



HELEN SHIELDS ROOKIE-MASTER GAME

TUESDAY APRIL 2, 2024

ANALYSIS BY RON BISHOP

RON BISHOP - INFORMATION

An ecologist by academic training, Ron has been involved with bridge for his whole adult life... earlier it was as a hobby and pastime; now it's his vocation. He plies his trade as a writer, teacher, player, editor in all things bridge... and directs games at clubs around the Toronto area. A regular finals competitor in Canada's national team championship (on the silver medal-winning team in 2020), he also tries to make time to attend the ACBL's Nationals (but, as of yet, doesn't have the major win that he's been looking for). He currently has in the neighborhood of 8400 masterpoints.

HELEN SHIELDS

Helen Shields, who died in 1987, was one of the finest players at the Lake Head. She served on the CBF Board of Directors from 1976-1984 and was CBF President in 1981. In her roles on the CBF Board, Unit 228 President and Thunder Bay DBC President, Helen did all she could to encourage and welcome new players to duplicate bridge. Trophies for the National Winners are provided by the Thunder Bay Unit 228 in memory of Helen.

NEXT ROOKIE-MASTER GAME

The next Rookie-Master game will be on Wednesday, October 16, 2024, for the Erin Berry game. Mark your calendar, and we look forward to seeing you again there.

I hope that all participating players, both Rookies and Masters, have enjoyed today's hands. I've certainly enjoyed discussing them with you. If your partnership had a good score for the session, I'm sure that you will have avoided some, or most, of the pitfalls that we've discussed here in the analyses. **REMEMBER... Ask Questions... Patiently give or get Answers...** that's a great way to improve at the game. See you at the table soon... maybe even tomorrow!

Board 1

Board: 1	♠AQ7652
Dealer: N	♥
Vul.: None	♦1095
♠K3	♣AK102
♥AKQ98	♠94
♦AJ2	♥654
♣853	♦K876
	♣J974
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠J108
N 4	♥J10732
S 1 4	♦Q43
E 1	♣Q6
W 1	

1. The auction will start 1♠-P-2♠ at most tables; although some might have to respond first with 1NT (if their direct 2♠ raise would promise 'constructive values'). Over either response West will intervene with Hearts (quite a reasonable hand, but also to direct the lead). North will either show a second suit of clubs (opposite the 1NT response and after the opposition's heart bid); or just go to game (if opposite a raise). **Don't see any table getting beyond game**

[those small diamonds in the North hand are a glaring weakness and any intermediate hearts arriving in the South hand rate to be 'offensively useless'].

After ruffing the first heart, North should make a plan... how to get rid of his small diamonds??

Best is to immediately play four rounds of CLUBS pitching away two diamonds from dummy, planning to ruff ONE (or both) of the remaining diamonds in the dummy... after surrendering one to

the defense. Crossing early to dummy with a club (planning to take the trump finesse) could easily lead to down one if the defense could switch to, and cash three diamond tricks. Getting back to his hand after the first ruff (to ruff again if dummy still has trumps) can be negotiated with heart ruffs [the opening leader will have helped out with the count by *leading low from three hearts*].

Expect most N/S pairs to be + 420; with, perhaps, an odd +450. There may be the occasional N/S that finds themselves marooned in a partscore. Those pairs needn't be concerned with the number of tricks they achieve as non-game contracts likely won't win many matchpoints. **Any minus score for N/S will matchpoint very badly.**

Board 2

Board: 2	♠9872	
Dealer: E	♥K	
Vul.: NS	♦J653	
♠KQ53	10853	♠A1064
♥AJ10982		♥Q7653
♦Q4	W N E	♦98
♣J	W S	♣KQ
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠J	
N 4 4	♥4	4
S 4 4	♦AK1072	13 HCP 11
E 1 4 4	♣A97642	12
W 1 4 4		

2. Some Easts will open the bidding...finding a major 2 suiter (here 4-5) with 11 hcp just too tempting. There may be the odd pair who use **Flannery** [a 2♦ opening to show 4-5 in the majors with 11-14 pts] and then this hand may well fall within their range. **Most (?)**

Standard bidders will elect 1♥, if they do decide to open. South has a good '**Unusual 2NT**' overcall (showing the 2-lowest unbid suits...here, that's for the minors). West must initially think he has

picked up a hand from a different board (as there appear to be too many points around the table); but **West's best descriptive bid is... a 'splinter jump' to 4♣...short clubs; game values; and good Heart support.**

Most Norths will be too terrified to bid here (perhaps from seeing poor Unusual NT's from partner in the past) ... but some intrepid souls will venture 4NT ["you pick our best fit, partner"]. East can't go further as his minimum is now BAD... but it will take real imagination on his part to find the winning call...DOUBLE of 4NT...trying to warn partner of wasted values opposite their splinter raise. E/W can't make the 5-level and there is no declaring plus for N/S there either. **So; plus scores in either direction will score well.**

At tables where East does NOT open; South will (and he could select either minor and not be thought of as wrong). The auction rates to be very competitive...after West's 'takeout double' or simple 1♥ overcall. South will find himself on the short end of the stick if he lets E/W play at the game-level. There is not a legitimate play to beat 4♥... although declarer may beat himself by playing for Hearts 2-0 [finessing for the King] rather than playing for them to be 1-1.

Expect N/S to normally be -100 or -200 [in 5m] or -420 [defending 4♥] ...with the occasional pair going +50 versus an E/W 5-level contract. We can't see a route for the bidding NOT to continue into the high 4-level (or even into the rarefied air of the 5-level).

Board 3

Board: 3	♠A7	
Dealer: S	♥A10	
Vul.: EW	♦K10873	
♠105	♠9853	♠8632
♥J8732		♥Q9
♦AQ	W N E	♦9642
♣J1062	W S	♣AK7
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠KQJ94	
N 2 3 1 3 1	♥K654	11
S 2 3 3 1	♦J5	8 HCP 9
E	♣Q4	12
W		

3. **South will usually open the 12 points in first chair [the good suit and 5-4 shape in the majors compensating for the lack of Aces and lonely minor honours].** The 'Standard' North players can respond with 2♦... intending to make a non-forcing or strictly invitational continuation. *The 2/1 bidders will have to content themselves with a Forcing 1NT response, hoping to be able to 'catch-up' later, as that 11- point hand is not worth an initial game-force.* North will either rebid 2NT next (non-forcing) in the Standard framework; or after a 1NT response will try 2NT (about

11-12 balanced) because a simple preference back to 2♠ after opener's 2♥ rebid doesn't give justice to what he has. **This 2NT rebid will most often be passed out.** Careful play in 2NT (which includes leading a diamond toward the dummy at some stage) will garner eight tricks for +120. Taking advantage of the lucky diamond position and the ten of trumps falling, may let spade declarers get a ninth trick for +140.

A very fortunate South may be allowed to make ten tricks in spades for +170. **Most spade players, however, will be held to just eight or nine +110 / +140. The No-Trump declarers will manage a middling +120. Any minus score N/S will result in a score well below average.**

Board 4

Board: 4	♠974	
Dealer: W	♥QJ65	
Vul.: All	♦95	
	♣Q632	♠862
♠AJ103		♥A94
♥10832	W N E	♦J1082
♦A7	S	♣874
♣K109		
	♠KQ5	5
	♥K7	12 HCP 5
	♦KQ643	18
	♣AJ5	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		
N 1 1 1		
S 1 1 2		
E		
W		

4. With the good hand being the one held by South (mired in 4th seat), he is likely to hear two opponents' bids before it gets around to him. A 1♣ start by LHO (**Left-Hand Opponent**) and a 1♦ response by RHO will leave him in the spotlight [there may be a few weak NTer's playing in this game – although they are increasingly rare beasts – and an advocate of that style will start with 1NT (12-14) as West, which will be passed around to South]. Hopefully any Easts that

choose to respond to 1♣ will select 1♦ (and not 1NT) as they have no positional values for NoTrump; and their hand is a little short on values – as 1NT in response to 1m opening normally denotes 7-9 points or so.

What should South do against either of those two attacks against him...1♣- P-1♦-??; or the rarer 1NT-P-P-?? First off; realize that partner may be quite broke! Only when LHO is on the low side of opening points; and when the 1♦ responder has just managed to scrape up a bid, will North have anything at all.

South really has just one bid (if it is still available) that describes their hand (a natural 1NT) – and that may be forestalled by their system as many have been taught “Sandwich NT” bids here... for the other two suits. Making a takeout double of 1♦ with just 3-2 shape in the majors is just asking for trouble (IMHO). But the other choice – PASSING – choosing to defend may be the better part of valour here... aiming for +100 (or +200) since the opponents are vulnerable. If by some chance, we as N/S could manage to bid and make eight tricks in NoTrump, then the vulnerable opponents rate to be able to take just five (that would be +200 to us for defending; while only +120 declaring).

Occasionally, West's 1♣ opening will be passed around to South. How to show this strength and pattern of hand ?? A 'balancing 1NT' is normally agreed to as 12-14 balanced points, so this hand is too strong. Best to balance with an all-purpose (but takeout oriented) Double and then pull partner's expected major-suit bid back to No-Trump; showing 15-17 points in a balanced hand.

