

ACBL-wide Charity Game #2

Wednesday Morning – April 3, 2019 – Set 226001



American Contract
Bridge League

Analysis by Barry Rigal



Barry Rigal is a player, author, commentator and syndicated columnist. Born in London in 1958, he has been a professional bridge player since moving to New York in 1994. Rigal has written many books as well as magazine and newspaper columns and has contributed to the world championship books for two decades. He has also served as the Chief Vugraph commentator for the World Bridge Federation for 10 years.

Married to Sue Picus. He has won two North American championships as well as EC Mixed Teams and multiple UK titles. As a professional player claims to be the only pro ever to have been shut out by his client from declaring a single board in a session — not for want of trying! At college reached the quarterfinal round of the University Challenge for Queen's Oxford - where he suffered the indignity of losing to Queen's Cambridge — and a team headed by the comedian Stephen Fry. He also claims that his tutors awarded him the title of "The laziest man in Oxford."

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 8 6
♥ Q J 3
♦ 10 6
♣ K Q 8 5 3

♠ J 5 2
♥ K 9 7 6
♦ K 5 4 2
♣ 7 2

W N
S E

♠ K 9 4
♥ A 10 5 2
♦ A Q J 7
♣ A 4

♠ A 10 7 3
♥ 8 4
♦ 9 8 3
♣ J 10 9 6

After West responds 1NT to East's 1♦ opening, he will end up in 3NT, probably on a low heart lead. Conceivably it might be right to put in dummy's 10 to preserve a heart re-entry to hand, but most will run the lead to their hand, then use that entry to take and repeat the diamond finesse. Now if declarer advances dummy's ♠K, South can do no better than win and return a major suit. West wins the return and runs his top clubs, forcing North to release a spade. Then North can be endplayed with the fourth heart to play diamonds into dummy's tenace for 11 tricks.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A 6
♥ K Q 8 5 3
♦ 5 4
♣ J 8 6 5

♠ Q 9 8 5 4
♥ 10 9 7 6 2
♦ K 3 2
♣ —

W N
S E

♠ K 7 3
♥ 4
♦ Q 10 8
♣ A Q 10 9 4 2

♠ J 10 2
♥ A J
♦ A J 9 7 6
♣ K 7 3

At his first turn North will hear the auction start 1♣-1♦-1♥ to him. Some will simply raise to 2♦, others may optimistically introduce their spades, perhaps planning to show their diamond support later? The double fit means both sides will want to compete to the three level, but they must also avoid going overboard. If N/S find spades, they might well find it hard to apply the brakes in time. Nine tricks are easy for East in 3♣, the same number in less straightforward fashion for N/S in either of their fits. Making contracts are surely going to score nicely for either side here.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 6 5 3
♥ K 5 4 3
♦ A 5
♣ 9 4 2

