

# ACBL-wide International Fund Game #1

Saturday Afternoon – Feb. 1, 2020 – Set 240024



American Contract Bridge League



Analysis by Frank Stewart

Syndicated columnist, author and Bridge Bulletin contributor Frank Stewart analyzed this set of deals, directing his comments toward advancing players.

## Board 1

North Deals  
None Vul

♠ —	♠ Q 9 8 2	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 7 5 4 3
	N											
W			E									
	S											
♥ 7 4	♥ A K 10 9 5 2		♥ J 6									
♦ Q 9 7 5 3	♦ 10 8	♦ J 4 2										
♣ A 10 8 7 3 2	♣ K	♣ 9 6 4										
	♠ A K J 6											
	♥ Q 8 3											
	♦ A K 6											
	♣ Q J 5											

This is a deceptively tough bidding problem for N/S. When North opens 1♥, South should respond only 1♠; strong jump shifts are appropriate only when responder has a self-sufficient suit, a big fit for opener's suit or a strongish balanced hand. When North raises to 2♠, South should avoid Blackwood, which won't tell him what he needs to know: North could hold ♠Q982 ♥AKJ952 ♦Q ♣32. South could bid 3♦, then bid 5♠ to try for slam and focus on the unbid suit. Many Souths will despair and roar into the winning contract of 6NT, hoping their 20 high-card points will suffice. On top of everything else, West may toss in an "Unusual" 2NT over South's 1♠, and that won't help N/S find 6NT. Woe to pairs who reach 6♥ doubled or 6♠ and fail unluckily. We think N/S will get an 80% result for +990.

## Board 2

East Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ K 9 5 2	♠ A Q 10 4	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 8 6 3
	N											
W			E									
	S											
♥ A 5 4	♥ 8 7		♥ K Q 10 6									
♦ 9 7	♦ 4 2	♦ A Q J 8										
♣ A Q J 6	♣ K 9 8 4 2	♣ 7										
	♠ 7											
	♥ J 9 3 2											
	♦ K 10 6 5 3											
	♣ 10 5 3											

Almost every E/W will reach the ill-fated 4♠. East will open 1♦ and raise West's 1♠ response to 2♠. If in E/W's style, East's raise promises four-card support, West can bid 4♠. If East might have raised with three-card support in a suitable hand (an approach we favor), West might test the water with 3♣, but E/W are almost sure to land at the spade game. On a good day, West might win 11 tricks without working up much of a sweat, but with the actual foul lie of the cards, he will surely lose two spades, a diamond and at least one more trick in the wash. We expect E/W to score a little above average for minus 50 since a few pairs will be minus 100. If you sat N/S and your opponents wandered into 3NT, a contract they probably made, you have our sympathy.

## Board 3

South Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ 8 4 2	♠ A K Q J 10 9 6	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5
	N											
W			E									
	S											
♥ Q 9 6 5 4	♥ A K		♥ J 10 7 3									
♦ 8 7 4	♦ A 5	♦ K Q										
♣ K 9	♣ 10 3	♣ Q J 8 7 6 5										
	♠ 7 3											
	♥ 8 2											
	♦ J 10 9 6 3 2											
	♣ A 4 2											

North has 10 solid winners and ample "Quick Trick" defensive strength and will open 2♣. If South responds 2♦, negative or waiting, North will rebid 2♠, South might then try 3♦ and North will probably jump to 4♠, passed out. If South has bid diamonds, East might avoid leading the ♦K, but unless he starts with a club, declarer can still set up a diamond trick in dummy for a club discard and score +480. Other Norths may get the ♦K lead when South never bids diamonds. How to reach the magic matchpoint spot of 3NT? One way might be control-showing responses to 2♣. If South conventionally shows two controls (an ace or two kings), North might gamble on playing at notrump. Still, N/S may score only average for +460.