A plus score N/S will be good (especially if greater than +90); an E/W minus of just -100 should be okay... but the dreaded -200 will be a bad result. Any minus score for N/S will be below average.

Board 5

Board: 5	♠AKQ654	
Dealer: N	♥J95	
Vul.: NS	♦J	
	♣AQJ	♠103
♠97		♥KQ10
♥A642		♦AQ9754
♦K862	N	♣73
♣K62	W	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠J82	18
N 3 2	♥873	10 HCP 11
S 3 2	♦103	
E 3 3	♣109854	1
W 3 3		

5. With the South hand bereft, North is left to fight off the E/W onslaught all on their lonesome. North should be willing to relinquish control of the hand once the auction is pushed as far as 3♠. Careful (and timely) defense by N/S - which involves getting South in to lead a club through West's vulnerable King - against a likely 4♦ contract; will lead to its' defeat, as N/S will score two spades and two clubs. That's what can happen, but achieving that end may be quite difficult.

At many tables E/W will make their contract of 4♦, scoring 130. If there are enough of those then N/S getting overboard in 4♠ for down one (-100) may not score that badly...*unless, of course, they are doubled (-1; -200) which be a horrible score.* Some N/S partnerships may not be forced so high; those pairs achieving +140 in a spade partscore will be amply rewarded.

Board 6

Board: 6	♠K862	
Dealer: E	♥K32	
Vul.: EW	♦KQ9	
	♣Q95	♠109
♠QJ754		♥Q1095
♥J6		♦108762
♦AJ543	N	♣K10
♣4	W	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠A3	13
N 6 2 4 1 6	♥A874	9 HCP 5
S 6 2 5 1 6	♦	
E 3 3	♣AJ87632	13
W 3 3		

6. With most Souths opening 1♣, West will take the opportunity to overcall 1♠. *It always feels nice to have the 'master' (ie, highest ranking) suit!* North's hand, after seeing the first two bids, has the look and feel of 3NT – so, that's likely what most players will bid now. The focus turns back to South... to 'pull' from 3NT (at matchpoints where a slight scoring difference in game value is vitally important), requires a crystal-clear reason. Here... with North marked with good

values; plus South's spade Ace reinforcing the stopper situation in that suit; and knowing that partner is likely to have strength in diamonds – no negative double (which would show hearts) nor club-support showing cuebid – there doesn't seem to be much of a reason to search out alternative contracts. If 3NT isn't slated to be successful; then 6♣ (or, even 5♣ for that matter) may not be a success either. If 5♣ is making 11 tricks for a N/S score of +400, then 3NT may be slated for 10 tricks or more (+430 or better).

Today, 3NT+3 is 'gin'... N/S can (and should) **score 7♣ tricks** (finessing against the outstanding King... the only missing high club honour); **2 hearts, 2 spades, plus a diamond trick** (using the K/Q to force out the Ace so that the other big honour becomes a winner) ... **for a total 12 tricks ... worth a score of +490.** But that same play makes 6♣ 'cold' too... and that will score even better... for +920. Declarer [in 6♣] can win the first defensive lead (usually it will be a major) to advance the club Q for a finesse. This "Queen" lead will enable KTx to be picked up without loss [win the Queen and continue finessing], while also preserving its' main purpose of scooping up the doubleton (or singleton) King when that honour is 'onside'. When the King turns out to be just doubleton, declarer can use the 3rd round of clubs to return to the dummy. Then the lead of the ♦Q or ♦K, will let declarer pitch a heart loser if it doesn't get covered (or, as it is in this case, when East can't "cover an honour with an honour" ... since he doesn't have the Ace). The occasional West may LEAD the ♦A against a 6♣ contract; see it get ruffed and turn a strange shade of greenish-yellow. Few matchpoints for that lead!

[Notice how important it is that North's diamonds – yes, diamonds – are **KQ9** rather than **KJ9**... why is that?... because it lets declarer establish his own diamond winner by force]. We don't see a plus position for any E/W, as a high-level in a diamond contract (their 10-card fit) is due to get slaughtered. **Expect that few pairs manage the heights of getting to any slam [6NT can also make].** So, 3NT+3 for +490 will be common. **Score average plus for N/S 3NT's as there may be some pairs in a simple contract of 5♣ (but one that matchpoints very poorly).**

Board 7

Board: 7	♠KQJ94	
Dealer: S	♥KJ10	
Vul.: All	♦765	
	♣93	♠A7
♠8532		♥962
♥AQ7	N	♦842
♦Q10	W	♠AQ654
♣J872	S	
		♠106
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		♥8543
N 1 3 3 4		♦AKJ93
S 1 3 3 4		♣K10
E 1		
W 1		

7. *South's 1st seat Pass will be the choice of many*, but those feeling frisky could start with 1♦ (or 2♦ if that is permissible within their partnership's weak 2-bid range - yes, it only has 5♦'s... but they are quite good diamonds; and if asked for a 'feature', the bidder would have an easy club high card to show). That said...opening 2♦ is a 'little different' ...*so let's content ourselves with Pass*. West has nothing to say, so North will open with a slightly light 1♠ (they are in 3rd

position, so all the players will suspect that this is possible). If the quality of the suit was a bit stronger, we could see the East players choosing to overcall with 2♣... *but look at all those losers!* The onus will be back on South (who is starting to regret not opening 2♦) since he is going to have to make that bid now !. Not 1NT, but 2♦ (good strength passed hand; good 5-card suit; no support for partner's announced spades)... *since that's where "he lives"*. Where can North go? ... the answer is to Pass 2♦, letting partner play there.

The hand is beautifully laid out for N/S if South declares a diamond contract... the club Ace is in front of declarer's King; dummy's heart honours are situated over the hand with the heart AQ; and the trumps are splitting nicely. Still, South will likely lose a trick in all the non-trump suits; and will not be clairvoyant enough to drop the offside Qx of trumps (losing a trick there too). So... **N/S will often emerge with just +110. That may well turn out to be below average for N/S as spade contracts may score +140.** The N/S players that attempt a NoTrump partscore will not do well on a club lead (it is the defenders' 5-4 fit), so **any minus score N/S will be punished on the matchpoint table.**

Board 8

Board: 8	♠K	
Dealer: W	♥AK8752	
Vul.: None	♦3	
	♠AQ873	♠AQ765
♠J9843		♥J6
♥Q3	N	♦AJ85
♦Q94	W	♣65
♣KJ9	S	
		♠102
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		♥1094
N 1 4 3		♦K10762
S 1 4 3		♣1042
E 2 1		
W 2 1		

8. After North opens with 1♥ [*yes; it's a good hand, but not good enough to open with anything except a one-bid*]; and then East overcalling 1♠, this hand will turn into a battle of the major suits. South would like to raise (the doubleton spade; T9x of trumps and side-suit K on top of the overcaller ... but he's a little short on values...so he should pass). West will raise to 2♠... although he has 5-card support, the rest of the values are scattered... and the hand

lacks the singleton somewhere needed to qualify for the **"Weak Freak" jump to the 4-level**. North should take this opportunity to jump in his second suit (to 4♣) to tell partner of his big playing strength and South will convert back to 4♥.

This is a good spot for N/S... losing just the pointed-suit Aces; and a slow club trick. **A score of +420 should be common but still above average**; some North players may 'steal' a diamond trick by leading towards dummy's King (if East doesn't 'pop up' with his Ace), so **the occasional + 450 may show up. E/W have a good 'save' in 4♠x-2 (paying out just -300 with thoughtful play)** but most pairs will find it just too difficult (perhaps, too dangerous?) to bid that much. **N/S pairs who fail to reach game won't get many matchpoints.**

Board 9

Board: 9	♠K962	
Dealer: N	♥98	
Vul.: EW	♦J9632	
	♣84	♠108754
♠AKQ1065		♥7432
♦AK87	N	♦Q10
♣J95	W	♣AQ
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠AQJ3	4
N	♥J	
S	♦54	17 HCP 8
E 3 1 7 1 1	♣K107632	11
W 3 1 7 1		

9. North and East will certainly Pass in 1st and 2nd seats; and then South will open 1♣ (showing his long suit and hoping to find a spade fit). **West has a VERY good hand; too good in fact to just overcall**, but unsuitable for any level jump in Hearts...so, looks like we will have to **start with Double** (planning to show the “**big double**” type of hand by later showing our good suit). **Yes**, it IS very unusual to make a takeout double of 1♣ with ZERO spades... but our hand is good

enough to be able to convert back to hearts [even if that is at the game level]. We shouldn't give up on slam yet (*just xxxx of heart support, with club shortness will afford us high-level safety; and that exact hand PLUS the Q of Diamonds - amazingly, partner has that too - will give us an almost certain slam!*).

