

ACBL-wide Charity Game #1

Wednesday Afternoon – February 20, 2019 – Set 226000



American Contract
Bridge League

Analysis by Barry Rigal



Barry Rigal is a player, author, commentator and syndicated columnist. Born in London in 1958, he has been a professional bridge player since moving to New York in 1994. Rigal has written many books as well as magazine and newspaper columns and has contributed to the world championship books for two decades. He has also served as the Chief Vugraph commentator for the World Bridge Federation for 10 years.

Married to Sue Picus. He has won two North American championships as well as EC Mixed Teams and multiple UK titles. As a professional player claims to be the only pro ever to have been shut out by his client from declaring a single board in a session – not for want of trying! At college reached the quarterfinal round of the University Challenge for Queen's Oxford – where he suffered the indignity of losing to Queen's Cambridge – and a team headed by the comedian Stephen Fry. He also claims that his tutors awarded him the title of "The laziest man in Oxford."

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ 8 4 3
♥ A K Q 8 5
♦ 10 9 5 2
♣ 4

♠ A K 7 5
♥ 6 3
♦ A 4
♣ K 10 9 7 3



♠ Q 9 6
♥ 9 7 4
♦ Q J 6 3
♣ J 6 2

♠ J 10 2
♥ J 10 2
♦ K 8 7
♣ A Q 8 5

Few Norths will do anything but open 1♣ here; some Souths will respond 1NT, some will introduce their diamonds. Those who bid 1NT may play there, and the defenders can cash their hearts, squeezing dummy. Declarer can escape for down one though, so long as he pitches clubs from dummy, and a diamond and spade from hand. If South responds 1♦, E/W ought to be able to compete to 2♥, while North may introduce both his suits and allow South eventually to bid on to 3♣. East should double this, and the defenders have five top winners against that contract.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 9
♥ K Q J 9 3
♦ 10 6 5 4 3
♣ J 6

♠ K J 3
♥ 10 6 4
♦ A 9 8
♣ 10 9 4 3



♠ 8 7 4 2
♥ A 8 5
♦ 2
♣ A K Q 8 5

♠ A Q 10 6 5
♥ 7 2
♦ K Q J 7
♣ 7 2

After East opens 1♠, most Souths will overcall 2♣. That call is somewhat hazardous, but it has a huge upside if he can find a fit. West will also probably take an aggressive action, by doubling 2♣. North can now raise to 3♣, and of course East will compete to 3♦, which is likely to end the bidding. This is actually the par contract today; the defense have four winners to cash, but no more. If N/S bid on, then E/W will not even have to double to collect the magic +200, and virtually all the matchpoints.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A Q 3 2
♥ K 3 2
♦ 9 6 4
♣ K 5 4

♠ 9 8 7 6 4
♥ A 8 4
♦ A J
♣ 9 7 6



♠ –
♥ Q 10 9 7 6 5
♦ Q 10 5 3 2
♣ A J

♠ K J 10 5
♥ J
♦ K 8 7
♣ Q 10 8 3 2

South has three choices of initial action – but few will opt to pass. Most are going to pick between a light 1♥ opener and a slightly off-center 2♥ call. Whether South goes high or low, West might stretch to an inelegant takeout double, and North will surely produce some sort of heart raise. Precisely where the auction is going to end up now is unclear. Fans of Grant Baze ("6-5 come alive") will bid the N/S cards to 4♥; despite the diamond finesse losing, the favorable heart lie may allow South to end up with an overtrick. E/W can take no more than eight tricks in either black suit.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

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

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

Though East would like to support his partner's diamonds, few have a simple raise left in their armory, so he may be forced to respond 1NT. Whatever he does, N/S will find it hard to enter the bidding. You can easily envisage East as declarer in 1NT on a spade lead - when he will struggle to take more than six tricks, and could well do worse. Diamonds plays better for West, but, equally, N/S seem to have an easy route to eight tricks in spades; once East turns up with a trump and a diamond honor, South will surely guess clubs.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

In third seat, South should not preempt; neither his hand nor the vulnerability argues for anything other than a 1♠ opener. If North produces a Drury raise of spades to show a maximum pass, now South might drive directly to 4♠. Dummy is highly suitable for this action, since with no wasted diamond values and a key doubleton declarer might come to 11 tricks if he can divine the trump position. In practice South is likely to take a trump finesse early, and hold himself to 10 tricks. +620 figures to be close to an average result; will anyone miss game here?

