

ACBL-wide Charity Pairs — Wednesday evening 3/12/08

Bd: 1 ♠ J 8 7 5
 Dir: North ♥ Q 7 5
 Vul: None ♦ 10 7 5 3
 ♣ A 7

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

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

With a balanced 15-count but five good hearts and a small doubleton, many will open 1♥ and jump to 3NT over 2♣ (in classic 2/1, a rebid of 2NT would show 12-14 or 18+ and be forcing). West can do little but pass now, and 3NT on a spade lead is an interesting spot. Declarer wins in hand and might well try a club to the king — planning to switch to hearts if this holds? As the cards lie, this line produces 11 tricks when East needs to bring in the hearts. Meanwhile, a good guess in clubs by playing to the jack might result in declarer settling for a safe nine tricks by rejecting the heart finesse!

Bd: 5 ♠ 5 2
 Dir: North ♥ A 8 7 2
 Vul: N/S ♦ J 10 7 6
 ♣ A Q 7

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

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

Although any of the first three players might find a reason to open, West will get to speak first at more than half the tables. As there is no reason to use a jump response by a passed hand as weak (you would have opened with that hand), East can respond 2♠ to 1♣. West should rebid 2NT and East will simply bid 3♣, after which West's absence of aces ought to persuade him to pass. On a diamond lead, the defenders can take five tricks — probably for close to an average, since contracts in all five strains may be attempted, generally with mixed success.

Bd: 2 ♠ K 10
 Dir: East ♥ A 10 5 4 3
 Vul: N/S ♦ Q 9 7
 ♣ 9 8 2

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

 ♠ 6 5 4
 ♥ —
 ♦ K J 10 6 3 2
 ♣ A J 6 5

Even at unfavorable vulnerability most Souths will open 2♦, despite the hand's playability in three suits. When West overcalls 2♥ — best — North should raise to 3♦ and East can either pessimistically raise to 3♥ or make a takeout double. If East bids 3♥, West might bring home +140 despite the bad trump break. Alternatively, South may compete again (4♦ on the club lead comes close, but the defense ought to prevail). If East doubles 3♦, West might end up in 4♠, down at least a trick on heart ruffs. Most contracts will go down.

Bd: 6 ♠ J 8 4 3
 Dir: East ♥ K Q J 10
 Vul: E/W ♦ A K 7 4 2
 ♣ —

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

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

South has a classic 2♦ opening bid, West will bid 3♣, North can bounce to 5♦ and East will now surely be tempted to bid 6♣ — after all who knows who can make what? As North, would you be tempted to double and lead a top heart — after which South with his trump ace on defense may be aggravated to find the contract is cold! 6♦ is no bargain of course — the defenders can arrange two spade tricks and three heart tricks via the ruff, though this is not so easy. Quite a few Norths may take a save for minus 500 and a decent matchpoint result.

Bd: 3 ♠ 10 9 4
 Dir: South ♥ 6 2
 Vul: E/W ♦ 8 7 5 4 3
 ♣ K 7 5

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

 ♠ A Q J 8 5 3
 ♥ Q J 9 7 3
 ♦ K J
 ♣ —

West is too good to overcall 1NT over 1♠ so will double, planning to bid notrumps later, perhaps. North might raise to 2♠ at favorable vulnerability, and now who knows what will happen? Many Souths will bounce to 4♠, letting West double again, thus persuading East to try 5♣. 4♠ has nine tricks on most sequences of play, while 5♣ is not much worse than the club finesse — a heavy favorite to succeed on the auction, but not today. It is hard to see how either side can stop short of game sensibly, unless their opponents stay unnaturally quiet.

