



**Message from
José Damiani,
President, World Bridge Federation**

So we reach the end of the 19th World Wide Bridge Contest — I do hope you found the hands interesting and enjoyable, and that you will now have fun as you watch the results come in to the website at www.ecatsbridge.com from all over the world. A time where we can enjoy the benefits that our technology gives us, in allowing us to provide this service for you, the bridge players from so many countries.

The 2005 World Teams Championship comprising the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and Seniors Bowl, together with the World Transnational Open Teams Championship will be held in Estoril Portugal from 22 October - 05 November, with the Open Teams being played in the second week. This great event gives players the chance to play in a prestigious and enjoyable championship while at the same time soaking up the atmosphere and excitement of the final stages of the Bermuda Bowl. The Estoril coast is charming, with a wide variety of hotels, and many restaurants ranging from the simplest to the most sophisticated. Play will take place in the Estoril Congress Centre, an ideal very modern complex designed to host events with class and the welcoming atmosphere that is the trademark and the image of quality characteristic of Estoril.

Full details are on the WBF Website at www.worldbridge.org and also on www.ecatsbridge.com or we can send you the information — just contact Anna Gudge on +44 1787 881920 or fax her on +44 1787 881339 or email her at anna@ecats.co.uk. We would love the chance to welcome you to Estoril!

Now I would like to thank you — the bridge players, who come and play in this event, and enjoy what might be called the "lighter" side of bridge — not a major Championship but a light-hearted and fun event, played amongst your own friends at your own club but competing against the rest of the participating clubs world wide! It just proves that we can all enjoy ourselves while indulging in our wonderful sport of Bridge ... and at the same time, show that we all follow the spirit of the WBF Motto -

Bridge for Peace

José Damiani
President



Commentator: Eric Kokish

Born: Montreal, Canada May 19, 1947

Married Beverly Kraft, his childhood sweetheart, in 1986.

Son Matthew, two dogs: Lady (Golden Retriever) and Jackie Robinson (Black Labrador); Kitten - called Kitten!

Residence: Toronto

Eric learned bridge at High School and has been fascinated by the game ever since. He has made his mark on bridge in several areas. He served in administration, as president of Unit 151 (Montreal); as District 1 judiciary chairman in the Seventies and Eighties, as a Canadian Bridge Federation board member and as a member of the ACBL Goodwill Committee.

Eric is a former editor of the Unit 151 newsletter, author of a weekly bridge column in the *Montreal Gazette* from 1977 to 1997, has been a principal contributor to most world championship books since 1979, directs the Master Solvers Club and Challenge the Champs for the *Bridge World* magazine, has been editor of the *World Bridge News* since 1994 and has contributed to bridge magazines and bulletins around the world as well as doing VuGraph commentary at many World

Checking your Scores

Please check your scores carefully when they go up on the site at www.ecatsbridge.com and contact your local heat organiser quickly if there are any errors - we aim to finalise the Contest very quickly following the event, and then no further corrections can be accepted.

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and International events.

Kokish is also the author of several conventions, including the Kokish Relay and the Montreal Relay. In 1980, he won a Bols Brilliancy prize and the ROMEX award for the best bid hand of the year.

Although he has not played frequently of late, Kokish is still among the top all-time Canadian players. He has won two North American championships — the Vanderbilt Knockout Teams and the Men's Board-a-Match Teams. He has earned two silver medals in international play — in the World Open Pairs in 1978 and the Bermuda Bowl in 1995 and has finished third three times in the Rosenblum Cup.

As a coach, Kokish has earned a reputation as one of the best. His latest success was as coach of the Nick Nickell squad, which won the 2000 Bermuda Bowl in Bermuda and the 2003 Bermuda Bowl in Monaco. In the past year Eric has coached the Russian and Chinese teams and members of the Egyptian team and this year is coaching teams and pairs using the excellent play records from Bridge Base Online, which provide for a whole new and effective coaching environment.

In 1997, after several working visits to Indonesia, he was invited by the Indonesian government to coach the national teams in Jakarta, following which he and Beverly settled in Toronto.

WBF Year Points

will be awarded to **100th place** for the 2003 Simultaneous Pairs - see the Master Points Website at:

www.wbfmasterpoints.com

for full details of the awards.

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jump to 4♣ over 2NT), and West will love his hand for slam, with decent spades, side aces and the queen of his partner's long suit. West will cue-bid or take control with a version of Blackwood and will usually drive to 6♣.

If West opens 1NT, as a majority of the 15-17 crowd will do (by breeding or because they foresee no accurate rebid after a 1NT response to 1♠), East will generally use Stayman, then continue with a forcing 3♦ over 2♠. A good case could be made for West to raise to 4♦, expressing his slam interest unambiguously, but some will stall with 3♥ or 3♣ or try 4♣, an advance control-showing bid agreeing diamonds by inference. While 4♣ seems innocent enough, it casts some doubt on the West's honour location: does 4♣ deny a heart control, or imply controls in both majors? Would 3♥ suggest a weakness in clubs for no-trump, its traditional primary message? Would 3♣ show a fifth spade or concentrated values in that suit, or would it imply weakness in hearts for no-trump? These are all important partnership issues, but the easiest way to avoid testing them in a casual partnership is to simply raise diamonds. East might then take charge with Blackwood on the strength of his strong trumps and controls in both unbid suits, but he might, in the alternative, settle for a 4♥ control-bid, hoping West will show spade control or take control himself. Over 4♠ East will continue with 5♣ or 4NT, and 6♦ will be reached in due course.

Those who use a form of five-card-major Stayman will locate the five-three major fit early, but precisely how they will follow up is not clear: 3♥ to set spades, a forcing 3♦, a splinter raise of 4♣ or a fit-jump to 4♦. When East shows some slam interest in spades West will co-operate and it's very likely that the partnership will finish in 6♣.

A few thoughts about the play of the spade suit: if declarer starts with a low card to the queen, the fall of the eight might convince him to cross to dummy to lead the jack. That works rather nicely here, but would not be a success when North stared with ten-eight-small. Although the eight is a standard false card from the latter holding, most declarers will lead the jack anyway, not only because they might not credit North with knowing the textbook play but also because North simply might have no

alternative, as here. Furthermore, as declarer will also be concerned about securing his contract (in 6♣), he will ruff a club in dummy before leading the ♠, catering to both the actual position and to a degree king-ten-four-deuce in South (intending to continue in the latter case with three rounds of hearts to discard his last club: if South ruffs high the club goes away, and if South ruffs low declarer intends to play on diamonds, succeeding if South has at least three of those).

Another variation involves declarer playing three high hearts early to tempt South to ruff from king-ten-small or king-low-low). That will work here.

Should North lead a diamond against 6♣ declarer will have to worry about a diamond ruff on either side. If diamonds are indeed four-one, playing ace and another trump works well unless South wins the *doubleton* king and gives North a ruff. As someone in "Through the Looking Glass" might have said, "A very merry un-safety play to you, to you!" Well, maybe you had to be there.

Against 6♦ by East, a cunning low-spade lead will almost certainly convince declarer to rise with the ace as the possibility of a singleton lead will threaten 6♦ and also mean that 6♣ will go down. How should declarer proceed from there on the assumption that spades are four-one? Drawing trumps won't work as North will hold off on the ♠K and leave declarer with a late heart loser, so declarer will try to ruff a heart in dummy. But even this line is somewhat tricky. If declarer draws one round of trumps (in hand) first, he might be in trouble if trumps are four-one too, after taking a heart ruff low and cashing the ♦Q: how can he get off dummy? Ruffing a club shortens his trumps before establishing a second spade trick, and leading a spade risks a spade ruff. Foreseeing these complications, declarer might try to ruff the third heart low without drawing any trumps. And there you have it: 6♦ down one when South ruffs in with the ♦10 and (in practice) uppercuts a trump trick for North. If you were South or East at a table where this took place, you will have the best story of the session.

See you tomorrow.

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Wherever you are today, welcome to the world's biggest bridge bash. You're comparing not only with the players at your club but also with thousands of players all over the world. Tops and bottoms are serious business, as you'll see when the final results are posted.

N/S will generally have the auction to themselves with their combined 31 HCP and two balanced hands, and most will stop short of slam, finishing in 4♥, 3NT, or perhaps 4NT.

While East lacks the strength and suit quality for an overcall of 2♣ or 3♣, that won't stop the most aggressive of their number from stepping into the auction over 1♦, 1♠ or 1♣ (strong or specialised). Although West can contribute little to the play in clubs, his doubleton heart and three trumps will apparently provide East with a play for seven tricks. However, if the defenders are careful they can develop either a trump promotion in diamonds or an uppercut in hearts to hold a club contract to six tricks. Not that anyone will elect to defend a relatively low club contract. South will force in hearts over a club overcall, after which North will spend the rest of the auction trying to be declarer to protect his heart holding without understating his values for a potential heart slam. When East risks 3♣, the pressure will really be on North over South's 3♥, and a conservative 3NT will be the winning action. After a 2♣ overcall and 2♥ by South, North will do best to rebid 2NT and pass a raise to 3NT, but this strategy will not be available to most strong notrumpers as 2NT would not be forcing. North might jump to 3NT, but if he stalls with 3♣ and rebids 3NT over South's 3♦, that will work too.

If South is declarer in a heart contract after

East competes, the indicated club lead will hold him to 11 tricks unless he plays diamonds for four tricks, which he won't. Indeed, to manage an eleventh he will have to lead a spade to his king and duck a spade on the way back, which he is more likely to do. If East doesn't bid, however, West might not lead a club (or a trump), and leading either a low or high spade or diamond will potentially allow declarer to come to 12 tricks. Declarer will have to play spades correctly and cash the ♣A at an appropriate time to squeeze West in spades and diamonds.