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

You'd envisage West raising 1♥ to 3♥, after which North may well come in with spades, both for the lead and to propose a sacrifice. It is very hard to imagine E/W bidding successfully to 3NT, instead playing 4♥ or defending 4♠ doubled. The lead of the ♠10 should defeat 4♥ (though on a low spade lead, declarer can put North under great pressure by following low from dummy). 4♠ doubled on repeated top heart leads should certainly go down 300. In fact North will have to play accurately to avoid minus 500 ... or worse.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

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

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

When South opens 1NT, some Wests will come in to show the majors, an action that is not without severe risk and might easily result in a penalty of 800 or worse today, even if E/W can settle in clubs, their best (or least worst) spot. Other Wests will pass and leave their opponents a clear path to 3NT. Against that contract a club lead is most effective, but declarer can still manage to come home with 630. If North simply raises 1NT to 3NT, South will probably receive a heart lead. Now South can come to 11 tricks, so long as he negotiates spades successfully.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

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

As West would you open 1♥ or 1♠? There will be strong arguments for both positions, but it is hard to know what will work better on this freak deal. For example, if West bids spades, North can show a two-suiter via a Michaels Cuebid and N/S will doubtless end up in 5♣, probably doubled. They are likely to come to 11 tricks there, against any defense. E/W have the comfortable balance of high cards but can take no more than eight winners in spades, on accurate defense. Still, 5♠ may not be doubled and could easily emerge with nine or even 10 tricks.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

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

North will open 1♦ and hear his partner respond 1♥. Now he can choose between rebidding 1NT to limit his hand and introducing his spades, for fear the suit will get lost if he does not bid them now. N/S ought to find their spades whatever North's rebid, but is there a chance that N/S might find it hard to put the brakes on in 4♠ after a fourth-suit auction? You never know. Note that 5♠ will make, but only because all the side suits and the trumps break favorably.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

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

West will double South's 1♠ opener, allowing North to redouble and East perhaps to run to 2♣. You surely could not blame South for taking his opponents off the hook now by repeating his spades, after which North will probably aim to play 3NT rather than 4♠. With the club finesse working, it should be simple enough for N/S to come to 10 tricks in either denomination; but there will doubtless be a few exceptions who fail to take the club finesse (or miss the minor-suit squeeze). Equally, a few may find their way to an unlikely 11th trick in 4♠, if East unguards clubs.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

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

Almost everyone playing a strong notrump will open the South cards with that call rather than 1♥ — won't they? After that action from South, North will use Stayman and drive to 3NT at almost every table, against which a small diamond lead by West will work out very poorly. The defenders may still prevail, through West setting up a third spade for his side before declarer can get hearts going; but they would need to be very accurate. If South opens 1♥, one could certainly imagine him stopping in a notrump partscore.

Board 12West Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

When West opens 1♠, East will want to raise preemptively if he can. Will he jump to 4♠ if he does not have a weak jump raise in his armory? I'm sure some will use the Law of Total Tricks to justify that overbid (I fear I'm too old for such shenanigans, despite the fact that 10 tricks might be made). In fact, 4♠ by West should come down to the club guess. It feels natural to mishandle the suit, since finding the ♣Q outside looks to be the easiest route to 10 tricks, but there are plenty of ways for the defense to make declarer's task easier — such as an initial club lead.

Board 13North Deals
Both Vul

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

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

When North opens 1♣, only the most foolhardy of overcallers will risk bidding 1♠ as East. Most will pass and let South respond either 1♦ or 1NT. A 1NT call might end the bidding (unless East balances into 2♠), while a 1♦ bid may let West come in with 1♥ and buy the contract in 2♥. I'd expect the majority of E/W pairs to go plus here, collecting 100 from defeating 1NT or taking eight tricks in either major. Anyone who does better than that is going to score spectacularly well, while any N/S who somehow avoid a minus score will scoop the pool.

