

Summer Instant Matchpoint Game

June 9, 2018 - Set 180709



American Contract Bridge League

Analysis by Sylvia Shi and Daniel Korbel



Sylvia Shi started playing bridge in 2011. Since then, she has a meteoric rise to the top. She won her first North American championship, the Lebarh IMP Pairs, in 2015, then quickly followed that up with a win in the Mixed Swiss Teams later that year. She won the Women's USBC in 2016 and 2017, the first win culminating in a Gold medal at the world championships. She has won the Women's Board-a-Match teams and the Women's Open Pairs. In 2017 she placed second in the Blue Ribbon Pairs, one of the most prestigious pairs events on the NABC schedule. She currently lives in Las Vegas and spends her time teaching bridge online and playing bridge at tournaments.

Daniel Korbel has won the Canadian Championships four times and represented Canada six times in international competition, including a silver medal in the Transnational Mixed teams in 2012. He has won two North American Championships and placed second in five others. He is a professional player with 16,000 masterpoints. Daniel has recently migrated from Canada and now he and Sylvia live in Las Vegas where he doesn't have to worry about shoveling snow!

<p>Board: 1</p> <p>Dealer: N</p> <p>Vul: None</p> <p>♠ J 9 3 2</p> <p>♥ Q 7</p> <p>♦ Q 10 9 8</p> <p>♣ K 6 3</p>		<p>♠ 5</p> <p>♥ J 5 4</p> <p>♦ A J 7 6 2</p> <p>♣ A J 7 5</p> <p>♠ A 10 8 7 6 4</p> <p>♥ A 6 3</p> <p>♦ —</p> <p>♣ Q 10 4 2</p>	<p>West North East South</p> <p>1♥ Pass 1♠</p> <p>Pass 2♦ Pass 3♥</p> <p>All Pass</p>	<p>Results of Board 1</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Scores</td> <td>MPS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N-S</td> <td>E-W</td> <td>N-S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>450</td> <td>...</td> <td>98</td> </tr> <tr> <td>420</td> <td>...</td> <td>95</td> </tr> <tr> <td>300</td> <td>...</td> <td>92</td> </tr> <tr> <td>200</td> <td>...</td> <td>91</td> </tr> <tr> <td>170</td> <td>...</td> <td>88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>140</td> <td>...</td> <td>78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>110</td> <td>...</td> <td>69</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100</td> <td>...</td> <td>63</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50</td> <td>...</td> <td>56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>50</td> <td>34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>100</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>150</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>200</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>470</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>	Scores		MPS	N-S	E-W	N-S	100	450	...	98	420	...	95	300	...	92	200	...	91	170	...	88	140	...	78	110	...	69	100	...	63	50	...	56	...	50	34	...	100	11	...	150	5	...	200	3	...	470	1	0
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Both North and East have marginal opening bids (both hands have only 11 high-card points, but qualify using the Rule of 20). If North opens, it may be difficult for South to restrain himself from bidding game, but the hands do not fit very well and nine tricks are the limit on reasonable defense. If North passes and East opens the bidding, N/S are likely to buy the hand in a spade or heart partscore. Finally, if both North and East pass, South will open either 1♠ or 2♠ and probably buy the contract in 3♠. If South opens 2♠ and this passes back around to East, East should reopen with a double: maximum passed hand and good distribution. It can't be right to let the opponents play at the two level when they want to be there! If E/W do manage to steal the contract to 3♦, this is slated for down one, but the slightest slip by the defense will let it through. In any case, any plus score for N/S will score above average, since it is very difficult to stay low enough on these promising-looking hands.

<p>Board: 2</p> <p>Dealer: E</p> <p>Vul: N-S</p> <p>♠ Q 7 6 3</p> <p>♥ 10 8 7 4</p> <p>♦ K 8 6</p> <p>♣ J 8</p>		<p>♠ 10 5</p> <p>♥ A K 6 3</p> <p>♦ A Q 7 5 3</p> <p>♣ K 5</p> <p>♠ K J 4</p> <p>♥ 5</p> <p>♦ 4 2</p> <p>♣ A Q 7 6 4 3 2</p>	<p>West North East South</p> <p>All Pass 1NT 3♣</p>	<p>Results of Board 2</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Scores</td> <td>MPS</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N-S</td> <td>E-W</td> <td>N-S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>250</td> <td>...</td> <td>99</td> </tr> <tr> <td>150</td> <td>...</td> <td>95</td> </tr> <tr> <td>130</td> <td>...</td> <td>86</td> </tr> <tr> <td>110</td> <td>...</td> <td>77</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100</td> <td>...</td> <td>65</td> </tr> <tr> <td>50</td> <td>...</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>90</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>100</td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>110</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>120</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>170</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>180</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>...</td> <td>...</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </table>	Scores		MPS	N-S	E-W	N-S	100	250	...	99	150	...	95	130	...	86	110	...	77	100	...	65	50	...	41	...	90	24	...	100	22	...	110	18	...	120	8	...	170	2	...	180	1	0
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East has a perfectly lovely 1NT opener (don't worry about the unstoppable doubleton; if you have a bid that describes your hand type accurately, make it). Although South is vulnerable, it's hard to imagine wanting to let the opponents play at the two level with this hand, so even though it could work out poorly some of the time, South should jump directly to 3♣ to make life difficult for the opponents. This will get through West and North, and probably East as well, but if East decides to take a chance and bid 3♦, this will improve his score. Three diamonds will probably drift down one on a singleton heart lead from South, but nobody can double 3♦ and 3♣ is easy to make.

Board: 3
 Dealer: S
 Vul: E-W

♠ Q 5 3
 ♥ A 7 2
 ♦ 9 7 5
 ♣ K Q J 4

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

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

♠ K 9 8 7
 ♥ 9 5 4
 ♦ A 8 3
 ♣ 7 6 5

West North East South
 Pass 1♣ Pass 1♠
 2♥ Dbl Pass 2♠
 All Pass

Results of Board 3

Scores		IMP
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
110	...	99
100	...	97
90	...	95
80	...	92
Pass	...	90
...	50	83
...	90	74
...	100	65
...	110	55
...	120	50
...	140	31
...	150	10
...	170	6
...	200	5
...	300	4
...	500	2
...	...	0

Boy, what a trap hand for N/S! North has a perfectly normal third seat 1♣ opening bid, and South has a perfectly normal 1♠ response. West overcalls 2♥ as a passed hand, and North faces the first critical decision of the deal. Holding such a square minimum opposite a passed-hand partner, it would be reasonable (and also successful) not to

make a support double. If North does not raise spades in some way, the final contract will be 2♥ by West, +140. If North does make a support double, the deal becomes a classic matchpoint battle. South will retreat to 2♠, which is slated to go down two tricks, for -100. This would be a good result for N/S, since E/W have an easy +140 at many tables, and now East faces the second critical decision of the deal: if East doubles, she will get +300 for a sensational result, but if East timidly passes 2♠ out, she will receive only 35% of the matchpoints.