Where North plays in no-trump, East is likely to start clubs and declarer will be most comfortably placed if he can arrange to lose one of his spade honours to the ace. Now the count will be rectified for the spade/diamond squeeze and declarer will manage a twelfth trick for an excellent result, losing only to the few pairs who wander into 6NT and bring it home.

As there will be plenty of +450s and some +420's, N/S pairs achieving +460 should fare quite well. +480 will be quite rare, although in some systems South will be able to show his hearts via a transfer response to 1♣, and with North declaring a heart contract 12 tricks will be within reach.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

A 12-14 no-trump opening by South might keep West out of the auction, after which N/S will finish in 3♥ or 4♥, depending largely on North's inclination to commit to game. A heart contract declared by South on a transfer sequence could yield as many as 10 tricks on a spade or diamond lead if declarer gets the red-suit position right. That achievement will be produce a good score whether or not N/S reach game.

If South opens 1♣ or a Precision 1♦, West will introduce spades and East will compete to 3♠ either directly or via a two-step approach. And some West players might dare to come in over a weak no-trump with a two-suited bid that includes spades, again convincing East to compete to 3♠. It's hardly obvious to double 3♠ and on the lie of the cards it's impossible to defeat it. Rather than sell out, N/S might well take the push to 4♥, hoping that -100 (not doubled) will be a fair result if 3♠ can't be beaten. 4♥ by North might be doubled, and declarer will have just too much to do on a spade lead through South's tenace, even if he pins the doubleton ♦10 and guesses the trumps correctly. The only danger for the defence after a spade lead is for West to refrain from covering the ♦J: now declarer can cross to the ♦A, pick up trumps, and finesse the ♦9 for a spectacular +620 or +790.

At the tables where North commits to 4♥ in a hurry after West overcalls in spades (INT-2S-4H or INT-2D(S and another)-4D(transfer), for example), East might well compete to 4♠. Now the best that N/S can do is double and collect 100, which will be a good result only if there are lots of N/S pairs going down in heart contracts or selling out to 3♠.

Although N/S will sometimes have control of their fate on this deal, E/W will more often be in the driver's seat by competing effectively in spades.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Where South opens 1♣ or a Precision 1♦, North will respond in a red suit and East will introduce his spades. Whether South rebids INT, competes with a Support Double (after a 1♥ response) or passes, West will raise to 2♠ and it will be usually be difficult for N/S to

compete any further. Where the opening bid was 1♦, however, North will take his chances with 3♦, non-vulnerable, and should buy the contract. E/W would do well to double 3♦ but it's difficult to see who should do so. It will be rare that N/S will get as high as 3♠.

3♦ can be set three tricks if East switches to hearts before setting up South's spade winner and West switches to clubs in time. If E/W get all their tricks they won't have to double 3♦ to score handsomely.

Where South starts with a weak no-trump, he may succeed in buying the contract and if West believes in leading from his strong four-card suit (generally a poor idea) the contract will be made. If he doesn't lead a heart (the queen, catering to king-third in dummy with the jack in South, is a possible but unlikely alternative to the three), West won't have much to go on in selecting a three-card suit. An inspired spade lead will produce a two-trick set but a club will give declarer time for a major-suit winner and his contract unless East finds the difficult switch to a low diamond when he wins the ♣K. A diamond lead gives the defenders the same chance for three hearts, two spades and a trick in each minor.

It's more likely, however, that East will double INT or reopen with 2♠ (or a surrogate).

If East doubles INT, both West and North have enough to think that INT doubled might be the best contract. It would not be surprising for North to think better of it and run to 2♦, which might be doubled. Alternatively, E/W might pass out 2♦ for a small plus or compete to 2♠, and a few might even misjudge their assets and finish in 2♥ in this scenario, a much less pleasant contract. There will be a wide range of contracts at these weak-no-trump tables, including N/S +90, +180, -50, -100, -300, -500, and E/W +110, +140, -50, and -100.

N/S can hold spade contracts to eight tricks by starting with three rounds of diamonds, a club to the ace and a fourth round of diamonds to promote another trump trick. If they find that defence they should score fairly well, as 2♠ will be the most popular contract and most will make three after the infinitely more attractive lead of the ♣Q, which will remove North's entry prematurely and kill the trump promotion. If the defenders don't break

N/S, their SST is 3 (1 for the club singleton, 2 for the doubleton heart), which deducted from 13 yields 10. But because their WVP total is only 16, 3 points less than the "equally divided" range of 19-21, their expectation is one trick less than 10 (according to the IFTL thesis, each 3 WVP are roughly equivalent to an actual trick), and so it is! It's a different way of looking at competitive decisions and it's more involved than making a simple estimate of everyone's trump length, but it's worth the trouble to train yourself to do this type of analysis. Your competitive bidding will surely improve.

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

At favourable vulnerability more South players will open (1♠ or perhaps a weak no-trump) than pass. North has a huge fit and 11 HCP but eight losers, so a limit raise is the indicated action. Actually, North has an awful hand for his invitational raise (all his side values are "slow" and may be entirely or largely useless and his queen-jack of trumps will often be as valuable as the three-deuce when South has ace-fifth). Frankly, if you raised to just 2♠ and partner passed, would you feel that your side hadn't bid enough?

Will East bid over a 3♠ limit raise? The vulnerability will usually silence him, but not always. Double will get his side to 4♥, and so might 4♦, although West is much more likely to pass. South might well double 4♦ for penalty if that's what a double would mean in his partnership, but it's not quite as tempting to double 4♥. As 3♠ can be beaten with accurate defence (E/W must avoid blowing their heart trick, but must cash their clubs only once declarer has established a second heart trick or if East does not capture one of his opponents' diamond honours with the ace),

any plus for N/S figures to be a solid result. Plus 200 would be particularly sweet.

Norths who back their judgement and downgrade their junky hand to a single raise will not sell out to 3♦ or 3♥, and might find that giving E/W an easier opportunity to compete (with 3♦) costs them the contract when West leads the ♦J (East ducking) rather than a fatal heart.

Total tricksters who think it sensible to raise 1♠ to 4♠ will not convince East to commit an indiscretion, and will frequently go -100 when most of their counterparts are -50 in 3♠.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

E/W would be pleased to reach 6♦ or the higher-scoring but technically inferior 6♠. Both contracts will be reached with significant frequency so the pairs stopping in 4♠, 3NT or (extremely unlikely) 5♦ won't score handsomely on the final deal of the session.

Where West opens 1♠, his rebid over 2♦ will not always be an easy one. If 2NT and 3♦ would imply minimum-range openings and 2♠ would be non-forcing or otherwise misleading, West will have to fabricate a high reverse to 3♣ or jump to 3NT, neither action being particularly comfortable. 3NT, in particular, will make life difficult for West, even if it depicts precisely 15-17 HCP. 4♠ won't be enough and 4♥ could be interpreted as five-six, non-forcing. A splinter bid of 5♣, nominally in support of spades, would work this time, but would have to be interpreted correctly, hardly a sure thing in go-as-you-please methods. East might simply take a shot at 6♠ or settle for just 4♠.

Where West indicates extra values with 2NT or 3♦ East will be able to support spades at the three level (or perhaps via a splinter

raise to 3NT, giving nothing away in the bidding and hoping 3NT will be a better contract or score more than hearts.

4♥ has 10 easy tricks, no more, no less, for +420. 3NT, in contrast, can be held to nine tricks on a black suit lead and careful defence thereafter. An inspired diamond lead (not so inspired if East boldly doubled a 2♦ transfer bid) from West will defeat 3NT if East withholds his ace at trick one and West continues with the ♦K after winning the ♣A (perhaps assisted by a positive Smith Signal from East). Although setting 3NT is a long shot, holding it to nine tricks is very likely.

This is a deal where it will pay South not to over-think after North opens 2♥. I confess that my sympathies lie with the South players who give 3NT plenty of consideration. It's the missing sixth heart that makes 3NT so much worse than 4♥.

Please don't write in to tell me that I should know that a weak two-bid shows a six-card suit. I'm having my mail re-routed to Antarctica.

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

If E/W are not vigorously harassed by their vulnerable opponents they will coast into 4♥ and probably make five (450), thinking little of the deal other than appreciating that they achieved par.

The reality of this deal, however, is that enterprising N/S pairs (South in particular) will indeed steal a significant amount of bidding space, often making it difficult for West to repeat his hearts conveniently. For example ...

1♣-(pass)-1♥-(double); 3♣-(4♠)

... where both 3♣ and 4♠ are somewhat pre-emptive rather than strength-showing bids.

It's easy to see why East would want to get to 3♣ in a hurry rather than bid only 2♣, but South's 4♠ appears to be considerably more aggressive. South can count on his side having at least nine combined spades and at least eight combined diamonds. His singleton club looks like an important asset and if North has more clubs than hearts South's three small hearts look good for offence and poor for defence. Even if 4♠ is doubled the penalty from South's point of view will often be only 200 points, which will be a good result if E/W can make a non-vulnerable game or perhaps even a slam. 3♠ won't be nearly as effective as the bigger bounce, as West will be able to bid 4♥ over 3♠, leaving East in a stronger position to do the right thing over the impending 4♠ by North, the right thing in this instance being 5♥ or a choice-of-games 4NT.

Over a jump to 4♠ by South, what can West do? Although double suggests general strength rather than trump tricks, West doesn't have that. While he might expect 5♣ and 5♥ to play equally well much of the time, 5♥ will seem like a stronger action than 5♣, and if East is short in both red suits, clubs will play at least one trick better. If West takes some action, 5♣ is more attractive than 5♥, but in either case, North must refrain from doubling to protect whatever score his side has coming. Minus 400 should be pretty good, -450 below average, -550 and -650 relatively unspeakable. This is a good "partnership" deal, a test of competitive agreements and style and also individual judgement.