Board 14East Deals
None Vul

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

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

In third seat the field will be split between Wests who open 1♠ and those who preempt to 2♠. After a 1♠ bid, North might prefer a bid of 1NT to a double. When East raises to 2♠, South can double, and North will either play 3♦, or E/W may end up in 3♠ doubled. Two rounds of trump and a diamond shift leave West with eight tricks at best. Meanwhile, 3♦ on a spade lead requires the trump guess and a little more. You can also conceive that North may reach 3NT after a weak 2♠ from West. That contract has play, but if declarer misguesses the ♦Q, he takes very few tricks.

Board 15South Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

Predicting how either pair will handle this freak is hard to do. After a 1♣ opener by South, West will be unable to show both minors, so he will either bid diamonds or pass. N/S ought to find their spade fit, and though West may back in to show the minors at his second turn, many N/S pairs rate to reach slam. Then again, perhaps E/W may work out to sacrifice in 7♦? If so, can the defenders find their club ruff to collect 800? If they do not, then E/W outscore all the N/S pairs who stopped in game!

Board 16West Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

Most Norths will pass in second seat, allowing East to open 1♠, to which West will respond 1NT. Now North can come in with 2NT for the minors, whether that is sound or not — after which E/W may find it hard to believe that they are supposed to stay quiet and defend a club partscore. South can bring home at least 10 tricks in peace and quiet in 3♣, so long as he guesses trumps. There will be quite a few pairs going minus on the E/W cards at the three level, when East allows his shape to override his lack of high cards.

Board 17North Deals
None Vul

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

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

Is the North hand an opening bid? Perhaps only if you play Flannery. Should North act, South will head to the heart game, possibly after some diamond preemption from East. The defenders do best to cash their diamonds and collect a trump winner at the death. However, if North declares 4♥ and East selects his singleton spade for the opening lead, declarer takes two rounds of trumps then runs the clubs to take 12 tricks, for a superb score. I suppose a few E/W pairs might overreach in diamonds and go for 500 or worse.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

Once N/S find their club fit, North's mind will surely turn toward slam. With all the second-round controls, he may simply launch into Blackwood. (This is an excellent sequence for Redwood or Minorwood where the ace-ask call is 4♣ or 4♦, because North would want to keep the auction low if missing two aces. Today, though, 6♣ by North is a great spot. It is cold on a red-suit lead, and declarer can ruff out the spades to pitch his diamonds on a passive black-suit lead, assuming spades split 4-3. +1370 will surely represent a fine result for N/S.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

In third seat some Norths will upgrade their balanced trick-less 19-count to a strong 2NT opener, with very little technical justification. If he does, East may decide to lay low, after which a Stayman sequence will see North declare 3NT, on the lead of a spade honor. What can North do but win and drive out the ♣A? Now he will do well to take even six tricks. If North opens 1♣, then East is surely going to bid 3♠. This will be passed round to North, who may well balance with 3NT, and go down again. With E/W cold for 3♠, I have no idea how N/S can compete to 4♦ successfully.

Board 20West Deals
Both Vul

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

After West opens 1♦, some Norths will stretch to produce an unusual 2NT bid, an especially dangerous action because of the weak hearts and the playability in spades. Others will produce an inelegant overcall in hearts, while some will pass. E/W may not find it easy to reach their highest-scoring contract, 3NT rather than 5♦, even if they don't encounter competition. Of course N/S can be set 800 if they clamber to the three level, though I can't imagine West sitting for a low-level penalty double, can you?

Board 21North Deals
N-S Vul

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

A simple auction is likely here: you'd imagine South will produce a constructive raise of 1♠ to 2♠, after which West might find a takeout double. Whatever he does, North looks to be worth a game try — perhaps a call of 3♦, though clearly nothing is perfect. N/S have just 21 HCP combined, with no singletons, but the doubleton diamond in dummy means that even after a trump lead, declarer can maneuver to ruff a diamond in dummy for the 10th trick in 4♠. I suspect no more than half the field will bid game.

Board 22East Deals
E-W Vul

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

This deal throws up yet another unusual 2NT call, this time by South after East opens 1♦. Will West now introduce his spades or simply raise diamonds? That certainly isn't an easy decision, but North is likely to compete to 4♣, where he can take 10 winners with ease and might maybe make an overtrick if the defenders do not lead and continue trumps. If E/W play diamonds, the defenders do best to lead clubs and go after spade ruffs. One way or another, after that start, East can only take eight tricks. Still, minus 100 may score surprisingly well for E/W.