**Board 4**West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

N/S will often bid 1♥-1♠, 2♦-3♣, 3NT ... and then South must judge whether to pass or go to 4♠. Neither action is clear, but many Souths will prefer to play at the suit due to their good spade spots. Suppose West leads the ♦A and a low diamond, and South pitches a club on dummy's king and lets the ♠8 ride. Declarer will still lose two trumps, so though a finesse with the ♣Q will win, he will need to avoid a club loser, such as by finessing with the ♥J. Other winning lines are possible: South can ruff a lot of red cards in his hand, but he still may need to let the ♠8 ride at some point. Norths at 3NT will find the play treacherous; nine tricks are possible even after a diamond opening lead by East, but North must guess well. N/Ss who bid and make any game should score well.

**Board 5**North Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Most Easts will open 3♦ despite the four cards in hearts. (West may have hearts, but unless he has a good hand as well, the deal may belong to N/S.) South doesn't have enough to act, and West must avoid the basic error of bidding 3NT. East should not have solid diamonds, and if he has a typical holding such as K-Q-10-x-x-x-x, his diamonds may be useless at notrump. For West to pass would be reasonable, especially if he knows that East's style is to preempt freely. Opposite a solid-citizen East, West might try 5♦, and that call could be a winner. If, say, South leads the ♥A and shifts to a club, East can take the ace, force out the ♦A, ruff South's club return, draw trumps and eventually guess well to finesse with dummy's ♠Q for 11 tricks. We think E/W may score above average for +150.

**Board 6**East Deals  
E-W Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

N/S should handle this board routinely. When South opens 1♠, some Norths will issue a forcing raise, such as a conventional 2NT response. South, with a minimum, will jump to 4♠ to sign off. Other Norths may temporize with a 2♣ response; it's not impossible that 6♣ could be a winning contract. But North will show his spade support later, and 4♠ will still be the outcome. West will lead the ♦K, and South takes the ace and cashes the A-K of trumps. When East discards, South runs the clubs. West must follow three times, so South gets rid of his last diamond and loses only a trump and the ♥A. We expect +450 to N/S to be a common and average result.

**Board 7**South Deals  
Both Vul

♠ K 8 2  
♥ K 8 5 3  
♦ 10 9 8 3  
♣ J 2

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ Q J 10 9 3  
♥ Q 10 7 4  
♦ Q 5  
♣ 5 4

After three passes, many Easts will open 1NT despite their semi-balanced pattern. One option is to open 1♣ and jump to 3♣ over a major-suit response, a sequence that is right on strength but suggests longer clubs. Another, to open 1♦ and rebid 2♣, distorts the distribution and may leave opener struggling to find a good third bid. As it happens. East can take nine tricks at either minor, +110, with careful play. (If the defense leads three rounds of spades against 3♣, East ruffs and must lead to his ♦K instead of drawing trumps first.) Against 1NT, South will lead the ♠Q, and East might judge to withhold dummy's king since South didn't bid. When North turns up with the ♦A as well as the ♠A, East can come to five clubs, two hearts and a diamond for +120 and a good matchpoint result.

**Board 8**West Deals  
None Vul

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

A deal such as this can swing as many matchpoints as a grand-slam deal. Passed out is possible, but West may open 1♣ though he would rather his ♦K lay in some other suit. A 1♠ response by East will silence South, and West's 2♣ rebid will be passed out. If instead East responds 1♦, South may try 1♠. Not every West will be willing to rebid 2♣ freely with such a minimum, and the auction may end. If South doesn't overcall, West will rebid 1♥, East will bid 1♠ and 2♣ by West will be passed out. Souths who play at 1♠ could emerge with seven tricks, +80. Wests at 2♣ should go down one: North leads the ♥K — 2, 10, 5 — and shifts to trumps. South lets dummy win, and West can't avoid six losers. As in many partscore deals, any pair with a plus score can expect to win some matchpoints.