Let's consider this deal from a Law of Total Tricks perspective. With 19 total trumps there are actually 20 total tricks, the double fit and abundant trumps providing the traditional explanation for the extra trick. But if we look at this deal from the "I Fought the Law" perspective introduced by Mike Lawrence and Anders Wirgren, the explanation is more refined. E/W, have a Short Suit Total of 2 (1+1 for the two useful singletons), which is deducted from 13 (the maximum number of tricks available on any deal), which predicts 11 tricks as long as their side has roughly half the deck in Working Points (which in this case totals 20, 10 in each long suit - as the missing ♣Q is irrelevant E/W get credit for all 10 WP in that suit, just as if they owned the ♣Q). For

diamonds, declarer will have time to cash aces, play three rounds of hearts to discard a club, and lead a diamond to the nine to secure nine winners.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

N/S are unlikely to enter the auction and E/W should be able to avoid reaching slam off two cashing aces, so this deal is destined to be a dull E/W +650 across the field.

Can anything unusual happen? Barely! The defenders could allow declarer to set up two heart tricks before South cashes the ♦A, and with South holding both the heart and trump length, declarer could cash one high trump, get rid of both his diamonds and still ruff two clubs in West for a spectacular +680. Less dramatically, where East declares on the lead of the ♥A and a club switch, declarer might once in a blue moon slip the ♦9 past South, ruff out the ♥K for a diamond discard, and go about his business, again coming to 12 tricks.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

It is not written that East must open his balanced 11-count in second seat, but it's inevitable that many will do so, trading on the favourable vulnerability. Where East opens 1♦,

North may come in with 1♠ over West's 1♥ response, and West will declare 3NT, as he would if East had not opened. The difference is that North will have more information about the red suits, the inference that West will have at least a double stopper in spades, and some idea that East has a balanced minimum for his opening bid. None of this will strongly indicate that North lead the ace or jack of clubs or a heart or the ♦J, but the routine spade lead might not seem so attractive to him. Those who do lead one of the other suits will be well rewarded in the scoring if they defend well thereafter and hold declarer to his nine top tricks. If North doesn't introduce his spades East will rebid 1NT and South will lead either a low club or the ♠9 against 3NT, again achieving a good result for his side. If East starts with an in-range no-trump West might eschew Stayman and raise directly game, which might convince South to lead a heart rather than a club to allow a tenth trick early.

Where East does not open, West will declare 3NT, often uncontested after a strong no-trump opening, and North's spade lead will allow declarer to win dummy's jack for a tenth trick. Even if West opens 1♣ or 1♥ and North overcalls 1♠, there won't be enough reason for North to stay off the spade lead.

There will be many more +430's than +400's, E/W, but it will take some doing to achieve +460 when the defenders lose their way in the endgame. The successful declarers will have stories to tell, but the unlucky defenders won't be saying much.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

If East resists the modest temptation to open the bidding, South will choose a number of diamonds appropriate to his personality, the

venerable Rule of 500 having slipped onto a back burner in recent years.

Perhaps you can think of something scientific (a jump to 5NT, for example to show a heart/club two-suiter, followed by 6♥ over 6♣ to invite seven) to deal with the West hand over a 3♦, 4♦ or 5♦ opening, but the practical shot is an unsophisticated jump to 6♥. That might bully North into 6♣, which can be set at least 1700 points (2000 if East leads a heart, ruffs his partner's second heart winner, and plays ♠A and a spade honour). If North passes East might guess his partner's hand type and raise to seven, but few will dare risk punishing partner for his enterprise.

Should South risk a Lightner double of 6♥ to increase his chances of defeating the contract? With no semblance of a second trick there's a real chance that obtaining a club ruff will merely hold declarer to 12 tricks. And what if North leads the wrong black suit? And what if someone redoubles? And might N/S obtain a reasonable score if North finds the club lead on his own to prevent an overtrick? There is no published manual that offers definitive guidelines on when to double and when to pass, and the position is complicated further by the form of scoring: at IMPs the main consideration is to increase your chances of beating the contract, but at Matchpoints the idea is to simply do better than as many of your counterparts as possible.

Ask yourself what you'd lead as North against 6♥ if South doubled, or if he didn't. The reflex choice would be a spade because you have more of those, and even if you guess wrong you may establish a trick for the defence. A reason *not* to lead a spade is that you may take two natural spade tricks if you don't break the suit and a middle-club lead will usually be safe unless South has precisely the king without the ten, dummy has the queen but not the ace, and both opponents have at least two clubs.

Here the club lead allows the defenders to score all five of their trumps tricks on a minor-suit cross-ruff and only the players involved can tell you whether the double or failure to double was responsible for North finding the killing lead. The scores will range from N/S +1100 to E/W +2470 (6♥ redoubled with an overtrick on a spade lead). Declarer doesn't

need the marked diamond finesse for 13 tricks as cashing the ♦A will squeeze North in the black suits.

West players who conservatively settle for a minimum bid in hearts will also take eight tricks or 13, depending on the opening lead. If North competes in spades West is unlikely to defend 4♠ doubled and will only reluctantly defend 5♠ doubled.

If this isn't the most exciting deal of the session, the winner will be something very special indeed.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

South, who is more than a little bit vulnerable, might look at his spotless major suits and decide that the risk in protecting against West's strong notrump is simply too great. That would lead to E/W +90 where N/S could have made +110 (on a red-suit lead) or +140 (on a black-suit lead) in hearts. Or, to be fair, perhaps +730 or -200 if East were to double 3♥ to try to protect his likely (in his view) +120 or perhaps +110 or so in a minor-suit partscore.

If South has a bid in his arsenal to show length in both majors the modern style is to use it rather than hope to do well defending INT. Other methods, which permit South to show one of his majors and a second suit, are not quite as attractive, but it's a bidder's game these days, and I would wager that many more South players will bid than pass in this scenario. Where South shows both majors, or hearts and another suit, North might jump to 3♥ as a two-way shot. While he hopes to make it, he would also prefer to avoid being doubled if he can't and E/W could make a partscore, which they might find if North settled, instead, for a gentle 2♥. Where South shows spades and

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Non-vulnerable, I would expect a significant number of Wests to open a weak 2♥ or some other obstructive toy, but at unfavourable vulnerability nearly everyone will pass, allowing North to open 1♣, 1♦ or INT (of various ranges: it's one of those hands). Where South needs to be concerned that North might have a singleton spade (not everyone insists that a INT rebid be based on a balanced hand, for example) he will not commit to 4♠ on his own, but he will drive to game otherwise. Where South invites game in spades opposite roughly 12-14, North will raise to 4♠, or perhaps try a hopeful 3NT.

West might well risk a 2♥ overcall after passing initially. When North passes, in some cases denying as many as three spades, East should pass despite his four-card trump support because his cards are largely defensive and at this vulnerability enterprising opponents will be keen to double for a one-trick set if they can't envision a game of their own. Indeed, that might happen here if East raises, as it would be reasonable for South to double (co-operative takeout) rather than repeat his spades on a poor suit. 3♥ doubled is down 800. And, yes, 2♥ doubled is down 500; that result might transpire if East passes, South doubles, and North passes for penalty.

In 4♠ declarer will lose three tricks no matter what he discards from the South hand on North's ♥K. Ideally he'd like to cash the ♠K, leave the ♠A in North, play off the ace-king of diamonds lest the queen drop, discard the ♦J if it doesn't appear, then ruff a diamond, hoping to avoid a guess in clubs if diamonds are three-three. The risk in this line can be seen on the actual layout, where West over-ruffs with a doubleton trump with both the ♦Q

and ♣J inside. An alternative involves playing both high trumps before embarking on the same "diamonds" line. If the diamonds were three-three, declarer would have the choice of playing West for the ♣A rather than the jack. When diamonds don't come in, declarer still has a choice in clubs, but playing West for the jack is his best bet; low to the king works when West has ace-low (declarer ducks on the way back) or East jack-low (the jack appears on the second round). As other less complex lines all work well, there won't be many declarers going minus in 4♠.

With the ace-queen of hearts in front of the king-jack, anyone in no-trump can also take 10 tricks, the rare +430s losing only to the rare 500-plus penalties against heart contracts.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Even if you don't believe in weak two-bids with five-card suits, this North hand is sure to lead you into temptation. Opposite ace-king-sixth of hearts and nothing else South can see at least ten tricks in no-trump and the same three losers in hearts if North has a doubleton diamond, perhaps four losers if North has three diamonds and there is a ruff out. Indeed, 3NT might be the only game if North is 3=6=1=3. Some Souths will simply close the bidding with a jump to 3NT, but others will try to find out a bit more about North's hand first, inquiring about suit quality, overall strength, no-trump features or short suits, according to the methods at their disposal. When they're finished inquiring, some will still choose no-trump but others will prefer to play in 4♥. Others will simply raise 2♥ to 4♥.

Where North passes as dealer and South opens INT, most Norths will offer a choice of games, but a few hyper-imaginative souls will

way at Matchpoints to keep 1♠ open. East will risk 2♠ over North's reopening 2♣ nonetheless, and that will set a difficult problem for South. Possible actions include a penalty double, 2NT, 3NT, 3♠ and even a gentle 3♣. If a double would not be for penalty, South might choose that call to slow down the auction.

2♠ doubled will go one down, -100, unless South leads a low heart or a low trump (allowing declarer to start hearts from dummy); a forcing defence will prove effective and a diamond lead will lead to a ruff and leave South with plenty of exit cards. If South tries 2NT over 2♠, North will sign off in 3♣ or move forward with 3♦, the former likely to end the auction, the latter leading to 5♣. North will not remove a jump to 3NT, and if South cue-bids 3♣ the most likely final contract will be 5♣.

3NT won't be a big success on the marked spade lead, East overtaking, and declarer will be well advised to cash his clubs rather than try to slip past an ace in East's hand.