Board 23South Deals
Both Vul

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

After a 1♦ opening bid by West, North will surely preempt to 3♥ or even possibly to 4♥, if feeling frisky. Over a 3♥ bid, West will surely balance himself into 3NT and play there. This is a perfectly reasonable contract until it is wrecked on the rocks of bad breaks. The foul diamond split means West can take no more than eight tricks in notrump, and he might well do worse on a spade lead. E/W can make minor-suit partscores while N/S can take seven tricks in spades — but it is hard to imagine how they could ever find that trump suit.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

♠ A J 10 9 7 5 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ —	♥ K 7 6 2										
♦ A Q	♦ 8 7 5 2										
♣ A 10 9 3	♣ K Q 7 2										
	♠ 4 2										
	♥ A Q J 8 5 4 3										
	♦ 6 4 3										
	♣ 6										

West may well follow a sequence such as 1♠ - (Pass) - 1NT - (3♥) - 4♠ to reach his normal game. North must refrain from doubling, and lead a passive heart. Declarer might conceivably ruff in hand, and cross to dummy with a club to finesse in spades. If he does so, North will win and play back a club. South can ruff and put a diamond through, after which 4♠ will go down like a stone. Does this mean declarer has done something stupid? Not really: the line of play West followed would yield an overtrick far more often than it would result in game going down.

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 6 4 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ K 3 2	♥ A 8 5 4										
♦ A 10 7 2	♦ K J 3										
♣ 7 3	♣ A J 2										
	♠ Q 7 5										
	♥ J 10 7										
	♦ Q 8 6 5										
	♣ K 6 4										

Finally an auction we can predict with confidence. East will open 2NT, and West can either go directly to 3NT or use Stayman to arrive at the same contract. (For what it is worth, the small doubleton argues strongly to me for trying to locate a fit.) If West uses Stayman, South may well not lead a heart — though perhaps he should anyway — and prefer a diamond. That would *not* be a great success today. Still, most routes seem to produce 10 tricks; and if the defenders lead the ♥J, ducked all round, might declarer be able to guess diamonds, then set up spades for an extra overtrick?

Board 26East Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 9 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 8 7 5 3
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 8 7 2	♥ J 5										
♦ 10 8 7	♦ Q 9 4 3 2										
♣ A J 8 5	♣ 9										
	♠ A J 4										
	♥ K Q 10 4 3										
	♦ J 5										
	♣ 7 4 2										

Unless playing limited openers, South is not worth an action when in second seat, vulnerable. If South passes, N/S are unlikely to reach slam, unless North opens 2NT, and South drives to slam via a Jacoby transfer and a jump to 5NT to offer a choice of slams. North would surely pick hearts, in case he needs to ruff out the clubs. He might be right in theory but is wrong in practice, since 6♥ can be set on the club ruff. 6NT by North can come home either on a good guess in clubs, or perhaps on a club-spade squeeze on West, should declarer misguess clubs.

Board 27South Deals
None Vul

♠ K 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q J 5 4
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 2	♥ K J 7 5 4										
♦ A J 9 5	♦ 10 6										
♣ K Q 7 6 5 4	♣ J 3										
	♠ 8 6 2										
	♥ A Q 10 8 3										
	♦ K 4										
	♣ 9 8 2										

You should expect a complex auction if West opens 1♣ and North overcalls 1♦ (though many will pass those North cards). Assuming North does stay silent, then West will probably end up in 2♣ on an unopposed sequence. After a diamond lead, the defenders may need to maneuver a diamond ruff to hold West to eight tricks. By contrast, if North intervenes, then N/S might well compete in either red suit to the two level. Hearts is their best spot despite the 5-1 break, but if East doubles and collects 100, he ought to score well enough for that.

Board 28West Deals
N-S Vul

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

South will bid 1♥ over East's 1♣ opener, then should act again with a double over East's 2♣ rebid. West may re-raise to 3♣, and if so, North might risk a 3♠ bid, notwithstanding that he knows West has four spades. East may compete now to 4♣. The decision to go on would certainly be rewarded if East finds the winning line there. He must, for example, duck an early diamond, then ruff the third heart with the ♣K, and take a first-round trump finesse against North. 3♠ by North figures to be simple to play, with the trump honors marked with West.