**Board 9**North Deals  
E-W Vul

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

E/W should reach a notrump game. East will start with 1♣ on his aceless minimum. If South is a light overcaller and tries 1♠, West can show strength and a club fit with a 2♠ cuebid and carry East's 2NT rebid to 3NT. If South wants more to overcall (we would) and passes, some E/Ws will be using "inverted" minor-suit raises, and West will raise to 2♣, strong and forcing. Then E/W will proceed to look for notrump by showing their stoppers and should land at 3NT again. If East is declarer, South might lead a pedestrian low spade, conceding two overtricks and minus 660. (He is squeezed when declarer runs the clubs.) But the auction may have suggested a diamond opening lead, and if South or North duly leads a diamond, he holds declarer to nine tricks. N/S will score well if they are minus 600.

**Board 10**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

Many Souths will open 1NT. The hand may be worth 17 points, with the five-card suit and two 10s, but if South opens 1♥ and sees a 1♠ response, he will lack a descriptive second bid. Assuming a 1NT opening, West has options. At the vulnerability, a pass might reap a penalty of +200 or more and a good result, and West could always bid spades later if North bailed out of notrump. (At a few tables, 1NT will be passed out, and E/W will take South to the cleaners.) Other Wests will overcall 2♠, perhaps passed out. If North leads the ♣Q to dummy's ace, West must arrange to lead diamonds twice toward his queen to win 10 tricks. Some players refuse to suppress a five-card major and will open 1♥ as South. Then West will bid spades, and we think E/W will have a chance to reach their makeable 4♠ for +620 and a top.

**Board 11**South Deals  
None Vul

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

Many auctions and results are possible. West might scrape up an opening bid if his long suit were a major, but as it is, most Wests will pass. If N/S's 1NT range is 15 to 17 points (or some lower range), North will open 1♦. After two passes, West might balance with 1NT. North might risk a penalty double, and if West sticks it out instead of running to 2♣, the defense could collect seven tricks for +100 after the ♠K lead. Other Wests will balance with a double, and North could redouble or bid 1♠ or 1NT, perhaps landing at 2♦ for +110. At some tables, North will open 1NT and play there. Almost any defense will hold him to seven tricks, and E/W should score well above average for minus 90.

**Board 12**West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

♠ 10 6 5  
♥ J 9 7 2  
♦ 4

♣ J 8 7 5 3



♠ K J 8  
♥ K 6  
♦ A J 10 6  
♣ A K 10 6

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

Some E/Ws will bid 1♦, 1♠-2NT, 3♥-3♠, 4♠. North will lead the ♦4. If West grabs the ♦A, takes the ♥KA, ruffs his low heart in dummy and leads the ♠K, South can win, cash a diamond and lead a third diamond to promote North's ♠10 for a third defensive trick. To make an overtrick, West can lead the trump king to South's ace, ruff South's third diamond lead with the ♠Q and finesse with dummy's ♠8 to draw trumps, squeezing North in hearts and clubs in the process. We would open 1♣ as East, allowing 1♦ by South. Then E/W might still bid similarly, but West might try 3NT over 3♠ by East, and East will be willing to pass. Even if South avoids leading the ♦K, giving East 11 easy tricks, East can endplay South for the same result, and E/W will get a matchpoint top for +460.

**Board 13**North Deals  
Both Vul

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

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



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

♠ K Q 7 5  
♥ Q 10 9  
♦ Q 4  
♣ 10 8 5 4

E/W could make a minor-suit slam if either player had slightly different shape, but with their mirror distribution, they need to reach a notrump game. When East opens 1♦, many pairs will be using "inverted" minor-suit raises, and West will bid 2♦, forcing. (See also board 9.) Then we would expect East to try 3♣, West to show his heart stopper with 3♥ and East to bid 3NT, making five for +660. We dislike the "inverted" scheme since some responding hands are neither weak nor strong and are unbiddable. Moreover, many pairs fail to discuss continuations after a strong raise; what often ensues is some ill-defined groping toward 3NT. Pairs using old-fashioned methods may cope via 1♦, 2♣-3♣, 3♦-3♠, 3NT, but neither "natural" auction seems to investigate slam adequately.

