

ACBL-wide International Fund Game #1

Saturday Daytime – February 2, 2019 – Set 226028



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

♠ K 10 5
♥ J 9 5
♦ K Q J 7
♣ 10 8 2

♠ A 7 6 4 3

♥ A Q 10

♦ 3 2

♣ 7 5 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 9 2

♥ 7 6 4 3

♦ A 8 5 4

♣ 6 3

♠ Q 8

♥ K 8 2

♦ 10 9 6

♣ A K Q J 9

The set starts routinely. South will usually open 1NT, more impressed with his five cashing club tricks than with his weakness elsewhere. North will transfer to spades with a 2♥ response and bid 3NT next, offering a choice of games. South, holding only a doubleton spade, will pass, perhaps with a bit of trepidation. West will lead the ♦K, but luckily for declarer, the defense can take only four diamonds. South will handle the rest, and +400 to N/S should be an average result.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 9 5 2
♥ 10 7 6
♦ 5 3
♣ 9 8 7 6

♠ Q J 8 7 3

♥ J 5

♦ A 9 8 6

♣ J 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ —

♥ A K 9 8 4 3 2

♦ J 7 2

♣ K Q 2

♠ A 10 6 4

♥ Q

♦ K Q 10 4

♣ A 10 5 3

When East opens 1♥, South can double. If West passes, North is worth a game-invitational jump to 2♠, East can try 3♥ and South will probably bid 4♠. West isn't likely to sacrifice at 5♥ — his ♠K is worthless for offense, and he has some defensive prospects — and East can't save unilaterally since for all he knows, West has a singleton heart and something good in spades. North should have no trouble winning 10 tricks for +620. At some tables, West may raise to 2♥ over South's double; many players treat a raise here as a nuisance action that requires a bit of support but little else. Then East is more likely to save, and the best N/S can do is double 5♥ for +300; if they swallow the bait and go to 5♠, E/W will be +100 for a matchpoint top.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 8 5 4
♥ A Q
♦ A J 10 6
♣ K 6 2

♠ A 9 2

♥ 7 6 3

♦ K Q 8 5 3

♣ Q J

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 10 7 6 3

♥ J 9 8 2

♦ 9 7

♣ 10 5

♠ Q

♥ K 10 5 4

♦ 4 2

♣ A 9 8 7 4 3

When West opens 1NT, East will usually transfer into 2♠. (A few pairs may land at 2♠ when their methods let East respond 2♣.) Even if South balances with 3♣, West will go to 3♠ with his four spades and maximum hand. Deep Finesse notes that West can take nine tricks, but with best play, only a heart opening lead can win four tricks for the defense. Say West wins with the ♥Q and leads the ♠K! North takes the ace and leads a second heart to the ace. Then if West leads a second trump, the defense can eventually lead a third heart, and South will either score the ♥K or North will score his ♠9 if declarer tries to ruff dummy's fourth heart. All that is fanciful; at more tables than not, we expect West to take 10 tricks, guessing the trump position. E/W may score only a bit above average for +170.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

♠ K 9 8 3
♥ Q 3
♦ K Q 7 4
♣ Q 9 6

♠ A J 7
♥ J 4
♦ 8 5 3 2
♣ J 8 7 4



♠ —
♥ K 10 8 7 6 5 2
♦ J 6
♣ K 10 5 3

♠ Q 10 6 5 4 2
♥ A 9
♦ A 10 9
♣ A 2

The West hand looks to us more like a barren assortment of high cards than an opening bid. If West and North pass, East may preempt with 3♥, and South can overcall 3♠. West may think his chances of winning five tricks against spades exceed East's of winning 10 at hearts, and 3♠ will be passed out. Indeed, South will be minus 100, off a trump, a heart, a club and two diamonds. But as it happens, East has an atypical preempt, and by guessing the ♣J, he can bring home 4♥. (South may make things easy by leading the ♣A and a second club.) At tables where West opens 1♦, East will respond 1♥, South overcalls 1♠ and North may dredge up a raise to 2♠. If East competes with 3♥, South may have a go at 4♠, and even if E/W neglect to double, they will be +200 for a good matchpoint result.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 6
♥ A 9 6
♦ A Q J 7 5
♣ A 10 4

