



Message from  
José Damiani,  
President, World Bridge Federation

Dear Bridge Friends

Once again I am delighted to be able to thank you for coming and playing in the World Wide Bridge Contest, an event which we hope you find challenging and enjoyable. This event represents a slightly lighter side to bridge, where you have been able to play at your own club, amongst friends, while still competing with players all over the world – a world that has become smaller over the years as communication has developed faster than perhaps we ever dreamed possible.

Scoring the event overall used to take weeks, now it takes hours – indeed only minutes. And the speed at which all the information becomes available – the statistics surrounding the event – would have seemed impossible just a decade ago.

The same happens at our World Championships – we can provide enormous amounts of data in seconds, publishing it across internet, with vu graph presentations of the major matches, and all the Bulletins being made available even before they are printed for the players on site. It all enhances these events and makes them even more interesting.

Many of you will have been aware of the First World Mind Sport Games held in Beijing last year - these were incredibly successful, and you can still find the data, including the hands, bulletins, results etc on the WBF Website at [www.worldbridge.org](http://www.worldbridge.org) as well as on the ECatsBridge Website at [www.ecatsbridge.com](http://www.ecatsbridge.com).

I hope that, in late August and early September, you will watch and enjoy the excitement of seeing some of the strongest teams in the world compete in the 2009 World Bridge Team Championships in Brazil - watching these teams is always an entertaining experience! Full details about the event are on both the WBF and the ECatsBridge websites, as well as the site set up especially for the event at <http://www.brazilbridge2009.com.br>

Once again, thank you for taking part in the Contest, competing across the world and showing once again that we all follow the spirit of the WBF Motto ...

*Bridge for Peace*

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several sweeping lines that form the name 'José Damiani'.

José Damiani  
President

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

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

There will be tables where North opens 2♠ (5+♠/4+m, weak) or South opens 1♥ or 2♥ in third seat – mostly because they can – but in most cases, West will be permitted to open 1♦ in peace. If N/S continue to pass, E/W will buy the contract in 1NT, 2♦, or 3♦. That's not very likely, however, as North will usually overcall 1♠ or reopen 2♦ with 2♠ or a takeout double. At these tables E/W will either compete to 3♦ or 2NT, or double 2♠ to protect their likely equity of at least +110. There will be some tables where N/S reach 2♥ constructively, or by competing against a diamond partial, and these pairs would be well advised not to bid again if they drive N/S to 3♦.

The play in diamonds does not involve anything fancy, but it's important for declarer to take the second-round finesse against South's jack after cashing a high honor in order to secure nine tricks. It shouldn't be too tall an order for the defense to attack spades before declarer can eliminate trumps and the rounded suits, but if that does not happen, South can be left on play with the first round of spades, forced to concede a ruff-and-discard to allow declarer to discard a spade loser from the East hand for a delicious +130.

Well, fairly delicious. If N/S allow declarer a heart winner before establishing two club tricks (a club lead against 1NT by East would be wildly unlikely), notrump will yield nine tricks for E/W +150.

Best defense will hold N/S to six tricks in spades, seven in hearts, and eight in clubs (a difficult strain to find) so if N/S compete to the two-level or even the three level, E/W will have to double a sufficiently fragile contract to extract 300 to score well. E/W +100 will beat only the infrequent minus scores achieved by counterparts who go wrong in trumps in diamond contracts to hold themselves eight tricks.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

Unless South leads a club to organize a club ruff for North, East can take 10 tricks in spades by using one of dummy's diamond entries to neutralize the ♠K, the other to lead a club to the king (then a low club to catch the ace). That's a short (and somewhat air-brushed) version of Board 2.

The bidding will usually start: 1♠-Pass-2♠, although some Wests will prefer to respond 1NT for systemic or personal reasons. After a spade raise North will expect the hands to fit well often for his side opposite one or two spades, but to enter the auction vulnerable with an off-shape takeout double or a gut-wrenching 3♦ on such a poor suit will not attract much support in any field. If North passes over 2♠, East might do the same as his red-suit honors may not be worth much. Many will try for game, however, and E/W will finish in 3♠ much more often than four. Where East passes 2♠, South will either consider reopening with 3♥ or actually take the plunge. Assuming North gives South enough leeway to pass 3♥ (if he raises, E/W won't need to double 4♥ to score famously), East will not pass. He will either take the push to 3♠ or double 3♥ if he believes East will treat this as a 3♠ bid with decent defensive prospects rather than a heart stack. Defending 3♥ doubled will work beautifully, as declarer will normally be held to eight tricks: 200 to E/W will lose only to the rare 420s for 4♠ bid and made (and the even more rare 500s for 4♥ doubled down two).

Even without running into a club ruff, East is very likely to emerge with only nine tricks in spades, using dummy's second diamond entry to pass the ♠9, playing for Jxx, AJx, or AJxx (if North follows low on the nine). Apart from E/W +420 and +200, E/W +170 will be well

above average, as the most common results will be E/W +140 and -50 (4♠ down one).

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Advancing a one-level overcall is an aspect of the game has been well covered in the trade literature, to the point that there is a clear expert consensus on high-frequency situations. Today, after a fairly wide-ranging 1♠ overcall by East, a 2♣ advance by West would be treated by most as nonforcing, a 1NT advance as stopper-showing and somewhat constructive, a single raise as more of a courtesy move with moderate trump support than a forward-going effort.

So what is West to do with a fair nine-count lacking three-card spade support, a heart guard of any stripe, and a six-card suit? For those who believe that an overcall should be limited to about 16 HCP passing 1♠ becomes a more attractive option. In a style that endorses stronger overcalls West will be more reluctant to pass and will usually choose between 2♣ and 2♠, each one card shorter than East will expect.

Where West passes, North might do the same with a quasi-balanced minimum; few will do that, however, with a straightforward 2♥ getting much more support than a jugular-seeking double. 2♥ will lead to West protecting with 2♠ or, when available, a particularly descriptive cooperative takeout double. 2♠ will usually buy the contract, but if South competes to 3♥ – an action that is only mildly aggressive – he will put his side in a position to achieve a near-top or joint bottom. If E/W sell out to 3♥ without doubling they will score rather badly for +100, and if they compete to 3♠, the lead of the ♥Q, ducked, should hold declarer to eight tricks with accurate defense thereafter, and -100 will be dreadful. If, instead, E/W double 3♥ their +300 will be considerably more rewarding. The mildly off-center raise to 2♠ will generally end the auction, but a 2♣

advance might not, as E will often continue with 2NT or 3♣ whether or not North volunteers 2♥. Clubs should handle for nine tricks and the same +110 that would generally accrue in 2♠, but notrump won't fare well at all on the marked heart lead, producing only seven tricks and an E/W minus.

In 2♠, North ducks the lead of the ♥Q. East wins and passes the ♦9, as good a shot as any: North must duck. If instead East wins the ♥K, cashes ♣AK, and leads low to the ♦8, North must win and play two high hearts (cashing the ♠A en route is okay) to allow South to discard his third club. The defense has a counter to any approach by declarer and declarer should be denied a ninth winner in spades in all variations.

Buying the contract low in any strain but notrump is the formula for success on Board 3.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

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

With the ♥10 well-located for N/S there is no defense against their 22-point 3NT should they somehow manage to bid it; indeed “they” manage +630 if the defense clears hearts.

But that's the stuff of legends. N/S will not reach 3NT, except perhaps by accident. More often, this deal will be a partscore battle, with N/S entitled to +130 in diamonds, E/W to +110 in hearts, +140 in spades (but +170 if N/S do not arrange a heart ruff).

After: Pass-1♦-1♠, South has a routine negative double, but some will prefer a raise to 2D or 3D, others a free bid of 1NT. Where South doubles West chooses from among redouble (either values or a spade honor, according to agreement), 2♥, 2♠, or a wait-and-see pass. Each of those choices will appeal to a certain segment of the field, but the lower actions will allow North to rebid his diamonds at a safe level. East, despite modest strength and a topless

main suit, has a promising hand for suit play and would compete to the three level in hearts of spades if West shows interest in one of those colors (including via a "tolerance" or lead-value redouble), but with no encouragement East is unlikely to bid a second time on his own (over 2♦) and South's 3♦ will often end the auction. Even if South instead advances 2♦ to 2NT, North won't raise to 3NT.