We can't foresee any West letting the N/S pair play this hand, so the **most common contracts will be 4♥+2 (-680 for the N/S)**; some 5♥ contracts as pairs search for slam (or are pushed up there); and a **very rare 6♥ (making just 12 tricks... for a very poor result of -1430 for N/S)**. The hand record shows that you ‘can’ (double dummy – seeing all the hands) make 13 tricks in Hearts! Can you see how?? It involves making use of dummy's QT doubleton of diamonds.

Board 10

Board: 10	♠32	
Dealer: E	♥Q9	
Vul.: All	♦K1095	
	♣AK863	♠Q9876
♠AK105		♥A54
♥1062	N	♦AQ
♦8432	W	♣1042
♣Q5	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠J4	12
N	♥KJ873	
S	♦J76	9 HCP 12
E 2 3	♣J97	7
W 2 3		

10. Most (if not all) Easts will elect to open 1♠ even with just 12 points. **Passing solid 12's with 5-card spade suits is NOT usually a recipe for success at matchpoint pairs**. After South's Pass, West can make a limit raise to 3♠ (a good 10 to 11 total points with 4-card trump support). This jump raise will act to silence North. Opener will surely refuse the invitation leading to a final contract of 3♠ declared by East. After drawing trumps (making sure to win the second round

in the dummy), declarer can take the diamond finesse. A later club ruff in the short trump hand (that's the dummy's hand) will add up to **nine tricks for a score of -140 (relative to N/S)**. This will likely be the flattest board of the session, with an expected ~85% of the E/W field achieving it.

Board 11

Board: 11	♠QJ7	
Dealer: S	♥K108	
Vul.: None	♦J102	
	♣Q983	♠105
♠K82		♥A7654
♥QJ32	N	♦A985
♦Q4	W	♣74
♣K1052	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠A9643	9
N	♥9	
S	♦K763	11 HCP 8
E 3	♣AJ6	12
W 3		

11. This time it is South's opportunity to open 1♠. West should Pass and North will show some values and 3-card trump support with a raise to 2♠ (his scattered nine points are not worth any more than that, and a 1NT response would be a misdescription). **When the bidding is passed back around to West, that player will face a common ‘balancing’ decision... choose to defend, or back his side into the auction**. Although a ‘**balancing double**’ may see partner try

for diamonds (where our limited support may be problematic), it is still the correct action as East may get his side to a playable fit in either clubs or hearts. Assisting West in balancing back in is the knowledge that East can have no more than two spades (and might have only one!). **East's 3♥ response may end the auction; or N/S may compete to 3♠**. Having done their assigned task... pushing up the opponents... East/West should make the final decision to defend if the auction does go past them up to 3♠.

If allowed to play 2♠, N/S will likely make it ... losing 1 spade, 1 heart, 2 diamonds; and a club for +110 (eight tricks). The same five losers will lead to a minus score in 3♠ if they are pushed there (-50

in 3♠). On the other side of the coin, how will E/W fare in their 3♥ contract ?? Looks like they will **do fine in 3♥... four losers will result in nine tricks for E/W (a score of -140 to N/S) as the Heart players can hold their losers to just one in every suit.** They need to arrange to (i) play a low diamond to the Queen before cashing the Ace [this is to avoid having too many losers that they would need to ruff in dummy with limited trump resources]; (ii) lead toward each of dummy's black Kings; and (iii) draw trumps. So, if E/W give up the ship too early they will get a poor score; but if they succeed in jacking up the level so N/S must play at the 3-level, they will be rewarded for their tenacity. As is commonly the case at pairs bridge, plus scores of any sort are the target to shoot for... and that will be reflected in the matchpoint results.

Board 12

Board: 12	♠J5	
Dealer: W	♥62	
Vul.: NS	♦AQ875	♠Q102
♠76	♣A743	♥Q843
♥AK1075		♦10962
♦KJ43	N	♣KQ
♣J8	W E	
	S	
		♠AK9843
		♥J9
		♦
		♣109652

N	♠	♥	♦	♣
N	1	3	1	4
S	1	3	1	4
E				1
W				

12. MatchPoint pairs can be a cruel game sometimes. Here, the natural progression of the auction [**a 1♥ opening by West and some sort of raise response by East – players will select from a slightly heavy single raise or a stretchy limit raise of 3♥**] will 'force' South to enter the auction to show his long spade suit, in case it's a deal where both sides can make game. Over the limit raise selection and South's 3♠ bid, West should elect to pass since his hand is minimum.

If he ever mentions the word 'Diamonds' and then his side competes too much (as in bidding 4♥ over 3♠), then he will hear a resounding penalty double by the North – who has as yet unspoken-of values with the E/W side suit locked up (plus an easy lead in the spade Jack, his partner's suit).

On this competitive deal (it is at least the fourth such hand with a 19-21 split of points that we have had over the last several hands), **it is the Spade side that rules the roost. N/S in their 6-2 fit can make 3♠ for +140** [losing 2 hearts, 1 club and a trump after the natural high hearts cash]; while **E/W can't make much of anything** even though they have a 5-4 heart fit and a slight edge in the Hcp's. All the immediate quick tricks for N/S will cash (as some of the E/W black cards don't carry their weight) and the heart side still has to deal with a diamond suit that is breaking badly offside. **Even undoubled it will be 4♥-3 (for +150 to N/S) and we can foresee some doubled heart contracts going for -300 or -500.** That said, a N/S plus of +140 may not be worth much if E/W normally give away bigger numbers in heart contracts that go down. **Any N/S who summon up a minus score [in 4♠-1 or 5♣-1] won't get many matchpoints at all.**

Board 13

Board: 13	♠A106	
Dealer: N	♥K54	
Vul.: All	♦9542	♠J9
♠Q7542	♣1082	♥A982
♥1073		♦AK8
♦J106	N	♣KQ73
♣J4	W E	
	S	
		♠K83
		♥QJ6
		♦Q73
		♣A965

N	♠	♥	♦	♣
N	1			1
S				1
E	1	1	1	
W	1	1		

13. East's opening 1NT call will allow his partner to show his spades (via a 2♥ transfer) and that 2♠ acceptance will go all pass, ending the auction. The card gods would 'laugh' if West didn't take the opportunity to transfer as East might have 3, 4, or even 5-card support for his Q7542 suit. Here East will have to play the hand well and determine the best way to play the trump suit.

Most often South will lead a heart... **the Queen from his QJ6**

combination. There doesn't seem be any harm in ducking this, even with his good intermediate cards in the attacked suit, so East should let the Queen hold [perhaps South will do something good for E/W (declarer thinks to himself) ... like broach the trumps !?] (please). South can't see any advantage in leading any other suit; so, more hearts it will be! [probably a low one from the remaining J6]. East should win the second trick and make a plan of attack for the hand... the best way to deal with the trumps would be to lead one from the dummy towards the J9 with the intention of playing the 9 if

North plays low [finessing against the TEN of trumps]. **Question?? ... How to get to the dummy?**
Easiest route would be **if South has the ♣A, then a low club towards the J4 will give declarer an entry for the trump attack.**

Even after correctly attacking trumps from the dummy, declarer will face a daunting task. Off two hearts; a club and the two top trumps, East will still have to navigate his way through other hazards (such as stopping North from scoring the dangerous ten of spades via “a trump promotion”; and refusing to take the tempting diamond finesse). **Any East managing to score up a contract of 2♠ for -110 (remember, scores are stated in relation to N/S) will be amply rewarded in the scoring table** as most will not go plus. As long as South stays away from a diamond lead (and who would pick a diamond from Q73 ??), then N/S should have a good chance for a plus score (even against an unlikely contract of 1NT played by East).

Board 14

Board: 14	♠63	
Dealer: E	♥Q9	
Vul.: None	♦AKJ1096	
	♣KJ3	♠AQ875
		♥J
♠KJ104		♦
♥K42		♠Q1096542
♦Q5432		
♣A		
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠92	
N 1 1	♥A1087653	14
S 1 1	♦87	13 HCP 9
E 1 6 4	♣87	4
W 1 6 4		

14. For the second time in the last three deals, we see a set-up with big distributional features. *East doesn't have many high-card points, but he also doesn't have very many 'losers'... and it's very tough to pass with 5-7 shape. Those that do decide to open should take the opportunity to bid out their shape by starting with 1♣* (they can later bid spades a couple of times to get information across to partner). **Many Souths will intrude with a preemptive jump overcall**

of 3♥... not the best shape (2-7-2-2 is the worst distribution), but it has reasonable “spot” cards and limited defense – just the heart Ace. **West will surely make a negative double** (trying to find spades) ... although there may be the occasional player grabbing the captaincy by just bidding 3NT. That negative double will delight East; whereas a 3NT bid might cause him some concern.