**Board 14**East Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

If East opens 1♠ — few Easts will pass that hand as dealer — West must commit to game. A possible auction is 1♠, 2♣-2NT, 3♠-4♠. East seems to have only three losers, but the contract is unmakeable against decent defense. South can lead a trump, and the defense can remove dummy's trumps, making a loser of East's third diamond; or South can lead a heart, forcing East to draw trumps to avoid a heart ruff, leading to the same result. Few E/Ws will reach the winning contract, 3NT, which makes due to the blockage in diamonds plus North's lack of an entry to his diamonds. A few Wests might respond 2NT, natural and forcing, to East's 1♠, and East might raise; or West might reach 3NT after responding 1NT, forcing. E/Ws who avoid game may score well, but some will be allowed to make 4♠ for +420 and a top.

**Board 15**South Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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



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

♠ Q J 5 2  
♥ Q J 10 5 3  
♦ 2  
♣ 9 5 4

N/S have 27 high-card points and three potential trump suits, but only inspired guessing may make a game. North's hand is hard to evaluate — and hard to describe. If North opens 1♣, he will wonder what to bid when South responds 1♥. If North forces with an improvised jump shift to 2♠, he may find himself playing at 4♠ — which happens to be the game most likely to succeed! Other Norths will open 2♣ or an off-shape 2NT. A resulting 3NT contract will go down on a diamond lead, and 4♥, played by North after a transfer, fails if East leads the ♣A, then puts West in with the ♦A to get a club ruff. Some N/Ss may bid to 5♣, a good spot but makeable only if North produces a remarkable guess in trumps. We think N/S will win a ton of matchpoints if they find a route to a plus score.

**Board 16**West Deals  
E-W Vul

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

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



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

♠ 6 3  
♥ 9 6  
♦ 7 5 3 2  
♣ Q 7 6 4 2

When West opens 1NT, North will often enter with a conventional takeout for the majors. Pairs use various methods, but since competing over an opposing 1NT opening is often a winning tactic, most pairs employ some way of showing different types of hands including various two-suiters. In "Landy," a 2♣ overcall shows both majors (and either a strong hand or a hand weak in high cards but with good playing potential). Opposite a typical North hand, South should be aware of a chance for game and might even blast right into four of a major. West should not double despite his four defensive tricks since N/Ss who bid to the four level know something about the distribution that he doesn't. In fact, South will lose only two diamonds and a spade. N/S may score above average for +420, but a few pairs will be +590.

**Board 17**North Deals  
None Vul

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

♠ K 10 7 5 2  
♥ 9  
♦ 9 7 3  
♣ K 10 8 2



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

♠ A 3  
♥ A Q 10 7 4  
♦ Q 6  
♣ Q 9 7 3

When East opens 1♥, most Souths will pass. South would double with ♠QJ98 ♥2 ♦AJ542 ♣A54, but his actual hand is dull. Though West has five-card support, his hand is too junky to bid 4♥. But if he issues a 3♥ limit raise, East may like his hand enough to go to game. South's opening lead against 4♥ may be crucial. If South finds a spade lead, he sets up a trick to go with his ♦A and the defenders' ♣AK, and East will go down one. But if South leads a trump (or the ♦A), East can get a second diamond winner for a spade discard and make the contract. At tables where bold Souths double 1♥, West might bid 2NT as a conventional limit raise or jump to 4♥. North might compete as high as 3♠, but if E/W go to 4♥, North can judge well to defend. N/S will need a plus score to avoid a poor matchpoint result.

**Board 18**East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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



♠ K J 9 8 7  
♥ K 10 8  
♦ 4 3  
♣ K 10 4

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

Some Easts will deem their hand worth a "reverse" and will open 1♣. In some styles, opener's reverse is forcing to game; in others, the partnership will have a way of stopping below game when opener has only a moderately strong hand. Other Easts will open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♣ — a perilous approach that may result in an inferior contract even when, as here, East has extra strength. Suppose East opens 1♣. If South passes, West and North may pass also. If instead West dredges up 1♠, E/W will do well to get out at 3♣, down one with best defense. They would do a trick worse at a diamond partial. At some tables, South will overcall 1♠ despite the vulnerability, and North will raise. Then N/S will be slated for a plus score, and if they play at 2♠, they may be +110 for a good matchpoint result.

