Dealer E
 ♥ KJ93 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A54
 ♣ KJ10

♠ A95 ♠ J83
 ♥ Q754 ♥ 862
 ♦ 76 ♦ K102
 ♣ Q653 ♣ 8742

♠ KQ76
 ♥ A10
 ♦ QJ983
 ♣ A9

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

Another momma-poppa hand!! Where are all the fireworks? Has the ghost of Mary Whitehouse appeared and sanitised these deals?? Did someone slip the dealing machine some Valium? It's enough to drive a man to drink. Speaking of which, cheers!

The most famous player in the world, and many peoples' idea of the GOAT, is Zia Mahmood. He's been a good friend of Irish Bridge, and has just published his magnum opus, "Bridge, A Love Story". I reviewed it in the most recent edition of the Irish Bridge Journal (see <https://www.cbai.ie/>). I can heartily recommend it. What's not to love about a book with this concluding paragraph? *A critic said of me "Zia is a disgrace. He's never worked a day in his life. He is a gambler and a philanderer. He drinks too much and eats at overpriced restaurants. He's addicted to bridge". I plead guilty on all charges. I have loved every moment.*

Copies available via CBAI HQ bookshop or online.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 7 ♠ QJ63 Dealer S
 ♥ J102 Vul: Both
 ♦ A96
 ♣ 1085

♠ 2 ♠ 9875
 ♥ AKQ54 ♥ 8
 ♦ Q1073 ♦ KJ4
 ♣ J42 ♣ AKQ97

♠ AK104
 ♥ 9763
 ♦ 852
 ♣ 63

West	North	East	South
		Pass	
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	5♣	Pass
Pass	Pass		

5♣ should be easy to bid, and even easier to play. 2♠ is fourth suit forcing and 3♣ "patterns out", pinpointing the fact that spades are wide open.

Enough already. Executive intervention to liven things up. I demand that the new partnership of Enoch and Ammi Burke (look them up if you've been living on Pluto), be admitted to the Sim Pairs competition. Never a dull moment after that. Did you guys see John Boorman's "Deliverance"? You're never too far from the banjos, that's all I'm saying.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 8 ♠ J954 Dealer W
 ♥ Vul: None
 ♦ Q84
 ♣ 987532

♠ Q62 ♠ A
 ♥ KQJ76543 ♥ 10
 ♦ 75 ♦ AK10932
 ♣ ♣ AKQJ6

 ♠ K10873
 ♥ A982
 ♦ J6
 ♣ 104

West	North	East	South
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	5♦	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

4♥ is normal, and 5♣ shows 1 or 4 of the 5 Aces (K♥ by definition here). 5♦ asks if West has HQ and 6♥ confirms that card, denying an outside king. 12 tricks are laydown.

If your Keycard responses are such that 5♦ shows one Ace, you cannot now find out about ♥Q and you just have to guess. The 1430 variant of RKCB is recommended over the 3041 version for the major suits, for that reason.

There is a way to show a void in responding to KCB. 6 of a suit below the trump suit shows 1 or 3 and a void in that suit, so you'd bid 6♣ here.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 9 ♠ AJ4 Dealer N
 ♥ A64 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AK972
 ♣ K4

♠ Q32 ♠ 9875
 ♥ KJ103 ♥ 9
 ♦ 64 ♦ J10853
 ♣ A1085 ♣ J96

 ♠ K106
 ♥ Q8752
 ♦ Q
 ♣ Q732

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Trappy hand. 2NT is plenty from North at their second go; these days partner often stretches to respond on 4/5 points, so we show our 18-19 and don't penalise him for keeping the bidding open if that's what he's done. Since North could have 3 hearts, South shows his clubs (or checks back if you play that), and North goes to the heart game.

The key to the play is to start with a low heart from North – if you cash ♥A you are down. If hearts are 3-2 you only ever lose one or two. But if they are 4-1 with West, you need to think about which singleton East has. If it's the 3, you're down anyway. If it's the 9 10 or J you have to start with a low heart from North. Then you can next lead a low one from South, and West has to split his honours. This limits you to 2 heart losers. If East's singleton heart is the King, leading low initially still keeps your losers to two.

While all this is going on, you need to ruff a club in order not to have to guess spades. Unless of course West led a spade, which is not impossible (they never lead spades against me on these hands).

Maybe you upgraded the North hand to 20 points and opened 2NT? A transfer sequence then has you declaring 4♥ and a spade lead is possible – happy days!

3NT can make if hearts are played as above but 9 tricks are the limit.