♠ K 10 4
♥ A 7 6 2
♦ K J
♣ J 8 7 3

W N
S E

♠ A 8 7 2
♥ Q 10 8
♦ 10 9 8 6
♣ A Q

♠ J 9
♥ J 9
♦ Q 7 4 3 2
♣ K 10 6 5

Most Easts will double North's 1♣ opener, after which South must choose between raising clubs, making a fit-jump in diamonds or trying to keep West out with a 1NT call. Whatever he does, West will surely compete via a responsive double or cuebid or simply bid both of his suits. This time N/S are favorites to win the battle, despite having less than half the deck between them. With the black-suit finesses succeeding, North can wrap up +110 in clubs or +120 in notrump, while E/W would do well even to come to eight tricks in spades after early diamond leads.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 7 6 ♥ Q 8 6 5 ♦ K 10 8 ♣ 10 8 6	♠ A J 5 4 2 ♥ A K 9 ♦ A 3 ♣ K 9 5 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 9 8 ♥ 4 ♦ Q J 9 6 5 4 ♣ A Q 3 2 ♠ K 10 3 ♥ J 10 7 3 2 ♦ 7 2 ♣ J 7 4
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I see no justification for opening the North hand 2NT except terminal optimism, but quite a few will do so. That might result in a transfer sequence to 4♥ — an awkward spot on a top diamond lead. It looks reasonable to win, cash one top heart, then try a spade to the 10, after which the contract will drift two down. 4♠ doesn't look any easier, but at least avoiding a heart loser seems much more feasible there. Frankly, the impractical game of 3NT looks simplest to bring home; it simply requires very good guesswork in the majors. Anyone recording +620 will score very decently.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 9 8 4 2 ♥ — ♦ J 10 6 4 ♣ Q 10 9 7	♠ Q 10 6 5 3 ♥ 8 7 5 4 ♦ — ♣ K 8 4 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A J ♥ A Q J 10 9 ♦ A 8 7 ♣ J 6 5 ♠ 7 ♥ K 6 3 2 ♦ K Q 9 5 3 2 ♣ A 3
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East looks too good for a 15-17 notrump. After a 1♥ opener and 2♦ overcall, West may decide not to make a negative double (defending looks sensible facing diamond length, doesn't it?). If West passes, East might balance over 2♦ with 2NT and be raised to 3NT. After a low diamond lead, declarer can win cheaply and play on clubs, thus bringing home at least nine tricks fairly easily. Getting to game and making it will give E/W a fine result (losing only to those collecting 800 from over-optimistic N/S pairs).

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 10 9 6 5 3 ♥ 5 ♦ A J 10 9 4 ♣ 3	♠ 2 ♥ K Q J 3 2 ♦ Q 7 5 2 ♣ J 10 9 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A Q 8 7 4 ♥ 8 ♦ K ♣ A Q 7 6 5 2 ♠ K ♥ A 10 9 7 6 4 ♦ 8 6 3 ♣ K 8 4
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While a few diehard Easts will open 1♠, it looks more natural to begin by bidding clubs first, then repeating spades. Today E/W will find their spade fit soon enough, and East may well use RKCB to determine his side is missing two key cards. Of course you can make 6♠, thanks to the fall of the ♠K, but how many pairs will reach slam under their own steam, as opposed to being pushed there over 6♥? N/S pairs who sacrifice in hearts, conceding upwards of 800, may be disappointed to find how few E/W pairs are recording +1430 here.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 6 ♥ A K 7 4 ♦ A Q 9 8 6 2 ♣ 6	♠ 10 5 3 ♥ 9 5 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ J 10 7 5 2 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ K J 9 8 7 ♥ 8 6 2 ♦ 10 5 ♣ A K 4 ♠ Q 4 2 ♥ Q J 10 3 ♦ J 4 ♣ Q 9 8 3
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E/W will bid unopposed either to game or slam after West reverses to show the red suits and considerable extras. East might jump to 3NT over 2♥, suggesting 11-13 or so, but the ♦10 is a significant spot card to West. It turns a very poor slam into a moderate one. After a club lead against 6♦, it looks logical to pass the ♦10 round to North's king. Best defense now looks to be to return a trump, after which declarer will run all the diamonds, then somehow have to work out to play for a major-suit squeeze rather than a simple spade finesse.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

♠ A 7 5 3
♥ J 7 5
♦ J 9 4
♣ 8 7 4

♠ K Q 9
♥ A 10 4
♦ K 10 7 5
♣ K J 5



♠ 10 6 4 2
♥ K Q 9
♦ A 8 6
♣ Q 9 6

♠ J 8
♥ 8 6 3 2
♦ Q 3 2
♣ A 10 3 2

You'd expect a strong notrump from North to lead to a contract of 3NT. Many won't use Stayman here, since there is no guarantee that spades will play better than notrump, and Stayman gives away unnecessary information about declarer's shape. After a heart lead, most Norths will take the trick in dummy and lead a spade to the ♠Q in hand, then maybe a diamond to the ace for a spade to the ♠K? When the jack falls, declarer can dislodge the ♠A and subsequently knock out the ♣A for the 10th trick, and surely a very respectable matchpoint result.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 9 5 4 2
♥ A
♦ A 9 3
♣ A Q 4 2