**Board 19**South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

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



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

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

When South opens 1♠, most Norths will decline to respond. East's hand is too strong to bid 2♦ in the balancing position; he can suggest more strength and get hearts into the picture by starting with a double. South could rebid 2♠, and the auction will become competitive: East will show his diamonds, N/S will compete to 3♠ and then E/W must judge. Their winning action, not clearly indicated is, to go to 4♦, which makes for +130, whereas South's 3♠ would be down one unless E/W let him execute an unlikely endplay. A few Norths will raise South's 1♠ directly to 2♠, a questionable action. (When you have nothing, it is seldom right to bid.) East would double 2♠, but South would commit to 4♠. If West doubles that, E/W should be +300 for a top.

**Board 20**West Deals  
Both Vul

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

N/S make 7NT — really, they can make 10NT — and must be +2220, not +2210, to avoid a poor result. When North opens 2♣, South will be three-fourths of the way to a grand slam right then. If he responds 2♥, natural and positive, North will rebid 2NT to show 23 or 24 points, balanced. South will be tempted to use Blackwood — he would survive here since North would show three aces — but if North had only two aces, South would be unsure whether to bid 7♥ since he might be off the ♣A. South could instead rebid 3♥, and North could take control with Blackwood or start to cuebid his aces. (Complications might arise if N/S treat a 2♥ response as an artificial second negative; South might have to jump to 3♥ at his first turn, crowding the auction.) We expect most pairs to reach 7NT somehow.

**Board 21**North Deals  
N-S Vul

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

After 1♠-Pass-1NT, East's choice of a second bid will be crucial. If East rebids 2♥, showing a second suit, West will raise to 3♥, and East will try 4♥; West's hand might be ♠95 ♥A7643 ♦A762 ♣32. If instead East rebids 2♠, West will pass, but then North might balance with a double. E/W had better not sell out to 3♣, which South would make for +110 and a top. N/Ss who defend against an E/W major-suit contract will have a tough task. They can hold a spade contract to nine tricks only if South leads a diamond, and North wins and leads a low(!) heart. Against 4♥, South will lead the ♣Q, and when East takes the ace and starts the trumps, North can win and lead the ♦A and a low diamond, forcing East to ruff and obliging him to lose a second trump. E/W may score well for +170.

**Board 22**East Deals  
E-W Vul

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

After 1♦-1♠, West will jump to 2NT. East will have little reason to go on; even if his club suit produces four or five tricks, there may be a fatal weakness elsewhere. If West plays at 2NT, North has no attractive lead. The ♠Q is risky when dummy has bid spades, a heart or club is speculative, and West has bid diamonds. As it happens, 4NT is makeable. If North leads the ♦4 to the king and ace, West can lead the ♣A and ♣10. When North plays low, West must guess. Passing the 10 would win if North held K-J-8-7, but he might have led a club from that holding. If West puts up the ♣Q, he can concede a club, duck North's ♦J, win the next diamond and (at double dummy) catch North in a spade-diamond end-position. E/W should get a big result for +600 or even for +150. If West misguesses in clubs, 3NT fails.

**Board 23**South Deals  
Both Vul

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

The hardest slams to bid are those with winners in two suits, controls in the other two, but minimum high-card values. Here, N/S have only 24 high-card points but can make 6♥ or 6♠. When South opens 1♥, North's hand is too strong to raise to 2♥, with a possible source of tricks in spades and a side singleton. If North temporizes with 1♠, South could rebid 2♣ or 3♥ or even jump boldly to 4♥ due to his spade honors and minor-suit controls. After 1♥-1♠, 2♣-3♥, South might try for slam with a 4♦ cuebid. After 1♥-1♠, 3♥, North could bid 4♣ if South would treat it as a cuebid; or North might rebid 3♠, and if South continued with 4♣, North could jump to 5♥, asking South to bid slam with a control in diamonds, the unbid suit. If you found a route to +1430, well done!