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

=====

Board 10	♠	AKJ9	Dealer E
	♥	AQ52	Vul: Both
	♦	9542	
	♣	9	
♠	853	♠	Q742
♥	KJ8	♥	64
♦	AK107	♦	QJ8
♣	A43	♣	J1076
	♠	106	
	♥	10973	
	♦	63	
	♣	KQ852	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	INT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

It's very difficult for N/S to find their heart fit here – they can make 140. In practice E/W are likely to play INT and make it. Maybe if West opens a strong NT, North may show his good majors, say by bidding 2♣. (An overcall with a four-card suit, as suggested for North here, is tolerable with a solid suit; here North's spade suit will cut the mustard, but their hearts won't.)

My word, ten hands gone and not a child in the house washed!! Tempus Fugit.

I mentioned the Irish Bridge Journal a few hands ago in connection with Zia's new book. I hope you'll tolerate a shameless plug. For the last year, the Journal has migrated to an online format see <https://www.cbai.ie/>. For sins committed in previous lives, yours truly is the Editor. I'm always on the lookout for newsworthy items, so if there's been a milestone / development of note at your Club, please send details and a photo if desired to editor@cbai.ie. Thank you kindly.

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

=====

Board 11	♠	QJ95	Dealer S
	♥	J	Vul: None
	♦	954	
	♣	K10852	
♠	864	♠	1032
♥	A63	♥	KQ10975
♦	K32	♦	J6
♣	A976	♣	43
	♠	AK7	
	♥	842	
	♦	AQ1087	
	♣	QJ	

West	North	East	South
		1♦	
Pass	1♠	2♥	Dbl
3♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

This is a good Pairs hand. East really ought to show his hearts. South's Double is a Support Double, showing 3 spades in support of North. West's hand has improved, his DK is now well-placed, so he can bid 3H and that may well buy it.

It's risky for South to compete with 3S, because the defence will play hearts and shorten North's trumps. North will have to ruff a heart for the second time after knocking out the ♣A, however the 3-3 spade break means N/S actually make 4♠. That's exactly why E/W should compete to 3♥. For all South knows, defending 3♥ may be their last chance to get a plus score.

3♥-1 if you get to play there, should be a very good score.

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

=====

Board 12 ♠ 10 Dealer W
 ♥ AK106 Vul: N-S
 ♦ QJ102
 ♣ AJ87

♠ 62 ♠ AK95
 ♥ 843 ♥ 75
 ♦ 874 ♦ AK965
 ♣ KQ652 ♣ 109

♠ QJ8743
 ♥ QJ92
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 43

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

I'm fond of watching Prime Minister's Questions live – how sad is that? Anyway, to borrow a phrase, I refer you to the answer I gave some moments ago (Hand 10). I said with 4441s you often had to make an uncomfortable rebid. Since I like 1♦ openings to show 5, I open these hands 1♣. E/W will compete in diamonds and North has a tricky rebid. As with Hand 11, double would in my system be a Support Double, showing 3-card spade support. North is just about worth a reverse, although the singleton in partner's suit is a negative. And he has very good defence to 2♦. Another consideration is that South is clearly short in diamonds, leaving room for club support - 1♣ only promised 2♥ or a heart suit. North knows he's only getting 50's for beating 2♦ non-vul, so at pairs I think he should try for better with 2♥. A heart partscore will play well and score better than a spade contract.

Some people play that a 2♠ response to the 1♣ opening shows a bad weak 2♠ opening. I think that will result in 3♦ X -1.

If your system allows you to open 1D, that shuts East out. It will go 1♦-1♠-INT-2♠ I think. Plus 110. One of those hands where your bidding system pretty much determines your score.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13 ♠ A104 Dealer N
 ♥ 93 Vul: Both
 ♦ K42
 ♣ AJ742

♠ 872 ♠ QJ6
 ♥ KJ765 ♥ A2
 ♦ AQ ♦ J7653
 ♣ K103 ♣ Q96

♠ K953
 ♥ Q1084
 ♦ 1098
 ♣ 85

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

A problematic hand for Weak NTers. Passing out INT results in two down for -200, the nightmare pairs result on a partscore hand. There is an alternative, however, called Garbage Stayman. South can see that if North has a major, that's where they belong. If on the other hand North denies a major by bidding 2♦, South plans to pass – on the basis that if North has at most 3 hearts and 3 spades, he likely will be ok to play in diamonds. It's a gamble. Nothing is perfect. On the given bidding I don't think West can pass 2♦. Double would be a big winner but it isn't logical.