Board: 4
 Dealer: W
 Vul: Both

♠ A K Q 7 4
 ♥ J 8
 ♦ K 9 3
 ♣ 5 4 3

♠ 10 9 6 5 2
 ♥ A 2
 ♦ 8
 ♣ K Q J 7 6

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

♠ J
 ♥ 10 7 5 4 3
 ♦ J 5 4 2
 ♣ 9 8 2

West North East South
 1♠ Pass 2♦ Pass
 3♣ Pass 3NT All Pass

Results of Board 4

Scores		IMP
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
200	...	99
100	...	97
...	110	92
...	130	87
...	150	78
...	200	70
...	500	67
...	600	59
...	630	29
...	660	5
...	750	3
...	800	1
...	...	0

The West hand may have only 10 high-card points, but with the exciting 5-5 distribution it's a long-run winner to open the bidding. This has the twin effects of both silencing North as well as making it easy for E/W to bid to their cold 3NT. If East guesses to finesse the ♦Q for an overtrick, she will take 10 tricks, which looks like the correct guess if one is greedy, because even if the ♦10 forces the ♦K, the defense will probably be able to shift to

spades profitably on most layouts). However, if East gets cold feet and simply cashes her nine tricks, that will swing 30 more matchpoints to N/S. Woe to any North who tries a fancy Lightner double of 3NT asking for a spade lead—now East will have the pleasure of choosing between +750 and +950!

Board: 5
 Dealer: N
 Vul: N-S

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

♠ A K 7 6 4
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ 10 9 8
 ♣ Q 9 7

♠ 9
 ♥ K J 10
 ♦ A K Q 5 4 3
 ♣ J 6 3

♠ Q
 ♥ 8 6 4
 ♦ J 7 6 2
 ♣ A K 8 4 2

West North East South
 Pass 1♦ Pass
 1♠ Pass 2♦ Pass
 3♦ Pass 3NT All Pass

Results of Board 5

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
730	...	99
300	...	98
200	...	97
150	...	96
100	...	74
50	...	43
...	90	33
...	100	32
...	110	26
...	150	18
...	200	16
...	400	10
...	430	5
...	470	3
...	500	1
...	...	0

What an unlucky deal we have here! For bidding to the excellent 3NT, E/W will get punished by going down two or three tricks. Those E/W who stop in 3♦ and make it will score very well (if a little undeservedly).

If West passes 2♦ (an error, in my view, with this good of a hand for diamonds), this may allow N/S to back into 3♥, which can be made with (very) careful play.

Board: 6

Dealer: E

Vul: E-W

♠ K Q 6 2
♥ 9
♦ K J 8 7 6
♣ 10 9 2

♠ 10 9 7
♥ K Q J 2
♦ Q 5 4 3 2
♣ J



♠ J 3
♥ A 10 8 6 3
♦ 9
♣ A Q 8 7 6

♠ A 8 5 4
♥ 7 5 4
♦ A 10
♣ K 5 4 3

West	North	East	South
		1♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

West should stretch to give a limit raise, upgrading for the singleton and East, with his exciting distribution and control-rich hand, should accept, despite holding a minimum. Bidding and making 4♥ is worth 85% to E/W, not surprising given that they have only 20 high-card points between them. If the auction does go as shown, it is unlikely that N/S can find a way in, even though they have a very cheap save in 4♠. However, if

West takes a dim view and merely raises to 2♥, North should pre-balance with a double, and this might even let N/S steal the pot in a spade partscore for +140 and 75% of the matchpoints.

Results of Board 6

Scores		IMP
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
590	...	98
500	...	94
420	...	88
300	...	84
200	...	80
170	...	76
140	...	75
100	...	65
PASS	...	53
...	50	49
...	100	44
...	140	39
...	150	37
...	170	33
...	200	28
...	300	26
...	620	15
...	650	2
...	...	0

Board: 7

Dealer: S

Vul: Both

♠ J 10 7 3
♥ 9 8 6
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K 6 3

♠ K Q 9 8 5
♥ Q J 10
♦ A 9
♣ 8 4 2



♠ 6
♥ A 5 4 3 2
♦ K Q 8 6 3
♣ 10 9

♠ A 4 2
♥ K 7
♦ J 10 5
♣ A Q J 7 5

West	North	East	South
		2♥	1NT
Pass	Pass	3♥	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

We don't recommend overcalling a 1NT opening holding a balanced shape (5332, 4432, or 4333), but some people will show spades with the West hand. Those who do will get severely punished on this layout, as they will likely play there and go minus. The Wests who find a disciplined pass will be rewarded by their partners balancing showing hearts and a minor (or diamonds and a major, if

playing DONT). It's a close decision whether West should raise to 3♥ or not, but we believe that with a source of tricks in spades, nice heart support and an opening bid that West should try for game. East will pass, of course, and score +140 (+170 if South ducks the first spade).

Results of Board 7

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
120	...	98
100	...	92
90	...	84
...	100	80
...	110	73
...	120	67
...	130	66
...	140	40
...	170	9
...	200	3
...	300	1
...	...	0

Board: 8
 Dealer: W
 Vul: None

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

♠ K J 10 9 6
 ♥ 9 5 3 2
 ♦ 9 8 5
 ♣ 5

♠ A 4 2
 ♥ —
 ♦ A K 7 3
 ♣ K Q 7 4 3 2

♠ Q 8 7 3
 ♥ A Q 10 8 7 6 4
 ♦ 6
 ♣ J

West North East South
 Pass 1♦ 2♣ 2♥
 Pass 3♥ Dbl 4♥
 4♠ All Pass

This is a very complicated deal, with many different possible outcomes.

North has a light but perfectly normal 1♦ opening, and East should make a heavy 2♣ overcall. Over South's 2♥ advance, North has an unpleasant bidding problem; we could envision votes for 2NT, 3♦, and 3♥ in It's Your Call. We like a raise to 3♥

as the least of evils. East might pass this, but we feel East has enough to come back into the auction with a takeout double. South will raise herself to 4♥, and now West should try 4♠, as East is promising quite a good hand and spade support to come back in at that level opposite a passing partner. It's complicated whether or not N/S should double this, and some Souths might even be tempted to bid on. We believe South should not bid 5♥, as from her spade length, she can infer that North has shortness in spades and yet wasn't strong enough to raise 2♥ to 4♥, so South should expect a weak hand opposite.

The play is very complicated, but West's pesky ♥9 will probably come into play to hold heart contracts to nine tricks. It's hard to see E/W taking more than eight or nine tricks in spades with the vicious distribution, so it would appear that defending at the four level is the winning strategy on this layout.