Where West introduces hearts on the second round (perhaps buoyed by his view that East will not readily expect a sixth heart after West did not open 2♥ or 3♥) or considers his two spade honors adequate trump support to raise East's overall, South will have a tricky decision to make after East competes to 3♥ or 3♠. Apart from shooting out 3NT, the winning strategy (in practice if not in theory) would be to double 3♥ for a 200-point set, but to forge on to 4♦ over 3♠.

Par on this deal is N/S +200, doubling E/W's 4♠ save against 3NT. That could happen a handful of times with everyone knowing exactly what he's doing, but more often N/S will be +130 in 4♦, -100 in 5♦, or -730 vs 3♠ doubled (after all, if you're not going to compete to 4♦ you're going to double 3♠ to try for +200 to protect whatever equity exists for your side in diamonds). Matchpoint scoring frequently creates that sort of high risk-high reward decision for enterprising pairs unwilling to settle for a certain average-minus. As competing to four of a minor is so rarely the right thing to do, trying for five tricks on defense will have more appeal at the table than we might expect.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

The most frequent start will be: Pass-Pass-1♦-1♠, Pass-1NT-DBL-3♠. As South has announced a strong hand and 3♠ is not forcing, East might consider passing despite his near-maximum strength. That would be the winning action as

West has to lose a spade, a heart, and two clubs if the defense does nothing terrible. As East will often raise 3♠ to 4♠, however, E/W will be -50 or -100 (South should not double 4♠ but some will) far more often than +140 in this scenario.

South's double of 1NT might convince West to settle for just 2♠, which East will pass. South should really go quietly in this variation, but, inevitably, some will double again and reach a good 3♣ (+110 if left there) or a poor 3♥ (-200 or 500, turning on East's inclination to double). East or West might compete to 3♠, and with no danger of reaching four, will score well for +140.

In 2009 it's become popular to open 2NT with 19-21 to accommodate 14-16 INT openings and therefore 18-19 2NT rebids, not to mention those whose announced range is 20-21 (or even 22) who routinely open with indifferent 19s to assert their virility. You may have your own opinion about justice being served when 2NT silences West and declarer goes -300 (or 400 if he tries to slip the ♥J through without cashing the ace). Of course, West will often bid over 2NT and go +140 or -50. Where South starts with a strong club West might see merit in a tactical 3♠, which will either buy the contract or lead to South bidding an unsound 3NT or doubling for takeout, adding several new contracts to the frequency sheets, none of them making.

Easts who open 2♥ (5+♥/4+m, relatively weak) will force South to choose from among pass, double, 2NT and 3NT. It's not clear how far West will go in spades at these tables, but getting past 3♠ seems very unlikely.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

Whether West opens 2NT, 2♣, 1♠, or a strong club E/W should have an undisturbed auction, and 3NT will be the people's choice. If West does not advertize spade length North might well lead the suit, allowing declarer to come to

nine tricks: win the spade in dummy and lead a heart to the king and ace; North's best exit is a count card in clubs, which helps South to discard effectively on the run of the spades, and the defense should come to a second heart and two diamonds as long as North keeps his hearts and South does not allow himself to get endplayed with the ♠J. Not much gratification after the disastrous opening lead, but others will make the same unfortunate lead or perhaps err in the defense in the middle game, so holding E/W to 600 will salvage a few points.

Some will play 3NT from the East side on a minor-suit lead. On a diamond lead around to the jack, declarer should pass the ♠10 as the finesse is a better chance than the three-three break; no luck this time. On a club lead South will need to exercise some care, but this should not be too tall an order.

There is no obvious reason for E/W to finish in spades or hearts but that will happen on occasion, with both strains likely to produce eight tricks and poor scores for E/W.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

There are many ways for E/W to reach 3NT from either side of the table (many Wests will ensure becoming declarer by opening 1NT, for example), and we can see that there are 10 tricks available if declarer does nothing more than play South for the ♥J.

As few E/W pairs will miss this game, the fate of both pairs at each table will turn on whether declarer secures a second heart trick or an alternative tenth winner in spades or clubs, or even an eleventh trick.

North might overcall 1♦ with 1♠, which will lead to East declaring 3NT and South leading the ♠Q, king, low, low. Now declarer has an easy 10 tricks available (three spades with a

finesse of the ten, a heart, and six diamonds, but to hold declarer to only those 10 winners, South must switch to a club when he wins the ♥A. On a spade continuation (instead), declarer can finesse against the ♥J for an 11th trick, and on a heart return declarer can come to eleven without finessing: he takes the ♥Q and runs the diamonds, and poor North must release his remaining heart, a spade and two clubs before declarer plays his last diamond winner. On the sixth diamond North must keep his remaining spades and so must part with the ♣Q; now declarer can concede a club and so take a club trick, three spades, a heart and six diamonds for a gratifying +660.

The same developing scenario will be achieved where West declares 3NT on a normal low-spade lead . . . if South elects to play the queen when dummy follows low, rather than allow declarer with Jx a second fast trick, a tempo, and a third stopper in the suit.

If South plays low on the first spade, however, and continues with the ♠Q after a heart to the king and ace, declarer will have the option of leading a club to the king for his tenth winner, a choice that would hold him to nine if North were to cash out.

Should South lead a heart after an E/W auction like: 1♦-1♠; 3♦-3NT, declarer might win and play a second heart to ensure 10 tricks. To prevent an eleventh South can win and play a club, or simply duck. However, if he wins and does not lead a club, pressure on North on the run of the diamonds will lead to +660 without much card-reading required.

With +630 rather likely and +660 certain to occur with some frequency, E/W +600 figures to be an awful score. Let's hope your luck was good on this one.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

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

Although N/S have 13 tricks with no finesses or breaks required, reaching 7NT or 7C does not figure to be easy after a 2♥ or 3♥ (or Multi 2♦) opening by West. Over 2♥ North's main choices are 2NT, 3♣ and a takeout double, with the former the best bet to get the most votes because it gets the approximate value across at once and makes it easy to explore alternative strains because South can count on finding North with a relatively balanced hand. A 3♣ overcall will work best when South is weak or more oriented towards suit play with a hand unsuitable for Stayman or a transfer. Double will often lead to a difficult auction when South can't force to game and might force a blind guess for North at his second turn over 2♠, 3♦ or a lebensohl 2NT. The same issues will surface at the tables where West opens a Multi ♦, although there is a stronger case for starting with a double when that fits the partnership scheme for introducing balanced hands weaker or stronger than a 1NT opening (the North hand is worth far more than its raw point count).

Where West opens 3♥ North might consider doubling for takeout but will usually settle for a hopeful 3NT, an action that covers a very wide strength range (perhaps a chunky 14 up to about 23) as a matter of necessity.

Would you drive to slam with the South cards opposite a 15-17 notrump? Surely not; and so, where South finds himself in roughly that position, he will most often do no more than invite slam with a raise (sooner or later) to 4NT. Where North might hold 20+ HCP for his initial action this superb 17 might not seem good enough to accept a slam invitation, but North should at least make a further effort with 5♣ or a "you decide" 5NT. Different notrump kits will emerge from hibernation on this one but it's difficult to construct a realistic sequence to get N/S to seven. Curiously, a simple overcall in clubs might yield an opportunity: South cue-bids 3♥ over 3♣; if North settles for 3NT South might pass (some distance short of 7♣), but if he continues with 4♣ North will be extremely bullish and might go all the way. And if North does not bid 3NT over 3♥ there is no way the partnership will quit short of six while showing enough enthusiasm for either partner to think seriously of seven.

As there will be pairs in 3NT and plenty in 6♣, just reaching 6NT figures to be average-plus.

Those who reach seven after a preempt by West will have something to brag about in the post mortem.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

Despite their nine-card fit neither side can make anything at the three level. Indeed, at double dummy (E/W can arrange a third-round club ruff), N/S can be held to seven tricks in their best fit - spades. The fact that N/S can't be stopped from taking eight tricks in their weak four-three club fit is one of those curiosities that might raise an eyebrow without having any practical application.

Whether one believes that the North hand should be opened is purely a matter of style and personal experience, but I suspect that the vulnerability and likely availability of a problem-free rebid will tip the balance toward bidding for the "undecided" voters.