That said, I think inevitably some N/S pairs will go minus for 200 or more. Sic transit gloria mundi.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14 ♠ KJ932 Dealer E
 ♥ 10853 Vul: None
 ♦ Q10
 ♣ K7

♠ Q76 ♠ 10854
 ♥ J42 ♥ AK
 ♦ A93 ♦ J876
 ♣ 10983 ♣ J42

♠ A
 ♥ Q976
 ♦ K542
 ♣ AQ65

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

Yet another 4441 hand, so back to PMQs as mentioned on Board 13! I refer the honourable member to the answers I gave on Hands 10 and 4.

As I said before, I open 1♣ on these 4441s because I like 1♦ to show 5. The 1NT rebid is 15-17 and 2♣ is a transfer to 2♦, promising invitational values. South asks the question and it is a close call but at pairs North may opt to record a plus score and decline the invitation. A heart contract can go well – spade lead, diamond to Queen, 3 rounds of clubs pitching a diamond, club ruff..... 9 tricks.

You make 9 tricks in NTs but it really is lucky – AK and a small spade establishes the suit, with late entries in the 3 other suits to enjoy it.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15 ♠ A2 Dealer S
 ♥ AK742 Vul: N-S
 ♦ K743
 ♣ QJ

♠ KQJ76 ♠ 1093
 ♥ Q ♥ J108
 ♦ 2 ♦ QJ8
 ♣ K97642 ♣ A853

♠ 854
 ♥ 9653
 ♦ A10965
 ♣ 10

West	North	East	South
		Pass	
1♠	2♥	2♠	3♥
4♠	Dbl	Pass	Pass
Pass			

A Shakespeare hand!! To quote Macbeth, “If it were done when ‘tis done, then ‘twere well it were done quickly”. Translation – West should venture 4♠ at his second turn.

Realistically, once East supports spades, West is always bidding game – it may make, and if not will be a cheap save against hearts. Note that in order to beat 4♠, N/S must collect their club ruff. I think that is far from guaranteed. Expect an assortment of 140s 170s and 420s.

By the way, the Chardonnay is going down fine and dandy, thanksh for ashking.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 16 ♠ AKQ9764 Dealer W
 ♥ A8 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 76
 ♣ KQ

♠ 2 ♠ 10853
 ♥ 52 ♥ J73
 ♦ AQ95 ♦ K10
 ♣ AJ10762 ♣ 9854

♠ J
 ♥ KQ10964
 ♦ J8432
 ♣ 3

West	North	East	South
1♣	Dbl	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

North is far too strong for a direct 4♠ initially. Double followed by 4♠ shows an Acol 2♣ type hand. Equally, South is too good just to respond 1♥, so jumping to 2♥ shows decent values.

4♠ can in fact be beaten. If East leads the DK and another, a third round promotes a trump trick for him. Even if East leads a club, West can switch to a low diamond and again 3 rounds of the suit promotes a trump for East. I think these defences are unlikely to be found at the table.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 17 ♠ 954 Dealer N
 ♥ Q643 Vul: None
 ♦ AQ543
 ♣ 9

♠ K82 ♠ AQJ1063
 ♥ J752 ♥ AK109
 ♦ 6 ♦ J2
 ♣ A10853 ♣ Q

♠ 7
 ♥ 8
 ♦ K10987
 ♣ KJ7642

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♠	2NT
3♣	4♦	4NT	5♦
5♠	Pass	6♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Another great tussle. East is close to a strong 2♣ opening. 2NT is the Unusual NT, promising 5-5 in the minors. West supports spades and North competes in diamonds. It's clear for N/S to bid 5♦ over 4NT Keycard Blackwood. As the saying goes, "the 5-level belongs to the opponents". However, circumstances alter cases. East knows that South has little or nothing in hearts, so the suit is likely to be coming in. If West has The SK and a minor suit Ace, 6♠ rates to be good. It doesn't sound as if N/S can cash 2 diamonds. Even if the ♠K is missing it's likely to be onside.

Over 5♦, West's 5♠ shows 2 Aces ♠double with none, pass with one, bid with 2♥. 6S now looks pretty good. In fact N/S do best to sacrifice in 7♦ which only costs 500.