Bd: 7 ♠ A J 2
 Dir: South ♥ J 6
 Vul: Both ♦ 10 9 8 7 5
 ♣ Q 6 3

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

 ♠ Q 4 3
 ♥ A Q 5 2
 ♦ Q J 3
 ♣ 7 4 2

East will be allowed to open in peace in fourth chair at most tables (some matchpoint hogs may choose 1NT, but most will open 1♣ and plan to jump-rebid in clubs). After the 1♣ opening, E/W will find it very hard to stay low enough to go plus. In response to a 1NT opening, might West down-value his singleton ♣K and use crawling Stayman to offer his partner a choice of major suits at the two level? On this occasion both majors play for 110 on excellent guesswork by declarer, which would surely score very nicely for E/W.

Bd: 4 ♠ A J 10 5 4 3
 Dir: West ♥ K
 Vul: Both ♦ Q 8 4 2
 ♣ A 9

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

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

If he has any sense, East will respect the vulnerability and stay silent throughout. If North rebids 2♠ over 1NT, he will play there on the normal but unfortunate (for E/W) low club lead. Declarer gets to take a heart pitch on the clubs then play a spade to the ten and lose just two trumps and a diamond. Of course, other defenses might work better, and North could well tackle trumps or side suits less successfully. N/S might well do better by reaching 5♦ (to which there is no defense). But equally, if East overcalls 2♥ an astute defense may double him and wrap up at least 500.

Bd: 8 ♠ A Q 10 5 2
 Dir: West ♥ Q J 9
 Vul: None ♦ 8
 ♣ J 7 6 4

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

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

A typical auction will see E/W bid and raise clubs around a 1♠ overcall by North. South can now choose between doubling 2♣ for takeout and overcalling in diamonds then doubling at his next turn — if there is one. N/S would do best to play in diamonds — where they can take eight tricks. There are no likely alternative contracts that they might come close to making. As for E/W in clubs, they are favorites to scramble eight tricks — particularly on a helpful lead of the ♥Q. Yet again, any plus score here rates to matchpoint respectably, no matter how small it is.

Bd: 9 ♠ A Q 7 3
 Dir: North ♥ K
 Vul: E/W ♦ 8 7 5
 ♣ A K Q 10 7
 ♠ 10 9 8 2 ♠ K J 6 5 4
 ♥ 8 2 ♥ A 10 9 6 5 3
 ♦ J 2 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ J 8 6 5 4 ♣ —
 ♠ —
 ♥ Q J 7 4
 ♦ A K Q 9 6 3
 ♣ 9 3 2

When North opens 1♣ and East overcalls 2♣ to show the majors, South will surely give up on defending and instead simply set up a forcing sequence to show his diamonds. Whether West joins in with spades now could depend on how well he knows his partner and the latter's ability to take a joke. The bottom line is that N/S have a painless 6NT (declarer can test clubs and then take two finesses). A club slam — but not 6♦ by South because of the ruff — should also come home. Still, reaching slam scientifically may well be beyond most pairs, particularly if E/W get in their way.

Bd: 13 ♠ 8
 Dir: North ♥ Q 10 9 5 3
 Vul: Both ♦ 9 6 2
 ♣ 9 8 7 2
 ♠ 10 3 ♠ A J 4 2
 ♥ A 6 ♥ K 7 4 2
 ♦ K Q 8 5 3 ♦ 10 7 4
 ♣ K J 5 4 ♣ 10 6
 ♠ K Q 9 7 6 5
 ♥ J 8
 ♦ A J
 ♣ A Q 3

When South opens 1♠, West will overcall 2♦ (yes one might pass at teams) and East will now have a problem. His choices are the slightly pessimistic 3♦ and the overbids either of 2NT or 2♠ to show a diamond raise. If East raises to 3♦, South might produce an undisciplined bid of 3♠. Then East can double and collect at least 500. If East bids 2NT, he may take eight tricks there on a top spade lead or make +150 on a low spade lead. Finally, if East produces a cue-bid raise, then West figures to end up in 3♦, probably managing +110, and no more.