North will wonder what's going on – after all, he has the table's best hand (in terms of Hcp's) – but should still take the opportunity to make a **“lead directing bid”** of 4♦ (“partner; please lead these...but go back to 4♥ in the bidding”). On another deal, with just loads of diamonds which had no heart support, North would have just two choices; Pass, or a committal leap to a 5♦ game all by himself. **Here East will feel he must show the spade 'fit' – they have a 5-4 or perhaps 5-5 fit – even if North is jamming the bidding.** He will be tempered a little seeing a losing heart and possessing neither of the top two clubs. Declarer, in 4♠, will find that everything lies swimmingly... trumps split well and two club ruffs in the West hand will establish that suit. **E/W 4♠+2, scoring -480 for N/S will be a very common result.** Few (if any) will make it to slam; but **it is possible that some will miss game if they elect not to open the distributional East hand.** Stopping off to double N/S in a 5-level heart contract will result in just +300 (down 2, not beating their available spade game score); or a fortunate +500 if they additionally manage a club ruff, or divine an early diamond ruff.

Board 15

Board: 15	♠732	
Dealer: S	♥A	
Vul.: NS	♦86	
	♠AKQJ954	♠KQ95
		♥KJ93
♠AJ864		♦KJ5
♥Q1084		♠107
♦Q7		
♣83		
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠10	
N 2 3 3	♥7652	14
S 2 3 3	♦A109432	9 HCP 13
E 2 1	♣62	4
W 2 1		

15. South and West should both pass to start the auction (South not suitable for a weak 2♦ preempt and West not strong enough for an opening 1♠ bid). North will initiate things with 1♣ and East can then make a takeout double. South can (and many will) jump to 2♦ to show his limited hand with his long suit (a “weak jump response in competition”). West has choices now; make a voluntary “freebid” of 2♠ with his values in the majors; jump to 3♠ (a bit of an overbid as the diamond Queen doesn't rate to pull its' weight); or make a “responsive double” (showing length

in the two remaining suits... if that is in the partnership's competitive arsenal). We think most players will opt for the simple 2♠ call. North can rebid his long suit with 3♣ (knowing South is likely to have only one or two spades).

The ball returns to East. He has the promised support (remembering that he made a takeout double earlier) but he has sterile shape and doesn't have any Aces. We guess that most will cave to temptation and make a competitive 3♠ call. This will float around to North who may re-compete with 4♣ (hoping for just a singleton spade with South). This should go all Pass; with **the final contract most-often being 4♣ by North**. East has a choice on opening lead... the spade K to prepare the way to cash some tricks; or a trump (attempting to stop any dummy ruffs of spades, which looks like the only place that declarer can manufacture tricks). Those that select the spade King may hear the echo of 'the Robot's voice' from the 60's American sci-fi TV series "**Lost in Space**" ("**Danger, Will Robinson... danger, danger!**") as 4♣ cannot now be beaten...in fact, it will take a trump switch to prevent North from scoring 11 tricks.

In the scoring, any E/W pair allowed to play in 3♠ making will get a fine score. In 4♣, E/W can be doubled and beaten a couple of tricks for +300 to N/S...but most defenses will garner just +50 for down one. E/W pairs who defend any club contract and don't find the necessary trump leads will see common N/S scores of +110; or +130 (or maybe even an odd +150, if the defense never leads a trump). **N/S will need a plus score greater than +100 to score well.**

Board 16

Board: 16	♠762
Dealer: W	♥A9
Vul.: EW	♦73
♠KJ	♣KJ8652
♥QJ864	♠98543
♦94	♥52
♣A743	♦K85
	♣Q109
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠AQ10
N 4 2 3 4 2	♥K1073
S 4 2 3 4 3	♦AQJ1062
E	
W	

16. This hand is difficult to predict, as N/S can only play NoTrump (arguably their best spot; but better from South than North) if North manages to say the word "clubs" at some point in the auction... and it's possible that North will never bid. Many Wests will open the bidding with 1♥ [that's a very scruffy 11, so many ... including your beloved analyst... would choose pass instead). Then East can put together a 1♠ response (fortified by the 5-card suit). What can South

do now except overall 2♦ with his good suit. We don't see anyone else bidding and it should go all pass. Here, a final contract of 2♦ by South.

IF West does NOT open the bidding, the auction will have a totally different flavour. *It will be left up to South (in 4th seat) to start with 1♦. West will overcall 1♥, and the North player (trading on their passed hand status) will bid 2♣ (usually 5+ clubs with 8-11 points).* Now East can go quietly (as he has no reason to bid). South will have a problem; his second best suit is gone but still it's a very good hand that has a 1-loser diamond suit (16 good points plus those about to be delivered by North). **I can see a rebid of 3NT coming from South, planning to use tricks from the pointed suits with a hope that North can contribute a little something here and there.** North will have no reason to continue past 3NT.

Against South's 3NT, West will usually lead 4th best from his suit. Using the "Rule of Eleven" South can see that the heart suit will furnish BOTH entries that he needs to attack diamonds. After the heart nine wins the first trick, declarer can take his first diamond finesse against the King; cross to the heart Ace and finesse again. **Time for a trick count... 3 hearts (the 9, A, and K); 6 diamonds, and the spade Ace. That's ten... 3NT+1 for +430.** Good for declarer that he doesn't need to play on clubs since he can't lead them (being void of clubs). **Scores for various N/S contracts will range from +110 (South in a diamond partscore making just three) up to +400; +430; or maybe even +460 (for NT**

games making 9, 10 or 11 tricks). Any N/S minus will be punished with a decidedly below-average position in the matchpoint table.

Board 17

Board: 17	♠KJ72	
Dealer: N	♥K7	
Vul.: None	♦Q763	
	♣Q94	♠108
♠AQ6543		♥AQ4
♥109652	W N E	♦9542
♦J	W S	♣10753
♣J		
	♠9	11
N 4 4 4	♥J83	HCP 6
S 4 4 4	♦AK108	8
E 1	♣AK862	15
W 1		

17. After both North and East pass, **South will have the first bidding decision**. He could (i) open 1♣, planning to rebid 2♣ to show an unbalanced hand with long clubs, or (ii) could elect to open one of either minor planning to rebid 1NT, if North should respond 1♠ [probably a poor choice since the hand is outside the range for that rebid – 12-14 points – and would also show a balanced shape, which this isn't]. If planning to get both his suits in, he could select from (iii)

try 1♣ first, intending to 'reverse' next time to 2♦ [but, the hand is not quite enough for that strength-showing call, since it should have 16+ points], or (iv) **[our choice]** open 1♦ with a plan to rebid 2♣ over the expected 1♠ response which will at least show 9+ of our cards (and is misdescriptive just by the club 2 'transmuting' back and forth between clubs/diamonds). This choice of (iv) 1♦, "checks the most boxes" and partner will have good info after the second round of bidding which can aid in making further decisions. *Of course, our planned auction is interrupted by an interloping West player* (who will either make a 1♠ overcall; or perhaps utilize a "two-of-the-same minor" **Michaels Q-bid**). It's our partner who comes to the rescue with a natural 2NT (= stoppers in their suits; balanced with ~11 points). That call we can raise to game after adding up the points (our 15 and partner's 11 = 26; so enough for game). **The final contract in this sequence is 3NT played by North.**

North will get some help after East's first lead... be that a spade if West has overcalled 1♠, or perhaps a heart from East's **AQ4** if West has made a "Michaels Q-bid". With careful planning, declarer can pick up both minor suits for winners (five in clubs + four in diamonds) added to the trick the defender helped set-up at trick one to get to at least 10 tricks; **3NT+1 for +430. That should be a decent result** as only **a couple of E/W's will overreach and find that the 'save' in 4♠x is too costly... down three tricks for +500 to N/S.**

Those N/S pairs who don't reach game will regret one or two of their bidding choices along the way. They shouldn't get many matchpoints for just making partscore.

Board 18

Board: 18	♠K53	
Dealer: E	♥KJ82	
Vul.: NS	♦A1053	
	♣43	♠A984
♠10		♥65
♥973	W N E	♦K97
♦QJ42	W S	♣Q765
♣AK1092		
	♠QJ762	11
N 3 1	♥AQ104	HCP 9
S 3 1	♦86	10
E 1 4	♣J8	10
W 1 4		

18. It would take "a conspiracy of silence" to see this deal passed out, but it might happen at a couple of tables. We think that North is the one most likely to open (in 4th seat, with 1♦) ... but West 'might' open 1♣ [for the lead] and then North could hazard a light takeout double. Let's take a quick look at the short auction that is likely if North starts with 1♦. East will pass again and South will respond 1♠. If this gets past a non-vigilant West, North should also pass (after all, he has

opened light and 1♠ seems as good a spot as any to 'set-up camp'). **"Don't encourage partner (by raising) if you don't want them to bid."** We can see some pairs ending in just 1♠ (N/S). On auctions where West opens with 1♣, the auction will be more competitive. After North's takeout double, East will select from a 'light' Redouble, 1♠, 1NT or 2♣ (we like 2♣ best of these choices). We have found that if one of the options is to raise partner's suit, then that is often the best route. **South's action will depend on what East does... 1♠ over Redouble (keeping the hearts in reserve); 2♣ cuebid**

(showing both majors) if East bids 1NT; a 'responsive double' (still for takeout) if East raises to 2♣; or introduce the hearts via 2♥ (if East bids 1♠). There! ... all the bases covered.