The bidding will most often begin: 1♣-1♦-1♠-2♦; 2♠-3♦. East's sixth diamond will be enough to encourage him to bid over 2♠ though his hand (soft spade holding, weak internal trumps, well-placed clubs) looks good for defending. South's fifth spade and partial club fit might cause him to think fondly of 3♠, especially where North's 2♠ indicated four trumps (no Support Double), but he should really resist the temptation to bid on over 3♦ because his cards, like East's, are defensive in nature: ♠A, slow diamonds, secondary heart honors, three rather than four clubs (more likely to cash a club trick or two).

N/S will do well to defend 3♦ and go plus, better still to double 3♦ and collect 200 with careful (i.e. not allowing declarer to establish the ♣10 for a timely heart discard) defense. As many will be going minus with the N/S cards - mostly at the three-level - any N/S plus figures to be

quite good. Though E/W can't make 3♦ and +50 should be above average, they might have to go +100 to do really well. There will be some declarers in spades who lose to the ♠Q.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

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

INT by West will be the most popular contract, West buying the contract with a third-seat 15-17 version. The best lead for the defense is a high heart, which would hold declarer to eight tricks in straightforward fashion as South's spade entry is intact to cash a third heart trick. If North leads a low club, however, declarer can knock out the ♠K first and duck two hearts, leaving him time for nine tricks in the form of three spades, one heart, two diamonds with the finesse, and three clubs while South is cut off from the defense's fifth winner.

But why should North lead a risky heart honor with nothing to go on? He won't, but if declarer goes after clubs first by leading low to the queen, North can win the second club and switch to a high heart in time to enjoy South's third heart winner. Weak notrumpers may suffer indirectly when West opens 1♣ and North leads a heart, but in England, for example, 1♥ would be a popular choice of openings for West and at these tables North would lead a helpful club.

Should declarer lose a trick to the ♣J he will usually fail at INT for a dreadful score, though +120 might not score that well either.

What else could happen? Well, South might reopen a strong notrump with a conventional bid to show both majors. Though North will be pleased to declare 2♥ he might not be as delighted to play it doubled, West passing a competitive double by East. 2♥ doubled figures to go at least two down, but once the penalty was starting at 200 there won't be much

for North to play for. Those who believe in competing hyper-aggressively against strong notrumps won't be including this deal in their promotional video on the subject.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

Regardless of notrump range, INT will be a very popular choice for South all over the world. If West passes North will raise to 3NT and a spade lead will see South running for cover with his nine top tricks. It's easy to imagine the defense stopping a trick in the endgame (West must come down to three hearts and the ♣A and leave East to guard the third round of spades; East must discard the ♥J and retain Kx along with his remaining spades). N/S +430 will occur much more frequently than we might expect.

Many, if not most, Wests will compete over INT with a bid to show the majors. If North bids scientifically – say by forcing with 3♦ or by using an invitational-or-better 3♣ transfer to diamonds – East might well bid 3♥ and improve E/W's defensive prospects if N/S reach 3NT. If East passes and N/S slide into 3NT, E/W have the same sort of jeopardy as over a direct raise to 3NT; West will usually lead a spade and the defense will sweat out the endgame.

If E/W are not going to beat 3NT they will do better to save, but in spades and not hearts, as the defense can arrange a spade ruff against hearts and collect 500 to beat all the 400s and 430s; in spades the defense can get only two trumps, two diamonds and a club, as long as declarer guesses hearts correctly. Minus 300, though a substantial distance from the +50 available against the popular N/S 3NT, will score very well for E/W. Such is the difference between theoretical and actual.

Where South opens 1♣ or a Precision 1♦ West

will overcall 1♠ or double for takeout (depending on his upbringing!), and the auction could take many different turns, N/S's competitive two-over-one methods and judgment coming into play. If East is given room he might raise a 1♠ overcall to two or introduce hearts where West has doubled. Another possibility for West is a five-four Michaels Cue Bid. Although N/S might still reach 3NT after these starts there will be more cases when E/W defeat the contract or save against it, and N/S might be more inclined to settle for 3♦ or 4♦ for +130, their par result. Out there in the jungle, achieving par often has little to do with achieving success, and this will be one of those instances.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West

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

At the prevailing vulnerability, North won't enter the bidding over West's strong notrump. If East starts with a 2♥ transfer to spades South will double if that shows hearts (and not a takeout double of spades) or bid 3♥ if he feels lucky. The latter will surely convince North to bid 4♥, the former might. Where South doubles the transfer bid a popular treatment is to "take" the transfer only with at least three spades; that treatment would really help East if the bidding reaches 4♥ quickly.

East might be tempted to go past game in search of slam once assured of a spade fit, but he needs perfect cards and perhaps better breaks than he can expect if N/S do a lot of bidding. At most of these tables, East's clubs will not be mentioned, but will appear in dummy after North's opening lead, which might be the ♣2, the ♥A or a low diamond. To make five on a red-suit lead declarer must lead a trump to the king and a second trump, else North will win the ♠Q on the first round and switch to his singleton club, and South will give his partner a

club ruff when in with the ♠A. On a club lead the same conditions prevail with the twist that South could rise with the ace on the first trump lead to give North his ruff; now declarer could go down by playing South for AQx of trumps, taking a second-round finesse.

Although +450 should by all rights be a joint top for E/W there will be some +590s, +690s and +650s in 4♠ doubled (making four or five) and a few +500s for two-down heart sacrifices by N/S.

As most E/W pairs will be in spades, +400 in 5♣ won't score well unless E/W are going down in 5♠ or collecting only 200 (or 100) against heart contracts.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North

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

N/S can make 11 tricks in hearts and 10 or 11 in diamonds, but E/W might buy the contract in spades, where they can take eight or nine tricks and might not be doubled if they compete beyond the three level.

Over North's 1♦ opening, there's a strong case for East to bid 2♠ rather than one: he would like to get his sixth spade into the picture but his outside junk and balanced pattern would make a second voluntary bid in spades a serious overstatement, and a vulnerable weak jump overcall should be based on a decent suit. South would pass over both 1♠ and 2♠ and West would raise the ante either by cue-bidding 2♦ over 1♠ or by raising 2♠ to 3♠ obstructively. Where West's advance is a 2♦ cue bid, North will want to bid again although he lacks the traditional high-card strength to do so opposite a potentially weak partner: of those who can't bear to pass some will be able to double 2♦ as takeout of spades, a handy treatment; others will double to show decent diamonds (which they don't have) while other groups will try a hopeful 2♥ or an extremely dangerous 2♠ (where they believe South will treat that as takeout of spades).



Where West has raised a weak 2♠ to 3♠, many Norths will not be able to resist doubling for takeout although they're at least a king short. That will get them to 4♥ with South expecting to have a play for six on a good day. Although E/W have a good save in 4♠ doubled, which one of them should take it? West made his bed when he raised to 3♠, hoping to leave N/S with a difficult guess; should he now decide that N/S guessed correctly and give them what is sure to be more than the value of a partscore? And East, who essentially transferred captaincy when he made his first bid, has lots of losers and fair defensive prospects.

N/S will not be extended in the play and will lose only a diamond and a club for +650. While it looks as if N/S can come to 11 tricks in diamonds too, that is not quite true if North declarer: East can lead a trump to the nine and queen; declarer exits with a club and when West wins the ace he can hold declarer to ten tricks by sacrificing his trump trick, at least temporarily, exiting with the king; poor declarer can ruff a club with the ♦J, but then West gets his trump trick back and the defense still gets a club, or declarer can draw trumps and take five hearts and five diamonds, but lose two more club tricks. Note that the defense can't arrange this brilliant sequence of plays if South is declarer.

To the brave will go the spoils, for if North does not risk a second bid, E/W will buy the contract in 2♠ or 3♠. Only two rounds of hearts and a club switch will stop nine tricks; without the club switch declarer draws trumps and takes three club tricks. Pretty cool!

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

Though 1♦ will be by far the most popular opening bid choice with the East hand, there

will be some support for a 1♥ opening by players who would like to show both red suits without committing to the three level at the risk of misrepresenting their relative lengths. By bidding hearts first, then diamonds, East also avoids choosing between raising a hypothetical 1♠ response to 2♠ (or even 3♠) and reversing into hearts. These are small matters, perhaps, but nonetheless they are basic aspects of the thoughtful player's overall bidding strategy for any given hand.