Whew!

Results of Board 8

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
800	...	99
670	...	98
590	...	96
530	...	93
500	...	89
470	...	84
420	...	83
400	...	81
300	...	77
150	...	72
140	...	71
110	...	70
100	...	65
50	...	53
...	50	42
...	100	29
...	140	21
...	150	18
...	180	16
...	200	14
...	300	10
...	470	6
...	500	4
...	590	2
...	690	1
...	...	0

Board: 9
 Dealer: N
 Vul: E-W

♠ Q 8 3
 ♥ K 6 5 3
 ♦ 9 5
 ♣ K 10 7 4

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

♠ K J 7
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ Q J 10 2
 ♣ 9 6 5 2

♠ A 9 6
 ♥ A J 9 8 2
 ♦ A 8 3
 ♣ Q J

West North East South
 Pass Pass Pass 1NT
 Pass 2♣ Pass 2♥
 Pass 3♥ Pass 4♥
 All Pass

I would expect the recommended sequence to occur at almost every table that is using strong notrumps. North has just enough to squeak out an invitational sequence, although some Norths will pass 1NT and play there for a poor result. If North does invite game in hearts, South has a hand squarely in the middle of his notrump range, but

the fifth trump should make this an automatic acceptance. Following "eight ever, nine never" will allow South to drop the ♥Q successfully, and from there it's straightforward to take 11 tricks. If West finds the opening lead of a spade, South will need to guess to play low from the dummy, using the power of his spade spots to hold his spade losers to one. Even making 4♥ is worth 68% of the matchpoints, and successfully taking an overtrick will give N/S a big board at 88%.

Results of Board 9

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
450	...	88
430	...	77
420	...	68
400	...	60
210	...	59
200	...	50
180	...	39
170	...	29
150	...	14
140	...	7
120	...	4
90	...	2
...	...	0

Board: 10 ♠ 7
 Dealer: E ♥ Q 8 7 4 3
 Vul: Both ♦ 10 7 3 2
 ♣ Q 8 5

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

♠ A K Q 5
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ 9 8 6
 ♣ A 10 7 6

West North East South
 1♥ Pass 1NT All Pass

Some Easts might try 1♠ over 1♥, which will lead to a spade partscore, but we prefer to have a chunky four-card suit or 5+ cards to bid 1♠ after partner's 1♥ overcall. The 1NT response, showing around 8-11 points, will likely end the auction, unless West finds an aggressive 2♠ or 2NT rebid. It should be fairly easy to score +120 in notrumps, although any E/W pairs that find their spade fit might regret it (South can clear trumps

immediately, essentially changing the play to notrumps - but notrump pays more!). +110 for E/W is an average board, but +120 will give them 66% of the matchpoints.

Results of Board 10

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
500	...	96
380	...	92
300	...	91
200	...	88
180	...	85
110	...	84
100	...	77
90	...	68
...	90	61
...	110	52
...	120	34
...	140	18
...	150	15
...	170	13
...	200	9
...	300	5
...	500	3
...	730	2
...	800	1
...	...	0

Board: 11 ♠ 10 7 6 5 4
 Dealer: S ♥ A 9 7
 Vul: None ♦ A Q
 ♣ 8 6 2

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

♠ A Q 9 2
 ♥ Q 5 3
 ♦ K 10 9 6 5
 ♣ 3

West North East South
 2NT Pass 3♣ 1♦
 Pass Dbl Pass 3♠
 Pass 4♠ All Pass

West has options after South opens 1♦, but we like getting both suits into play immediately with an Unusual 2NT overcall. This suddenly makes it a very difficult situation for N/S to be able to find their spade game. West's 2NT call puts North in a pickle; he has a nice hand with some HCP, but what he really would like to do is make

a negative double. What we recommend: make an agreement with your favorite partner on how to do this.

There are two possible ways: either a) play an immediate double of 2NT is negative, and pass-then-double-later is penalties, or b) play an immediate double of 2NT is penalty-oriented, and pass-then-double-later is negative.

In the recommended auction above, we have N/S using treatment b). North raises to game at the end based on the fifth trump and the likelihood that his partner has only one or two clubs based on the opponents' bidding.

If E/W allow N/S to play 4♠, N/S will get an excellent score. 5♣ is only down one or two, depending on the heart guess, however, and -100 in 5♣x will allow E/W to escape with 56% of the matchpoints. The scoring reflects how difficult it will be for most N/S pairs to navigate the auction after the 2NT overcall; many will end up defending a club partscore where most of the matchpoints will go to E/W.

Results of Board 11

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
690	...	97
650	...	93
590	...	92
500	...	91
450	...	87
420	...	81
300	...	70
200	...	63
170	...	59
140	...	56
100	...	44
50	...	30
...	50	23
...	100	19
...	110	17
...	130	12
...	150	9
...	250	8
...	430	7
...	460	6
...	510	2
...	...	0

Board: 12 ♠ Q 10 9 8 4 2
 Dealer: W ♥ 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ K 10 6 2
 ♣ 9 8

♠ 7 6 3
 ♥ A 10 8 7 3 2
 ♦ 8 7
 ♣ 10 6



♠ A J 5
 ♥ J 6 4
 ♦ 3
 ♣ K J 7 5 3 2

West North East South
 2♥ Pass 2NT Pass
 3♥ Pass 4♥ All Pass

We recommend opening 2♥ on the West cards, not vulnerable versus vulnerable in first seat. There are two opponents to preempt, and only one partner, after all! And hopefully, you have discussed with your partner that your preempts can be a little light in this position. What a hand East has after a 2♥ opening bid! East needs to restrain himself a little bit and simply bid 2NT, asking about his partner's hand. When his partner makes the

weakest response possible, East should steel himself to give up on slam and simply raise to 4♥. 4♥ making is worth average plus to E/W, and if they find a path to 11 tricks they will score a healthy 70% of the matchpoints.

The auction will be more difficult at the tables where West chooses not to open 2♥. North may open 2♠, which will make it more difficult for E/W to sort out their heart fit. Even if North passes, East will have a headache trying to bid that hand intelligently.