It will be stubborn E/W's that won't let go of this hand...we see them subsiding by 3♣ (no further) as **N/S will have to play well to make 3♠ (normally they will only manage +110...** losing 1 diamond, 2 clubs, and a couple of trumps). So, **a small plus defending spades to the tune of E/W +50 will appear often. E/W can make +130 in a club partscore but those that manage to declare the hand, whether they come out with +110 (or +130), should be on the good side of the matchpoint ledger.**

Board 19

Board: 19	♠9732	
Dealer: S	♥KQ63	
Vul.: EW	♦KJ2	
	♣108	♠QJ10
♠A86		♥A1095
♥J874	N	♦A10
♦65	W	♣K543
♣QJ76	E	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠K54	9
N 1	♥2	
S 1	♦Q98743	8 HCP 14
E 1 1 3 4	♣A92	9
W 1 1 3 4		

19. The **tenor of this auction depends on whether South decides to open with a weak 2♦ call** (it is within the point range and has the correct length of suit; but the values are in strange places and it has just a moderate suit). **If they do, North will raise 'obstructively' to 3♦ and hopefully East will enter with a takeout double, prepared to take his lumps if it doesn't work out (one can't be that easily pushed around by a simple 2♦-P-3♦ sequence!).** West will luckily have a 4-

card major to bid. His 3♥ call should end the auction. While N/S can manoeuvre a club ruff against hearts, it's a tough nut to crack... **so with all the heart honours onside, and the spade King unexpectedly in the South hand, many E/W's will emerge with 10 tricks for -170 in relation to N/S** (some E/W pairs will manage just nine for -140). **As there are a plethora of losers for N/S if left alone in 3♦... they must lose 1 Heart, 3 Spades, a slow (but unlikely to vanish) solitary Club trick; and the trump Ace... that's six losers (and it is only the vulnerability that saves them as they go minus two) (3♦[S]-2 for -100).** Still, that should serve them well if many E/W's score bigger numbers in heart partials.

Board 20

Board: 20	♠AKQ965	
Dealer: W	♥KQ3	
Vul.: All	♦J10	
	♣93	♠10742
♠1087432		♥K876
♥86	N	♣J7542
♦943	W	
♣K10	E	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠J	15
N 6 6 6 5 5	♥AJ95	
S 6 6 6 6 5	♦AQ52	3 HCP 4
E	♣AQ86	18
W		

20. This deal will show a definite lack of interference bidding from E/W, so it will all focus on how well N/S can communicate their difficult holdings to each other. North will open with a simple 1♠. After South's 2♣ response, North can pick **a jump to 3♠ (good, long suit – 1-loser or fewer – and at least an Ace in value above a minimum opening)** as best describing their holding. Since the singleton spade Jack will now be enough support; and recognizing

that North may have difficulty in cue-bidding Aces (and Kings), South can simplify things with a Blackwood bid. Many players nowadays (even at lower experience levels) are used to Roman Key-Card responses... and will understand **North's 5♠ response as "2 keys + the trump Queen" – meaning 'spades'**. South can explore more with 5NT (stating that all the key-cards are accounted for) and asking for 'other values' (?) When North bids 6♥ (definite values in that suit), the last decision will be up to South... 6♠ or 6NT?? As North doesn't seem to have values in clubs or diamonds, South should go with the contract that 'protects' his hand from the opening lead. That will also give him time to make a plan for tricks. Since North will be declarer in spades, but South will play NoTrump... South should elect 6NT.

It's unclear what opening lead will be made [perhaps a diamond from 943 so to not give anything away that declarer couldn't do on his own]. *Cashing the spade Jack will give some hint as to how many tricks are available in that suit, and South can plan from that point. Best to cross to dummy with a heart and finesse in diamonds attempting to build the trick count [if all had followed under the*

spade Jack, declarer could, when first in the dummy, cash one high spade to check on tricks in that suit – there is a costless small club to pitch from hand. **After taking a couple of diamond finesses without loss, South can count tricks... 4 top spades, 4 hearts, 3 for sure diamonds, and a club seem to total 12 tricks.** Even if South were to initially go another route (believing that all the spades were tricks – he will, of course, find the suit is not running when one opponent shows out as he cashes the Jack), that would only be 12 (6 spades, 4 hearts, and the minor suit Aces). The diamond continuing finesse will add more to the trick total than would a simple club finesse, when spades prove to NOT run. **A N/S score of +1440 for 6NT= will be a TOP result, and beat those in a plain 6♠= where 12 tricks can still be made (but for just +1430).** Pity those in 7♠ which can't be made due to the foul break (it's not a horrible grand slam; just not very good... needing a minor finesse for a King; plus a trump break). **Those that only reach game (hopefully not that many) may get a couple of matchpoints depending on how many high-level declarers don't make their contracts.**

Board 21

Board: 21	♠Q542
Dealer: N	♥983
Vul.: NS	♦KJ85
♠10	♣86
♥KJ7642	♠AJ8
♦76	♥Q10
♣AJ105	♦AQ1092
	♣Q73
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠K9763
N	♥A5
S	♦43
E 5 1 6 5 5	♣K942
W 5 1 6 5 5	

21. East should (and most often, will) open with 1NT (15-17). South will contemplate overcalling 2♠ [but shouldn't since he has just a 5-card suit of suspect quality while his outside cards are just as good on defense as they are on offense]. **West will either (i) transfer to hearts with a Jacoby transfer and then raise opener to game; or (ii) get to game immediately via a "Texas transfer" if that device is available.**

Not strong enough to go further opposite the limited 1NT, West

should subside in game. **E/W have arrived... 4♥; most likely played by East.**

Matchpoint pairs play is often about getting the smallest minus (being careful NOT to lose tricks) and here South should be wary about underleading one of his Kings (especially around and into a strong NT opening hand) as a potential trick which might score with that King may never come back. **We would feel South's pain and not envy any of his lead choices.** After due consideration, we think it best to lead our doubleton diamond (but many will pick their 4th best spade). Ace of trumps (to see the dummy) and then a second trump also has merit.

With all our good trump 'intermediates' (the 10 thru the King) we should endeavour to soon draw trumps, trying to prevent an opposition ruff of one of our side-suit winners with a small trump. If the opponents have chosen to lead trumps early, we can use one of the Q/10 to take an early club finesse (the opponents aren't likely to get a club ruff since South didn't lead one initially – if he had short clubs he probably would have started that suit). When in the long trump hand, declarer can draw the remaining small trump(s) (**note: Count Trumps!**). Cross to the 1NT bidder's hand (whether that be dummy or declarer) with a spade to the Ace, and lead another low club towards the original **AJT5** of clubs hand... and finesse again. **Decision time!** ... *if you think that clubs were originally 3-3 (so that the King is tumbling down); then cash the Ace.* *If you think that clubs were more likely to have been 4-2 originally (and here the opponents' count signals may tell you something), then play diamonds for three winners (plus no losers!), to pitch away your last club* – the way to do that is a "double finesse" in diamonds playing North for both the King and the Jack). Low to the diamond TEN; return to the other hand with a spade ruff...then finesse diamonds again. Wow; that's a player!

As most E/W's will be in 4♥, the number of tricks declarer manages will determine their matchpoint score. **4♥+1 for -450 will be normal; 4♥ just making (ten tricks) will be below average; while 4♥+2 for -480 (playing clubs and diamonds to perfection) will result in a VERY good score.** Any E/W's that languish in a partscore; or defend an undoubled N/S spade partial won't get many matchpoints at all.

Board 22

Board: 22	♠A53	
Dealer: E	♥J	
Vul.: EW	♦QJ73	
	♣A6543	♠94
	♥AK532	♥9874
	♦AK	♦1086542
	♣KQ102	♣7
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠KQ10872	12
N 1 3 2	♥Q106	HCP 0
S 2 3 2	♦9	20
E 3 1	♣J98	8
W 3 1		

22. **An almost textbook weak 2♠ bid for South... good suit; some shape; strong offense but limited defense.** What can West do but make a takeout double?? ... hoping to describe his hand on the next round. If East were to respond 3♦ [some values (maybe ?!) plus diamond length], West will be almost honour bound to bid his hearts next to show the reason for their initial double (but he has certainly owned a better suit now and then). **Whoa, you say; that** heart suit

has the **AK!** (**yes, it does...** but not much after that; and it's just five cards in length). [Using the **Lebensohl convention** here – where East's 2NT call followed by a new suit shows a different level of values from a direct response in a suit at the 3-level – cannot be underappreciated]. When West bids hearts, East may feel he has been freed from the responsibility of carrying on with the auction and he might then say PASS (but may also have some nagging regrets... soon to be dispelled... that his 4-card support with a side singleton might be just enough for a heart game).

A direct raise to 3♠ by North over the takeout double will end up causing insolvable problems for West when the bidding comes back to him. All of West's choices will then seem fraught with danger. Most (I fear) will attempt a solution by bidding 4♥ next... but be none too pleased about it. Even after catching a 'suitable' dummy (*pun intended*), two rounds of spades off the bat will leave West with little chance in his 4♥ contract. **We see many 4♥-1 (+100 for N/S).** There is, however, a pot-of-gold with this rainbow since **if N/S are allowed to play spades, there will be many 3♠= (+140); or even some making +530 (if they happen to be doubled).** So going for a small minus in a heart contract won't be so bad.