Here East's choice of opening bid will have a major effect on South's initial action: over 1♦ South has the option of a value bid in notrump to vie with a shapeless takeout double and a mildly eccentric 1♠ on a four-card suit. INT will most often end the auction, although some Easts might reopen with a hopeful 2♦ (+90 with two relatively early rounds of trumps by South, unless West raises to 3♦ and jeopardizes his side's plus score), a more hopeful 2♥, or (much better) a new-age conventional double (support for the majors), the latter opening up the possibility of defending INT doubled for a glorious +300. Other possibilities after a reopening double include North declaring 2♣ doubled, remarkably down only one, or 2♥ doubled down 300, or West declaring 2♠ for a breathless +110.

Where South doubles 1♦ for takeout West might volunteer 1♠ and finish in 2♠, to South's momentary delight; declarer can always make two with careful play, even after the lead of the ♠J. If South overcalls 1♠ he might play there for two down, -100, the same fate in store for his counterparts who declare INT not doubled ... and cash out; if South tries to build a club trick too early the defenders can take nine tricks – N/S -150 will be a very poor result.

Where East opens 1♥, South is more likely to double than overcall 1♠. The auction might proceed: 1H♥-DBL-1♠-Pass; 2♦-Pass-2♥-Pass; 2♠-All Pass, or East might settle for a simpler raise to 2♠.

Might East reopen a 1♠ overcall? His spade length says no, but his strength and red-suit quality suggests that +50 or +100 might not be good enough if E/W can make +90 or +110. As success or failure at Matchpoints often turns on small total-point differences, it's nasty little decisions like this one that make Bridge such a

multi-faceted challenge.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

♠ A Q 6 2 ♥ A 7 5 3 2 ♦ 10 5 2 ♣ Q	♠ 7 3 ♥ Q 10 8 ♦ A 7 3 ♣ 10 8 7 4 2	♠ K 9 8 4 ♥ 6 ♦ K 9 6 4 ♣ K J 9 6
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N/S can always piece together 10 tricks in spades ... unless declarer loses three diamond tricks . . . but they don't really have the combined assets to stretch to game at Matchpoints, jeopardizing a sound plus score. Where West opens 1♣ in second seat, South won't love his club honors or count on his ♦K being a sure trick, so will have reason to favor a conservative approach if the spade fit is uncovered. Plus 170 should be adequate for N/S as there will be more pairs that do not find the spade fit than pairs that reach game.

A common auction will be: Pass-1♣-DBL-2♣; 2♣-All Pass. East should reject any notion of competing to 3♣ at this point, with -500 looming, but jumping to 3♣ on the first round might have silenced everyone and -150 might be close to average for E/W.

Where North overcalls 1♣ (or a Precision 1♦) with 1♥, East will raise to 2♣ or 3♣ or might try a tactical INT. Over 2♣ South might try a responsive double if he has that club in his bag, but with no guarantee of locating an eight-card fit and such good defense against clubs, passing 2♣ will be an attractive option. Over a weak jump raise to 3♣, South will usually pass. Might North reopen 2♣ or 3♣ with a takeout double? Against 2♣, perhaps, creating an opportunity for +300 if South passes, but against 3♣ doubling is a bit rich, even for aggressive Norths. After 1♦\*-1♥-INT, South might double to show high cards or to show spades and clubs if his methods include this treatment. Whether N/S find spades is again somewhat difficult to predict, so risking +140 or +170 to try for +620 should not be taken lightly.

If North's initial action is a Michaels-style cue

bid, South will at least consider jumping to game, but settling for a partscore will seem very reasonable to South: rightly so.

If West opens a systemic 1♥ in second seat, North will pass and East will raise to 2♥, doubled for takeout by South. Now North will have only good options: +300, +170, +620.

And if West passes his marginal opening bid, N/S will usually bid: 1♥-1♠; 2♠-All Pass. If South aggressively tries for game and reaches 4♠, he will consider giving himself a pat on the back, but if he is a realist he will realize how lucky he was to survive his avarice.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

♠ 7 ♥ 10 9 8 ♦ K Q 10 7 2 ♣ Q J 6 2	♠ Q 5 ♥ K ♦ A J 9 6 5 4 ♣ K 10 7 5	♠ J 8 4 3 2 ♥ A Q J 4 2 ♦ 8 ♣ A 4 ♠ A K 10 9 6 ♥ 7 6 5 3 ♦ 3 ♣ 9 8 3
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While it might seem at first glance that E/W can take nine tricks in hearts that's not quite true: the defense can come to a fifth trick by taking its diamond winner immediately (even if West declares) and switching to the ♥K; declarer will either take a spade ruff and no diamond trick or lose his spade ruff and take one diamond trick. It's a variation of a position we've seen more than once in this session, which makes it even more interesting than otherwise.

It might seem that a trump lead and continuation will suffice, but if diamonds have not been touched declarer gets one spade ruff, takes the club finesse, gets a club ruff in East and draws trumps. Now when he plays a diamond with eight tricks in, North will find that he can't prevent ten tricks (let alone nine) whether he wins the diamond or ducks it (declarer exits dummy with the ♣J) – dummy will get two diamond winners. E/W +170 will be a huge result.

If West passes (some who use weak 2♦ openings will not pass) and North opens 1♦ East will choose from among 2♦ (Michaels), 1♠ (the traditional choice of the higher of two five-card

suits) and 1♥ (an eccentric suit-quality decision to treat East's suits as equivalent to four-five). 2♦ and 1♥ will locate the heart fit immediately, and it's not clear whether North or South or both will get further involved in either scenario; E/W might buy it in 2♥ or take a nudge to 3♥.

As N/S can't make anything significant they must be careful not to offer E/W a shot at their exposed throats. Any penalty of 300 or more will bump those wonderful +170s down the frequency sheets, and perhaps it's naïve to think that N/S will go quietly.

Where East overcalls 1♠ South will pass much more often than venture INT; West will advance with INT and, although North should pass, some will risk 2♦ or 2♣. They may survive when East introduces hearts, but South might double 2♥, suggesting a spade stack and fair defense against hearts. Alas, that will offer North the choice between -670 and -300/500, so the frequency charts will gain some new entries at those tables.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

Here are some realistic scenarios:

West	North	East	South
-300 on a heart lead	1♥	INT	DBL /
+120 on a spade lead	1♠	Pass	DBL / RDBL / 1/2NT /
+140	1♥	DBL	2♥/3♥ /
Pass +140	Pass	INT	Pass
	2♥/ or a ♥-showing convention /		
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣ / -50/-100			

	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	DBL	Pass	3♦
Pass +140	3♥ /		
	Pass/		
-100/-150			
	Pass	1♠	Pass
Pass	DBL	Pass	INT
2♠	DBL	Pass	3♦
Pass +140	3♥ /		

Or South could pass a double of 2♠ (in this last case) for a penalty of 100 or 300.

Acol aficionados and strong clubbers tend to open nicely put-together 10-counts like North's, and this approach usually works particularly well on partscore deals or when the light opening bid directs the winning lead.

At Matchpoints it's frequency that matters most. If opening light gets you too high on occasion, or fear of inadequate defensive strength results in some missed penalty doubles, you can live with those consequences as long as you gain obstructively or competitively considerably often. If everyone saw the game the same way we'd all play the same style and methods and might lose interest in this great pastime. Light openers will also tell you that it's more fun to bid than pass, and who can argue with that?

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

By playing West for honor-ten-low in spades and the doubleton queen of clubs, N/S's declarer can take 12 tricks in spades or clubs (a strain no one will choose unless they bid a slam). Notrump should be held to at most 10 tricks on a heart lead (fairly normal from either side) for a poor N/S score, but any other opening lead gives

declarer a shot at 12 tricks and a big score by playing the same way as the declarers in a black-suit contract.

Assuming that East does not open the bidding (perhaps presumptuous in the Antipodes, where Moscito variants rule and East might well start with 1♥ or 1♦ showing four or more hearts and about 9-13 HCP), South will start with 2NT or a strong club. Over 2NT North will show 5+♠ (most often via transfer of 3♥, which East might well double) and generally offer a choice of games; South will usually opt to play in spades.