As East has only one trump to lead declarer can take 11 tricks in clubs by ruffing two diamonds in dummy. Bidding 5♣ should be excellent and +150 close to average. The only hope for those N/S pairs going set in no-trump is that a significant number of Easts will be permitted to make 2♠ doubled.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

The extremely friendly lie of the cards permits N/S to make 5♦, or 3NT from the North side, but as they don't really have the assets to justify contracting for game, 3♦ rates to be the most popular final contract.

Most East players will double 1♦ for takeout and South will introduce his spades. West doesn't have much, but some will volunteer

2♥ with an eye on the vulnerability. Where West competes, North will have little choice but to bid 3♣. When South gives preference to 3♦ North might think of bidding again, but it's simply too dangerous to put his probable plus score in jeopardy at Matchpoints. If West passes over 1♠, North will bid 2♣ but will almost certainly bid again over South's preference to 2♦, choosing from among 3♣, 3♦, 2NT and a misdirected 2♥. Although South has some useful cards, he hasn't got enough of them to do more than retreat to 3♦ over 3♣ or pass 3♦. Over 2♥, however, he might try 2NT. As 3NT by South can be defeated on a rather likely heart lead North will do well not to raise to game, instead following up with 3♣ or 3♦, both of which should lead to a safe haven in 3♦. And if North's third bid is 2NT, South might well raise to 3NT, perhaps expecting about another queen from North.

Eleven tricks are easy in diamonds, as declarer needs only one club ruff in dummy to establish the suit, and it will be natural to play West for the ♦Q after East's takeout double (or even if East passes throughout). We can expect a large number of +150s and a few +600s in 5♦.

Against 3NT, East will lead a heart, giving declarer a second stopper/trick in the suit, or a spade, which is potentially more effective. If West follows low to the first spade, declarer must not run the diamonds but, instead, play no more than two diamonds before ducking a club. Even if declarer plays this way (leaving diamonds intact gives him more flexibility), he's in trouble if he calls for the ♠Q when East wins the club and leads a second spade. West takes the king and switches to a heart and declarer doesn't have time for a ninth trick. It would be unlucky to go run into a defence that gives you a chance to go set in 3NT on the actual layout, and I expect most of the pairs who get there from the North side to make it for +600. Let's not even think about N/S +630.

Overly aggressive E/W pairs who compete to 2♥ or 3♥ might regret their enterprise if someone doubles, as they can be held to just six tricks from either side on any lead but a trump. N/S pairs collecting 300- or 500-point penalties should score very well as +600 won't be a frequent result.

another suit, North will bid only 2♥, and East will compete with 3♣, 2NT, or a card-showing double.

If E/W wriggle into 3♦ they can be defeated if the defenders can arrange two club ruffs, which won't be too tall an order on a heart lead from North and club switch, or on a club lead from South (although North might well play low on the club if declarer does not cover the jack with the queen). Curiously, E/W can take nine tricks in clubs easily enough, 10 unless the defenders lead hearts at every opportunity.

Where West opens 1♦, a 1♥ overcall by North will get his side to 3♥ sooner or later after a raise by East, and it's not clear whether West will double or how the defence would proceed. At these tables it seems likely that East will lead a trump or the partnership's suit (allowing a timely trump switch), and declarer will fall a trick short because he won't quite be able to establish South's long spade or manage three club ruffs in dummy.

Where West opens 1♠, there is a some chance that East's 1NT response will end the auction, as West has some jeopardy in raising to 2NT if East is minimum. Unless South leads a spade or the defence stays off hearts long enough for declarer to lead the ♠J through South and divine the spade position with a spectacularly potent dose of inspiration, E/W will be held to seven tricks.

If there are enough N/S pairs going plus in hearts or on defence against diamond partscores, any E/W plus will prove a sound result, but if N/S are pushed to 3♥ and defeated, or drive E/W into clubs, or misjudge the defence to 3♦, +90 in 1NT won't be worth much.

It's a jungle out there. Only the strong survive.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

N/S will not reach an undignified slam so the main interest on this deal will be the number of tricks in 3NT and 4♠. With the ♣K onside and the ♠J sitting pretty for declarer, there will be 11 unassailable tricks in no-trump. Possible uncontested auctions include:

- 1♠-2NT (forcing); 3NT-Pass
- 1♠-2NT; 3♦-3NT; Pass
- 1♠-2NT; 3♦-3♠; 3NT-Pass
- 1♠-2♣; 2♦-2NT (forcing); 3NT-Pass
- 1♠-2♣; 2♦-3NT; Pass
- 1♠-2♣; 2♦-2♠ (forcing); 2NT-3NT; Pass
- 1♠-2♣; 2♦-2♠; 3♠-3NT; Pass

In many cases the declarers in spades will also come to 11 tricks without much fuss, but there are a couple of negative scenarios. The first is that East might find the lead of his doubleton diamond and if West withholds his ace the defence is in a position to arrange a diamond ruff to hold declarer to +420. One of the reasons it pays for the defenders to avoid playing too quickly is that it's far more obvious to lead a singleton than a doubleton and for third hand to follow low with only small cards than with the ace. Anyone serious about playing at the highest level should devote some effort to avoid making even the most obvious plays at breakneck speed. If you found your diamond ruff on this deal without exchanging unauthorised information you ought to feel doubly good about your excellent defence.

If declarer sees the diamond ruff coming he might try to dispose of two of his diamond winners before broaching trumps: the club finesse yields one diamond discard and three rounds of hearts might provide another except that West can ruff in. If West ruffs with the ♠J a second natural trump trick is promoted for the defence when declarer over-ruffs, as he must to avoid going set. Now *that* would be a battle worthy of our attention.

A second danger for declarer in 4♠ is a club lead (other than the king) from East. The finesse is an even-money proposition but finding hearts four-three is a 62.2% chance, so declarer might well rise with the ♣A and play the three high hearts. When West ruffs the third with the ♠J declarer can discard his losing club, but a low diamond switch sets the stage for a third-round diamond ruff to defeat

the contract. Charley Brown would be able to provide the background noise for this scenario: aaaarrrrggghhh!

As there will be many N/S pairs scoring +460, those managing +450 will have to hope that a significant number of their counterparts will be held to 10 or nine tricks in spades if they are to escape with a mere average-minus.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

Should East open the bidding light and show three-card spade support, there is a lively possibility that his side will reach the five or six level in hearts or spades if left alone. If declarer happens to guess hearts successfully only a club lead will defeat slam, but if declarer is less inspired in hearts a club lead or switch and careful defence will hold declarer to 10 tricks.

It would be surprising, however, if E/W were permitted to conduct an uncontested auction. At the prevailing vulnerability South is likely to enter the auction (or open in third seat) with a bid to show his minor two-suiter, which should convince North to jump to 5♦. Now E/W will have to decide whether to settle for a small penalty (300 points this time) or try for the game and/or slam bonus without much valuable information on which to base their decision. If East has opened the bidding, his vote will probably be to accept a penalty, but if he has passed initially he will be more inclined to leave the final decision to his partner if possible.

Whenever South has indicated great length in the minors his chances of taking a trick with the ♥Q will be very high. For the same reason, both North and South are likely to lead clubs, so it would not be surprising to learn that most E/W pairs who bid on over 5♦ have gone minus.

If these reflections are accurate the E/W pairs who accept their 300-point penalty against 5♦ doubled might score rather well and those who are held to +620 will be well above average, losing only to the rare +650s and even less frequent +680s and +1430s.

Where the bidding starts: 1♥-2NT-3♠ (or 3♣/3♦ showing spades and a good hand)-5♦, a pass by East would be forcing. His yet-unrevealed spade support, minor-suit controls and reasonable heart suit point towards declaring but his minimum strength and values in one of South's suits suggest defending. If he can't make up his mind, he can leave the decision to his partner, but it's not clear what West should do in this scenario. His sixth spade, heart fit, and ♦A suggest bidding on, but his minor-suit doubletons and potential loser(s) in hearts point towards doubling. It's a typical five-level decision that many E/W pairs will face and I expect the conservative camp to do better this time.

Where West is left to open in fourth position, methods and style will determine whether East responds 2♥, 3♥ (fit-showing), 3♠ or a Drury-fit 2♣. While South might double 2♣ to show that suit, he'll do better this time to compete with 2NT (minors), as West will jump to 4♣ over 2♣ doubled and it's unlikely N/S will find their sacrifice in diamonds.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

After Pass-Pass-1♣-1♦; 1♠, should South raise to 2♦, vulnerable with no diamond honour and not much of a hand? Only the most aggressive Souths will compete freely in this position, and doing so will influence North to compete to 3♦ over 3♣. It's difficult to double 3♦ with any confidence and if North buys the contract and gets the hearts right (with or without a little

a transfer that permits West to show his degree of fit without going past 3♦, West will admit to liking his hand. If East is unwilling to get involved with stoppers or shortness and simply converts to 3NT the defenders will take the first six tricks for a delightful score.

Fearless North players might mention their spades, which might force East to choose between game and partscore (transfer lebensohl permits East to invite also) and there will be more pairs in 3♦ than 3NT after this start. Should South raise to 3♠, East will double if West doesn't get in his way, and the penalty will be 500 or 800 (on a club lead, which permits the defenders to take all their side suit tricks before leading a fourth heart) if West sits for it. Where West starts with 1♥, North will overcall and East will introduce diamonds only when West won't expect much more than this. South will raise to 2♣ whether East bids (a skewed negative double is conceivable) or passes and West will not be able to stay out of game if East has bid 2♦. If he hasn't, West will double the raise to 2♣ for takeout and East will bid 4♦, 5♦, or 3♠. 5♦ will be the most probable destination.

At the tables where West opens 1♦, East might well drive to 5♦ once West indicates a good hand and it becomes clear there is no spade stopper, but it's possible that E/W might stop in 4♦, exercising good judgement if West denies a singleton spade.