Board 23

Board: 23	♠75432	
Dealer: S	♥Q65	
Vul.: All	♦K3	
	♣654	♠AK10
	♥A83	♥J10942
	♦J976542	♦10
	♣J	♣K1087
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠QJ6	5
N 1 1 2	♥K7	HCP 11
S 1 1 2	♦AQ8	6
E 2 2	♣AQ932	18
W 2 2		

23. **Most Souths will open 1♣, rightly believing their hand too strong for a 1NT start.** Being vulnerable West should Pass and North should strongly consider that action too... some five-point hands that are burdened with a really poor suit just aren't worthy of a response. While it could be the winning decision to pass out (and defend) 1♣, we think a majority of the East players will happily "balance" with a 1♥ call to get their longest suit into play... they certainly have enough

high-card strength for that action.

South will be glad to be allowed back in the bidding with his multi-dimensional hand. Best action is surely "Double": a takeout of hearts. West hasn't got enough to compete (afraid that a raise to 2♥ would show more than he actually has). North will get the spade suit back into play with a 1♠ response to the double. South (remembering that his partner passed initially) will pass 1♠. Action back on the West player, who now certainly has enough of a fit and must try to push N/S up one-level... so a 2♥ call it is. **Hoping that his side cards will solidify something in the South hand and bolstered by his own long spades [he does, after all, have a 'maximum' for his passed-hand status], North may push on with 2♠ [and how right he is as 2♥ by E/W is virtually impossible to beat].** Those E/W's who are allowed to declare 2♥ will usually manage eight tricks for -110 to N/S. The defense to 2♠ is troublesome and convoluted...so some declarers will make it for +110 and others will find the timing too tough and go down one (for -100).

Board 24

Board: 24	♠A96	
Dealer: W	♥AK1084	
Vul.: None	♦	
♠QJ874	♠J10642	♠K1032
♥2		♥J73
♦K9752	N	♦Q83
♣83	W	♣KQ5
	E	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠5	12
N 2 6 1 6	♥Q965	
S 2 6 1 6	♦AJ1064	6 HCP 11
E 1	♣A97	11
W 1		

24. With a preponderance of the high cards, and with no E/W contract making past the one-level, *N/S will march on to a heart game* (some may even try for slam). Competition by E/W in their 5-4 spade fit may cause the ‘heart’ side a brief headache... but to get into the bidding, West would have to enter after 1♥-P-2♦ and that player doesn’t have a particularly good suit.

The N/S auction might cut another track if South initially responds with a “Jacoby 2NT forcing raise” – the hand is worth a minimum of 13-15 support points and it does have four-card trump support. **Even after North’s shortness-showing 3♦ rebid, it will take two pairs of ‘rose-coloured glasses’ to push the partnership beyond the game level.** Even a “splinter” response of 3♠ right off the bat might not be enough impetus. *With most pairs in 4♥, the chart will be determined by total tricks made.* Declarers that recognize the lumstrength of the ‘spot cards’ (the J, T and nine enabling finesse positions) in the two combined club holdings will get to play their side suit for maximum tricks. *There will be many 4♥+1 (+450); and a few 4♥+2 (+480) results. Anyone getting to slam N/S, and making it, for 6♥= (+980) will likely garner all the matchpoints.*

Those N/S pairs who don’t reach game will regret one or two of their bidding choices along the way. They shouldn’t get many matchpoints for just making partscore.

Board 25

Board: 25	♠A98	
Dealer: N	♥K6	
Vul.: EW	♦K1096	
♠Q6542	♠AK92	♠J
♥104		♥AQ53
♦A873	N	♦QJ4
♣106	W	♠J8543
	E	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠K1073	17
N 3 2 3 2 2	♥J9872	
S 3 2 3 2 1	♦52	6 HCP 11
E	♣Q7	6
W		

25. North will open 1NT with his good balanced hand, and the next decision will be up to South. *With only six points, but with promising majors, South could transfer to hearts and then pass (perhaps missing a better spade contract); or make a Stayman 2♣ bid to hunt down a fit in either major (hoping the auction ‘times-out’ well later).* Most of these ‘hopeful’ Stayman auctions will self-propel themselves into 3NT (as North – with a prime 17 points – can hardly do anything less,

expecting South to contribute at least eight high cards). It will take an almost divine guess in hearts for North to make the NoTrump game – leading the King and then playing to the Jack next time to crush out the Ten. **Those N/S’s in a NT partial will do well by scoring either eight or nine tricks;** those in a spade partscore may find the bad break difficult to overcome. *Easy to see scores on both sides of the ledger... any plus score in your direction should be an okay result.* Transferring to hearts (as South) and then passing leads to a contract very difficult to beat; and will ensure that your side goes plus in the scoring table.

Board 26

Board: 26	♠762	
Dealer: E	♥AQJ	
Vul.: All	♦AQ2	
♠A105	♠KQ103	♠K8
♥K64		♥10853
♦KJ3	N	♦10976
♠A742	W	♠J96
	E	
	S	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠QJ943	18
N 1 3 1 1	♥972	
S 1 3 1 1	♦854	15 HCP 4
E	♣85	3
W		

26. *With all the gadgets that partnerships utilize against the opponents’ strong 1NT openings, it’s time to test an old fashioned one... ‘Double’ ... telling partner that you have a good hand* [undefined in strength or shape, but always with significant high cards]. When West opens 1NT (after two passes), **North can say ‘Double’.** *Where can East go ??* The answer is nowhere; he should stay put, what with his few high cards and little shape. **Now the real**

question ?? Should South sit out the double since he knows that partner may be leading many times from his own hand (often to his detriment)?? Our preference: treat the intervenor’s double as if they had a good strong NT (although often that hand will have more high cards and not always be a

balanced pattern). So, utilize transfers (or occasionally use 2♣ as weak Stayman) opposite the doubling hand to search out a safer haven. *Here South can bid 2♥ in response to the double “as a transfer” saying they have 5+card length (in spades) but (normally) few high cards.*

A trump suit gives your side the normal trump vs. non-trump advantages... and HERE it may also enable the stronger hand to enter the dummy with ruffs in order to lead through the known strong hand of West. No need to lead away from North’s high cards when we can arrange to lead toward them instead. Finesses now become possible. With all of West’s high cards trapped in front of North’s power, 2♠ will be very difficult to beat. A contract of 1NT by West might go down depending on the lead North selects. 1NT by NORTH might also make (but is a lot more difficult to manage than a spade partscore).

We can see several different contracts and declarers popping up on the score sheet. **2♠= (or 2♠+1) by N/S will score very well. It will only be beaten if West declares 1NTx and goes -1 (+200 for N/S).** A rare E/W pair may find a way to get a plus score which will ensure them of a good matchpoint result.

Board 27

Board: 27	♠ 10
Dealer: S	♥ A J 7 4 3
Vul.: None	♦ 5 3
♠ K 2	♣ A J 10 8 7
♥ 10 8	♠ Q 8 7 5 4
♦ A K J 10 7 2	♥ K Q 6 5
♣ Q 6 4	♦ 4
	♣ K 5 2
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠ A J 9 6 3
N	♥ 9 2
S	♦ Q 9 8 6
E 1 2 2 1	♣ 9 3
W 2 2 2 1	

27. E/W have the preponderance of the high cards (23 versus 17), but with both of their longest suit-fits breaking poorly, it may be a ‘strain’ (bridge lingo for a suit or NT selection; pun intended) to get a plus score. It will be difficult for E/W to stop low enough (and not get carried away by their enthusiasm in the bidding). After South’s pass, West will open 1♦; North will usually overcall 1♥ (but an ‘Unusual 2NT overcall’ – here showing Hearts + Clubs – is also a reasonable

choice). East (after 1♥ by North) will chirp in with 1♠. South, hiding his surprise, will pass and West should rebid 2♦. East will often take another call... we expect it will normally be 2NT; and that should end the auction. So there will be **many in 2NT**; but with an **occasional outlier in a diamond partial from West**. We don’t see many N/S pairs getting too high nor into much trouble. If South listens to his partner, he will get off to the ♥9 lead (today, proving not to be best, as it will help build up a third stopper in the suit for East). Declarer may still have difficulty scrambling enough tricks (one way is to take an early diamond finesse; set-up the suit; and rely on South having the spade Ace to get back to the dummy). **Any plus score E/W will do well, with +120 and +110 (for that side) leading the list.**

There may be **lots of down ones in contracts for -50 since 3♦ contracts have the added danger of a spade ruff.**

Board 28

Board: 28	♠
Dealer: W	♥ Q 7
Vul.: NS	♦ A J 8 7 3
♠ A K 10 9 6 5 4 3	♣ A Q 9 5 3 2
♥ 10 5 4	♠ Q 8 2
♦ 5	♥ K J 9 6 2
♣ 7	♦ K
	♣ K J 10 8
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠ J 7
N	♥ A 8 3
S	♦ Q 10 9 6 4 2
E 4 3	♣ 6 4
W 4 3	