Declarer will win the heart lead, discard a heart from North on the third diamond and lead a spade, intending to pass it. If West follows low declarer will have no obvious reason to change his plan and after losing the ♠6 to the king, declarer will come to a club and lead a second trump, covering West's card. If the position is absolutely clear to West (i.e. he can be sure East does not have singleton king!), he might accomplish something by playing second hand high – the queen – on the first round of trumps. If declarer refuses to credit West with this play he might take the ace, cross to a club and lead a second trump to the jack to lose a second trump trick.

This is one of those Spy vs Spy situations: wouldn't West play low from KQx, expecting declarer to lose to the ten if East had it and declarer had the nine? Or would West mix it up with either holding? Does West know this position? Can he afford to play the queen from Q10x? Shouldn't declarer ignore West's possible motivations and simply go with the odds (West's K10x, Q10x or KQ10x occurring more often than KQx or KQxx without the ten)?

If North responds 1♠ to a strong club and admits to holding four clubs in an exploratory sequence, South will love everything about his hand except for his spade holding; he might drive to 6♣ if he thinks he needs a big score or if he favors an aggressive slam-bidding philosophy. Won't happen often, it says here. As N/S +680 will be by far the most common result, variations will produce extreme scores: +1370, +1430, +1440, +630; +690; -100; +650; +620. Each of these results will occur somewhere in the world, just not very often. If you were one of those exceptional-result pairs you'll have a story for the bar, bedroom, or online chat room.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

It may be old-fashioned to open an 18-point notrump in these depreciated times, but the last time I checked the Laws of Contract Bridge this throwback action was still legal. Pessimists see the South hand as flawed by its two relatively weak suits, three queens and a jack; optimists see two strong four-card suits, a potentially useful nine and possible positional holdings in the red suits. My dear friend Banzai Jackson of Dublin values the South hand at 26 "54321" points, following his theory that queens, jacks and tens are undervalued in the Milton Work Count when both partnership hands are balanced. As a Banzai strong notrump is 22-25, this hand is a pip too strong. The North hand, with 11 "54321" points combines with South's for 37 Banzai points, the theoretical minimum for two balanced hands to attempt 3NT (with no 5-card suits). You might find it interesting to use these Banzai points in valuing balanced hands; you'll be surprised at how much difference there can be between 4321 and 54321 valuation and how the latter proves its accuracy when both hands are balanced. 25 Milton Work points suffice for game too and N/S will reach 3NT via: 1♦-2♦; 2NT-3NT, or 1♦-1NT; 2NT-3NT, or 1♠-1NT; 2NT-3NT, or perhaps a fancy 1♦-1♥; 2NT-3NT.

Where West is on lead a spade will go to the queen and ace, leaving declarer with an apparent uphill struggle. If he elects to spurn the diamond finesse and relies on West holding the ♣J he will find that the defense can't get out of its own way and the West hand will come under unbearable pressure. Say that he plays ♦A, ♦Q (spade from West), East ducking, then the ♦J. West is squeezed already and will believe his safest discard is a heart, perhaps the jack. East can duck the third diamond to keep declarer out of dummy, or win and return a spade. Say that declarer ducks to the nine and West switches to

the ♥10, not without hope. That gives declarer two heart tricks to go with three diamonds and two spades, and he will come to at least two club tricks by leading the queen, ducking West's king, and finessing the ten on the return. En route to scrambling nine tricks declarer will lose a trick in each suit, though there are variations in which he will not lose a spade trick. Where East is on lead he might lead any of the four suits and a low heart might lead to a later mis-guess by declarer if East gains the lead to play a second low heart. While declarer may find a losing line, especially if the lead of the unsupported ♠Q convinces him that East has the ♠J, 3NT will be made more often than it fails. It's one of those deals that look bad for declarer until he starts to play it. +430 would take some doing but it will happen a few times.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West

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

6♣ is superb for N/S and it would appear to be biddable with E/W silent:

- (a) 1♣-3♣; 4♦ (Splinter)-4♠; 6♣ /
- (b) 1♣-2♣ (inverted); 3♦ (shortage)-3♠; 4♣-5♣ (no ♦A, no top heart); 6♣ /
- (c) 1♣-2♣\*; 2♥-2NT; 3♣-4♣; 4♥-4♠; 4NT (Last Train)-6♣ /

Although N/S have only 28 combined HCP and a wasted queen, the hands fit magnificently, the doubleton heart being especially valuable. My estimate is that nearly half the field will bid 6♣, in no small measure due to the familiar Matchpoint dictum that once past a playable 3NT with potential for overtricks one might as well bid a minor suit slam, as 5♣ or 5♦ rarely score well. While there is undeniably something to that strategy, it can be taken too far. When 3NT is going down or when it will not yield any overtricks it's foolish to bid a poor minor-suit slam when reaching a superior five of a minor

would be just right.

On this deal, 5♣ with an overtrick might not be too bad because there will be plenty of pairs in 3NT ...

- (a) 1♣-2NT (invitational); 3NT / "Who needs stoppers to bid 1NT first?"
- (b) 1♣-3♣; 3♥-3NT / "You've got spades and diamonds covered - I pass"
- (c) 1♣-2♣\*; 2♥-2NT (nonforcing); 3NT / "Hey, it's Matchpoints, right?"

Sad, but true; these auctions will happen more often than we'd like to believe. If there are more of them than N/S auctions culminating in 6♣, those +620s in 5♣ might even be over average.

The vulnerability will usually dissuade West from opening an aggressive weak 2♦, but where the bidding does start 2♦-DBL-3♦, N/S will stay out of 3NT and might well reach 6♣. At tables where N/S do not have a convenient way to raise clubs, South might respond with 1♦, hoping to buy time. If his side reaches 3NT after that it's possible that West might not lead a diamond, and N/S will chalk up +660 with spades three-three. Underservedly, that will be well over average.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

With 6♥ slightly better than the trump finesse and three-two trump break (stiff ♣K or club lead from the king or ♠K ruffing out tripleton), we can expect a significant number of pairs to reach slam whether South forces to game or merely invites one.

South's initial response to 1♥ makes an interesting problem in itself. 1♠, intending a limit 3♥ over 2♦, is a live possibility, as is 2♣, intending to show heart support support in either forcing or nonforcing mode (according to system). Some dedicated five-card majorites, particularly those

using a strong-club system, might respond 4♥ or some version of a limit raise. A 2♣ response will cause North to value his hand highly once the heart fit materializes, and Blackwood will often make an appearance at these tables. A 1♠ response will not be as great a catalyst, but if South cooperates with a slam probe, North might bid 6♥ sooner or later also: 1♥-1♠; 2♦-3♥; 4♦-4♥; 4♠-5♠; 6♥, for example.

A flimsy 1♠ overall might work either way, on one hand hinting at bad breaks that might cause N/S to tread cautiously; on the other hand suggesting that a heart or club finesse though the overcaller would have a greater chance of succeeding.

While it would appear that 6♥ is doomed, East does not have an easy lead and might opt for a sneaky ♣7 through dummy's suit, the sort of lead that used to find its way into books featuring successful examples of an aggressive lead strategy. Although the club lead might not cost here when declarer wins the ace to prevent a club ruff, relying on the trump finesse, there will be declarers who give East a long look and play low from dummy. Another positive scenario for declarer involves West failing to return a club when he wins the ♥K; now East will be squeezed in the black suits on the run of the red-suit winners.

The frequency sheets will reveal a large number of +650s and -100s for N/S, but there will be enough +1430s and 680s to confirm that things are rarely as obvious as they seem.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East

♠ 10 9 8 2 ♥ K Q 10 7 6 3 ♦ 6 ♣ 10 2  ♠ A K ♥ 5 4 ♦ 10 7 2 ♣ A Q J 9 6 5  ♠ J 4 3 ♥ J 2 ♦ K Q J 9 8 3 ♣ K 8	♠ Q 7 6 5 ♥ A 9 8 ♦ A 5 4 ♣ 7 4 3
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With the favorable club position E/W can take 11 tricks in notrump or clubs, and to score well they will have to reach one of their 24-point games, with the clear edge going to the higher-scoring 3NT.