Bd: 10 ♠ A 8 7 4
 Dir: East ♥ 5
 Vul: Both ♦ A Q
 ♣ J 10 9 7 4 3
 ♠ K J 9 5 ♠ Q 10 2
 ♥ A K J 8 7 ♥ Q 10 6
 ♦ 6 5 2 ♦ 10 8 7 4
 ♣ Q ♣ A 8 6
 ♠ 6 3
 ♥ 9 4 3 2
 ♦ K J 9 3
 ♣ K 5 2

You would expect all four players to get into the act early with the heart and club suits, and then for West to bid on to 3♥ over 3♣ — a sensible enough decision, since 3♣ looks simple enough to make, while 3♥ can be set only on the hugely unlikely defense of four rounds of diamonds. One way or another, though, N/S figure to bid on to 4♣ over 3♥, and receive a heart lead. The defenders now need to shift to a trump, AND East must duck the first round of the suit to set the contract. Otherwise, declarer has the communications to untangle his diamond tricks.

Bd: 14 ♠ 9 4
 Dir: East ♥ 10 6 5
 Vul: None ♦ 5 3
 ♣ 9 8 6 5 4 3
 ♠ K 3 ♠ A Q 10 5 2
 ♥ K J ♥ Q 9 8 7
 ♦ 9 8 7 6 ♦ A Q J
 ♣ A Q J 10 7 ♣ K
 ♠ J 8 7 6
 ♥ A 4 3 2
 ♦ K 10 4 2
 ♣ 2

E/W must try to find their way to 6NT by East to protect the diamonds. An auction such as 1♠-2♣-2♥-3♦-4NT-6NT might do the trick. But equally, West could pass 4NT, expecting partner's range to be 17-18. Imagine in 6NT that South leads a passive club. East wins and South takes the second heart to return a third heart. The fall of the heart 10 gives East 12 top tricks. Easy? Yes, but if South ducks TWO hearts, declarer will do very well to read the position. Most defenders may miss the point of the deal — but there again, not every E/W pair will get to the best slam, the right way up.

Bd: 11 ♠ A 4
 Dir: South ♥ 10 7
 Vul: None ♦ Q 10 8 7 4
 ♣ K 10 6 3
 ♠ 8 7 3 2 ♠ J 10 9 5
 ♥ 8 4 2 ♥ K 6 5 3
 ♦ 9 5 2 ♦ A K 6 3
 ♣ J 9 2 ♣ 4
 ♠ K Q 6
 ♥ A Q J 9
 ♦ J
 ♣ A Q 8 7 5

N/S ought to be able to bid unopposed either to their highest scoring game, notrumps, or to their best spot, 6♣. When South makes a jump-shift rebid to show his clubs and hearts, North can respond by jumping to 4♣ to show extras and good clubs. South may now opt for the subtle approach of using Blackwood and driving to 6♣, expecting to have a shot not to need the heart finesse. On a spade lead declarer may opt for some sort of crossruff or simply to take the heart finesse — the latter line being both simpler and rather more likely to succeed.

Bd: 15 ♠ Q
 Dir: South ♥ K J 5
 Vul: N/S ♦ A K 4 3 2
 ♣ Q 10 7 3
 ♠ J 9 ♠ A K 6 4 2
 ♥ — ♥ Q 10 9 6 2
 ♦ 10 8 7 ♦ J 5
 ♣ A K J 9 8 6 4 2 ♣ 5
 ♠ 10 8 7 5 3
 ♥ A 8 7 4 3
 ♦ Q 9 6
 ♣ —

A normal 5♣ opening for West should see North pass as smoothly as he is capable of doing so — a double ought to show transferable values, i.e., offensive values with which North won't object to partner bidding on. Even if North's tempo does not bar him from doing so, few Souths will dare to reopen with a double. If North does double, however, some Souths might think they were being invited to bid, and that would be a catastrophe for their side. Some E/W pairs may concede 300, some may collect 500 or so on defense, and very, very, few pairs will make any contract their way.