Results of Board 12

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
790	...	99
350	...	97
200	...	96
150	...	93
100	...	91
50	...	74
...	140	59
...	170	58
...	200	57
...	400	55
...	420	43
...	430	31
...	460	29
...	480	19
...	510	9
...	520	6
...	650	4
...	980	2
...	...	0

Board: 13 ♠ K Q 5 2
 Dealer: N ♥ 8 4
 Vul: Both ♦ 10 6 4
 ♣ J 10 9 7

♠ J
 ♥ K Q J 10 6
 ♦ Q 8
 ♣ Q 6 5 4 3



♠ 8 6 3
 ♥ A 7 3
 ♦ A J 9 5 2
 ♣ 8 2

West North East South
 Pass 1♠ Pass
 1NT Pass 2♦ Pass
 2NT Pass 3♥ Pass
 4♥ All Pass

Playing 2/1, the West hand is not strong enough to start with a two-over-one, and therefore must start with a forcing 1NT. East must rebid a short minor, presumably 2♦, and now West will likely try 2NT to show his game-invitational strength. East now has a chance for a clever bid: he has denied holding four hearts when he rebid 2♦, so 3♥ shows exactly three

hearts and a hand that wants to accept the game try. Neat! West will happily raise to 4♥ and the best contract will be reached. Even if West rebids only 2♥ over his partner's 2♦ bid, East has enough to scrape up a raise to 3♥, and 4♥ should still be reached.

If East doesn't find the 3♥ bid over his partner's 2NT invitation, and simply raises to 3NT, North will surely lead a club, allowing 3NT to scamper home. However, -600 will be worth 62% of the matchpoints to N/S.

Results of Board 13

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
200	...	99
100	...	98
...	120	96
...	130	94
...	140	92
...	150	91
...	170	88
...	180	86
...	200	78
...	600	62
...	620	46
...	630	39
...	650	19
...	...	0

Board: 14 ♠ A 7 3
 Dealer: E ♥ 10 8 6 5 4
 Vul: None ♦ A 8 7 2
 ♣ Q

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



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

West North East South
 3♦ 3♠ Pass 2♠
 5♦ All Pass Dbl Pass

South has "everyone's" 2♠ opener (although there are those who would open 3♠ to try to inflict maximum damage on the opponents' auction). West is a little heavy for a 3♦ overcall but what else can she do? North will probably raise spades one level, and East should come in with a responsive double, showing some points and some length in the unbid suits. This should cause West to get excited and take a chance on 5♦.

It's usual to lead a side-suit singleton, and certainly holding trump control we recommend North lead the ♣Q. After winning a round of trumps, North must find the excellent play of underleading in spades to South to get a club ruff. In fact, if North can visualize this possible defense in the auction, he might even double 5♦ for the one-trick set. Going plus on this deal will give most of the matchpoints to N/S, but going -400 by misdefending 5♦ will lead to an 11% board.

Results of Board 14

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
590	...	97
530	...	93
450	...	92
420	...	89
170	...	87
150	...	85
140	...	83
100	...	72
50	...	58
...	50	52
...	100	48
...	130	37
...	150	21
...	400	11
...	510	4
...	550	1
...	...	0

Board: 15 ♠ 8 6 5 3
 Dealer: S ♥ A 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ K J 10 8 6 2
 ♣ Q

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

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

West North East South
 4♥ 5♦ All Pass 1NT

Results of Board 15

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
1100	...	99
750	...	97
650	...	93
620	...	79
600	...	67
500	...	62
300	...	53
100	...	42
...	100	26
...	200	10
...	300	3
...	400	2
...	500	1
...	...	0

A wild one to be sure! There will be a lot of different results on this deal.

Over South's 1NT opener, we like a direct jump to 4♥ by West to put North into the most awkward position possible. Most people don't play negative doubles this high, but this hand is an example of why it's a good idea. Assuming double is penalties, we would expect most to try 5♦. It will be hard

for either East or West to compete further from here, although 5♥ doubled will not be expensive. In fact, simply making 5♦ will be a solid result for N/S. It's tricky to make: if you misguess diamonds, it appears you have three top losers, but you can recover by drawing only one or two rounds of trumps and one or two rounds of spades before exiting with a heart to West.

Any North South pairs who get to a spade game will score very heavily, and any E/W who get out for -500 or better will salvage some matchpoints on the board - but the only way for E/W to score big here is for N/S to stretch too high and go minus.

Board: 16 ♠ Q 10 8 3
 Dealer: W ♥ 10 9 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ A 9 3
 ♣ 8 4 2

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

♠ A 6
 ♥ K Q J 6 4 3
 ♦ 5 2
 ♣ 10 7 5

West North East South
 Pass Pass 1♠ 2♥
 Dbl Pass 2♠ All Pass

Results of Board 16

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
500	...	99
200	...	94
140	...	91
100	...	85
...	50	78
...	100	75
...	110	69
...	130	64
...	140	47
...	150	31
...	170	26
...	300	13
...	500	3
...	620	1
...	...	0

A fascinating partscore battle. We expect the first round of the auction to be duplicated at almost every table, until North must decide whether to raise to 3♥ or not. With his minimum hand, square shape and spade values, Daniel believes he should defend, but Sylvia would raise. As it turns out, E/W's best chance at a big score is if they can figure out a way to defend 3♥ doubled and take all their tricks (which might happen, especially

if North passes first and then balances 3♥). Spades will take eight or nine tricks, depending on whether declarer is wearing his guessing shoes. It turns out 5♦ can be made E/W but we would expect hardly a single pair to get there.

Board: 17 ♠ Q 7 6 3
 Dealer: N ♥ A K J 4
 Vul: None ♦ K 9
 ♣ J 9 5

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

♠ A 10 8 5
 ♥ 5 2
 ♦ 5 2
 ♣ 10 8 6 4 2

West North East South
 2♦ 1♣ Pass 1♠
 2♠ 3♦ All Pass

Results of Board 17

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
500	...	99
470	...	98
300	...	97
180	...	95
150	...	92
140	...	89
110	...	85
100	...	78
90	...	70
50	...	52
...	50	29
...	90	15
...	100	7
...	110	4
...	150	2
...	...	0

North has a normal 1♣ opener, and we believe that it is losing bridge to pass 1♣, not vulnerable, with a hand such as South's. If South jumps to 3♣, West will probably bid 3♦ and play there, but when South responds 1♠, West will have a problem. He could try a 1NT overcall, but between two bidders with weak stoppers and a minimum, we would overcall the safer 2♦. North and East raise their partners, and now West must make a disciplined

pass of 3♦ rather than try for 3NT. The play should be easy: North leads a high heart, sees South's encouraging signal, and gives South a ruff. If South returns a low spade, West will have to guess to play the king to hold it to -50; -50 is average, but getting that extra undertrick would turn this into an excellent board for N/S.

Board: 18 ♠ A 4
 Dealer: E ♥ Q 3 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ K 9 5 2
 ♣ Q J 3 2

♠ 7 6 5 3 2
 ♥ A
 ♦ A Q 8
 ♣ K 10 9 7

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

♠ K Q J 8
 ♥ K J 9 5
 ♦ J 10 7 6
 ♣ 8



West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2♦	All Pass	

Some Souths will open the bidding 1♦ (check out our video on the website if you would like an animated discussion between us as to whether this hand is an opening bid or not), but at many tables South will pass. West is dealt a clear-cut 1♠ opener, and North has a marginal takeout double. Some Norths will double, but Vul against

Not with a passed hand partner, this is not without risk. One possible auction is shown above, where East responds to the opening bid, but since three players each have a marginal do-I-or-don't-I action, there will be a number of different common auctions on this board.