It seems routine for E/W to finish with 10 tricks in diamonds but there will be some +150s when West is able to slip a club past North and discard East's remaining clubs on high hearts.

It's difficult to predict how par (E/W +130) will score for each side as there are too many rational ways to do better or worse.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

The North hand looks remarkably like a vulnerable weak two-bid to me, but I am prepared to concede that 1♠ will probably be the more popular choice in this very large field. The one-bidders are in some danger of reaching game uncontested, perhaps via: 1♠-2♥; 2♠-2NT; 3♠-4♠ (aces, partner, I've got aces, and a doubleton too) or 1♠-1NT (forcing); 2♠-4♠ (well, you didn't open a weak two, so maybe you've got something). More conservative Souths will not insist on game in those sequences.

If North opens 2♠, that could easily end the auction, but some West players might protect with 3♦. Some of their partners will gamble on 3NT, others will try 3♠ or 4♦, and those who have been there before will pass, nudging South to 3♠. As E/W can take only eight tricks in diamonds or six in no-trump and rate to get doubled if they do too much, East will do well to adopt a conservative approach at these tables.

Those who use a version of the Multi 2♦, are likely to declare 2♣ from the short side: 2♦-pass-2♠ (good hand for hearts)-all pass.

At first glance it might seem that the defenders can hold spade contracts to eight tricks on a club lead by East, but that is only true if declarer attacks trumps as soon as he gains the lead in clubs or diamonds at trick two. If instead he plays on hearts he will have time to discard either a diamond loser (after a club continuation) or a club winner (after a diamond switch) to prevent the impending club ruff. Plus 140, N/S, is the par result and should also be the most common result, the other possibilities being far less likely.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

Although it's become increasingly rare to pass a one-bid these days, West won't go out of his

he's a bit under-strength. North might raise to 3♣ to crowd the auction if West settles for a gentle 2♦, and might double if West cue-bids 3♣ to show at least a limit raise in diamonds. If East decides *not* to emphasise his strong spades, which might well be the highest-scoring strain for game opposite (indeed, 4♣ yields 10 tricks if East discards hearts on the second and third rounds of clubs) and instead bids 4♣, West should interpret that as shortness (else East would bid hearts or spades) and show his ♥A. In a perfect world East would bid 4♣ and West 4NT, a "Last Train" slam try admitting to just a bit more than he might have and denying the ace of clubs; East would bid 6♦ with more than a little hope. In practice East is going to have to drive to slam or show his spade control and respect West's sign-off at 5♦.

If E/W do fetch up in 4♣, which is certainly not ridiculous, declarer can take 10 tricks on repeated club leads by discarding hearts on both the second and third rounds, for the same +620 as 5♦ with an overtrick.

While it's difficult to imagine E/W reaching 3NT, that could happen if South does not overcall, West responds INT, and East raises to three. North will not lead a club and declarer will have the first 10 tricks for +430, beating all the pairs in 5♦ and 4♣.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Here's a deal that will be randomly good or bad for both sides. N/S will reach 4♣ by South or 3NT from either side, sometimes mentioning diamonds but often bidding nothing but no-trump.

If you're E/W you will have no control over which game your opponents reach or how they get there. In 4♣ declarer must lose two trumps and the ♥A for +420 unless declarer can sneak a low

heart past the ace, discards his remaining hearts on diamonds and later lead a trump to the king to fell West's queen. To that extent West *can* do something about his fate by securing the ♥A.

Where South declares 3NT, West can lead his best suit and eventually score his long heart to hold the contract to +400 if declarer plays normally in spades, his best chance for 11 tricks. However, if declarer gives up on the ace-queen of spades and leads a spade to his king he will finish with a spade, two hearts, four diamonds and three clubs for +430. It would not help East to rise with the ace from ace-low to clear hearts). Might this happen? It's not out of the question as declarers in no-trump will want to do better than their counterparts who land in spades and if the ♠Q is wrong the heart lead threatens to hold them to +400 where the spade guys are on for +420. Interesting considerations.

Where North declares 3NT without bidding diamonds East might lead that suit, but otherwise he'll have to choose between his "safe" heart sequence and the more aggressive club lead. North will be at East's mercy, but again, that fancy spade play might be a possibility.

Did you enjoy Board 27?

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Where West opens INT and North passes, East will sign off in diamonds, employ an invitational sequence that could end at 3♦, or commit to game by jumping to 3NT (or by showing heart shortness with length in one or both minors or specifically diamonds). A somewhat bizarre compromise for East is to pass INT. The East hand isn't really worth a game force facing 15-17 HCP and one of the more conservative sequences should have greater appeal. If East invites game via

help from his friends) he can escape for -100 and an excellent score. Going two down or one down doubled, however, will be a N/S disaster. If E/W compete to 4♣ they can make that for +130, so there will be some opportunities for both sides on this competitive partscore deal.

If South does not raise diamonds immediately he will probably do so over East's 3♣ after North volunteers 2♦ over West's 2♣ rebid. In this position, West will have to take further action (double, 3♥, or 4♣) or 3♦ will end the auction.

On a club lead against 3♦, declarer will come to eight tricks unless he uses dummy's sole entry to lead up to the ♥K. Of course, he might very well do that. Particularly if West has mentioned hearts, East might lead the ♥A, giving North an easy ride.

The best E/W scores will be the occasional +500 and more frequent +200s, but the most common scores will be +130 and +100. Any N/S plus will be spectacular.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Perhaps I shouldn't mention it, but there will be a few tables at which East slips in a 1♠ overcall after 1♦-Pass-1♥, leading to a raise by West and a competitive double by North, which South might pass for penalty and collect 500. There; I've said it. However, for the most part, N/S (usually North) will declare 2NT or 3NT, depending on whether North forces to game at his second turn or settles for an invitation, and whether South accepts the invitation. These are close decisions, and Matchpoint scoring favours a fairly conservative approach. Nonetheless, I would not put my chips on 2NT as the popular final contract.

If East leads a low spade and North gets

the diamonds wrong (as he usually will), the defenders can take five tricks. This will be a fairly common result, yielding -50 more often than +120.

If East leads a heart and the defence perseveres with that suit, declarer will take nine or 10 tricks for +400, +430, +150 or +180. However, if West finds the switch to a low spade and declarer goes wrong on the second round, -50 is back in the picture. But now so is +430 and +460. Given that West can read the honour position in hearts and can credit North with the ♣A for his no-trump bid, he really should switch to a spade from any holding. When East wins the king (a better choice than the ace because North will intuitively consider it more difficult for West to lead from the king with the queen in dummy) declarer might well rely on the Theory of Restricted Choice (with both the ace and king East could win either card randomly, so either high honour is more likely to be a forced play) and call for the ten. And yes, East might lead a club, which won't really matter if the deal boils down to a spade guess.

Although it's certainly a possible scenario, it would be presumptuous to suggest that going plus will produce a good result for N/S. While I believe that there will be considerably more N/S pairs in 3NT than 2NT, there's simply no way to predict how many tricks they will take.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Some will pass as dealer with the West cards but many others will start with 1♣, 2♣ (natural, limited in strong club systems) or an eccentric 3♣. If West passes, most would open the North hand, and if West opens 1♣, everyone will enter the auction with 1♠ or a two-suited bid to show the majors. It's less certain that North will come in over 2♣ and it's possible

that 3♣ would silence him. It's interesting to speculate on all these possibilities and on which slot the bouncing ball will occupy when the roulette wheel grinds to a halt, but it's a good bet that the auction will conclude at the five or six level in spades or clubs. It's one of those deals where everyone might bid one more for the road, just in case something (not necessarily the bidder's contract) happens to be making. In this respect, everyone's tactics will be much the same as they would be at IMP scoring.

There isn't much to the play in a club contract as the declaring side will lose a trump and a slow diamond trick. In spades, however, there is some scope for variation. If E/W stay off hearts, declarer can pick up that suit for one loser to finish with 11 tricks. Or declarer can play West for ace-third or ace-and-one and lead a heart to the king, holding himself to 10 tricks. Or East can lead hearts early to get his ruff to hold the contract to 10 tricks legitimately. Or West might lead ace and another heart where South declares, and if declarer tries the king from dummy, he'll take only nine tricks.

There's not much chance that N/S will finish in hearts, but if they do, East won't find it easy to recognise that West has a spade ruff coming.

The best scores in each direction will be doubled five-level contracts that are made, +550 for E/W, +850 for N/S, but there won't be that many of those. 6♣ doubled -100, and 5♠ +650 or -100 will be more popular results. If West starts with a two or three-level bid in clubs and silences North, East might finish his opponents off with a bounce to 5♣ and West will chalk up +400.

Although it's possible that this will be a relatively tame deal at some tables, it's much more likely that West will get involved at his first turn and trigger a competitive battle whose outcome will be determined by the player forced to make the last guess.

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Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

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

With ace-king-king and a five-card major, most North players will open their threadbare 11-count. East has enough strength to compete over 1♠ but his modest heart suit and balanced pattern are not ideal for a 2♥ overcall while a somewhat safer takeout double would often make it difficult to find a five-three heart fit. Despite the flaws, most East players will not pass.

As both 4♠ and 3NT can be defeated with accurate defence, South will do best (at least in theory) to try for a penalty. That strategy is easier if East doubles 1♠ for takeout because South can redouble and either he or North can double any run-out. 2♥ doubled will cost 500 on normal defence, 2♣ doubled 500 if the defenders lead trumps, 2♦ doubled 1100 if the defenders draw trumps and switch to spades, and INT doubled 800. If East overcalls 2♥, however, South can't send a heat-seeking missile-message and must risk a pass, hoping North can reopen with a takeout double. On this deal, North might pass out 2♥, producing +200 rather than +500.