**Board 24**West Deals  
None Vul

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

Style and judgment vary, and we expect as many different auctions and results as tables in the game. Some Wests will pass, avoiding a weak 2♥ because they hold four cards in the other major. Then East will open 1♦ or 1♣ in third seat. If South rejects a double due to his flat pattern, West will respond 1♥. If North passes, East will rebid in a minor and pass West at 2♥. At tables where non-traditionalist Wests open 2♥, South can balance with a double after two passes, and North may land at 2♠. Other Norths will play at 2♠ when N/S enter aggressively on a different auction. Can anyone make anything? West can win eight tricks at hearts but may need a finesse with the ♣Q. North should be down one at 2♠ but only with precise defense. A plus score in either direction should earn plenty of matchpoints.

**Board 25**North Deals  
E-W Vul

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

E/W can earn a fine result by bidding a good slam. If West opens 1♠ after three passes and sees East raise to 2♠, West should not count his points but should visualize slam if East has the ♠A and ♣K. If West probes with a 3♣ bid, East should jump to 4♠ with his maximum and “working” ♣K, and West can bid 6♠, reasoning that slam may be cold and will surely have a chance. If North leads the ♥K, West can succeed in several ways. He may take the ♥A, cash the ♠AK, then take the ♣KA and ruff a club in dummy. We think E/W will get a 75% result for +1430. Could you make 6NT as West? If North leads the ♥K, West can duck, win the next heart and run the spades, squeezing North in clubs and diamonds. Even winning the first heart will do since North can be “strip squeezed” in those suits.

**Board 26**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

After two passes, many Wests will open light with 1♦ (or 1♠) despite the vulnerability. North can double 1♦ for takeout, and South’s hand improves so much that he should commit to game. Some Souths will jump straight to 4♥. West will lead a top spade: 6, 4, 2. A club shift would be best if he had a crystal ball, but if he were smart enough to find that defense, South could be smart enough to take the ♣A, lead a trump to his hand and return a diamond to dummy’s 10, setting up two club discards from dummy on the ♦AK. In real life, West may continue with the other spade honor, and South will easily make an overtrick. If instead West shifts to a trump, South can draw trumps and might lead to the ♦10. N/S should still reach game if West doesn’t open; we think they will need +650 for a strong matchpoint result.

**Board 27**South Deals  
None Vul

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

North may have to contend with the grandmother of all bad trump breaks. South will open with one of a minor. (We prefer to open 1♣ with this pattern unless the diamonds are much stronger.) If North responds 1♥, South will often raise to 2♥. In our experience, raising a major-suit response with decent three-card support in a suitable hand is a winning tactic. Maybe that shows how much we know, since South could make 1NT for +90 if he played there whereas 2♥ should finish three down. Some Norths might raise 1♣ to 2♣, suppressing the weak hearts in a weak hand, and then East will overcall 2♥, passed out for +110 to E/W. N/S may score some matchpoints for minus 150 at 2♥ since some E/Ws will locate their spade fit and play at a spade partial for +170 and an excellent result.

**Board 28**West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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



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

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

North will usually open 1♦ in second position. East has a high-card minimum to double, but his distribution is suitable and his side isn't vulnerable. Over a double, South might jump to 2NT as a conventional limit raise, but West can bid 3♠, passed out: N/S can't risk competing at the four level, vulnerable. At spades, most lines of play will lead to nine tricks. West has a heart, a diamond and a club to lose — North must be careful to take his ace when declarer leads a club toward dummy — and West will lose one additional trick, being unable to dispose of all his diamond losers. We predict +140 to E/W at many tables. A few Wests will manage a 10th trick for +170, and other E/Ws will sell out too cheaply to a N/S diamond partial or overreach to 4♠ and go minus.