Here are some likely auctions:

- (a) Pass-1♦-2♣-DBL\*; RDBL-3♦-DBL\*-3♥; 3NT /
- (b) Pass-1♦-2♣-3♥; 3NT /
- (c) Pass-1♦-2♣-2♥ (NF)\*; 2NT- Pass-3NT /
- (d) Pass-1♦-3♣-Pass; 3NT /
- (e) Pass-2♦-3♣-Pass; 3NT /
- (f) Pass-3♦-4♣-Pass; 5♣ /
- (g) Pass-Pass-1NT-2♥; DBL\*-3♦-Pass (not 4 spades)-3♥; DBL-Pass-3♠-Pass; 3NT /
- (h) Pass-Pass-1NT-Pass; 3NT /
- (i) Pass-Pass-1NT-Pass; 2♣-2♦-3♣-Pass; 3NT /
- (j) Pass-Pass-1♣-2♥; DBL-3♦-DBL(?) -3♥; 3NT /

Most of these hypothetical scenarios lead E/W to 3NT, and I expect that to be the popular contract, with E/W +660 a solid average-plus, +600 well below average, and any missed game a dreadful result.

In (g) and (j) above, E/W might defend 3♥ doubled and beat it three, inadequate compensation for their vulnerable game.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South

♠ A 10 4 ♥ K 7 6 5 ♦ 10 7 ♣ 9 5 4 2  ♠ 9 8 6 3 2 ♥ 8 4 ♦ K Q J 9 ♣ 6 3	♠ K Q J ♥ A Q 10 9 3 ♦ A 4 ♣ A Q 8  ♠ 7 5 ♥ J 2 ♦ 8 6 5 3 2 ♣ K J 10 7
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East will generally be permitted to open the bidding in fourth seat, and the main choices will be 2♣ (intending 2NT next: 22+-24), 2NT (20+-22), and a strong 1♣. Although there is some merit in a simple 1♥, the danger in missing game combined with likely complexity in following up on the next round will convince everyone to start with a stronger opening.

Whenever East reaches 2NT in his chosen scheme West will show his spades, usually with a transfer. It's not difficult for West to envision East hands in the appropriate range that will

offer a superb play for 6♦, 6♠ or even 7♦, but West will have to decide whether to go past 3NT to show his second suit and risk finishing in 4NT, 5♦, or an awkward 4♠ on a five-two fit. At IMPs the possible upside might merit the more aggressive strategy, but at Pairs it's considerably more attractive to be able to stop at 3NT without the uncertainty surrounding a 4♦ continuation over 3♣.

Whether East issues a strong slam try (by super-accepting the transfer), a mild one (say 4♥ over 3NT after taking the transfer) or none at all (converting 3NT to 4♠), there will be considerably more E/W pairs stopping in 4♠ than advancing to six; spade contracts will be played far more often by East than by West (when a club lead can hold declarer to 11 tricks in short order).

To make 12 tricks in spades declarer must play with inspiration. Say that South leads a diamond. Declarer wins in hand (East) and tries the ♠K, which holds (best defense). Now declarer must cross in diamonds to lead a heart to the queen; ♥A, heart ruff (the defense can't score the ♠10 as declarer establishes the long heart), and a second trump; North wins and switches to a club, but declarer judges to win the ace, ruffs the hearts good, and (with the ♠10 still in North's hand) leads a high diamond; North can ruff or not: if he does declarer over-ruffs and has the rest, dummy's club going on the long heart; if North discards he must make a similar fruitless decision when the last high diamond is led from dummy – if he discards again declarer discards his remaining club and draws the last trump. We can expect +680 to score well as other declarers in spades will take only 11 tricks in game or slam.

3NT, which might be reached on occasion if East treats his hand as a strong two-bid in hearts rather than a notrump type, can produce as many as 11 tricks on the best lead of a diamond: ♦A, ♠K to the ace, diamond to kill the spade suit, cash diamonds to discard clubs, heart to the queen, ♥A, ♥10 to drive out the jack (passing the ♥8 on the first round will fare far worse as a club switch will defeat the contract, perhaps serving justice for choosing the higher-scoring but much riskier strain). As declarer can take only one heart finesse, leading to the queen is the better play as it caters to doubleton jack.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

With the ♠A in front of the king E/W can take 12 tricks in hearts even on a trump lead by building a second diamond trick rather than by ruffing three clubs in West. But to get this right declarer will have to play South for the singleton ten of diamonds rather than honor-ten doubleton: that means cashing the ♦A, drawing trumps ending in dummy and passing a diamond equal. If he doesn't do that, he will eventually allow South to score the ♥J on a trump promotion on a forced diamond lead from dummy. As North will bid diamonds, however, and South will usually lead the ♦10, getting the position right should not be too tall an order for declarer.

Not that many will contemplate bidding 6♥: perhaps the main issue for E/W will be to decide whether to defend 4♠ doubled or push on to 5♥. Where N/S employ weak jump shifts in competition the bidding might proceed: Pass-1♦-1♥-2♠; 4♥-4♠. With accurate defense - a pretty example of several possible approaches: club to the ace, club ruff, ♦A, club ruff, heart to the queen, club ruff - E/W can beat 4♠ three tricks, with +500 beating all their colleagues who did not bid 6♥ or collect a bigger penalty. That will not be at all obvious to East, however, and he's much more likely to forge on to 5♥ in case either 5♥ or 4♠ happens to be making.

Where South bids only 1♠ West will consider less committal heart raises, but East will bid 4♥ if West has not done so. Now it will not be so easy for South to bid 4♠ and at these tables East will buy the contract without having to make a competitive decision.

E/W +480 will be the popular result, but +500 will be the E/W top. There won't be many +450s or +300s, or for that matter many other results at all.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

With the ♦Q doubleton onside and West having no entry to give East a heart ruff N/S can take 11 tricks in diamonds, but their central task will be to avoid playing in their five-three heart fit which offers 30 points a trick compared with 20 a trick in diamonds.

The bidding will begin: 1♥-1♠, or 1♥-2♥ (spades and a minor, or, for some, spades and clubs). Over 1♠, South might settle for 2♥, intending to bid diamonds later and naturally in many scenarios.

Alternatively, South might prefer a (not so) weak jump to 3♦ or a negative (nonforcing) free bid of 2♦, where one of those treatments is available. Others will volunteer a light, forcing 2♦, hoping to gain by mentioning the suit as early as possible. The raise to 2♥ figures to work poorly as North will try for game and convert any diamond bid short of game to hearts, a strain producing only eight tricks and a minus score. If South focuses exclusively on diamonds he probably won't reach game, though North has a good dummy for diamonds. However, he will achieve a plus score where many of his brethren are going minus, and N/S +150 might produce a fair score. If East bids a second time on his own it won't always be easy for N/S to punish him for his presumptuousness, but there will be a few numbers accruing to N/S at these tables.

Where East's initial action is a two-suited cue bid, South will often have a way to show his suit without overstating his values (a transfer or a natural nonforcing 3♦). As those actions will mark East with clubs, West might show his support in these circumstances, either by doubling a transfer or by bidding the suit. Given a chance to double clubs for penalty North will exercise that option against his vulnerable opponents and

avail himself of the 500 or 800 points on offer; South should not pull that double. If West does not get involved North will pass a nonforcing bid in diamonds or accept a transfer, and 3♦ should buy the contract although both South and West might consider action.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

Though some will open INT (range not specified) in third position, most will prefer 1♠. If North risks INT East will not think seriously of doubling in search of a magnificent +200 and will raise to 2♣, which should end the auction. There's nothing to the play in 2♣ and declarer will lose a trump, two hearts, and two clubs for +110. E/W won't get higher than 2♣.

If North instead doubles 1♠ with the idea of avoiding an easy-to-extract penalty when South is weak, East is a bit too strong for 2♣ as many play these days; some of those pairs use an artificial bid (INT, 2♣ or a one-under transfer) to indicate a constructive 2♣ raise, and a few others prefer to pass and bid 2♣ later where possible. In most cases these vagaries shouldn't affect the outcome, but a (tiny) handful of tables N/S will finish in 3♥, down 200 or 500 depending on whether anyone doubles. You don't believe me? This sort of thing always happens on the most mundane deals, so why not now?