Bd: 12 ♠ A 9 7
 Dir: West ♥ A K 6
 Vul: N/S ♦ A K J 2
 ♣ Q 8 2
 ♠ Q J 10 8 ♠ K 4 2
 ♥ 4 2 ♥ J 9 5
 ♦ Q 8 7 3 ♦ 6 4
 ♣ 6 5 3 ♣ K J 10 7 4
 ♠ 6 5 3
 ♥ Q 10 8 7 3
 ♦ 10 9 5
 ♣ A 9

A straightforward N/S auction will see South offer a choice of games via a transfer after a 2NT opening. North, with weaknesses in both black suits, will surely opt for the suit game. Is he right to do so? Yes and no! If either the diamond finesse were wrong or hearts did not split, then notrumps might well be in some jeopardy. As it is, East will probably lead a club against 3NT (yes, a case can be made to go passive), and North can take 12 tricks in a breeze. 4♥ on the less active diamond lead looks to make only +650 — presumably for a below average result.

Bd: 16 ♠ K 10 8 6 5
 Dir: West ♥ A 6 4 2
 Vul: E/W ♦ —
 ♣ A 6 5 2
 ♠ Q 7 3 ♠ J 4
 ♥ K Q J 10 9 8 3 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ 6 3 ♦ K Q 9 8 4
 ♣ 9 ♣ J 10 4 3
 ♠ A 9 2
 ♥ —
 ♦ A J 10 7 5 2
 ♣ K Q 8 7

West's 3♥ opening sets North an insoluble problem. Bidding 3♠ looks insanely aggressive, so passing smoothly is really his only option. However, regardless of his tempo, South has an automatic reopening double. After that start, can N/S find their way to a making slam? 6♣ looks best — but goes down with the 4-1 trump break. Meanwhile, 6♠ can be made at double dummy. One of the winning lines available on a heart lead is to take two heart ruffs in dummy early, then play off the ♠A K and eventually develop a minor-suit squeeze on East.

Bd: 17 ♠ J
 Dir: North ♥ 5
 Vul: None ♦ J 8 7 6 5 4
 ♣ A Q 10 8 6
 ♠ K Q 7 4 3 ♠ A 6 5 2
 ♥ A J 10 2 ♥ K Q 8 7 3
 ♦ A 10 9 ♦ 3
 ♣ 9 ♣ 7 4 3
 ♠ 10 9 8
 ♥ 9 6 4
 ♦ K Q 2
 ♣ K J 5 2

When West opens 1♠, North can overcall 2NT with a real expectation of making life tough for his opponents or of finding a sacrifice. East will bounce to 4♠ (or he might produce a fit jump to 4♥ or even a splinter-raise of 4♦ if he can) and South can sensibly sacrifice, with his perfect minor-suit holdings. Now is there a way for E/W to reach a slam? They may get pushed there if N/S take too many bids. Note that both minor-suit saves for N/S run into ruffs in the other minor, meaning that a seven-level save could theoretically cost more than their opponents' slam.

Bd: 21 ♠ K Q 10 9
 Dir: North ♥ 5 2
 Vul: N/S ♦ A K Q 7 4 3
 ♣ 10
 ♠ 4 ♠ 8 2
 ♥ K Q 8 3 ♥ A 7 6 4
 ♦ J 9 6 ♦ 8 5
 ♣ A K Q 9 2 ♣ J 8 7 5 3
 ♠ A J 7 6 5 3
 ♥ J 10 9
 ♦ 10 2
 ♣ 6 4

An auction for N/S starting 1♦ (Pass) 1♠ (Dbl.) 4♦ will get North's hand across accurately — suggesting six good diamonds and four spades. Now when East sacrifices — best is to bid 4♥ now, then 5♣ over 4♠ — N/S can collect just +100 from defending the club game. If they bid on to 5♠ they will concede at least 100 themselves. Paradoxically, if North sandbags in the auction by simply raising to 2♠ initially then competing to 4♠ on a non-competitive sequence, he might persuade E/W not to sacrifice. If North has an innocent face, he might just get away with it!