Results of Board 18

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
630	...	97
180	...	92
150	...	88
140	...	84
130	...	81
120	...	74
110	...	64
100	...	53
50	...	44
...	80	33
...	90	27
...	100	19
...	110	11
...	200	8
...	300	6
...	400	3
...	470	2
...	...	0

Board: 19 ♠ J 9 8 6 5 4
 Dealer: S ♥ —
 Vul: E-W ♦ 7 6 3 2
 ♣ A 10 6

♠ 2
 ♥ 9 8 4 2
 ♦ Q J 8
 ♣ K Q 7 5 4

♠ K Q 3
 ♥ J 10 5
 ♦ A K 9 5 4
 ♣ J 2

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



West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1♠	2♦	Dbl
3♦	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

If N/S are playing support doubles, we expect the auction to go this way at most tables. With his exciting distribution and knowledge of the ninth trump, North should not be afraid of competing to the three level despite holding only 5 HCP. With his source of tricks and singleton diamond, South should definitely raise 3♠ to 4♠, which should

be made on careful play. And that, folks, is how a good 18 HCP game is reached! (For a good explanation of how support doubles are used, visit Larry Cohen's site.)

Results of Board 19

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
630	...	99
590	...	97
500	...	96
420	...	81
200	...	62
170	...	46
140	...	31
110	...	26
...	50	21
...	100	11
...	110	4
...	150	2
...	...	0

Board: 20 ♠ —
 Dealer: W ♥ K Q 6 4 3
 Vul: Both ♦ 7 6 5
 ♣ Q 10 7 5 4

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

♠ J
 ♥ A 9 8
 ♦ A 10 9
 ♣ A K 9 6 3 2

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♣
4♠	5♣	5♠	Dbl
Pass	6♣	Pass	Pass
6♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

Results of Board 20

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
1740	...	97
1660	...	94
1390	...	84
1150	...	75
680	...	73
640	...	68
500	...	53
200	...	25
190	...	8
100	...	6
...	620	4
...	790	1
...	...	0

This is the wildest board of the set. Hold on to your hats!

East has a normal 1♠ opener, South a normal 2♣ overcall, and West a normal, if freakish, jump to 4♠. We believe it would be overly optimistic as North

to bid 6♣, as South doesn't need a hand anywhere near this good to overcall 2♣. East has learned of "big" spade support from her partner's 4♠ call, and this should lead her to bid 5♠: either it might make opposite the right hand, or else it could be a profitable sacrifice, as it's very unlikely to go down more than two, and 5♣ will often make.

Now things get interesting. South will surely double 5♠ holding all those aces, and it's up to North. North should think, "What is South doubling on?" On this auction, it's very unlikely to be based on a lot of spade values, and therefore South will most often have quick tricks — aces and kings. That's just what the North hand needs to have a chance at slam, and we recommend North now take a chance at 6♣.

This will probably pass around to West, who should figure that 6♣ is surely making, as partner couldn't double it, and if partner thought 5♠ was going to be a sensible contract, then surely going down in 6♠ is better than the opponents making 6♣.

Although it will happen at some tables, most of the time the auction will not reach the seven level, although 7♣ is cold.

Board: 21 ♠ A 10 7 3
 Dealer: N ♥ 10 7
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 6 4 2
 ♣ J 8 6

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

♠ Q 6 5 4
 ♥ K Q 9 8 3
 ♦ 8
 ♣ A 10 9

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
1NT	All Pass		

Results of Board 21

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
300	...	99
200	...	98
150	...	91
140	...	83
110	...	80
100	...	69
50	...	45
...	90	25
...	100	17
...	110	13
...	120	10
...	150	8
...	180	6
...	200	4
...	300	1
...	...	0

We expect this auction to be repeated at almost every table, unless N/S are playing Flannery (there, they may end up defending 2NT or playing in a spade contract, both excellent outcomes for N/S). North will lead a heart against 1NT, and South will clear the suit. If West plays the opening bidder for the ♦Q, he will surely go at least one down, but if West finds the ♦Q, he can use the entries to lead toward his club suit. However, if the play

continues ♦A, diamond to the dummy, club toward the king, and diamond back to the dummy, when West leads another club toward his hand, South can rise with the ♣A and cash his hearts. The run of the hearts will squeeze West in a strange way: he can't afford to bare down to a singleton ♠K, so West will be forced to discard a spade and a diamond. This will sever West's link to his seventh trick, so if South can work out what has happened, he will exit his last club and endplay West into leading spades from his hand for one down. +50 for N/S will be a very common result, and splits the matchpoints almost evenly. Either finding a spade contract or defeating 1NT two tricks will give N/S the lion's share of the matchpoints. If West finds a way to limp home in 1NT, he will be rewarded with a 75% score.

Board: 22 ♠ Q J 6 4 2
 Dealer: E ♥ J 5 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ 7
 ♣ J 10 3 2

♠ A 9
 ♥ A K Q 10 8 7
 ♦ A 10 8
 ♣ A 8



♠ K 8 7 3
 ♥ 9
 ♦ Q 9 5 4 3
 ♣ K 9 5

♠ 10 5
 ♥ 6 3 2
 ♦ K J 6 2
 ♣ Q 7 6 4

West North East South
 2♣ Pass Pass Pass
 2♥ Pass 2NT Pass
 3NT All Pass

West surely has a strong enough hand to open 2♣, and with her balanced hand should raise East's 2NT to 3NT instead of rebidding her heart suit. East might consider trying one more time for slam by raising to 4NT, but West will probably pass that with her minimum count. Slam is not very good but can be made by guessing both diamonds

and hearts. For the percentages mavens out there, the percentage play for six tricks in the heart suit is to play hearts from the top, and the percentage play for one loser in diamonds is to taken two finesses through South — so by playing correctly, 12 tricks will be made. E/W need to make at least 12 tricks in notrump to salvage an average plus (getting to 4♥ or taking only nine tricks leads to a below average result).

Results of Board 22

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
200	...	99
100	...	89
...	600	79
...	650	77
...	660	70
...	680	62
...	690	46
...	710	32
...	720	27
...	1100	22
...	1370	20
...	1430	16
...	1440	9
...	1460	4
...	1470	2
...	...	0

Board: 23 ♠ Q 9 8 6
 Dealer: S ♥ J 9 5 3 2
 Vul: Both ♦ 8 7 5 2
 ♣ —

♠ K 2
 ♥ A K 7
 ♦ K Q 9 6 3
 ♣ J 10 7



♠ A J 10 4 3
 ♥ 4
 ♦ J 10 4
 ♣ 9 4 3 2

♠ 7 5
 ♥ Q 10 8 6
 ♦ A
 ♣ A K Q 8 6 5

West North East South
 1♦ Dbl 1♠ 1♣
 All Pass 4♥

This board will have a wild result at many tables, depending on exactly what North and East decide to bid, and what E/W decide to lead. In the example auction, North decides to get both majors in the picture (we don't recommend passing 1♦ with such exciting distribution, despite holding only 3 HCP), but this allows East an opportunity to introduce his spade suit. If West then leads ♠K,

this will lead to -100 in 4♥ and an 80% board for E/W.