♠ K 10 7 3
♥ Q 5 2
♦ 10 4 2
♣ K 10 3



♠ J 8
♥ K J 10 7
♦ J 8 6 5
♣ 9 8 7

♠ Q 6
♥ 9 8 6 4 3
♦ K Q 7
♣ J 6 5

West will generally get to open 1♠ in fourth chair. After a 1NT response, I'd expect most of the field to reach game. But 3NT on a heart lead looks very unattractive. (Declarer ought to win the heart lead and play on spades but should not be allowed to come home with more than eight tricks.) Not that 4♠ is any more attractive, but with ♠K onside and the clubs breaking, there are some relatively uncomplicated routes to 10 tricks. I can't see how E/W can confidently bid to the suit game here, but maybe East will be able to diagnose the singleton heart opposite.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

♠ 7 4 3
♥ A 3
♦ Q J 8 4 3
♣ K J 7

♠ 5 2
♥ K J 7
♦ A 5
♣ A 10 8 5 4 2



♠ A K J 10 9 8 6
♥ 2
♦ K 9 7 6 2
♣ —

♠ Q
♥ Q 10 9 8 6 5 4
♦ 10
♣ Q 9 6 3

Is that East hand a 3♥ opening bid? I say no, but I do have one foot in the grave. Whether East preempts or not, it may well be hard for N/S to diagnose that, despite all of North's high-cards and South's shape, slam is nothing special today, and the bad diamond break could make declarer's life very tough. Still, if West cashes the ♥A, South can draw precisely one round of trump, then trust the ♠Q to be singleton and pitch two diamonds on dummy's winners. He can then ruff his remaining diamond in dummy. Only a trump lead (or an unlikely low diamond) sets the slam.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

♠ K 9 7 4 2
♥ J 7 6 3
♦ A K 4 2
♣ —

♠ 10 8 5
♥ K 5
♦ 8 6
♣ K Q 8 5 4 2



♠ Q
♥ A Q 10 8 2
♦ J 9 3
♣ J 10 9 7

♠ A J 6 3
♥ 9 4
♦ Q 10 7 5
♣ A 6 3

While a few desperados will preempt with the South cards, most will pass and let West open 1♠. Now some Norths will overcall or even jump in clubs. East has close to a game-forcing raise of spades, but N/S will want to sacrifice in clubs, with South perhaps wanting to interpose a lead-directing action in hearts along the way. Who knows where the music is going to stop? With E/W having a painless 11 tricks in spades, and N/S able to save in 5♣ for down 300, you'd imagine each side may have an awkward five-level decision to take.

Board 12West Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

East raises 1♠ to 2♠, South can come in with 3♥ or 4♥. East may then reconsider his earlier caution and save in 4♠ over 4♥ — unilateral, but right today. 4♥ needs only the club finesse (unlucky!), but game might be let through if the defenders cash the ♠A, as South can discard his club loser on the spade winners. 4♠ also has real play after a heart lead. Crossruffing lets the defenders score an extra trump trick from a diamond ruff. West's non-obvious winning line is to ruff the heart lead, come to the ♦A, and lead a club up, stopping N/S from scoring their trumps separately.

Board 13North Deals
Both Vul

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

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

Given the vulnerability, might an optimistic North open here? I hope not — but I'm not holding my breath. While E/W rate to get to game in hearts whether North bids or not, the real issue is if N/S can find their club fit and save in 5♣ (where E/W need to find the diamond ruff to take them down two). Since N/S have the majority of high cards, they may well not seriously envisage saving, but E/W can establish spades to ensure 10 tricks in 4♥ one way or another. Doubled games one way or the other won't be uncommon, I suspect.