**Board 29**North Deals  
Both Vul

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

♠ A 9  
♥ J 6  
♦ A K J 9 4  
♣ A Q 7 4



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

♠ K J 7 6 4 3  
♥ K 9 4 2  
♦ 6  
♣ J 2

When North opens 1♦, few Easts will jump to 2♠, preemptive, when vulnerable, but many will overcall 1♠ despite the paucity of high cards. (If East passes for fear of the vulnerability or because he wants more to overcall, the auction may end.) Even if a jump raise to 3♦ would be preemptive, South may pass over 1♠ since his hand lacks shape and his ♠Q may be worthless for offense. Then West will raise to 2♠, and North can try 3♣. After South's 3♦ preference, East must judge whether to compete to 3♠ on his six-card suit. In the play, North can win nine or 10 tricks at diamonds for +110 or +130. East can take eight at spades with a good guess in trumps or some help from the defense. N/S may get a top if North stretches to open 2NT, a poor call in theory but a winner here. With a spade lead, he will be +150.

**Board 30**East Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

South's hand has too much playing potential, defense and playability at hearts to open 2♦. Many Souths will open 1♦, setting N/S the problem of avoiding a losing slam. We expect 1♦-2♣, 2♦-2♠, 2NT, and then North will do well to raise only to 4NT to invite. South won't be having any. If West leads the ♥J, declarer wins with the queen, goes to dummy and returns the ♦8. If East plays low, South will take 10 tricks even if he loses to West's queen, but East may grab his ace to return a heart, making 10 tricks easier. Some Wests may choose a passive spade opening lead. If South wins in dummy and leads a diamond, East must rise with his ace and lead a heart to hold South to one overtrick. N/S may score well for +430 since some pairs will fail at a slam.

**Board 31**South Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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



♠ Q 7 5 3 2  
♥ 8 5 3  
♦ J 9 8  
♣ J 8

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

East will open 1♥ after three passes, and West responds 1♠. Then East can describe his hand with an invitational jump to 3♥, but a 2♣ rebid is flexible; it saves space and introduces a second possible trump suit. Then some Wests will try 2NT and convert 3♥ by East to 3NT. (East's 3♥ would be forcing; he would have rebid 2♥ with a minimum hand.) Other Wests will raise 2♣ to 3♣, but when East bids 3♥ next, West will bid 3NT, probably passed out. Wests at 3NT will get a diamond lead and can take 11 tricks for +460 by attacking the hearts and luckily finding North with K-Q-9. Easts at 4♥ will also win 11 tricks but may not score well for +450. A few pairs will reach 6♣. The friendly lie of the hearts plus a 3-2 trump break will see the bold slam home for +920 and an E/W top.



**Board 32**West Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ 8 4 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 7 6 5
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ A 10 5	♥ K 7										
♦ Q 4 2	♦ K 5										
♣ 10 9 7 2		♣ K 8 6 4 3									
♠ Q											
♥ Q J 8 6 4 3 2											
♦ 8 6											
♣ Q J 5											
		♠ A K 10 9 2									
		♥ 9									
		♦ A J 10 9 7 3									
		♣ A									

N/S can make 7NT(!), but no slam is especially desirable. West will be reluctant to act at the vulnerability, so South will often open 1♦. North can respond 1NT, and South will reverse to 2♠, forcing. When North takes a 3♦ preference, South can continue with 3♠ to suggest his 5-6 pattern as well as extra high-card strength. Then North will probably raise to 4♠. Though his ♦Q and ♥A appear to be useful cards, slam will seem far away. If West leads a heart, South can take dummy's ace and lead the ♦Q to pick up the suit. He cashes the ♠AK, leads the 10 to force out East's jack and takes the rest, making six. Souths at diamonds can take 13 tricks since the ♦4 can serve as a second dummy entry for South to guess how to play the spades for no losers. We admire N/Ss who got to 6♦ and were +940.