As it's always speculative to go for the jugular (the opponents', that is) with solid support for partner's suit, many South players will abandon the penalty idea and aim for 4♠ or 3NT. To defeat 4♠, East can cash two high hearts and switch to a club, a play that risks conceding the contract if North happens to hold the ♣10, or he can play a third heart to kill one discard, win the ♠A, and play a fourth heart to let West ruff the last heart. Diamonds play for four tricks but declarer will be left with a club loser in the end.

To defeat 3NT, East must switch to a club before declarer knocks out the ♠A, and that

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

Although it's fashionable and completely normal for South to overcall 1♠ over 1♦, that doesn't mean we have to like it. If North dares to compete to 2♠ over a negative double by West (hardly a clear choice, with 2♣ and 2♥ both sensible alternatives), E/W can extract a 300-point penalty if they can arrange to double. As double by East in that scenario would normally be treated as responsive, 2♠ would have to come around the road to West, who could double to show extra values, still negative, and East would leave it in.

If, instead, West volunteers 2♣ or a "prepared" 2♥ (intending to bid clubs later) it's less attractive for North to raise spades as the opponents have shown more strength and named two suits, and North isn't anxious to encourage a sacrifice. Even less so if he could see West's hand and realise that his opponent is overbidding slightly, gambling on finding a fit. Once North elects to remain silent it's likely that E/W will reach 3NT or perhaps 4♥. Those who find a way to stop in 3♣ or 4♣ -- perhaps with West suppressing his hearts -- will usually manage 10 tricks for +130 and what should be a decent score. 4♥ would have some play with hearts three-three or with both club honours onside, but here nine tricks are the limit . . . unless North sagely leads the ♠Q rather than a low card, hoping to trap East's putative king and retain the lead. Now declarer can guess clubs correctly, build a second spade trick and essentially elope his trumps by ruffing to come to 10 tricks for a spectacular +620. Plus 170 or +140 in hearts should also be good results.

But 3NT will be the most common contract, and declarer won't be able to get home legitimately on a low spade lead to the queen and ace. Not that the defence will always have an easy time of it! For example, East might try

a low diamond at trick two. If South wins the king, he must not lead a second low spade to establish his suit, a play that will seem attractive to him. If he does, declarer can guess the clubs correctly, strip the red suits, and endplay South with the fourth diamond. And if South ducks the diamond, declarer can lead a low club from dummy, taken by North. Now North must not make the reflex play of the ♠8, lest declarer cover to prevent South from continuing the suit effectively. The winning play from North in this variation is the ♠4. That's the sort of play you find in advanced textbooks or learned articles, so if you're a student of the game and get it wrong you might well feel that you shouldn't have. The same position arises if declarer tries a club to the jack at trick two. If, instead, declarer unblocks hearts immediately and leads a club to the king, trying for three-three hearts, careful defence will defeat the contract.

As there are several ways for the defence to go wrong, 3NT will be made with some frequency, and again, this will be a deal that provides some good stories in the post-game discussions.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

We can see that E/W are stone cold for 6♦ and would be without the ♥Q, the ♠J and the queen-jack of diamonds. Imagine bidding slam without those wasted assets! It's important to note that slam would have no play if West held one more heart and only two clubs, so for East to use his favourite form of Blackwood when West shows a diamond fit and some values is really hit or miss. Not that East is likely to get West to co-operate with a delicate control-showing campaign, but there is a chance that West will show some life if East could show his club shortness in time.

South will surely overcall in clubs with his strong suit and promising distribution even if

One of the apparent strengths of the Law is that trumps provide safety. This is true only to the extent that there aren't too many fast losers. When the useful strength is more or less evenly divided and both sides have an adequate trump fit, each side's ability to control relatively early rounds of side suits and take advantage of long-suit winners that will determine its potential.

The Law doesn't provide this information.

Where North adopts a relatively soft approach the final contract is more likely to be 4♠ down one, -100. The big bounce to 4♣ will lead to -200 when West passes or +100, +200, or +500 if West removes to 4NT (at least two places to play) and gets his side to five of a minor, which South might double. Guessing the ♣Q will be important but once West decides not to defend 4♠, his side is slated to score badly for going minus.

Might South take the push to 5♠? That seems terribly unlikely, but if South's expectations for a jump to 4♠ are rather more positive, who knows?

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ J 10 8 6 3 ♥ 8 ♦ K Q 8 7 3 ♣ Q 7</p> <p>♠ K 5 ♥ A K 10 6 5 4 ♦ 10 6 2 ♣ K J</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 4 ♥ J ♦ A J 9 5 ♣ A 10 6 5 3</p> <p>♠ A 7 2 ♥ Q 9 7 3 2 ♦ 4 ♣ 9 8 4 2</p>
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Whether North shows a two-suiter or simply overcalls 1♠, South is unlikely to do more than "raise" to 2♠, which shouldn't reduce North into competing to 4♣ over 4♥ or 3NT. As 4♠ doubled can be held to six tricks without complex defence, North will learn a lesson from this deal if he misjudges and suffers an 800-point set. In some variations, declarer might take only five tricks.

But how about 2♠ doubled? If North cue-bids 2♥ to show spades and a minor, East will double or pass according to his agreements. When South bids 2♠ West will certainly consider defending with his balanced hand and prime values if East wishes to do so. It's not so

unlikely that West will pass 2♠ around to East, then sit for the ensuing double. It's common practice to lead trumps on this sort of auction, hoping to prevent ruffs in the short hand. That strategy preserves the defenders' three diamond tricks, but North's long diamond will come into play and 2♠ doubled will go two down, -300, for an excellent N/S score.

Although the hearts break dreadfully, E/W can piece together 10 tricks in either hearts or no-trump as long as declarer does not lead the ♥J to the ace when South follows low. In practice, 11 tricks in hearts are possible unless North leads the ♦K (which he usually will) and 11 tricks might be made in no-trump if South leads either the ♠A or his singleton diamond. On a low spade lead declarer wins in dummy and can come to 10 tricks by starting diamonds, or in much more complicated fashion by calling for the ♣J, which North must cover. He can negotiate +430 after that start by running the ♥J, crossing back to the ♣K, cashing hearts to discard diamonds, and leading to the ♦A to play ♣10, club. Because South started with only one diamond he can't escape in this end position. Declarer might well play this way if North has shown five-five in spades and a minor, but otherwise, playing on diamonds will have more appeal, with the intention of ducking when North later leads a spade honour through the queen. The play is easier in hearts.

Say that declarer in 4♥ takes the lead of the ♦K with dummy's ace and leads the ♥J, which South covers. Declarer wins, cashes the ♥K to get the bad news, and leads the ♠K. South wins and plays a spade, but declarer wins, cashes three high clubs to discard a diamond, ruffs a club, and exits in diamonds, with 1065 of trumps remaining. South has 973 and declarer must make two of the last three tricks. It makes no difference whether South covers the ♥J or ducks the ♠K, and the hand more or less plays itself as long as declarer plays clubs from the top.

4♥ will occasionally be doubled so apart from those 800s in 4♠ doubled, there will be some 590s, 690s (an overtrick), and perhaps an 880 or 1080 (redoubled) at the top of the E/W frequency chart. The pedestrian 420s and 430s, which will "feel" like good scores for E/W, might not turn out that way if the world's N/S line is too busy.

won't be so obvious with the North hand in dummy.

In truth, this is a partscore deal for N/S, but in real life, it simply won't turn out that way.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

<p>♠ 3 ♥ Q 10 7 6 4 ♦ 10 ♣ A J 7 4 3 2</p>	<p>♠ 8 7 4 ♥ A 8 ♦ A 9 8 5 3 ♣ 9 8 6</p> <p>♠ K J 6 5 2 ♥ 9 ♦ K Q J 7 6 ♣ K 5</p> <p>♠ A Q 10 9 ♥ K J 5 3 2 ♦ 4 2 ♣ Q 10</p>
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West's first impression of his moderate six-five is positive, but after 1♠-1NT; 2♦, he will be thinking about how to extricate himself with the smallest possible minus. The ultra-pessimists will pass 2♦ or retreat to 2♠, hoping an opponent will come to the rescue or that trying to wriggle into one of his own suits will only make things worse. While this strategy could work if East has extreme distribution, most Wests will attempt to play in one of their suits -- usually clubs. With clubs as they are and South holding only two diamonds, West can always take nine tricks with clubs as trumps, whether or not North takes the ♦A immediately. Declarer will either lose a spade and three hearts or a spade, a diamond and only two hearts, as South has only two trumps and won't be able to ruff any of dummy's diamond winners. E/W +110 should be a popular result and yield a decent score.

All other strains should produce minus scores for E/W if they declare, but they may be spared that dubious pleasure because South might wish to enter the auction with an ugly 2♥ overall. West will pass that unless he plays penalty doubles in this position and North is worth a raise to 3♥, although he might give his partner some leeway at Matchpoint scoring. If North passes 2♥ without significant deliberation, East will usually risk a reopening double.

Is it so clear for West to pass a reopening double of 2♥? While it looks like the natural thing to do, imagine E/W's potential on offence should East be 5=0=4=4, even without Friday 03 June 2005

significant extra values. 5♣ or 6♣ might be worthwhile contracts with 2♥ doubled destined to go only one down. Of course, East needn't have perfect shape in this position and trying for a significant penalty is surely a reasonable strategy for West.