Board 14East Deals
None Vul

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

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

You'd expect N/S's unopposed auction to start: 1♦-1♥-1♠. Now should North rebid 1NT or give preference to his partner's diamonds? A lot depends on their personal style: some would play that the 1♠ rebid guarantees an unbalanced hand. But those Souths might choose a call of 1NT at their second turn. Of the three possible partscores in diamonds, hearts and notrump, it is far from clear which is best. Hearts struggles to take an eighth trick; that is also true for diamonds on a trump lead, while notrumps has no more than seven tricks on sensible defense.

Board 15South Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

West's cards constitute a normal, shapely 1♣ opener, letting North overcall either at the one or two level. Now E/W will drive to game, probably reach 3NT in one or two bids. After a spade lead, declarer will simply dislodge the ♥A and claim 11 tricks either sooner or later. Yes, a diamond lead would work to hold East to at most +430. Just to come to 10 tricks now, it would be necessary to duck two diamonds, then squeeze North in the majors. But I'd confidently expect a row of +460s for E/W here. 5♣, of course, makes no more than +400.

Board 16West Deals
E-W Vul

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

Some Wests will be able to preempt to 3♥ to show these values. Others will open at the one level because they consider this hand too good for a preempt. After a 3♥ call, South can balance with a bid of 3♠ and play 4♠. Could you blame East for winning his partner's club lead and shifting to hearts? He should still defeat the game, although West's blood pressure may be raised a point or two. After a 1♥ opener from West, North might overcall in clubs — but if he chooses to preempt, he might end up in that suit and regret it.

Board 17North Deals
None Vul

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

North will generally open 1♥ — he is not close to a 2♣ call, to my mind. A 1♥ bid might well end the auction, after which many Easts will lead a top diamond to concede 10 tricks. A trump lead would work much better, of course, but that looks hard to find. However, if South responds 1♠ to 1♥, then North will introduce his diamonds and make the opening lead problem to 4♥ far less challenging for East. A few Wests might balance over 1♥ with 2♣; if North then guesses to double, South will pass happily and collect as much as 500 on defense.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

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

East's feeble spade spots may discourage him from opening 2♠, but if he does then West can raise to 3♠, stymieing North. That player might choose to pass, hoping that it wasn't his side's hand. If North instead bids 3NT, he will not enjoy developments (down five?). Should he double, South won't have fun declaring 4♥ — and might even be doubled there by an aggressive West. It is hard to see how N/S can go plus here, since 3♠ appears to come home easily enough. An initial pass from East may let N/S find clubs, but seven tricks seem to be the limit in that strain.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

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

When South opens 1♠, West will overcall 2♦. North can double, letting South rebid 2♠, which doesn't guarantee a sixth spade. Now North does not seem worth more than a raise to 3♠ (because of the threat of diamond overruffs by East). South ought to pass now, because his ♦ Q is also a broken reed. If N/S do stay out of game, they will be peeved to discover how hard it is for the defenders to take their ruff. If the black kings were reversed, even 3♠ would go down. But today, any N/S pair who manage to reach game will probably score undeservedly well.

Board 20West Deals
Both Vul

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

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

West's side suit of hearts may discourage him from preempting or even tempt him to open at the one level. A 3♦ preempt might easily terminate the auction, but if West bids 1♦, E/W could sniff at slam. 5♦ is the simplest game to make, despite the incredibly hostile trump break. West can discover the bad news, then arrange to reduce his trumps a couple of times, and hold his trump losers to one. 3NT by West on a spade lead requires declarer never to duck a spade, but to clear clubs using the ♥Q as an entry to the East hand. Far from obvious!

Board 21North Deals
N-S Vul

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

♠ 4
♥ K Q 7 4
♦ A K 10 9 4
♣ Q 10 5

Does North have a 2♠ opening at unfavorable vulnerability? I say no, but I may be in a minority. If North does open 2♠, he should play there. Even if the defenders don't take their club ruff at once, it is hard to see how North can avoid running into an extra trump loser after a diamond lead. He does best today to pitch a club on the top diamonds and lead a trump; but seven tricks are still the limit on perfect defense. Few E/W pairs will manage to end up in notrump; thus most of the field will find creative ways to go minus.