Once N/S are bidding diamonds it is not easy to reach slam with confidence. West has 3 treasures – ♠K, ♣A and singleton diamond – and there's no way to show them all. Wouldn't it be nice to have the agreement that 3♦ from West over South's 2NT shows short diamonds and spade support? 6S is laydown, and very well done if you got there.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 18 ♠ AJ54 Dealer E
 ♥ KQ1087542 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 3

♠ K92	♠ Q10876
♥ 6	♥
♦ 10763	♦ KJ4
♣ AKQ105	♣ 98742

♠ 3
♥ AJ93
♦ AQ9852
♣ J6

West	North	East	South
		2♠	3♦
4♠	5♥	Pass	6♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East has the perfect hand for a weak 2♠ opener. He's non-vul against vul, he's void in hearts and he has a backup 5-card suit in case of emergency. While weak 2s promise 6 cards in theory, in practice you need to be prepared to open with 5 for tactical reasons, and this is one such situation.

After 2♠ from East, West has an easy raise to 4♠ and North has to make a 5-level decision. He can double (4♠ is very likely going down) or he can punt 5 of his 8-bagger. Don't know about you, but where I come from (the Model County if you must know), we bid our 8-baggers, so it's 5♥ for me. South has a clear raise to 6♥ – partner has ventured 5♥ vul and South has AJ9x!!

6♥ is cold. E/W have a good sacrifice in 6♠, which costs only 500 for 3 down. But that's only because of their 5-5 club fit and they don't know about that.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	2	6	-	2
S	-	2	6	-	2
E	2	-	-	3	-
W	2	-	-	3	-

=====

Board 19 ♠ J83 Dealer S
 ♥ Q43 Vul: E-W
 ♦ QJ3
 ♣ 10432

♠ A1072	♠ K95
♥ K	♥ AJ5
♦ AK942	♦ 876
♣ K75	♣ AQ86

♠ Q64
♥ 1098762
♦ 105
♣ J9

West	North	East	South
		Pass	
1♦	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Slam is a lucky make and I would not be bidding it. After West reverses with 2xS, East tries 3♥ fourth suit forcing. East is flat and the 3 low diamonds are a worry, but 4NT quantitative is clear - it asks West to bid slam if he has a strong reverse, which in this context he does not. East has not supported either of his suits.

There are 12 tricks once South plays 9J on the first 2 rounds of clubs, allowing a finesse against the ten. Four major suit tops, 4 diamonds once you concede one, and 4 clubs = 12 tricks.

**An alert South holding J109 of clubs, would contribute the 9 and J to the first 2 rounds, and now if declarer finesses the third club, South wins the ten.

The Theory of Restricted Choice, if you're au fait with it, essentially tells you to believe South's carding and to finesse on the third round.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	6	4	5	6
W	6	6	4	5	6

=====

Board 20 ♠ K43 Dealer W
 ♥ KQ10642 Vul: Both
 ♦ 102
 ♣ 87

♠ J86 ♠ 1075
 ♥ A7 ♥ J9
 ♦ A84 ♦ Q973
 ♣ AJ1053 ♣ K962

♠ AQ92
 ♥ 853
 ♦ KJ65

♣ East ♠ West North
 East South South

INT Pass Pass Pass

I'm a lifelong fan of the weak NT and this hand nicely demonstrates one reason why. The Weak NT has a pre-emptive value which is often under-appreciated. On this hand North simply cannot show his hearts vulnerable with an 8-count, and South certainly has nowhere to go.

INT making for E/W will be a very good score as N/S have 9 tricks in either major.

Just the 8 boards to go. We've rounded Tattenham Corner and we're straightening up for the judge. Do we have the required blend of speed and stamina to win the Derby?? Vamos muchachos!!

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 21 ♠ K43 Dealer N
 ♥ 9875 Vul: N-S
 ♦ Q9872
 ♣ 10

♠ AQ10875 ♠ 2
 ♥ J62 ♥ A4
 ♦ J ♦ K10543
 ♣ A83 ♣ KJ952

♠ J96
 ♥ KQ103
 ♦ A6
 ♣ Q764

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

Once East rebids 2♣ West can see that if East has 2 or 3 spades, game is good, but if not it isn't. 3♠ pretty much asks that question. Note that if West wanted to force to game he could have bid 2♥ fourth suit forcing. So East can pass 3♠. Once West guesses to play the ten on the first round of trumps, that does the job.

I expect a number of pairs may bid game and go down.

I mentioned JFK a number of hands ago. It's now sixty years since his assassination, and to this day almost 60% of Americans do not accept that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, was the assassin. This despite the fact that it is as simple a murder case as you'd ever see. A joke goes that the end of the world comes. All the conspiracy theorists corner God and ask him "What was the truth about the JFK killing?" God tells them "Oswald did it and he acted alone". The theorists go into a huddle and they say "Guys, this thing runs deeper than we ever imagined!!"