**Board 33**North Deals  
None Vul

♠ 9 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 6
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ Q 8 4 3	♥ J 10 9 5										
♦ J 10 9	♦ A 5 4 2										
♣ J 8 5 3		♣ 10 9 2									
		♠ 8 7 5 2									
		♥ A K 6 2									
		♦ 7 3									
		♣ Q 6 4									

N/S should handle this slam deal competently. North is worth a 2♣ opening; he has about nine winners and five defensive tricks. After 2♣-2♦, 2♠, South can raise constructively to 3♠, and North can start slam investigation with a 4♣ cuebid. When South replies 4♥, North may sign off at 4♠ since his 2♣ opening was minimum, but South should try again with 5♥, and North can bid slam. Even if North settles for a 1♠ opening, South may jump to 3♠ as a limit raise, and North should need little more encouragement. North will easily take 12 tricks, losing only to the ♦A, and N/S should score only about a 60% result for +980.

**Board 34**East Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ K J 10 5 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 6 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 7 6 3	♥ J 9 5										
♦ J 8 5	♦ K 10 6										
♣ J 8		♣ A Q 10 3									
		♠ Q 8									
		♥ A 8 2									
		♦ A Q 9 4 3									
		♣ K 9 7									

If East opens 1♣, some Souths will overcall 1♦, and West will respond 1♠. When East rebids 1NT, West may do well to pass instead of removing to his five-card suit. The defense could (in theory) mangle 2♠, winning two diamonds, a third-round ruff, three hearts and a club for +100. But against 1NT, South will lead a diamond, and East can emerge with five spades, a diamond and a club for +90 and most of the matchpoints. At other tables, South will overcall 1NT, a vulnerable action that requires more courage than we possess. When everyone passes, the defense can tee off with five spade tricks, but South can win four hearts, two diamonds and a club for +90 and a good matchpoint result.

**Board 35**South Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ A Q 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 9 8 6 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 8 7 5	♥ 9 6 4										
♦ A J 7 5 4	♦ Q 6										
♣ J 10		♣ 6 5 3									
		♠ J 10 7 5									
		♥ A K J 10 2									
		♦ K 3 2									
		♣ 8									

When South opens 1♥, West can't act safely, and the auction may continue 2♣-2♥, 3♣. In "Standard" methods, North's 3♣ rebid will not be encouraging — and so will be an underbid. South will pass, and if East leads the ♦Q, North will take nine tricks for +110, off two diamonds, a diamond ruff and a spade. Even in a game-forcing two-over-one style, many pairs treat the sequence as not forcing. Some, though, treat it as forcing. (Will those pairs be willing to force as North?) If South is obliged to bid over 3♣, he will try 3NT. A spade opening lead could beat the contract, but if West innocently leads a low diamond, South will take 12 tricks. A few N/Ss will reach 4♥. To get a plus score and a good matchpoint result, E/W can find a club lead or shift to kill the dummy.

**Board 36**West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ A 6 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 9 8 3
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ A K 6 2	♥ —										
♦ J 8 7	♦ K Q 9 6 5 3										
♣ 9 5 4		♣ J 7 6									
		♠ K 7									
		♥ 10 9 8 5									
		♦ 10 4 2									
		♣ A K 8 2									

West has three Quick Tricks — a mandatory opening bid for some players — and he may hold his nose and open 1♣. If North declines to act on his junky hand, some Easts will respond 1♦, and West's 1♥ rebid will pick off N/S's nine-card heart fit. East then bids 1♠, and West's 2♦ preference is passed out, making two for +90 when the defense takes three clubs, the ♦A and a spade. Other Easts will respond 1♠, and West rebids 1NT. If East then bids 2♦, West will go to 2♠. If East continues with 3♦, West can treat it as a sign off and pass, but N/S will be +100. A few Easts may shoot out a pass over 1NT; West should take eight tricks for +120 and an E/W top. N/S can get a top if North bravely overcalls 1♥ at his first turn. If he plays at a heart partial, N/S can be +170.