Where North passes over 1♠ (not enough for a vulnerable INT, not enough shape to double, not enough freedom to improvise) he might find it difficult to pass out 2♣ and so will fall from grace and double belatedly. Well, there's another route to 200 or 500 for N/S.

Where West opens a weak notrump North will not be comfortable doubling, but will usually do so anyway, and double might well conclude the auction. As long as the defense gets around to hearts before declarer can concede a spade,



INT will fail. Minus 200 will be an E/W bottom on a deal where nearly everyone else will go plus with their cards. If someone runs from the double all contracts other than E/W's 2♣ are slated to fail and might well be doubled. So even on this innocent-looking deal there will be some opportunities for both sides.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

The big-money contract for N/S on this complex deal is 4♥, which offers the opportunity for +450 with normal play in hearts and clubs; E/W can't attack diamonds profitably with North on play and declarer loses only a trump and a spade. In 5♣ the defense can't attack both spades and diamonds at once even with South on play (which won't often be the case) and declarer will have time to establish hearts to discard losers in one of the rounded suits. In 3NT, declarer prevails because spades are four-four, but might fail or make overtricks if West leads a diamond, depending on whether he ducks the first trick.

But will N/S reach game?

After two passes:

- (a) 1♥-DBL-1NT-Pass; 2♣-Pass-2♣\* (strong club raise)-Pass; 3NT /
- (b) 1♥-DBL-1NT-Pass; 2♣-Pass-3♣-Pass; 3♦-Pass-3♥-Pass; 3♠-Pass-4♥ /
- (c) 1♥-DBL-1NT-Pass; 2♣-Pass-3♥ (big club fit, doubleton heart honor)-Pass; 4♥ /
- (d) 1♥-1♠-Pass-2♣; 3♣-Pass-3♠-Pass; 5♣ /
- (e) 1♥-1♠-Pass-2♣; 3♣-Pass-4♥ (club fit, doubleton heart honor) /

South might bid more conservatively after North shows clubs or North might prefer to take his chances in clubs after a takeout double by East, expecting hearts to break poorly much of the time.

Given the difficulty of reaching 4♥ and delicacy in game-investigation auctions, I suspect that +400 N/S will score very well.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

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

Assuming that N/S find a way into the auction (even after a strong notrump by West) and alight in 2♠, they will make three unless the defenders start trumps immediately, something much easier for East than West.

If East passes 1NT, N/S's pet notrump defense will come into play, any action by South showing spades and another suit or clubs and another leading his side to 2♠. But East will rarely pass 1NT, instead transferring to hearts or (much less often) signing off with a natural 2♥. In the latter case South will have to act directly to avoid having 2♥ passed out; 2♠ is the practical solution though some will double because they feel that 2♠ is an underbid – having to bid 3♣ over 3♦ won't be fun but at least they knew in advance that this might happen. Where South passes over a 2♥ transfer, he will have the same choices when 2♥ comes around to him but at least he will know that East is limited. That knowledge really doesn't justify bidding more than 2♠, but again, some will be more ambitious and so get a level higher.

Say that West leads the ♦K against a spade contract. Declarer wins and loses the club finesse. It's too late for a trump shift, and if West finds a safe club exit declarer can go about his business in clubs and hearts, using diamond ruffs to enter hand. He eventually gets over-ruffed in clubs but loses only two more trump tricks for +140.

If West competes to 3♥ he exposes himself to a sharp penalty double by South, and unspectacular defense will net the defenders six tricks for +300 and a (joint) top. For example: diamond to the ace, diamond ruff, ♠A, ♠Q to

the king, club exit ruffed by North, who gives South another diamond ruff: that's a club, a diamond, a club ruff for North and three trumps for South.

Any E/W pair that finds a way to go plus will score fabulously.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

With the ♥K in South E/W can make 6♥ or a less likely 6NT (use East's club entry to discard spades on high diamonds, then lead the ♥10). The play is likely to be more precise than the bidding. Uncontested:

After a pass by North:

- (a) INT-2♣; 2♦-3♠ (4+♠, longer hearts, FG); 4♥-6♥ /
- (b) INT-2♣; 2♦-3♥ (4+♠, longer hearts, FG); 3NT-4♦; 4♥-4♠; 4NT-5♦; 6♥ /
- (c) INT-2♦\*; 2♥-2♠; 2NT-3♠; 4♥-5♦; 5♥ /
- (d) 1♦-1♥; INT (strong)-3♠ (6/5); 4♥-5♦; 5♥ or 6♥ /

If West can set hearts and use a form of Exclusion Key Card Blackwood he will learn that his side is off the ♥K and the ♣A when East admits that he has no key card, but West won't wish to preclude playing in spades and might not wish to use Exclusion Blackwood with no control in clubs. This is simply not an easy combination for E/W and whether or not they reach slam will often turn on West's willingness to shoot it out or whether East believes he is forced to bid slam with any club control. Not satisfactory, perhaps, but that's real life.

A few N/S pairs will have an opening bid in their arsenal to show a weak minor two-suiter. Whether they use it at this vulnerability is difficult to predict, but I'm sure there will be a few Norths who get into the bidding. We can only hope for their sake that they aren't doubled, for they

have only three tricks coming in their nine-card diamond fit. Please forgive me for this digression.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

If South does not come in over East's strong notrump, West will either have to pick a major in which to sign off (perhaps via a transfer) or will be able to use a specialized Stayman sequence to offer a choice of major-suit partials (INT-2♣; 2♦-2♥ is commonly used in North America for this purpose; it's been labeled Garbage or Scrambling Stayman and is particularly useful with a hand like West's). Given the choice East will prefer to play in 2♠, the best spot for his side. The cards lie well for E/W and with the ♥10, ♦K, and ♠Q declarer is going to take at least nine tricks in spades with normal play; on a fairly normal trump lead from South, declarer might well take ten, eventually losing only three hearts.

But will E/W buy the contract at the two level? In the Scrambling Stayman sequence described above, North might reopen 2♠ with 3♦. Although West might be completely broke East will be tempted to double 3♦, but if he doesn't, West might do so to express interest in competing to 3♠ (fancy stuff, I know) and East will pass. A major suit lead and accurate defense will hold declarer to six tricks in diamonds for a 500 point set and an E/W top, but even if E/W pass out 3♦ they might score almost as well for +150, beating all the 140s.

Where East opens 1♣ or 1♦ playing weak notrumps, South might risk a non-vulnerable 1♥ overcall. Over West's 1♠ North will bid notrump or diamonds (where East opened 1♣) and East will compete to 2♠. Despite his 11 HCP North has no heart fit and a lot of slow stuff and he might well sell out to 2♠. Some ferocious Souths might even come in over a strong notrump with a bid to show hearts and another or clubs and

another. It will be difficult for them to find a happy home but West might take them off the hook and get his side to the popular 2♠ after all.

This is another deal with an innocent façade that could lead to some fireworks.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

As West has a normal heart lead the N/S pairs who bid: 2NT-3NT / will soon find themselves down one (it's difficult for E/W to block this suit). How revolting!

With the perfect mesh in hearts N/S are cold for 6♣ and also the excellent, less likely, higher-scoring 6♠. The fate of the deal for N/S will turn on their methods over a 2NT opening, North's willingness to get involved and South's willingness to cooperate with a move in clubs with only two-card support and a weak tripleton. Serious partnerships that invest the time in incorporating single-suited minor-suit slam tries in their methods tend to make provisions for opener to use an artificial step response to check on key cards and reserve 4NT for a signoff, but beyond that there is rarely much discussion or development; intermediate steps seem to be ignored.

One idea:

South	North
2NT	3♠*
3NT	4♣**
4♦***	4NT****
6♣	Pass

- \* (Puppet to 3NT)
- \*\* (6+♣, slam interest)
- \*\*\* (asks for shortness)
- \*\*\*\* (♥ shortness, NF)

Over 4♣, 4♥ would have been RKC, 4♠ a "scramble" with a poor hand, 4NT a good notrump hand with no obvious fit, 5♣ a prime

hand with a modest fit. This is just one scheme that allows some investigation with minor openers. Over 4♦, the shortness ask, North replies by steps: none, low, middle and high. It's trickier if responder has to go through Stayman to start such hands, as opener can't tell whether he's facing a long minor or only five of the minor with a four-card major. Even if your natural slam tries start no higher than 4♣ or 4♦ there's only so much room you have to exchange relevant information. Certainly, casual partnerships will have more guessing to do on hands of this type, but they may not do any worse than scientific partnerships if North or South commits to slam once past 3NT on general principles.