Board 29North Deals
Both Vul

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

Few of the deals this set have been easy to bid or play so far; time for a breather. Unless N/S go overboard and sacrifice at the five level, you would expect E/W to identify their fit and settle in 4♠. Whatever the defenders do on opening lead, the 4-0 trump break will probably persuade East simply to draw trumps and run for cover with his 10 tricks. After a heart lead, might a careless declarer tackle clubs before drawing all the trumps, and run into a heart ruff? I suppose there will always be an occasional outlier. Still, maybe someone can collect 630 at notrump?

Board 30East Deals
None Vul

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

Most Souths will be able to come into their opponents' auction, either by doubling a 1NT response or by balancing into 2♠ over West's 2♥ rebid. With both black jacks conveniently located, 2♠ makes at least eight tricks; so E/W will do best to find a way to compete over 2♠. One possibility is to try 2NT — but that contract can only be made by West, rather than East, after a spade lead. In 3♥, though, there are just four top losers — unless the ♥K falls out of North's hand. Two rounds of hearts and a spade shift earn North +50 ... and a visit to the District Recorder.

Board 31South Deals
N-S Vul

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

Whether it is sound or not, many Easts will double North's 1♥ opening. Now whether South chances a 1NT call or not, West will bid a black suit and North will introduce his diamonds, letting N/S compete to 3♦. Declarer should come to +110 there, painlessly enough. E/W do not have a nine-card fit and have less than half the deck, but, remarkably, they can make 3NT; it requires a double-dummy view of both spades and clubs and some very favorably placed cards, of course. E/W are much more likely to go down in a black suit at the three level.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul

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

N/S have a lovely fit and plenty of controls, but not enough high cards to investigate slam. Still, South might go overboard if North doubles West's 2♦ preempt, or if North gets to open 1♣ and produce a support double of 2♦. Then South can make a splinter jump to 4♣, after which the partnership will conceivably get carried away and advance to the five level. The duplication in diamonds means that South will need to take a good view in spades to come to 11 tricks. Maybe after declarer runs the ♠10, East will get caught in a black-suit squeeze?

Board 33North Deals
None Vul

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

On a good day one might make slam with the N/S cards; 6♣ is somewhat worse than needing two finesses, admittedly, but we've all been in worse contracts. Today is not that day, though, because with the minor-suit finesses losing, no game is on with the N/S cards. In fact 3NT is a quick two down, while the bad trump break dooms 4♠, a contract that would have significant chances on a 4-2 trump split. Since virtually no one will be able to play partscore here, I suspect +50 won't be that spectacular a result for E/W.

Board 34East Deals
N-S Vul

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

At pairs, West has a challenging second call after he responds 1♠ to 1♣ and hears his partner rebid 1NT. You could certainly sell me on the idea that he should sign off in 2♠, rather than try for game via New Minor. Even if he were in a 5-1 fit, his trump intermediates might justify that action. However, 1NT is a better contract as the cards lie, especially if South leads a diamond. Declarer will then have time to establish a black suit for eight tricks and +120, whereas in 2♠ declarer will have to lose two spades and three top side-suit losers, for just +110.

Board 35South Deals
E-W Vul

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

On this messy deal quite a few Souths will open 1NT, after which an intelligent North will gamble out Stayman, hoping to find a major-suit fit or to play 2♦. That won't thrill South of course — curiously, though, the top spot for N/S is indeed 2♦. After a trump lead (to the 10 and queen) for a trump return, declarer can ruff out the clubs by playing the suit from the top and come to at least 10 tricks. You can also envisage East doubling 2♦ in the passout seat, and that might get West to 2♠, where he can scramble eight tricks.

Board 36West Deals
Both Vul

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

Many Norths will pass over 1♥ and sell out to 2♥ by West. Even if the defenders attack trumps early (say on a diamond lead, ducked, and a trump shift). Declarer ought still to find a way to eight winners. However, West should maybe rise with the ♦A at trick one, in order to go after clubs and ensure the ruffs in dummy? If North doubles 1♥, he may find himself in a delicate contract such as 3♣. Declarer needs to play both spades and clubs from dummy as many times as possible, and on accurate defense eight tricks appear to be the limit.