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 22 ♠ J8 Dealer E
 ♥ KJ109 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A1043
 ♣ 1082

♠ A6 ♠ 10543
 ♥ A42 ♥ 863
 ♦ 9752 ♦ K6
 ♣ KQ63 ♣ AJ75

♠ KQ972
 ♥ Q75
 ♦ QJ8
 ♣ 94

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
INT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Ye Gods and little fishes!! Hard on the heels of Board 20 highlighting the pre-emptive value of the Weak NT, here comes Exhibit B! INT makes for +90 to E/W and with N/S able to make 7 tricks non-vulnerable in either major, that rates to be a good score.

Perhaps South should back in with 2♠ or equivalent bid, reasoning that North must have values but is unlikely to lead a spade against INT.

For strong NTers, if your system allows you to bid 2♣ as E/W, that is top spot, but again South ought perhaps to venture 2♠.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-				-
S	-				-
E	2	-	-	-	
W	2	-	-	-	
=====					

Board 23	♠ 73	Dealer S
	♥ J84	Vul: Both
	♦ J107	
	♣ Q10654	
♠ AJ85	♠ Q62	
♥ AKQ10962	♥ 5	
♦ Q8	♦ 96542	
♣	♣ AJ73	
	♠ K1094	
	♥ 73	
	♦ AK3	
	♣ K982	

West	North	East	South
		INT	
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Once South opens (INT or other), West will close the auction with 4♥. This should go one down unless North leads a club. I say "should" because when West runs the trumps, South cannot afford a spade discard – otherwise West's 4th spade becomes trick ten. I expect 4♥ to be made quite a few times.

There is a convention available if South opens 1♣. West can bid 3♣, which says "Partner I have a running suit. Bid 3NT if you have a club stopper". 3NT makes and ought to score well too.

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

Board 24	♠ 32	Dealer W
	♥ K1097	Vul: None
	♦ Q1092	
	♣ 975	
♠ A109	♠ Q65	
♥ QJ2	♥ 854	
♦ KJ8	♦ A654	
♣ KJ106	♣ 432	
	♠ KJ874	
	♥ A63	
	♦ 73	
	♣ AQ8	

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	INT	2♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

I think South has to compete here. INT from East denies a 4-card major, improving the chances of North having good major holdings. I think INT by E/W is going to make. I also think 2♠ is at worst one down, since West is likely to lead a heart or a club, both of which help declarer.

At the time of writing the Rugby World Cup has just finished. There's been much hand-wringing following our loss to New Zealand. I think the remedy is clear. We should in future demand that after the Haka, our guys perform Riverdance. Or else – my personal choice – the Hucklebuck. It's only fair. It would demoralise the All Blacks from the get-go. I mean to say, Brendan Bowyer would demoralise anyone.

So, ever anxious to help, here are the lyrics. All together now!!

Now here's a dance you should know (Hey!)
 Oh, baby when the lights are down low (Hey!)
 Grab your baby, then go (Hey!)
 Then do the Hucklebuck (Hey!)
 Do the Hucklebuck (Hey!)
 If you don't know how to do it
 Then you're out of luck (Hey!)
 Shove your baby in (Hey!)
 Twist her all around (Hey!)
 Then you start a-twistin' and a-movin' all
 around (Hey!)
 Wriggle like a snake, waddle like a duck
 That's what you do when you do the
 Hucklebuck

I can readily visualise the All Blacks
 capitulating from such an assault on their
 senses. Job done and game over. (Hey!)

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 25 ♠ 974 Dealer N
 ♥ 9 Vul: E-W
 ♦ Q1073
 ♣ A9653

♠ KJ10853	♠ 6
♥ J1052	♥ AK843
♦ A82	♦ KJ9
♣	♣ KQ74

♠ AQ2
♥ Q76
♦ 654
♣ J1082

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
	Pass	Pass	Pass

11 tricks in hearts will be the order of the
 day, but slam isn't the worst spot in the
 world. If you prefer to respond 4♣ as West
 (splinter bid showing heart support and short
 clubs), I wouldn't argue with you.