Against heart contracts, doubled or not, West will do best to lead his singleton diamond (or the ♣A, then a diamond) after which declarer can be held to six tricks. On a spade lead declarer gains a tempo and should piece together seven tricks. The best results for E/W will be penalties of 500 and 300 against doubled heart contracts, but if there aren't too many of those and more 50s and 100s, those +110s in 3♣ should hold up pretty well.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

<p>♠ 8 ♥ J 6 5 3 ♦ A Q 6 4 3 ♣ J 9 8</p> <p>♠ Q 9 4 3 2 ♥ Q ♦ K 10 7 ♣ A Q 10 5</p>	<p>♠ A 10 5 ♥ 10 8 4 ♦ 9 8 5 ♣ K 6 3 2</p> <p>♠ K J 7 6 ♥ A K 9 7 2 ♦ J 2 ♣ 7 4</p>
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After 1♥ by South and 1♠ by West, North must find an appropriate heart raise. The elected action will be based on his assessment of the value of the hand, on his estimate of how the auction is likely to proceed, and on the level at which he intends to sell out to an E/W spade contract. North expects to have a play for nine or 10 tricks opposite many unexceptional South hands, but if the strength is more or less equally divided between the two sides it's difficult to gauge his opponents' potential in spades and the degree of difficulty in their getting together under pressure. A case could be made for 2♥, 3♥ or 4♥, fit-showing jumps to 3♦ or 4♦ and even for 2♠ (limit raise or better in hearts). Perhaps the tactical considerations are more important than choosing a proper value bid.

The call that appeals to me, if it's available, is a fit-jump of 3♦, which is accurate on strength, pinpoints the length and strength in diamonds, and jams the auction enough that East might

not be willing to compete to the three-level. Whether that would silence E/W, South retreating to 3♥, is likely to depend on the style and personalities of the E/W players, but it would not be surprising for N/S to buy the contract in 3♥ after this start. A bold 4♥ would often work too, and on the excellent lie of the red suits, produces +620.

Should E/W compete to 3♠ they're likely to buy the contract, perhaps doubled by South. It's not easy to see who would bid 4♠ over 4♥, although doing so would show a profit. West can take eight tricks in spades against best defence only with strong play. On ♥K, low heart (it's easy for him if South switches to diamonds and gets his ruff) declarer ruffs, crosses to the ♣K and leads the ♠10. South wins the king and continues with the ♥A, declarer discarding a diamond. South must play diamonds now, declarer playing low on the deuce but covering the jack. North takes two diamonds and his best play is a fourth heart, but declarer ruffs in dummy, discarding a club, crosses to a high club, returns to the ♠A, and leads the high ♦9, coming to a trump coup against South's guarded jack. If South follows low to the ♠10, declarer can play on diamonds himself, and although North can shorten his trumps he can recover by forcing South to ruff a club. Eventually, he will reach a position similar to the one described above and manage an eighth winner. Even if West goes for 500 that will be better than the 620 he would have conceded in 4♥.

The problem, of course, is that N/S won't often reach 4♥ unless North simply bids it early or as part of a plan to get pushed into it. E/W will do very well if they escape for -50 or -100, but when they are doubled and concede at least 300 they'll need to count on an aggressive N/S line to protect them with a raft of +620s. I don't expect that to happen.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Either you're the sort of player who will double 1♣ for takeout with the North hand or you're not, but a 1♦ overcall is not really a hedge between double and pass as it gives you very little for your investment. If North can't bring himself to double, he will usually get a second opportunity as East's raise to 2♣, 3♣ or 4♣ (there will be a few of those) will come back around to him when South's pattern keeps him out of the auction. At the prevailing vulnerability it's certainly tempting to pass in search of +200, the proverbial brass ring. However, as North didn't bid over 1♣ with almost certainly ideal shape for a takeout double, South should not count on his partner for much help defensively and the prudent move would be to take out to diamonds, a contract that will yield at least 10 tricks. Even on the best lead of the ♦6, South can come to 11 winners if he draws trumps, guesses hearts correctly and cashes four rounds, discarding a spade, and leads a spade to the king and ace. If West exits with a spade and East switches to clubs, declarer has time to establish the long spade in dummy; if West leads a high club declarer ruffs in dummy and plays a second spade, the defenders must establish a spade or club trick for declarer. It is best for West to exit with a low club, which declarer must run to his hand for a maximum result.

Should South pass North's reopening double of 3♣ for penalty the defence can prevail but to do so must cash hearts on the go or after taking its diamond trick. If not, West can take two diamond ruffs in the course of finessing against South's club honours, then exit in hearts with a trump left in each hand. After taking three heart tricks the defender winning the last will have to break spades to

If East opens 1♠, West will make a natural or artificial raise, stall with a forcing INT where appropriate, or respond 2♣ where a two-over-one response needn't be forcing forever. While it's not aesthetically pleasing for North to overcall 2♦ or double for takeout after a 1NT response, both those actions will seem palatable to players who believe in positive action when it's their turn. East will show his clubs, even when obliged to do so at the three-level and even when it's an overstatement of his values (some pairs use 2NT as an artificial competitive device to separate weak and strong distributional hands in such situations) and South might compete as high as 4♦ or 3♥, but even at this vulnerability, that ought to be the end of their adventure.

Many Easts will start with 1♣, and now some North players will come in with 2♦ or a takeout double over West's 1♥ response. Should that happen East might not feel that he can afford to bid out his shape without overstating his hand, and it's conceivable some E/W pairs will stop in 4♣ for an unhappy +130 or reach 5♣ for an even unhappier -100.

But, all these reflections are unduly gloomy. At most tables, E/W will reach 4♣ without difficulty and chalk up +620 in no time at all.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

What is the North hand worth in support of spades? True believers in the Law of Total Tricks will feel that the (minimum of a) 10-card trump fit justifies a raise to 4♠. "The Law shall protect me," is their credo. Not that anyone believes that a pre-emptive raise to 4♠ is an accurate call with a 10-loser hand. Although you might deduct a half-loser or even a full loser from the North hand because of the big fit, it's still a stretch to raise to game when opener will think in terms

of roughly seven losers. Even a pre-emptive raise to 3♠ (where that method is employed) needn't produce a good result, as neither side might have the wood for a nine-trick undertaking. Really, North is worth just 2♠ and would not be surprised if even that humble contract failed on occasion. But bridge is a game with elements of poker, and it's common strategy to bid more (sometimes a lot more) than you think you can make and dare your opponents to sort out what's going on. This is one that offers North the opportunity to follow his muse.

East won't always love doubling for takeout lacking a fourth heart, but double he will, whether the bidding is at the two, three or four level. Although South won't know how well the hands fit, East's double will add some lustre to his heart holding and South will bid 4♠ if North hasn't already done so.

Pan now to West, with special attention to the case where East has doubled a raise to 4♠. This is a classic high-level decision. Followers of the aforementioned Law will estimate a total of 19 trumps (11 for N/S, 8 for E/W), but does that point him in one direction or the other. The Law suggests that if 4♠ is making, E/W have a 500-point save in their best suit, but if 4♠ is due to fail, the E/W five-level sacrifice will be a phantom. Those projections could easily be off by a trick or two if either side has a trump more or less, if some of their high cards are wasted on offence, if the hands fit exceptionally well, or if someone doesn't have what his bidding suggests. By this time many of you will be familiar with the remarkable new book by Mike Lawrence and Anders Virgren, "I Fought the Law," in which you have learned about Working Points and Short Suit Totals. Those factors come into play on this deal where the authors would project nine tricks for N/S (largely because the ♣Q and ♥J have no actual value) and nine for E/W (largely because their shortness is duplicated). It's easier for West to assess his side's potential than it is for anyone else because he has more useful information from the bidding. If West can determine that one of the most likely results for his side is nine tricks, he should be more inclined to defend than declare: there is not enough information about the opponents' short suits to support the conclusion that N/S can make 4♠, even with 11 trumps.

finish in 2♠, perhaps doubled if North dredges up a takeout double. N/S are likely to score well in these scenarios. If South doubles, that might end the auction and South will probably lead a club for a one-trick set. More often, West will escape to 2♠. If North's methods permit him to double for takeout, he will do so and South can pass for +500. If double would be penalty North will probably take positive action and get his side too high for a rare N/S minus. E/W will be delighted to have escaped both the frying pan and the fire.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

Should East come in over a strong no-trump at favourable vulnerability? To an extent, the answer is a personal matter, although the modern style seems to be to compete whenever there's the slightest hint of rationality in doing so. "Popular" needn't mean "successful," of course, and there are many ways for bidding to backfire, not the least of which is that 2♠ might make while North would have gone down 200 in INT. Your own vulnerability is important, of course, but it's wise to consider the opponents' vulnerability as well. Players who favour aggressive initial action over a strong INT opening expect their partners to give them lots of leeway (they are, after all, competing for the partscore rather than attempting to reach game), so getting too high is only a mild concern. I expect more than half the East players to bid over INT, in part because it's more fun to bid than pass. South knows his side has the balance of power and believes that 2NT or 3♣ might be worthwhile contracts and suspects that 2♠ might be going down. If 2NT and 3♣ are natural and non-forcing, South will choose one of those actions. If double would be negative that would be a

reasonable choice. If N/S are using a version of lebensohl and double would be for penalty, South must guess whether to pass, double, or bid 2NT to puppet into 3♠.

For many the North hand is too strong for a 15-17 no-trump (systemically or subjectively), and they'll start with 1♦ or a strong club. East will compete with 2♠ and leave South to choose from among pass, a negative double, and a mildly off-beat 3♦, with the last two choices likely to induce North to bid 3NT. Where South passes, North might do so also, but it's far more likely that he'll reopen with 2NT, a slight overbid, or a questionable takeout double. 2NT will lead to 3NT, but double is likely to beget 3♠, and North can't justify bidding again. Ouch!

Particularly where South passes over 2♠, West might raise to 3♠ to block the bidding, and this might just steal the pot, although both North and South will suspect they are being had. Double by North would be for takeout and he can hardly bash 3NT himself.

Accurate defence (timely trump leads, North withholding the king on the first round) will hold spade contracts to six tricks, for -100, -150, -300 or -500, with only the smallest minus sure to be a good score. As North can take 10 tricks in no-trump (+180 or +630) on a spade lead with the ♦Q dropping doubleton, the E/W pairs going -150 or more in spades will be hoping N/S land in an appropriate number of no-trump and not in 3♦ (+150) or 3♣(-100).