Club systems may deal better with the issues, but those who reach 6♣ or 5♣ deserve to score well no matter how they get there. -100 in 3NT may not be a disaster as a raise to 3NT at Matchpoints is hardly ridiculous.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

Because the E/W diamonds are two-two and the N/S hearts are three-one (with South having a sure heart trick on defense), N/S have the greater potential on this competitive deal. There are 10 tricks available in diamonds or clubs so N/S can't go wrong by competing to four of a minor over E/W's 3♥ or 3♠. Furthermore, with E/W vulnerable and due to lose five tricks if they declare, N/S can't go wrong by doubling their opponents in three of a major for 200 points and a top.

Some days it doesn't pay to be E/W; unless your opponents misjudge, of course. And they could do that by selling out to 3♥ or 3♠ without doubling, or by over-reaching to 5♣ or 5♦ on their own.

Say it proceeds: Pass-1♦-1♠-2♦; 2♠-3♣-Pass-3♦; Pass-Pass-3♥-Pass; Pass-? North fully expected

to make at least 3♦, so has equity of 110-130 or protect. If 3♥ (or 3♠) is making North can't afford to sell out and must go on to 4♦ to try for 130, but willing to concede 50 or 100. But if E/W can't take nine tricks their vulnerability provides North with an opportunity to double in search of a one-trick set, 200 more than covering North's perceived equity of 110-130. The one thing North can't afford to do is settle for +100, which would be inadequate compensation for the partscore he expected to make. As this is a case where North simply must take some action, doubling does not preclude reaching 4♦ while bidding 4♦ does preclude defending 3♥ or 3♠ doubled. Is this a close decision for North? I would say no: double is a standout. South, with a sure heart trick and limited offensive potential, should take his chances by passing because he too can see the upside very clearly. And the nice thing about Matchpoints is that -670 with +130 available may be no worse a disaster than going 400 in five of a minor with 420 available in a major. Absolute differences in total points are far less important than relative differences with the scores of pairs in the same direction.

Not everyone will raise with the South hand, in which case North will introduce clubs over West's raise to 2♠. East might compete to 3♠ directly with his sound overcall, but here, with hearts not mentioned South might consider his big fit for both minors sufficient reason to bid 4♦ directly, and North will do well not to count on South for a singleton spade and raise himself to game. The rare N/S minus scores will be dreadful.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

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

If your 2NT structure does not use 3♣ as Stayman but rather as a puppet to 3♦ you will have a rare golden opportunity for a universal top for there are nine tricks available in diamonds and only six in notrump with normal

defense (South ducks one diamond). If you can't get to 3♦ you'll have lots of company, of course. East will have to decide whether to pass 2NT (aiming for a narrow target: +120 or one fewer undertrick than 3NT), raise to 3NT (hoping the diamonds have some value), or commit to 5♦ (essentially hoping to concede fewer 50-point undertricks than those in notrump). Everyone will either have an experience-inspired view of how to proceed with such hands, or will soon have one for the future.

Strong clubbers using the sequence 1♣-1♦; 1♥ as 19+ will have a chance to stop at 2♦ or 3♦, but those whose methods involve West reaching 2NT no later than his second turn will have to deal with the same issues as the standard bidders.

One possible small mercy for E/W in notrump might materialize where declarer starts diamonds by leading the nine to the queen. Regardless of which card North plays to this trick it might be a singleton, so when South ducks the queen he will have to guess whether to take his ace when declarer continues with a low diamond from dummy towards his concealed blank king. Stealing a second diamond winner might not sound like much of a triumph for West, but there will be a huge difference between -50, -100, and -150 on the scoresheet.

Playing in notrump will rarely be good unless West has at least three diamonds; his average diamond length will be two-and-a-third cards, so on a probability basis counting on using diamonds in notrump is odds-against. Take that to the bank and sell it to your financial adviser.

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

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

Although N/S have combined assets that would suggest trying for slam with a proven trump fit, that condition does not exist here and the

bidding should usually conclude in 4NT; stopping at 3NT would require an unusually conservative decision by South in (a), (b) and (c) below, or an agreement that a third round jump to 3NT over a fourth-suit game force can include a super-prime 17-count, as in (d) below.

Examples (silent opponents):

- (a) 1♠-1♥; 2♣-2♠; 3♠-3NT; 4NT-Pass
- (b) 1♠-1♥; 2♣-3NT; 4♠-4NT; Pass
- (c) 1♠; 1♥; 2♣-3NT; 4NT-Pass
- (d) 1♠-1♥; 2♣-2♠; 3NT-Pass

As long as West hangs on to his minor-suit stoppers and East hangs on to a spade winner in the endgame West will not succumb to a throw-in after failing to cash hearts when in with the fourth round of diamonds. I don't expect to see N/S +660 more than a couple of times, and then less frequently than N/S -100 (slam or 5NT down) or +600 (in 5♦ or 5♣).

There could be some trouble, I suppose, if South believes all those aces and kings merit a game-forcing jump rebid and North thinks enough of his minor-suit honors to drive to slam. Or if North thinks he has enough opposite a strong club to push to a high level in search of a slam. Neither of these possibilities seems realistic, however.

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

There will be more variety on this partscore deal. South might open 1♣, 1♦ (Precision), 1♠, or INT (12-14, 13-15, 14-16, or an optimistic 15-17).

After 1♣-Pass, some will respond 1♦, many others 1♥, in both cases intending to rebid INT over a 1♠ continuation by South, which will transpire here. South will not convert to 2♦, N/S's best strain (+130 with best play) and INT will be held to seven tricks, +90, on a club lead but will produce +120 on any other lead as long as North

preserves an internal diamond entry for the third round of the suit. There will be a significant difference in the scores for 90 and 120.

After a Precision 1♦, North will almost certainly give preference to 2♦ after 1♥-1♠, though South could still have only two diamonds. Plus 130 will be excellent for N/S.

Even in four-card major systems that advocate opening 1♠ with four-four in the blacks, North should raise to 2♣ rather than dabble with INT. East, with spade shortage, might double for takeout though the ♠K makes up a quarter of his 12 points. E/W are in trouble now and might have to choose between -670 vs 2♣ doubled and -500 in 3♣ doubled. In fact, unless West leads ace and another diamond, South might take nine tricks in spades for +870. So much for enterprise, Mr East!

A INT opening by South whose maximum is no higher than 16 HCP might end the auction, and only a club lead will hold declarer to 90 from this side too. Expect plenty of 120s. Furthermore, East might reopen with a bid that shows one of his two suits with a second unspecified suit. E/W will do best to play in clubs where there are seven tricks available, while hearts can be held to six tricks. Should N/S double either contract they will reap a windfall profit, but even if 2♥ is not doubled, -200 will be awful for E/W. If E/W can escape for -100 in an adventurous partscore they should do rather well, so it would be unkind to knock East for trying to compete effectively for the partscore when conditions seem reasonable for him to get involved.

If North tries for game over INT and finishes in 2NT after a Stayman probe West will know of four spades in South and four hearts in North, so might well find the club lead to secure a lovely plus score for his side.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Our session concludes with a fairly dull deal as E/W should have no trouble reaching 4♠ or taking 10 tricks. Despite North's dull pattern and having only 12 points outside clubs, most Norths will double 1♣, if only to get their money's worth for the session. East should bid 1♠, as he would without the double, and continue on to 4♠ over a raise to 3♠ (a 3♦ splinter would be at least a mild overbid, though it will be a popular choice).

Where West doubles 1♣ for takeout, declarer should know that playing ace and another trump in the early going would not be sound

strategy, but even where North has remained silent, declarer should take some diamond ruffs in West before considering a second round of trumps. By simply going about his business declarer can't lose more than two trumps and a diamond, but once North shows up with AKx of diamonds and the suit is established, declarer can try for two-two trumps where North has not advertized his actual holding.

Missing game will be costly for E/W and as N/S are not likely to concede a significant penalty, E/W +620 will be both common and solid. See you tomorrow, kids.



**Eric Kokish** 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 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.