Bd: 18 ♠ A
 Dir: East ♥ K J 7
 Vul: N/S ♦ A 10 4 2
 ♣ Q 10 9 6 2
 ♠ J 10 9 8 5 4 ♠ Q 2
 ♥ 2 ♥ Q 10 8 6 5 3
 ♦ J 9 8 7 6 ♦ Q 5 3
 ♣ 3 ♣ J 7
 ♠ K 7 6 3
 ♥ A 9 4
 ♦ K
 ♣ A K 8 5 4

The vulnerability may tempt East into producing a wild 2♥ preempt. South has to bid now — though neither a double nor a call of 2NT or 3♣ is attractive. Bidding 3♣ would leave N/S reasonably placed to get to the easy 7♣, while 6NT looks unmakeable, even though there might be some pressure on both defenders on the run of the clubs. If E/W decide to sacrifice over 7♣, their best save is in 7♠. It is a decent sacrifice in theory — but may not earn many matchpoints, since so few pairs will reach the grand slam.

Bd: 22 ♠ 9 6 5
 Dir: East ♥ A Q 5
 Vul: E/W ♦ Q J 9 4
 ♣ J 10 5
 ♠ J 4 ♠ Q 10 8 2
 ♥ 7 4 3 2 ♥ K 9 8
 ♦ A 8 2 ♦ 10 7 3
 ♣ 7 6 3 2 ♣ A 9 4
 ♠ A K 7 3
 ♥ J 10 6
 ♦ K 6 5
 ♣ K Q 8

With 26 high-card points and two balanced hands, most of the N/S field will settle in 3NT — certainly no worse than the heart finesse, since if it works, there are virtually nine top tricks. On a heart lead by West to 3NT the key plays come at tricks one and two. First South must deceptively insert dummy's ♥Q — to tempt East to continue hearts, after which 3NT becomes very easy. If he neglects to do that, East may win his ♥K and shift to a spade. Declarer should take this trick, but then he must attack clubs before diamonds — far from obvious. Otherwise, the defenders can arrange to set up the long spades.

Bd: 19 ♠ 10 4 2
 Dir: South ♥ J 8 4 3
 Vul: E/W ♦ 10 6 5 3
 ♣ 6 3
 ♠ A 7 5 ♠ Q 9 6
 ♥ A 10 9 6 5 2 ♥ K Q
 ♦ A Q ♦ K 9 8 4
 ♣ Q 10 ♣ 8 7 5 2
 ♠ K J 8 3
 ♥ 7
 ♦ J 7 2
 ♣ A K J 9 4

When South opens 1♣, West will overcall 1♥, after which E/W, with 26 HCP between them, have to judge how high to go. Both 3NT and 4♥ are reasonable contracts in abstract, both defeated by the hostile lie of the clubs and hearts. The defenders have five clubs to run against 3NT, and in 4♥ repeated club leads might set that game even if hearts were 3-2. Accordingly those pawky (canny) E/W pairs stopping in a safe partscore will do very nicely. One can imagine West raising a 1NT advance by East only to 2NT and East passing. Alas, even 2NT should be set a trick!

Bd: 23 ♠ Q J 4
 Dir: South ♥ A 9 8 5
 Vul: Both ♦ 10 8
 ♣ K 10 4 3
 ♠ 10 3 ♠ A 9 8 7 6 5
 ♥ 10 6 2 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ A K J 5 3 ♦ 7 6 2
 ♣ Q 6 5 ♣ J 2
 ♠ K 2
 ♥ K J 7 3
 ♦ Q 9 4
 ♣ A 9 8 7

North should introduce his hearts at his first turn (whether or not West overcalls 1♦ over 1♣, as many will). Now, whether East gets his spades into play or not, South can raise to 2♥, allowing North to pass. Since N/S can wrap up +140, the real issue is whether East balances with 2♠ when 2♥ is passed round to him. If he does, North may well double, hoping for the magic 200 — and he will get it. It would be easier for North to take this decision if his partnership does NOT play support doubles — so he does not know whether he is facing four-card support.