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

Although N/S have a 500-point sacrifice in 5♦ (unless declarer loses both the ♦K and a heart ruff to concede 800), it's difficult to see how they will find their way into the auction, let alone reach the five-level.

his disadvantage or concede a ruff-and-discard, after which the simple spade finesse sees declarer home for +670.

If North is willing to double 1♣ for takeout, South might suspect that his action is based on shape rather than high cards, but it will take great restraint for him to settle for a responsive double or a gentle 3♦ over 3♣, intending to pass North's reply. It's more likely that he'll take a shot at 3NT, which has a fair play even opposite this light North hand. Assuming that West clears clubs, a winning guess in hearts will lead to +430 and a joint top. On the run of the diamonds the defenders might provide some indication of how to play the hearts. West can safely discard two descriptive spades to keep three small hearts, but East must make two discards before his partner, remembering that his partner's third club play was the nine, indicating a spade entry. He will want to hold onto his club winners but to keep his hearts will have to release four black cards. It would be good discarding to part with a heart early, trying to paint a false picture for declarer. If declarer gets the hearts wrong he will go one or two down, depending on the discarding, but any minus score will be a poor result.

Where West opens a weak no-trump, East will arrange to get his side to 3♣, and if North is in a convenient position to bid he will certainly double, but if the E/W methods involve some ambiguity, North may not be willing to enter the auction. At these tables, 3♣ will normally fail as declarer won't get the trumps right. Another possibility is that East will pass INT. If South doubles and North passes East will escape to 2♠, but it's not clear how high N/S will get: I wouldn't completely rule out the possibility that South will double 2♣ and North pass it, but I suspect that it won't be easy to stop at 3♦ after this start as North will take an optimistic approach with his three-suiter. If South passes out INT the defence will take a prodigious number of tricks and declarer will be left with only three or four for -400 or -300.

Where West starts with a Precision 1♦, North might slip in a 1♥ overcall, and might finish in 4♥, a contract that can be made on a diamond lead. Declarer picks up trumps, takes three more diamonds ending in South, and leads the ♣Q, discarding a spade as West wins; he discards another spade if West continues with

the other high club. N/S might stop in a heart partial or reach 3NT after this start. If North does not overcall, East will respond INT, which might well end the auction.

With so many wildly different possibilities this will be one of the more interesting deals of the session. Note that "interesting" needn't mean "satisfying."

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

N/S can make 6♣, 6♥, or 6♠ without breathing hard, but the trick will be to reach slam after East intervenes with 2♦ or 3♦ over North's 1♥.

Over 2♦ South will bid 3♣, expecting to bid out his lengths naturally. Not many Wests will raise diamonds at this vulnerability, but there might be a few. If East starts with a weak jump overcall of 3♦, however, there will be more West players taking a part in the auction. 4♦ or even 5♦ will be more attractive if South chooses a negative double rather than 4♣ because neither North nor South would have made a strong statement yet about any suit.

The degree of difficulty in reaching slam is increased because North would like to play in hearts if slam is not worth bidding, but also has a very good hand for clubs. Furthermore, as his hearts are not quite solid, he can't insist on making his suit trumps if he does drive to six. It's quite a complex combination even if E/W don't compete beyond 2♦. The best slam is 6♥, not only because it scores more but also because declarer doesn't need the whole club suit in order to succeed. The same can be said for 6♠, although the possibility of a bad spade break makes the four-three fit a bit less attractive.

Among the many possible auctions will be:

1♥-(2♦)-3♣; 3♥-3♠; 4♣-4♥; 4NT, etc; 6♥-Pass
 1♥-(2♦)-3♣; 4♣-4♠; 4NT, etc; 6♣-Pass
 1♥-(3♦)-4♣-(4♦); 4NT, etc; 6♣-Pass
 1♥-(3♦)-4♣-(4♦); 4♥-Pass
 1♥-(3♦)-4♣-(4♦); 4♥-4♠; 4NT, etc; 6♣-Pass
 1♥-(3♦)-Dble-(4♦); 4♥-Pass
 1♥-(3♦)-Dble-(4♦); Dble-5♣; 5♦-5♠; 6♣-Pass

As it will often be difficult to reach any slam, 6♣ should score quite well and those who reach 6♥ or 6♠ won't have that much company at the top of the frequency sheets.

It's not likely that N/S will stop to double an E/W diamond contract short of the five level, and even if they don't score the ♦Q on the third round of hearts for a sixth defensive trick, the penalty will be greater than the value of any N/S game. If E/W finish -500 or -800, they will score well only if a majority of the N/S pairs reach slam.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

The most common auction will be Pass-(Pass)-1♦-(1♠); INT-(Pass)-3NT-All Pass, but some Wests will stop to show their hearts and others will open a strong club, making it a bit more likely that East will try for a penalty against 1♠ doubled. In standard methods, it's a bit presumptuous for East to trap over the 1♠ overcall and pass the reopening double for penalty because West might be considerably weaker and East has a decent fit for diamonds. Nonetheless, playing for penalty will be a good idea this time as E/W can hold declarer to five tricks, down 500.

On the lead of the ♠J against 3NT, North can duck, giving declarer a tenth trick immediately (picking up South's ♦J will not be a problem) or win the ♠K and switch to clubs. That looks

better for the defence but declarer can win and build a third heart trick for a tenth winner. On a club lead declarer plays the same way, developing a third heart trick. If North does not overcall (a possible scenario where West opens a strong club) and West declares 3NT, a low spade lead from North has a chance to succeed. If declarer ducks to the jack, a club switch will hold 3NT to nine tricks for a magnificent score. There is no legitimate play for an eleventh trick and there won't be many no-trump declarers who fail to take ten, so there shouldn't be many different results included in the frequencies for this deal, E/W +430, +500 and +200 being the three most common results.

Should E/W wander into 4♥, perhaps with West expecting to be in an eight-card fit, the even trump break and friendly lie of the spade honours will allow them to take 11 tricks against any defence for a tremendous score.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Where North passes South's 1♣ opening, East will face an awkward reopening decision. With a strong hand and support for all unbid suits it seems straightforward to double, intending to bid hearts next. The danger in this plan is that West might reasonably pass for penalties and at the prevailing vulnerability the set might not be large enough to compensate E/W for their vulnerable game. Zia Mahmood and Larry Cohen are two experts who have expressed their reluctance to double for takeout with a void in the opponents' suit if there is any reasonable alternative. Should the double be left in the defence is often difficult when one partner has no trumps to lead. There is much to be said for that caveat, although true three-suiters should normally double rather than

misrepresent the nature of the hand. Here, however, East does have an alternative. He can start with a 2♣ cue bid or whatever action the partnership employs to show a major two-suiter. If West bids spades East can show a strong hand by introducing hearts, suggesting a two-card disparity in his suit lengths. That plan should work here as West could raise East's known long heart suit with the singleton nine, his two aces almost certain to be valuable assets. East is too strong for a reopening jump to 2♥, which is commonly treated as "intermediate," a sound opening bid with a strong six-card suit.

If East doubles 1♣, South will volunteer 2♣ or 3♣, and some West players will double for penalty. East won't often pass a penalty double of 2♣ and not many more will sit for 3♣ doubled (declarer can negotiate six tricks on a major-suit lead), but whether East commits to hearts or leaves West the possibility of declaring 3NT is more difficult to predict.

No-trump plays poorly even if declarer finesses against the jack of hearts, but East can make 4♥ even if he leads the ♥9 to the ace after discarding a diamond on the ♣A at trick one. When South shows out on the ♥K declarer knocks out the ♠A, wins the black suit return, cashes two spades, and exits with his remaining spade to endplay North. Declarer will take six trumps and four side tricks or five trumps, two spades, a club and two diamonds, guessing correctly if North breaks that suit. There is no escape.

Curiously, 4♠ can also be made even though a forcing defence establishes three trump winners for N/S. Declarer establishes hearts and plays winners and North will eventually have to lead diamonds for declarer. It's a cute position. If you bid and made 4♠ you'll have a good story for the post-mortem.

As not everyone will bid and make a major-suit game and those in 3NT will invariably go set, the E/W pairs who collect a penalty of 300 or more against club contracts might score quite well. Even 100 might be a fair result if most of the field is going minus in game.

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Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Where East opens 1♣ in third position, South will have the wrong shape for a takeout double and a vulnerable 1♠ overcall on a modest four-card suit might not have much appeal either, so most will pass. If left alone E/W will come to light in either INT or 2♣, depending on West's inclination to sit for INT. If North doubles 2♣ for takeout, South might pass and chalk up a 500-point set, but if North doubles for the red suits a round earlier, South will declare INT and come to eight tricks for +120 unless West leads a heart to hold him to +90. 2♠ down 200 and INT (by East) down 100 or 200 will be popular results, South facing an unpleasant lead against INT after East opens 1♣.

At the tables where East starts with a Precision 1♦, it will be more difficult for N/S to enter the auction and more likely that South will lead a club against INT.

Some will prefer a 1♥ opening in third seat and at these tables South can double for takeout. West will compete to 2♥ either directly, which might well buy the contract, or after introducing spades, which will permit North to compete with INT or 2♦. In both scenarios North might be tempted to double 2♥ as a one-trick set will compensate him handsomely for the partscore he expected to make. But as both INT and 2♦ might have been yielding only +90, +100 against 2♥ might be a decent result and the risk in doubling what might be a fairly normal and playable 2♥ will not always seem justified. As it happens, a trump lead is likely to set 2♥ two tricks but other leads cost either a trick or a tempo. Lots of possibilities after this start.

Where East starts with a weak no-trump, South has a marginal "cards" double. If he passes, West (or East via a transfer) will generally