28. **Almost all Wests will open with 4♠. We can’t see any reason not to do so.** It has; the correct length; good suit quality (able to be led by either partner); and fulfills a real need to preempt away the opponents’ space. **North should overcall 4NT (minors, since both suits are similar in strength) – if that is in the ‘tool set’.** This route will let North describe ten (or, as here, eleven) of his cards. This 4NT also shows both suits, whereas a 5♣ overcall would transmit far less

information to their partner. The opponent in the **East seat should carefully consider their next two actions before making a call over 4NT.** If thinking of making a Double (to show good values), one must consider if they would be willing to defend 5♦ (likely doubled) if that action comes back around the table. The opponents are surely not about to pick Clubs (when East has such a disparity between the minor suits). **IF East decides that he would then want to bid 5♠, then he should do so right away**

before North and South 'get together' in the auction. Passing 4NT (or doubling it) will allow South to freely bid 5♦ [which can't be beaten]. Then, after East's planned – but too late – runout to 5♠, either N/S player can push on to 6♦! If played by North, 6♦ can't be touched [as the honour combinations in both ROUND suits (Hearts and Clubs) are situationally protected from an opening lead]. When 6♦ is played by South only an initial Heart lead from West can defeat it [and, let's face it, how likely is that ??]. West will far more often lead a high spade honour; or perhaps (misguidedly !?) his non-trump suit singleton.

Here it is whichever side wins the contract [E/W with its' eleven card – 8-3 – spade fit, or N/S with their eleven card – 5-6 – diamond fit] that will usually win most of the matchpoints. With contracts ranging from 4♠ (E/W) [against a nervous N/S that don't bid at all] through 5/6♦ N/S [perhaps even on to a solitary 6♠ E/W], there will be big numbers on both sides of the scoresheet. 4♠ = (-420; losing just three Aces); 5♦ = or 5♦+1 (+600 or +620) for N/S; or the rare 6♦ = (+1370). Some declarers (in just a few diamond contracts) will go down; as will E/W's who play spades at the 5-level or higher. **Pairs will need a big number (game or better) to get most of the matchpoints.** The play in 6♦ is all about long-range planning (remembering that declarer is trying to make 12 tricks – not 13). Plan to set up the long clubs (the 5th and 6th ones) as tricks on which to pitch heart losers from the South hand. Ducking a club early in the play [after winning the first trick and crashing down the 1-1 trumps] will let declarer succeed against any 3-2 or 4-1 club break.

Board 29

Board: 29	♠ 765	
Dealer: N	♥ A98	
Vul.: All	♦ 109852	
	♣ A8	♠ AK32
	♥ Q6	♥ 1032
	♦ AJ63	♦ 4
	♣ Q7654	♣ KJ932
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠ QJ109	8
N 1 1 2	♥ KJ754	9
S 1 1 2	♦ KQ7	HCP 11
E 4	♣ 10	12
W 4		

29. After East opens 1♣ in second position, South has a rather standard 'takeout double' (a better bid than overcalling 1♥ as it gets most of the hand's distribution into the description). West will raise to 2♣; and North, asked to name a trump suit, will surely take this opportunity to mention his choice – 2♦. East wants to outcompete the N/S diamonds, so can rebid 3♣ to take up room [there are a lot of forcing bids that East could make...but re-raising clubs is NOT one of those... it doesn't ask a limited West to keep going in the auction]. Such a re-raise is used just to push the opponents up a level.

East's 3♣ call will float around to North. With a couple of defensive tricks in the Aces but just a poor five-card suit (and unsure how well South fits diamonds), **North will likely 'give up the ship'.** An E/W contract of 3♣ will be quite common; it should lose only 2 hearts and the trump Ace for -130 (for N/S). Those N/S pairs who are not pushed past 2♦ will find success as they will lose only 3 spades (two high honours plus a ruff) and West's two natural trump tricks to (scoring +90 for N/S). North's losing heart (he would have one without divine guidance) will eventually go away on the established high spade in the South hand.

Board 30

Board: 30	♠ 1076	
Dealer: E	♥ AQ73	
Vul.: None	♦ 52	
	♣ Q1082	♠ AQ
	♥ KJ52	♥ 1094
	♥ J8652	♦ AJ73
	♦ Q6	♣ A965
	♣ J4	
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠ 9843	8
N 1	♥ K	9
S 1 1 2 1	♦ K10984	HCP 15
E 1 1 2 1	♣ K73	9
W 1 1 2 1		

30. **East has a clear 1NT opening**, but further decisions in the auction rest mainly with West. That hand has eight high-card points (but all of us have seen much better eight-counts than this one !). **West could (i) transfer to hearts, and then either pass or carry-on with 2NT; or (ii) bid Stayman [searching out any major fit], deciding later what to do if opener responds with a major-denying 2♦ bid.** Some, after Stayman and the no-major 2♦ reply, would next bid 2♥; while others would ignore that moth-eaten suit and rebid 2NT. We might prefer the second sequence,

hoping that our ‘minor honours’ in the minors [look, another pun] will pull their full weight. **We can see contracts of 2♥ or 2NT on these cards...**but the auctions should run out of steam before getting anywhere close to game. Even on South’s quite natural diamond lead (usually the ten from the interior sequence), we don’t see a road to eight tricks in 2NT due to the ‘blockage’ in the spade suit. 2♥ is more likely to succeed; losing a trick in each minor plus 3 trump tricks. N/S pairs shouldn’t get involved in the hand except as end-of-the-auction defenders. **Anyone making 2NT E/W (-120) should be really pleased, as it will edge out those in 2♥ (making only -110).** Some E/W declarers will surely go minus (usually just down one for +50 to N/S). After all that action over the last bunch of hands, this one turns out to be quite calm.

Board 31

Board: 31	♠QJ843	
Dealer: S	♥K106	
Vul.: NS	♦AKQ8	
	♣Q	♠652
♠10		♥7
♥AJ9842		♦642
♦1093		♠A86543
♣K109		
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠AK97	17
N 3 3 1 3	♥Q53	
S 3 3 1 3	♦J75	8 HCP 4
E 2	♣J72	11
W 2		

31. After a first-seat pass by South, *West has a garden-variety weak 2-bid (2♥)*. North has a nice hand (but not compatible with a takeout double due to the club shortage), so will just overcall their five-card suit (2♠). East will normally not say anything. South will consider how high to raise the spades (discounting the heart Queen as not worth very much). **We would just up-the-ante by going on to 3♠ (invitationally showing our support), but lots of players overbid in**

situations like this... so, we expect many in today’s game will be bolder and raise to 4♠. That contract can suffer a cruel fate...but **ONLY** if E/W are careful defensively ... and are on the same page of the defenders’ textbook. East will lead his singleton, **West will win and give his a partner a ruff... by leading the 2 of hearts !** East can see that a defensive DIAMOND trick can’t run away, so this should be a “**suit-preference**” return by West. West, who is known to have few, if any, spades ... with which he might ruff the second round of clubs; so this “**request for CLUBS... the lowest heart sent over for the ruff indicating the lowest-ranked suit**” should show a High Honour in CLUBS (that could only mean the King, from East’s perspective). East should “**underlead**” his club Ace to West’s King for another ruff... and only then should the defenders try to cash a second club winner.

Without that key underlead, many of the N/S pairs will make their game (4♠= +620). There may also be **some North’s who don’t make it to game; they will only make +140 or +170 (solely dependent on the defense against them)**. Once in a while an odd E/W pair will get to play clubs (usually at the game level; doubled and going down) ... 5♣x-3 (+500 for N/S; which may score well for N/S if a sufficient number of pairs receive a minus in 4♠).

Board 32

Board: 32	♠86543	
Dealer: W	♥AQ10	
Vul.: EW	♦32	
	♣KJ10	♠7
♠KJ10	♣1093	♥74
♥K95		♦K1098765
♦QJ4		♠AJ8
♣7652		
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠AQ92	6
N 1 4 4 1	♥J8632	
S 1 4 4 1	♦A	10 HCP 8
E 1	♣KQ4	16
W 1		

32. Vulnerable against non-vulnerable, in 3rd seat East will see two passes to his hand. He should jump at the chance to open 2♦ [yes, **admittedly it’s not classic...** but East has just ONE small spade and only TWO small hearts AND is opposite a passed hand... **so, Get in there and Bid... don’t wait and don’t dream!**]. **It’s only the bad vulnerability that prevents us from advocating a 3♦ start.** South will make a takeout double. Now West should raise to 3♦ – making it

more difficult for N/S to exchange information. **West shouldn’t ‘force the issue’ too much, since – with the takeout double on his right – he may have enough to beat an enemy slam all by himself** (just look at those defensively well-positioned major-suit cards that he holds). North just has to bid now and after hearing that, South can start to visualize a game in Spades (and some Norths may take the pressure off their partner by bidding 4♠ instead of just 3♠!). **South can foresee that Kxxx(x) of**

spades and the club Ace will give game an excellent chance, so he should carry on to game even if North just makes a 3♠ call.