Bd: 20 ♠ 8 2
 Dir: West ♥ K Q 9 6
 Vul: Both ♦ A K 7 6 5
 ♣ 10 5
 ♠ 9 4 ♠ A 10 7 6 3
 ♥ A 10 8 ♥ 5 2
 ♦ 8 3 2 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ A 9 6 3 2 ♣ K Q J 4
 ♠ K Q J 5
 ♥ J 7 4 3
 ♦ Q J 9
 ♣ 8 7

North has a normal 1♦ opening bid, allowing East to throw in a 1♠ overcall; what should South do now? Wouldn't you be tempted to bid 1NT until you took a look at the full deal: the defenders have seven tricks against that contract, while N/S can make 3♥. That means that a negative double by South will work far better...and yet, despite that, I must admit I'm still tempted by the 1NT call. My weak hearts and slow spade stops argue strongly for that action, despite the inevitability of it turning a decent plus score into a minus score. I guess I'm just too obstinate for my own good.

Bd: 24 ♠ A 8
 Dir: West ♥ A 5 4
 Vul: None ♦ Q J 9 2
 ♣ K Q 6 3
 ♠ K Q J 3 2 ♠ 9 6
 ♥ 6 3 ♥ 10 9 8 7
 ♦ A 8 6 3 ♦ 7 5 4
 ♣ A 4 ♣ 8 7 5 2
 ♠ 10 7 5 4
 ♥ K Q J 2
 ♦ K 10
 ♣ J 10 9

The auction will surely start with North doubling West's 1♠ opening, and South jumping to 3♥, although some might take the calculated underbid of 2♥. Assuming South does invite with 3♥, then North should probably pass; an alternative would be a 3♠ probe, resulting in South playing 3NT, the optimal contract with the sight of all four hands. Not that 3NT is a great contract — it needs West to have all the missing 14 high-card points, to prevent the defenders establishing spades. Best defense to a heart contract is repeated spade leads, which holds N/S to +140.

Bd: 25 ♠ Q J 8 3 2
 Dir: North ♥ K J 6
 Vul: E/W ♦ K 10 7
 ♣ K 8

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

♠ A 7 4
 ♥ 10 9 7 5 3
 ♦ Q J 8 5
 ♣ A

This is a true bidding challenge deal. Whether South treats his hand as a game force by starting with 2♥ or goes through a forcing notrump sequence, he is likely to drive the hand to 4♠ by one route or another. That is very much the wrong decision; 4♠ is a very poor spot — needing a heart finesse plus quite a lot more in the way of avoiding ruffs. Meanwhile 4♥ is an excellent spot by comparison, because the spade loser goes on the top clubs. Any pair finding a way to play the deal in hearts will do well — whether it be a partscore or a game.

Bd: 29 ♠ —
 Dir: North ♥ A Q 8 7 6 3
 Vul: Both ♦ 9 4
 ♣ 8 7 6 4 2

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

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

The mainstream position with the North cards is to open with a preempt (some might prefer 3♥, but 2♥ looks reasonable enough. If South blasts out 3NT, North has to pass, like it or not, but if South offers a choice of games, North will pick hearts — or might even introduce his clubs — whereupon South may guess to bid 6♣! As to who can make what; 3NT on a spade lead takes at least nine tricks. But 7♣ can also be made — however the shortage of entries means that declarer needs to take the heart finesse or play a complete crossruff to bring home 13 tricks.

Bd: 26 ♠ A 9 7
 Dir: East ♥ 4 3 2
 Vul: Both ♦ K Q 6 5
 ♣ 9 5 4

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

♠ K Q 8
 ♥ K J 9
 ♦ 9 3 2
 ♣ K J 10 6

An auction starting Pass-1♣-1♦-1NT should be almost universal. Now what is East to do? Passing is perfectly reasonable but would result in N/S collecting +120, unless North totally misguesses hearts. If East does bid — and there is a huge temptation to try something here — he must try to maneuver his side to their optimal spot — hearts, which plays for +110, even on a trump lead. Declarer can arrange to set up spades, and the defenders cannot both prevent a spade ruff in dummy and get their long suits going. 2♠ by East might also come close on a non-trump lead.