As the cards lie, you lose a trump and a spade.
 But if you ventured 6♥, and the trump Queen

comes down, your chances are ok. You'd lead
 a spade up. If South plays the Ace, you can
 establish the suit, pitch a diamond in East and
 ruff a diamond in East. If South plays low on
 the spade and the Jack takes the Ace it's the
 same story. Even if the Jack loses to the
 Queen you get home via a ruffing finesse
 against North's marked Ace. (It would take a
 brave South indeed to play low on the first
 spade, holding the Ace). So if you went down
 in 6♥ you have my sympathy, if few
 matchpoints.

Achtung Achtung! Chardonnay supply running
 low!! Mein Gott in Himmel!! For you, Herr
 Murphy, ze war is almost over!! Kaput!!

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 26 ♠ AJ42 Dealer E
 ♥ 1042 Vul: Both
 ♦ A8
 ♣ KJ62

♠ Q108	♠ 75
♥ A95	♥ KQJ83
♦ 1092	♦ J76
♣ Q974	♣ 1083

♠ K963
♥ 76
♦ KQ543
♣ A5

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♦
Pass	4♠	Pass	2♠
Pass		Pass	Pass

Mary Whitehouse's ghost strikes again,
 cleansing another board of any potential sex
 and violence.

You'd think 4♠+1 by North would be the only
 game in town, but South might treat his hand
 as balanced and open INT. After a Stayman
 sequence South will declare 4♠. West will
 lead a minor suit and look what happens.
 Trumps are drawn via a finesse. 5 rounds of

diamonds, throwing all North's hearts. That guarantees 12 tricks, and a thirteenth may come via a club finesse, or cashing ♣AK and ruffing one. That has to be the top of the night.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	5	2	5	2
S	3	5	2	5	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 27				Dealer S Vul: None			
	♠	10852		♠	AKJ93		
	♥	874		♥	Q6		
	♦	AJ6		♦	Q10		
	♣	J42		♣	A1073		
♠	76						
♥	AJ103						
♦	K98432						
♣	Q						
	♠	Q4					
	♥	K952					
	♦	75					
	♣	K9865					

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

3NT should be commonplace, but the number of tricks will vary. Played by West on the given bidding, a heart lead is likely. Queen King Ace. Diamonds are quasi-blocked ; if either defender has A to three, they'll hold up, and you can't establish the suit. So it may be best to go for 4 spade tricks. This requires you to play one to the 9. South can win and play ♣K but the ♣10 ensures 10 tricks. Not at all easy.

East could elect to rebid 2NT, in which case West raises to 3NT. If South leads a club (normal), West wins and can play to ♦10 and then ♦Q, ducked. A heart finesse (not ♥Q) wins and diamonds are cleared. This line delivers 12 tricks once ♠Q falls. Easy game, innit guv?

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	6	4	5	4
W	2	6	4	5	4

Board 28				Dealer W Vul: N-S			
	♠	98653		♠	J10		
	♥	Q54		♥	KJ9862		
	♦	1032		♦	K87		
	♣	Q4		♣	86		
♠	KQ72						
♥	A7						
♦	J64						
♣	J952						
	♠	A4					
	♥	103					
	♦	AQ95					
	♣	AK1073					

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2♥	3♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East opens a weak 2♥ and South has a real problem. In fact opposite a passed partner, there's a case for East to open 3H, exerting maximum pressure.

Over 2♥, 3♣ is the least bad option. South's problem is that adding his 17 to East's presumed 7-8, there are 15 or 16 points for West / North combined. If they're equally distributed, N/S belong in game, but the pre-empt denies N/S the space to explore. 3C will buy it and assuming South uses the only entry to dummy – ♣Q - to play a diamond to the Queen, that is one down. However, it would be easy to get that wrong – a non-vul pre-emptor third in hand might be very weak. Declarer might therefore run the D10 and go 2 down for a poor result. Sometimes pre-empts work!

If East opens 3♥ - as I must admit I would, South has Hobson's choice between Pass, Double, 3NT and 4♣. I wasn't brought up to pass on 17-counts after a pre-empt, I have to tell you. Double runs the risk of getting partner excited about spades (and here he'd bid 3xS). 3NT advertises a non-existent heart

stopper. 4♣ bypasses 3NT and partner could have had a heart stopper all along.

So there will be a string of minuses in the N/S column and the smallest minuses will score best.

And now, if you'll excuse me, I must away. The Chardonnay has run out – quelle dommage encore une fois!!..It's been a real slice, peeps. Mind how you go. Is dona linn an bhriseadh seo. Elvis has left the building. The Revolution will not be televised. Apres moi le deluge. Ou sont les neiges d'antans?

Makeable Contracts

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

=====