On the given layout **4♠ is 'cold'**... since the heart King is 'onside'... losing just two 'offside' winning trumps and the club Ace [it's situated well for declarer; in front of South's KQ4 of clubs]. Attempting to establish a diamond winner on defense turns out to be a lost cause as South has 'absolute control' (the singleton Ace) in the diamond suit. **4♠= (+420) should matchpoint above average as some N/S's may miss game.** The only better results for N/S will come by defending over-reaching E/W's in diamonds at the four or five-level (all doubled... when E/W didn't give the adverse vulnerability enough respect). Contracts of 4♦x or 5♦x should all go down at least two or three tricks (for plus scores of +500 or +800 for N/S).

Board 33

Board: 33	♠43	
Dealer: N	♥K10	
Vul.: None	♦KQ105	
♠AQJ92	♣AQ987	♠106
♥A742		♥QJ95
♦J92	N	♦874
♣3	W	♣J642
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠K875	14
N 3 3 3	♥863	
S 4 4 4	♦A63	12 HCP 4
E 1 2	♣K105	10
W 1 2		

33. North will certainly open the bidding... be that with 1♦, intending to rebid 1NT if partner responds 1♠, or with 2♣ after a 1♥ response. We don't relish opening 1♣ and rebidding 2♣ showing an unbalanced hand with 5+ clubs, since it doesn't describe as many of the hand's features as does the 1♦-1M-2♣ sequence. As for making a '**reverse bid**' (opening 1♣ and rebidding 2♦ on the second go-around), we would like a better hand. Nevertheless, North will get a choice of

sequences to pick from as South's initial response will be 1♠ [temporarily, at least, silencing the West player]. *Many will rebid something at the two-level, but others will rebid 1NT (ostensibly showing 12-14 points in a balanced hand).* South can do the math, seeing that 10 + (max. 14) = only 24 (maybe as few as 22), so will quietly submit. It would be a big step, as West, to back into the auction now to show their spades with just five of them, so that hand will likely hope for the best on defense.

East has a normal ♥Q lead and North will have to win his trick in that suit early. Without divine guidance in deducing the club layout (taking a first/second round finesse against East's Jxxx), we can see just eight tricks for N/S... 4 diamonds, 3 clubs plus a single major suit winner ... **1NT+1 (+120 for N/S).** That should be a good matchpoint result however, since the pairs that overreach in 3NT will usually take the same tricks (and go minus). **Those playing in clubs N/S will most assuredly take nine tricks** (losing 2 spades, 1 heart, and a club trick – either a natural winner when declarer doesn't pick up the Jxxx, or as an overruff on the 3rd spade trick – **but that 3♣ making totals just +110; not as high up on the chart.**

Board 34

Board: 34	♠AQ86	
Dealer: E	♥43	
Vul.: NS	♦KQ10983	
♠743	♣2	♠52
♥1095		♥AJ62
♦6542	N	♦AJ7
♣AQ7	W	♣9843
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠KJ109	11
N 1 5 2 3 2	♥KQ87	
S 1 5 2 3 2	♦	6 HCP 10
E	♣KJ1065	13
W		

34. After a pass by East in 1st seat, South will open 1♣, realizing it may be a long road before he gets all his suits into the bidding.

North will respond 1♦ (6-4 shape with at least invitational values it is correct to bid your suits in natural order). South will just rebid 1♥ (not so pleased with things so far); and North can rebid 1♠ (that bid in this sequence is natural and forcing for one round of the bidding; instead, a jump to 2♠ here would be the equivalent of '4th suit forcing

to game'... and also wouldn't necessarily show spades since it would be an Artificial bid). North at this stage is starting to wonder where they are going. He doesn't need much for this 1♠ call as – right now – he is just looking for a safe haven. South, more pleased with the current turn of events (but still not enamoured with his diamond void) should raise to 3♠ [reasonable values; invitational; and showing

four-card support]. North can carry on to 4♠... not thrilled since he knows his long diamonds are likely facing shortness, but still willing to give game a 'shot'. **The auction should stop there.**

Playing 4♠, declarer can lead toward the heart KQ87 a couple of times; and taking a 'ruffing finesse' against the diamond Ace. Those East defenders that choose (for whatever reason) to attack clubs on the opening salvo [*"leading through strength" perhaps*] will only succeed in setting up an additional ruffing finesse play for declarer, albeit in another suit. It's certainly helpful on this hand that N/S possess all the top trumps (the eight spot through to the Ace), so can afford all the ruffing back and forth. **As an occasional N/S pair will only make 4♠= (for +620), making five should be above average ... whilst those just making four will score below average.** We don't contemplate any pair failing to reach game. On one of those hands where it is better NOT to draw trumps (they are needed to establish tricks by ruffing), we can see declarer scoring 2 H's; 1 established high diamond; and as many trumps as they can score on a crossruff (usually seven or eight trumps tricks)...so ten or eleven tricks in total.

Board 35

Board: 35	♠QJ65	
Dealer: S	♥A103	
Vul.: EW	♦97	
♠AK9872	♣10964	♠103
♥Q92		♥KJ5
♦Q		♦KJ10632
♣K72		♣Q8
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠4	7
N 2 2 1	♥8764	14 HCP 10
S 2 2 1	♦A854	
E 1 2 3	♣AJ53	9
W 1 2 3		

35. Though everyone will open 1♠ with the **West hand, they all should be aware of its' shortcomings.** Outside of a reasonable (but not classifiable as 'good') six-card suit, the hand has some poor features... (i) a singleton diamond Queen (maybe good, or bad, or inconsequential), (ii) an unsupported middle honour (the Queen) in a tripleton heart holding, and (iii) an unbraced King of clubs [no J/10 or intermediates to assist it]. Bidders should tread carefully! **East has many responding options.** They could respond 2♦, hoping to make a non-forcing call of 3♦ next time to limit their hand [note: 2/1 system adherents can't take this route]. Also possible is to start with a 1NT response [6 to 10 points while denying 3+ card spade support] ... hoping that if opener does carry on then East will have a better idea of where to go. Those that believe that East's hand falls in the "I have an opening bid" category are, I am afraid, destined to get overboard on this deal [the hand's lack of Aces is a big negative].

The key here is to stay low; preferably in NT (the one- or two-level) where all those stray honours may carry some weight... or to get to play in diamonds (no more than at the three-level) ... or to stop in 2♠! Any of those are difficult accomplishments. **Getting a plus score in 2♠ (making for -110; or a miraculous +1 for -140) will be great results; and the -110's should match those played in 3♦= (-110).** An occasional E/W pair may slide through a contract of 1NT for -90 (or -120 for an overtrick) ... but, for the life of me, I don't see a route to stop in 1NT. **Many E/W pairs will go minus in some contract; usually just +100 for N/S but perhaps +200 if a really stretched 4♠ is reached** (off a trick in every side suit **plus** two trump tricks).

Board 36

Board: 36	♠K842	
Dealer: W	♥AKQ43	
Vul.: All	♦98	
♠Q3	♣75	♠AJ9
♥J6		♥9
♦1043		♦AKQJ6
♣KQ10863		♣J942
N ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	♠10765	12
N 2 2	♥108752	8 HCP 16
S 2 2	♦752	
E 1 4 5	♣A	4
W 1 4 5		

36. West can't open (starting with a preempt of 3♣ being just too much; and there happens to be no such beast as a weak 2-bid in clubs), so North will see a pass before he elects to open 1♥ in second position. **East should just overcall 2♦ (the disparity amongst support levels for the different suits – those outside of hearts – should rightly sway him away from the other choice (??) of a takeout double).** **Quite a decision South now has...** the hand is a 'cousin' of the Weak Freak type of supporting hand... it possesses the short suit and long trump support... **but the side singleton**

is the club Ace! Could be worth a lot if opener has several small clubs to be ruffed in the dummy; but not so good if the 1♥ bidder has any 'club wastage' (high cards in the club suit). With the wrong layout the defense may slam spade and diamond winners on the table until they run out of tricks to cash.

So, what to do?? We expect that most will 'chicken' out and just raise opener to 2♥ or 3♥... but that weak raise (2♥) is inopportune here as it gives West the easy 'freebid' of 3♣ (and at no cost). That will set the 'pot boiling' as East can scarcely now stop below game in clubs (knowing that if N/S later bid on to 5♥ that he will have an easy Double!). ***Even the jump raise to 4♥ may not successfully shut out the E/W pair; they now have a 'double shot' at a good score. East could double 4♥ when it returns... if left in by West the 4♥x contract will go down -2 (for -500 for N/S); if East pulls to 5♣ then his side will be in an even better spot ... 5♣= (-600 for N/S).*** Looks like E/W will need a 500 or better number to score very well. Some may not even get to game; declaring a diamond or club partial (for not many matchpoints). But more than they would get if they decide to defend a N/S partial of 3♥ (which will go down only one trick; as N/S give up only a -100 score).