♠ Q J 8
♥ K J 10 8 7 4
♦ K 4 3
♣ 6



♠ A 9 5 4
♥ Q
♦ 9 8 6
♣ K Q J 5 2

♠ 10 7 3 2
♥ 5 3 2
♦ 10 2
♣ 9 8 7 3

Some Norths will ignore the vulnerability and open 2♥. This fearless preempt will be effective. East lacks the values to act, and if South passes, West may settle for 2NT (a slight underbid in the balancing position). East will raise to 3NT. Even if North finds your lead and mine, the ♥K, West can win 10 tricks by taking the ♥A and cashing five clubs, forcing North into uncomfortable discards and possibly endplaying him with a heart to lead into the ♦AQ. If instead North leads any other card, West easily takes 12 tricks. When North passes as dealer, we think E/W should reach a minor-suit slam after East opens 1♣ and West issues a strong jump shift to 2♦, intending to bid notrump next to show a strong balanced hand. Pairs who find a route to +920 should earn a tie for top.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 9
♥ A Q 2
♦ A Q 6 4
♣ K J 9 3

♠ Q 5 2
♥ J 5
♦ J 2
♣ A 7 6 5 4 2



♠ A 8 7 6
♥ K 9 8 4
♦ K 7 5
♣ Q 10

♠ K 10 4 3
♥ 10 7 6 3
♦ 10 9 8 3
♣ 8

Even at matchpoints, we avoid opening many balanced 12-counts when vulnerable, but the East hand has length in both majors and two defensive tricks, so most Easts will open 1♦. The auction may proceed in various ways — if E/W employ “inverted” minor-suit raises, West will start with 2♦ — but every pair will rest at 3NT with two balanced hands and 29 points. If East declares, South will lead a spade, setting up two spade tricks for the defense along with the ♣A, and E/W will be +630. If West is declarer, the auction may still suggest a spade lead, but suppose North leads a club. West can force out the ♣A, duck a spade shift to “rectify the count,” win the next spade and, with 10 tricks in the bag, cash some clubs. South will be squeezed in the red suits, and E/W will be +660 for most of the matchpoints.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 4
♥ A 8 7 3
♦ J 10 5
♣ Q 9 6 2

♠ K 8 7 3
♥ 4
♦ 7 6 4
♣ J 10 8 5 3



♠ 9 6
♥ K J 10 9
♦ A Q 8 3 2
♣ A 4

♠ A Q 10 5 2
♥ Q 6 5 2
♦ K 9
♣ K 7

When South opens 1♠, some Norths will raise to 2♠. East will double, hoping West will advance in a red suit, and West will duly bid 3♥. Though North has only a jack and a king, his fourth trump and singleton suggest competing to the three level. At other tables, N/S's system may let North jump directly to 3♠, weak, and then East may be reluctant to come in. If he does double, West will bid 4♥, and N/S should defend: When E/W have been forced to guess at an uncomfortable level, to sacrifice at 4♠ is less attractive. Sure enough, both 4♥ and 4♠ should fail. Any defense (except a club opening lead) beats 4♠, and West can't make even 3♥ with a club lead, ducked to South's king, and then repeated spade leads to weaken his trump holding. Pairs with a plus score will win most of the matchpoints.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

♠ 7
♥ K J 6 3 2
♦ Q 8 4 3
♣ K J 7

♠ J 10 9 5 3 2
♥ 9 8
♦ 5
♣ Q 9 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 4
♥ A 5 4
♦ A K J 10 6
♣ A 10 8 2

♠ A K Q 8 6
♥ Q 10 7
♦ 9 7 2
♣ 5 4

If East opens 1♦, South will overcall 1♠. West, a passed hand, can bid 2♥ and North will put it up to 4♠. East will be reluctant to pass this around; since he opened in third seat and West is a passed hand, it's not clear (to your analyst, at least) that a pass would be forcing. If East tries 5♥, everyone will pass. If North leads a spade, South may win and lead a second spade. West can then pick up the trumps with a finesse and take the rest for +480. Many Norths will lead their singleton diamond, and West can win, pick up the trumps, discard his spade loser on dummy's fifth diamond and go looking for the ♣Q to make seven. We don't expect many E/Ws to reach slam in the face of a N/S barrage, and +510 may be worth a top. A few pairs will double 4♠ for +300 and a matchpoint zero.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 5 3 2
♥ 10 9 5 4
♦ 7 6 4 2
♣ 7

♠ Q 7 6
♥ K 8 3 2
♦ Q 5
♣ J 10 8 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 10 9 8 4
♥ A Q
♦ K 9 3
♣ A 9