If North responds 1♥, however, this will place East on lead, and he is sure to lead the ♦J, which will allow +620 for N/S, a 63% board N/S.


At many tables West may double the final contract with his powerful hand, and there may be a number of +790s and +730s which is why +620 is only average plus.

Results of Board 23

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
990	...	98
930	...	96
790	...	88
730	...	78
670	...	73
650	...	70
620	...	63
500	...	58
300	...	56
200	...	50
170	...	42
140	...	36
110	...	32
100	...	27
...	100	21
...	110	15
...	200	7
...	500	2
...	730	1
...	...	0

Board: 24 ♠ 9 4 2
 Dealer: W ♥ K J 10 4
 Vul: None ♦ J 8 7 5
 ♣ 8 6

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



♠ K Q 8 7 6
 ♥ 6 2
 ♦ 3
 ♣ A J 10 7 3

♠ J 5 3
 ♥ Q 9 7 3
 ♦ K 9
 ♣ Q 9 4 2

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

Results of Board 24

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
150	...	99
100	...	97
50	...	92
...	130	88
...	400	72
...	420	56
...	430	52
...	450	42
...	460	29
...	480	21
...	490	11
...	520	4
...	800	3
...	980	2
...	990	1
...	...	0


This is another deal where it's difficult to predict the final contract. West may choose either to jump to 2NT or 3♦ at his second turn; we prefer 2NT, as the hand is semi-balanced and 3NT is the most likely final contract to aim at. East will check back for a spade fit, find none, and probably introduce his club suit, hoping for a suitable hand for a club

slam opposite. West, envisioning 5-5 distribution opposite, should preference back to spades at this point, trying to slow the auction down, and East should reluctantly pass. Twelve tricks are possible if the diamond finesse is taken to discard a heart, and this will bring E/W an 80% board. E/W may reason that simply getting to spades is a good result, and decide not to risk the diamond finesse if a heart is led; in that case, taking 11 tricks in spades will still be average-plus for E/W. Landing in 3NT, however, will score very poorly unless E/W manage to avoid a heart lead.

Bridge is a funny game: sometimes the best contract is 3NT despite holding an eight- or nine-card major suit fit, and sometimes the best contract is four of a major despite not having a major-suit fit.

Board: 25 ♠ J 5
 Dealer: N ♥ K 10 9 8 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ 7 6 2
 ♣ A Q 8

♠ A Q 6 3
 ♥ A Q 3
 ♦ 10
 ♣ 10 7 6 5 2



♠ 10 9 8 2
 ♥ 6 4
 ♦ K Q J 4 3
 ♣ J 3

♠ K 7 4
 ♥ J 7 5
 ♦ A 9 8 5
 ♣ K 9 4

West	North	East	South
	All Pass		
1♣	1♥	Dbl	2♥
2♠	3♥	Pass	Pass
3♠	All Pass		

Results of Board 25

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
200	...	98
150	...	95
140	...	88
120	...	81
110	...	77
100	...	70
PASS	...	63
...	50	58
...	100	51
...	110	42
...	140	26
...	150	14
...	170	8
...	300	3
...	730	2
...	...	0

This deal will become a gritty partscore battle at many tables. After West's routine fourth-seat opening bid, N/S will compete to at least 2♥. We believe North should take the push to 3♥, expecting 2♠ to be making often enough for it to be the winning action. E/W have a difficult decision, but as West, we would compete to 3♠,

hoping for that contract to be a good one. Even despite the horribly duplicated values in the East hand, if North leads the expected heart, 3♠ will make +140, and East could hold a much more suitable hand.

In any case, E/W need to score at least +100 for an average board, with +140 clocking in at 75% of the matchpoints.

Board: 26

Dealer: E
Vul: Both

♠ Q 6 4
♥ Q 8 5 3
♦ A J 6 3
♣ K Q

♠ A 5 2
♥ 9 2
♦ K Q 8 7 5
♣ A 6 3



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

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

North would love to be able to get into the auction, but may not find a sensible way to do so. We believe it is okay with a hand like North's to make an offshape takeout double of 1♦, intending to live with the consequences if partner chooses clubs, but passing is certainly more prudent. Here, getting involved in the auction could be very expensive for N/S, especially if E/W can figure out to double.

Results of Board 26

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
100	...	95
...	90	80
...	100	67
...	110	52
...	120	32
...	140	22
...	150	16
...	180	11
...	200	10
...	380	8
...	500	6
...	600	3
...	800	1
...	...	0

The play is very complex, but a huge number of matchpoints depends on whether or not N/S can stop an overtrick in 1NT. North has no obvious lead, since both his suits have been bid by the opponents, and we would try a spade as the least of evils. Although this lead isn't wonderful for N/S, it does at least avoid helping West to guess the heart suit.

West can always come to at least eight tricks on his own if he guesses well, but for those Wests who face a non-heart lead and misguess the hand to hold themselves to seven tricks, a 20% board will be their fate.

Board: 27

Dealer: S
Vul: None

♠ 8
♥ Q J 10 8 4
♦ A Q J 7 2
♣ A 4

♠ 9 2
♥ K 7 6
♦ K 9 8 3
♣ K Q J 6



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

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♦	1♥	1♠	Pass
1NT	2♦	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

It's unclear if North will introduce his diamond suit into the teeth of West's opening 1♦ bid, but we believe he is supposed to with such a strong hand and powerful texture in his suits. South has an easy correction to 2♥, and this will be passed around to East. With his 10 nice-looking HCP, East may be tempted compete one more time,

with double, 2♠, or 2NT. Since 2♥ is an easy make, any decision by East to compete will be a winner, although if 2♠ gets doubled, East may have to scamper out to 2NT to salvage the board.

Some intrepid Souths might raise directly to 2♥, an action we don't like once East's 1♠ call takes the luster off the spade suit. At the tables where South raises, North may easily make a game try, hoping for something useful opposite, automatically getting N/S too high.

Peacefully making 2♥ will be worth 70% to N/S, whereas +50 or +100 will be closer to average; going minus on the N/S cards will be at least a 70% score to E/W.