Board 22East Deals
E-W Vul

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

♠ K 4
♥ J
♦ A 8 7
♣ K J 10 9 8 7 6

If South cannot bid 3♣ over 1♣ to show this hand, he may have to pass at his first turn. One way or another, though, you'd expect N/S to be able to find their way back into the auction. They can then probably reach game either in clubs or, even better, notrump. But if E/W find spades, it may scare N/S off notrump. In either 5♣ or 3NT declarer can cash off all the spades and clubs, reducing East down to the bare ♥A and three diamonds, whereupon he can be endplayed in hearts to lead diamonds and concede the 11th trick. Plus 430 still figures to score N/S respectably.

Board 23South Deals
Both Vul

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

♠ A K 7 4
♥ K 8 7 3
♦ K 5
♣ A 5 2

South probably has too much for a strong notrump, but many will opt for simplicity and choose that action. West rates to come in to show the majors, and now might North show his diamonds? Assuming East now competes in spades, it is hard to know when the bidding will stop and the doubling will start. One cannot imagine N/S ever finding hearts now, where they have nine tricks. Similarly, if South opens 1♣, West will surely introduce his hearts. Notrump partscores may come home, but the weather forecast is: doubled contracts ending in two zeroes.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

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

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

When West passes (few will preempt with this shape,) North can choose to treat his hand as a black two-suiter or a strong notrump. Both treatments are reasonable, but most will follow the latter route. In all likelihood the final contract will be 4♠, declared by North; despite the 4-1 trump break, the favorable location of the ♣A and ♥K mean that 10 tricks look straightforward enough. An 11th trick looks very hard to come to, since it appears almost impossible to maneuver a club or heart ruff.

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

E/W can set up a game force and find their heart fit but should not be in danger of going past 4♥. The absence of a diamond control ought to come to light early enough in the auction to keep them safely low. The defenders are likely to lead diamonds against 4♥, after which game is likely to come home. Curiously, a more incisive shot on defense would be for South to lead a spade, to set up the threat of overruffs. And yes, E/W might do better to play notrump here, but that is truly hard to do.

Board 26East Deals
Both Vul

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

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

You'd envisage almost every East will open the bidding, typically with a call of 1♣, but that shouldn't stop South overcalling in spades and North getting hearts into the action. The final contract is surely going to be 4♥ by North — unless N/S use a form of Rubens advances to overcalls, when South will be declarer. In the latter case a club lead would leave N/S with no more than 11 tricks. However, if North is declarer the club lead from East is far less attractive. After a low trump lead, for example, North can ruff out the spades while drawing trumps and come to 12 tricks.

Board 27South Deals
None Vul

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

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

South has far too little defense for a 1♦ opener, and 2♦ is inappropriate with such a weak suit. Whether or not South acts, E/W will surely find their spade fit and will reach game, but won't worry about exploring for slam. In a spade contract, it ought to be simple to ruff out hearts while drawing trumps to come to 11 winners. But if N/S sacrifice in 5♦, the key to the defense is for East to maneuver a heart ruff. While this looks easy enough, some pairs will miss the point of the deal; and the difference between +500 and +300 may be close to a full top.

Board 28West Deals
N-S Vul

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

South will step in with a takeout double after hearing 1♦ to his left and 1♥ to his right. That will let North jump in spades - but at the one, two or three level? The higher he bids, the tougher East's decision might be as to whether to rebid his hearts. With N/S taking eight tricks in spades, it looks as if E/W may have done far too much in reaching 4♥. However, the cards cooperate almost unfairly well for East in that spot. With the spade suit protected from attack by the defense, there is nothing South can do to set up a fourth winner for his side.