Bd: 30 ♠ 9 8 4 2
 Dir: East ♥ —
 Vul: None ♦ 9 5
 ♣ K Q J 10 8 6 5

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

♠ A K J
 ♥ A Q 10 6 3
 ♦ A J 6 4
 ♣ 7

The North hand will excite strong passions as to what is the best response to 1♥. Some may be able to jump to 3♣, weak, some will respond 2♣ then rebid 3♣, yet others may bid 1♠. A look at the par contract won't help settle any disputes. N/S can make 1NT, but also (at double-dummy) game in spades and SLAM in clubs. In 4♠ even on a trump lead North could conceivably draw two rounds of trumps, then run clubs through East. In 6♣ declarer needs to ruff out the hearts for a 12th trick. Any N/S making game will score very well.

Bd: 27 ♠ 8 7
 Dir: South ♥ K J 8 3 2
 Vul: None ♦ K 5
 ♣ Q J 7 2

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

♠ A K
 ♥ A 9 7 6 4
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ A 10 8 5

N/S will get to 4♥ in double-quick time (some like to use a 3NT response by North for just this sort of hand, but any route North cares to select will work). West has a choice of long suits to lead, but it matters not what he does; he could select any card in his hand but the ♣K and would still hold N/S to the ten tricks with which they started life. I'll regret this I know, but I predict a totally flat board at many clubs — notwithstanding the fact that E/W have a cheap save in spades..

Bd: 31 ♠ K Q J 7
 Dir: South ♥ 10 3
 Vul: N/S ♦ 8 7 6 4 3
 ♣ 9 5

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

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

E/W will have a relatively mundane sequence featuring a strong notrump and Stayman to their normal 4♥ game. Surprise! The perfect fit of the E/W cards means that even on a trump lead declarer can arrange to ruff two spades in the East hand and come to 12 tricks (two ruffs, four trumps and six minor-suit winners). Will anyone but a pair playing a strong club system be able to get there? I don't think so, but if East has a response to 1♣ to show a positive with 1-4-4-4 shape, slam would be duck soup!

Bd: 28 ♠ A 10
 Dir: West ♥ 9 4 3
 Vul: N/S ♦ A K J 7 4
 ♣ A 8 6

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

♠ K J 7 6 4
 ♥ K Q
 ♦ 10 6 2
 ♣ K 9 5

Anyone who does not preempt 3♥ (or 4♥!) must have misread the vulnerability. If West does pass, he will probably let N/S play in 3NT, where they can take at least 10 tricks and might just manage an 11th if the defenders don't get round to leading clubs early enough, to break up the double squeeze on themselves. Meanwhile if West does open 3♥ what will North do? I do not see how N/S can get to 3NT — do you? They are quite likely to declare 4♠ — not such a terrible contract, even after the heart ruff, but one that cannot be brought home.

Bd: 32 ♠ Q 7 5 2
 Dir: West ♥ 9 7
 Vul: E/W ♦ K Q J 9 4 3
 ♣ 3

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

♠ 6 3
 ♥ A Q 3 2
 ♦ A 8 6
 ♣ 10 6 5 4

Some will resist opening 2♦ with the North cards because of the four spades, but I suspect the majority might discount that minor flaw — or should it be a 'major' one? If North does open, then East will double and South will raise to 3♦, encouraging East to balance with a second double. Now West has more than enough to bid 4♣ — or even 5♣. Unlucky; the ♠Q is onside, but the defenders have two diamonds, two hearts, and a ruff to take. While some of the field may make +110 or even +130 with the N/S cards, quite a sizeable chunk of the E/W field will be conceding 200 or more.