Results of Board 27

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
800	...	99
570	...	98
530	...	97
500	...	96
470	...	92
420	...	89
300	...	86
200	...	83
150	...	78
140	...	73
110	...	69
100	...	57
50	...	41
...	50	29
...	100	14
...	110	5
...	150	3
...	300	1
...	...	0

Board: 28

Dealer: W
 Vul: N-S

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

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

♠ J 8 6 5
 ♥ A K Q 7 6
 ♦ 9 8 5
 ♣ K

West	North	East	South
3♣	3♠	5♣	5♠
Pass	Pass	6♣	Dbl
All Pass			

Results of Board 28

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
790	...	99
650	...	95
620	...	87
300	...	67
100	...	48
50	...	43
...	100	35
...	200	20
...	300	13
...	400	12
...	500	6.
...	550	1
...	...	0

Some people have stringent suit-quality or hand-strength requirements for preempts, but we say if it looks like a preempt in first seat, it's a preempt! The effect of a 3♣ opener will be to accelerate the auction dramatically. North has to choose between an overbid of 4♠, or a weird 3♠ overcall, but in either case, East will surely bid 5♣ or even leap directly to 6♣.

South has a very good hand for North, but the singleton ♣K is unlikely to be carrying full weight — on this type of auction, often both North and South are dealt a singleton in the opponents' suit, so discretion is the better part of valor here.

Although in the example auction, East's 6♣ call is a phantom sacrifice (as long as West remembers to cover the diamonds when they are led from the dummy), it's hard to blame him, as usually 5♠ will be a very easy make, and it's hard to imagine 6♣ doubled being very expensive at all. In fact, +100 against 6♣x is a 48% score for N/S. If N/S err by going on to 6♠, E/W can secure quite a good board by defending, but taking insurance in 7♣x will get N/S back to 67%.

At the tables where West does not open, a 4♠ opener by North is likely to steal the pot, giving N/S at least an 87% board. A 1♠ opener will allow East to overcall a Michaels 2♠, but it's hard for West to imagine that his partner's suit is clubs (!), so N/S may still buy it in 4♠ at those tables as well.

Score one up for the 3♣ preempt.

Board: 29

Dealer: N
 Vul: Both

♠ A K Q 4
 ♥ A Q 8
 ♦ A Q 8
 ♣ Q 3 2

♠ 7
 ♥ 6 5
 ♦ KJ97432
 ♣ J 5 4

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

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Results of Board 29

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
500	...	99
200	...	93
100	...	79
...	170	69
...	240	68
...	600	66
...	620	64
...	660	58
...	690	44
...	720	22
...	1370	4
...	2140	1
...	...	0

At these colors, in second seat, the East hand is just too threadbare to qualify as a 3♦ opener to us. However, we would compromise and open 2♦, a diamond long and a few high-card points short. West, with his beautiful hand, should enquire with 2NT. When East gives the most negative response possible, West should give up on slam and simply settle for 3NT.

North will likely lead a low club against 3NT, and now suddenly West has 12 top tricks, and if he guesses to finesse hearts in the endgame (or play for a squeeze, which is working), he will emerge with 13. Twelve tricks is worth 42% for E/W, while all 13 is worth 56%. The really big swings will come at the tables where E/W end up in slam; if a club is led, N/S will get at least 80% of the matchpoints, while on any other lead E/W will get over 95% of the matchpoints.

Board: 30 ♠ 9 7 6 5 4
 Dealer: E ♥ J 10
 Vul: None ♦ K Q 3
 ♣ J 10 7

♠ A J 10 8
 ♥ Q 8 7 3
 ♦ J 7 2
 ♣ Q 5

♠ K Q 2
 ♥ K 5 2
 ♦ A 8
 ♣ K 9 8 4 2

♠ 3
 ♥ A 9 6 4
 ♦ 10 9 6 5 4
 ♣ A 6 3

West	North	East	South
		1NT	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

A normal, 25 HCP 3NT for E/W, but what a bad mesh of the cards! N/S are likely to take four diamond tricks and two aces, +100 N/S. This is actually only worth 45% of the matchpoints to N/S, as some Easts will desperately try to make the contract by playing on either hearts or clubs more than once, and allow a third undertrick.

Results of Board 30

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
200	...	98
180	...	95
150	...	83
100	...	45
50	...	16
...	90	11
...	100	10
...	110	8
...	300	7
...	400	5
...	430	2
...	...	0

Board: 31 ♠ A Q 9 4
 Dealer: S ♥ K 10 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 4
 ♣ A Q 10 7

♠ 2
 ♥ A Q 9 7 6 2
 ♦ J 9 8 7 6
 ♣ 2

♠ K J 6 5 3
 ♥ 8 5 4
 ♦ K 3
 ♣ K J 5

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

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♥	2NT	All Pass	

An interesting judgment deal! Some Wests might consider either passing or opening 3♥, but we like a 2♥ opener on the chunky six-card suit. North will probably overcall 2NT with his 17-point balanced hand, and East has a decision. While it's normally a good idea to raise a weak two-bid to the three-level holding nine combined trumps, the defensive nature of East's hand, combined with the three small hearts, suggests

that defending might here be the better option. And so it proves; 3♥ should go down at least one trick, while 2NT has no chance to make as long as West can work out to duck the first two rounds of hearts to keep communication with his partner.

Should West, with his exciting hand, bid again over 2NT? It's possible that this is the winning action, but it sounds from the auction that the hearts may be poorly placed, so if West does not catch a good fit in a red suit, getting doubled at the three level could be very expensive.

+100 defending correctly against 2NT is worth a juicy 77% board for E/W, but misdefending to let it make is worth only 27%. 3♥ going down one is approximately average (depending on whether it's doubled), so we suppose for anyone who doesn't trust his own defense skills, competing on to 3♥ might be the winning action.

Results of Board 31

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
500	...	99
300	...	91
150	...	79
120	...	73
100	...	62
50	...	40
...	100	23
...	110	19
...	140	15
...	200	8
...	400	4
...	500	3
...	800	1
...	...	0

Board: 32 ♠ A 10 6 3
 Dealer: W ♥ K 9 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ 9
 ♣ K Q J 8 3

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

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



West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Dbl	Rdbl	2♦	4♥
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

West has just barely enough, in our view, to step into the auction with a frisky passed-hand takeout double. North, if playing support doubles and redoubles, has an easy way to show three-card heart support (this convention comes up a lot and we highly recommend it), and East will probably compete in diamonds.

South, with his fabulous distribution and knowledge of a 10-card fit, should waste no time in leaping to 4♥, and now West's frisky action might come back to haunt him: we know that as East, we would have a lot of difficulty reaching for a pass card instead of a double card.

In fact, this contract will be doubled so many times that +420 for N/S is worth only a 34% board; +590, on the other hand, will be worth 81%. To salvage this board undoubled, N/S will have to find a way to sneak an 11th trick, something that should be impossible as long as West leads from his obvious spade sequence.