Board 29North Deals
Both Vul

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

If North believes (as most do now) that 5-3-3-2 hands are balanced, he will open 1NT here to end the bidding. Now what will East lead? Those mindlessly selecting majors over minors will pick a heart; declarer should win and test spades, then play on clubs (perhaps planning to lead to the 8?) and come to +150 for a fine score. I'd lead a diamond as East - believing it to be a safer sequence. It may be luck that this holds his opponents to eight tricks, but chance is supposed to favor the prepared mind. Spades rates to produce no more than +110.

Board 30East Deals
None Vul

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

When West opens 1♥ in third seat, East can either try to put the brakes on with a call of 1NT or raise to 2♥. Either way, South is likely to overcall 2♠, but when West bids diamonds, E/W will struggle to reach their best game of 3NT. Mind you, on the lead of ♠J, 4♥ rolls home, and North can hardly be blamed for leading his partner's suit. If East does respond 1NT to 1♥, then might West blast out 3NT, relying on East to convert to 4♥ with an unsuitable hand? Even after a club lead, declarer can dislodge the diamond honors and come to at least nine tricks.

Board 31South Deals
N-S Vul

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

South's values may fall into the gap between 1♥ and 2♥ - but whatever you do, please don't pass with such a good suit. Should South try 2♥, West will simply bid his spades, helping East to save in 4♠ over 4♥. That looks likely to be doubled and down one. A 1♥ opener from South will see West make a Michaels cuebid, and again East is surely going to save in 4♠. I wonder at how many tables North might bid on to 5♥? The lead of ♠A would let that through, but after a club lead South will be struggling to come to as many as 10 tricks.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul

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

West has a sketchy but lead-directing 1♦ opener. North can then go high or low in hearts, with East probably doing no more than producing a simple diamond raise at his first chance. South will surely introduce his spades now, and North is likely to let him play partscore, selling out to 2♠ or competing to 3♠ if East balances into 3♦. I don't see many E/W pairs competing to 4♦, but they can take 10 tricks in that strain. Meanwhile, the defenders have six tricks against spades (though a few unfortunate Wests may lead the ♦A and dissipate one of their winners).

Board 33North Deals
None Vul

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

The North cards don't constitute an opening bid, no matter what optimistic prism you look at them through. But doubtless some will act, after which N/S are unlikely to stay out of a minor-suit game, unless they double E/W in a spade contract. Given the vulnerability, absolute par is for E/W to compete to 4♠, where nine tricks look easy enough. The 5-0 club break means there are ruffs available against 5♦, so coming to as many as 10 tricks in a minor looks a stretch for N/S. Any making contract will score the successful side extremely well here.

Board 34East Deals
N-S Vul

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

You'd imagine West will double after hearing 1♦ from his partner and 1♥ to his right. Now North may want to compete (some could redouble here, some will bid 1♠ then support hearts, while others will pass and plan to raise hearts later). East also has a choice of rebidding either 1NT or 2♦. No matter what he does, though, it is hard to predict who will win the auction. N/S have less than half the deck but can in theory take at least nine tricks in either major, while E/W have a far simpler route to nine tricks in diamonds.

Board 35South Deals
E-W Vul

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

When North hears his partner bid and rebid hearts, he can either head for 3NT to protect the tenaces or blast out 4♥ and play the 6-2 fit. In 3NT you'd expect East to cash a top club and shift to a top spade. Now the entry position may mean that declarer's best move in hearts might be to run the jack — picking up a stiff 9 or 10 to his right; disaster! The play in 4♥ could follow the same route, but here South may be able to start by taking one top heart. After that, he can come to 10 tricks comfortably enough by ruffing black cards in his hand.

Board 36West Deals
Both Vul

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

6♥ looks good in theory, since declarer seems to be able to ruff a club with the short trumps. Indeed, slam can be made by either East or West (but East might go down on a spade lead from South, by running into a ruff). 6NT can only be made by East, since a low club lead defeats West, but East can arrange to organize a squeeze after a club lead. And on any other defense he runs the red suits, coming down to four spades and the ♣A and squeezing North down to the same pattern. Then he cashes ♣A and ♠A and exits with ♠10 to endplay North!