Results of Board 32

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
800	...	99
690	...	97
630	...	94
590	...	81
450	...	62
420	...	34
200	...	9
170	...	6
110	...	4
...	50	3
...	100	1
...	...	0

Board: 33 ♠ Q J 7
 Dealer: N ♥ J 6 4 2
 Vul: None ♦ Q J 9 3
 ♣ A 6

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

♠ K 9 4
 ♥ A 9 8 7
 ♦ 6
 ♣ K Q J 8 3



West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♦	1♥	Pass	2♥
3♦	Dbl	Dbl	All Pass

Another hand where the final contract could be all over the map. N/S are tantalizingly close to game, but the mesh of their cards is such that the only game that has a chance is 3NT. They might get there, too: if South aggressively jump raises 1♥ to 3♥, North should surely offer 3NT as a contract, and it would be up to South to decide to pass, figuring that North can infer his diamond shortness from the auction.

3NT is an excellent contract that will very likely make, as either West will plug away at his diamonds, conceding the ninth trick immediately, or North can endplay West in the red suits by leading a heart toward the jack after stripping away West's black cards.

At the tables where South raises only to 2♥, West will likely try again with his strong hand and compete to 3♦. Where North can make a penalty double, he will surely do so, and this will lead to +300 and a 70% score to N/S. Where North's double would be an artificial game try (a "maximal" double), the N/S decisions are much more awkward. It would not surprise us to find an assortment of +100, +140, and -50 or -100 at those tables, depending on exactly what North and South choose to do.

Finding a way to go plus on the N/S cards automatically assures them a reasonable board, but for the many pairs in 4♥, even -50 is worth only 29% of the matchpoints.

Results of Board 33

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
1100	...	99
960	...	98
800	...	96
550	...	92
530	...	90
500	...	88
420	...	86
400	...	79
300	...	68
150	...	62
140	...	57
120	...	53
100	...	44
...	50	29
...	100	12
...	180	2
...	470	1
...	...	0

Board: 34 ♠ Q 5 3
 Dealer: E ♥ 10 8 6 5 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ A Q 9 6 2
 ♣ —

♠ A J 2
 ♥ Q 3
 ♦ K 8 4 3
 ♣ K 8 4 3

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

♠ 8 6
 ♥ A K J 9 7 4
 ♦ 5
 ♣ A J 9 6



West North East South
 Pass Pass 1♥
 Dbl 4♥ 4♠ Pass
 Pass 5♥ 5♠ Pass
 Pass Dbl All Pass

Results of Board 34

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
1660	...	99
1460	...	97
1430	...	93
1200	...	90
1100	...	88
850	...	84
800	...	78
680	...	66
650	...	42
620	...	26
500	...	22
300	...	19
200	...	18
...	100	11
...	200	3
...	600	1
...	...	0

What a wild deal! This is the type of hand where anything can happen. The example auction is just one of many possible auctions that will occur on this deal. North has a clear 5♥ call, in our view, once his partner is likely to be short in spades based on the auction, since 5♥ will very often be making. East must guess what to do; we have

a lot of sympathy for a 5♠ call, hoping for a double fit in the black suits, but here this could turn out disastrously. If N/S manage to double 5♠ and lead their singleton diamond, accurate defense will lead to +800 (North wins ♦Q, returns ♦2 for a ruff, ruffs the club return, returns ♦6 for another ruff).

It turns out that 11 tricks is the expected result for N/S in hearts, and since it's not that easy for E/W to do better, +650 is worth only 42% for N/S. As seen in the example hand, there will be some who go for a number E/W, there will be some whose sacrifices end up costing less than the +650 that is North-South's due, and there will be some N/S pairs who get pushed to slam and may even make it on a non-spade lead.

Board: 35 ♠ 9 8 3 2
 Dealer: S ♥ J 9 5 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ 7 5
 ♣ A 9 5

♠ A 6 4
 ♥ A 10 8 3
 ♦ K 3
 ♣ Q J 7 6

♠ K J 7
 ♥ K 6 4
 ♦ J 4 2
 ♣ K 4 3 2

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



West North East South
 Dbl Pass 3♣ 2♦
 All Pass

Results of Board 35

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
200	...	82
100	...	53
...	50	42
...	90	39
...	100	37
...	110	27
...	130	16
...	150	13
...	170	12
...	200	11
...	500	9
...	600	4
...	...	0

This time, South has everybody's weak two-bid in diamonds, and will surely open 2♦ unless that bid is conventional in their system (or, unless South is an extremely aggressive opening bidder). West has an easy takeout double, and East has a real problem. If E/W play the Lebensohl 2NT convention against 2♦ opening bids (an explanation can easily be found by searching Google online), then East has a fairly comfortable 3♣ response.

Even if not playing any conventions, we would still choose 3♣, as it is a contract that is likely to make. A natural 2NT call is possible, but it is pretty risky holding only ♦Jxx. If E/W do manage to stop in 3♣, +110 is worth a hefty 73% board to them. Going one down in something would be average, but if E/W climb to 3NT, it's easy to defeat this two tricks, which will give N/S the gift of an 82% board.

Board: 36

Dealer: W

Vul: Both

♠ J 8 4

♥ J 8

♦ K Q 9 2

♣ A K 10 7

♠ A Q 10 6

♥ 10 9

♦ 8 7

♣ 8 6 5 4 3



♠ 9 5 2

♥ 6 5 4 2

♦ A 10 5 4 3

♣ 9

♠ K 7 3

♥ A K Q 7 3

♦ J 6

♣ Q J 2

West North East South

1♦ 1♥ 3♦

All Pass

We recommend South jump to 3♦ after East's 1♥ overall, assuming N/S are using weak jump raises in competition (highly recommended, since a cuebid of the opponents' suit can serve as a limit raise or better in diamonds). This gives East a real headache: he will feel pusillanimous passing this out, but doubling back in to the auction might easily lead to trouble. This decision is surely a close one, and we would personally double back NV but pass VUL.

It turns out that both 3♦ and 3♥ should go down one, although we can envision an accident at many tables where East woodenly continues with a "safe" heart at trick three, instead of visualizing spade tricks disappearing on clubs.

If E/W manage to defend 3♦ and defeat it a trick, they will have earned themselves a 67% board, and even competing to three of a major and failing by one trick will be average. Allowing 3♦ to make, often with an overtrick, will transfer most of the match points N/S, and at the tables where North somehow works out to double E/W at the three level for +200, a 90% board will be his reward.

Results of Board 36

Scores		MPS
N-S	E-W	N-S
...	...	100
870	...	99
400	...	98
300	...	96
200	...	89
130	...	77
110	...	67
100	...	51
...	100	33
...	110	26
...	140	21
...	150	17
...	170	12
...	180	7
...	200	3
...	...	0