♠ —
♥ J 7 6
♦ A J 10 8
♣ K Q 6 5 3 2

This board may prove frustrating for East. First he must decide whether his hand is worth a game-forcing 2♣ opening. He has ample defense for that action, but only about eight playing tricks, so most Easts will open 1♠. If South overcalls 2♣ and North raises to 3♣, East might double, expecting to continue with 3♠ if West advances in a red suit. When West bids 3♠, East may judge to pass, but South may compete with 4♣. If East then changes his mind and goes to 4♠, passed out, South will lead the ♣K, and East will take the ace and cash the ♠A. When South discards, East can't both pick up the trumps and finesse in hearts, and he will be down one. Still, minus 100 will be a better result than selling out to 4♣ and much better than doubling it. South would take 10 tricks for +130 or +510.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

♠ 6
♥ A 10 7 4 2
♦ A Q 8 7
♣ 8 7 4

♠ A 10 8
♥ Q 6
♦ 10 6 5 4 2
♣ J 9 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K J 7 5 4 3
♥ 9
♦ —
♣ A K Q 10 5 2

♠ Q 9 2
♥ K J 8 5 3
♦ K J 9 3
♣ 3

We can imagine auctions to 6♣ but doubt they will occur at the table. The jury is still out on the proper opening bid with 5-5 in the black suits; the jury on what to do with 6-6 hasn't yet been empaneled. (We prefer opening 1♠ but could accept 1♣ here with six robust clubs and six ragged spades.) Suppose the auction begins 1♣, 1♥-1♠, 1NT-3♠ ... then West should like his aces and club support and bid 5♣ or cuebid a red ace, and East might conceivably bid slam. If East opens 1♠, we would expect 1NT-3♣, 3NT-4♣ ... and West might jump to 6♣. If South leads a trump against a club slam, East wins, leads a heart to dummy and returns a spade. Even if North plays low and East plays the jack, he will survive when South has no second trump to lead. E/Ws who are +1370 will surely get a top.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

♠ 7 6 4 3
♥ A 5 2
♦ Q J 10 9
♣ K 8

♠ Q 10 5 2
♥ Q 10 9 8 3
♦ 6 3
♣ 6 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 9
♥ K J 6 4
♦ K 8 7 4
♣ Q 10 2

♠ A J 8
♥ 7
♦ A 5 2
♣ A J 9 7 4 3

When South opens 1♣, some Norths will pass. Then East can balance with 1NT, showing 11 to 14 high-card points. (Actions in the passout seat are shaded.) If everyone passes, East will take eight tricks for +120. A modern tendency is to respond with fewer than textbook values to keep the opponents from entering the auction cheaply. Thus if North scrapes up a 1♥ response, South will rebid 2♣, passed out. And even if North declines to respond, South might rebid 2♣ over East's reopening 1NT and buy the contract. Souths at 2♣ will take nine tricks; West will lead the ♦Q, and South can ruff a diamond in dummy and finesse in spades, losing two trumps, a diamond and a heart. We expect N/S to get a good matchpoint result for +110, especially since a few E/Ws will be +110 at a diamond partial.

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

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

After two passes, some Easts may open 2♣, though the hand lacks the defensive values for that opening. Other Easts will open 4♠, but when when East owns the ranking suit, he has some control over the auction, and slam remains possible even though West has passed. (Suppose the West and North hands were swapped.) If East opens 1♠, South will overcall 2♥. If two passes follow, East may bid 4♠, though the chance of missing slam still exists. If South leads a high heart, East will ruff and cash seven rounds of trumps. North must be careful to save four clubs, keeping parity with dummy, to hold East to 11 tricks. At some tables, North may bid diamonds, and South may lead a diamond against 4♠. Three rounds of the suit will promote South's ♠10, and N/S will get a fine result for -420.

Board 13
North Deals
Both Vul

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

When North opens 1♣, South will usually respond 1NT, passed out. If West leads a spade, declarer can let it ride to his jack. Playing at double dummy, he can lead a low club to West's jack next. If West finds the best switch to a low diamond, the defense can clear the diamonds, setting up East's fourth diamond, but declarer can lead a second club from dummy to his 10 as an "avoidance play," establishing a second club trick, and finish up by guessing the ♥Q for nine tricks in all. N/S will score most of the matchpoints for +150. In real life, we expect South to win only eight tricks, but even +120 may be a good result for N/S, beating pairs who are +110 at a club partial.

Board 14
East Deals
None Vul

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

Will N/S bid their makeable 4♥? They have well fitting hands but only 22 high-card points. When South opens 1♣, some Wests will jump to 2♦, preemptive. North can make a negative double, intending to convert to clubs if South bids spades. Then East may raise to 3♦ and South may try 3♥, but whether North will raise is uncertain. If instead East jumps to 4♦, he may push his opponents into game since South may feel constrained to bid 4♥. At other tables, West will settle for a 1♦ overcall, and North will bid 1♥. East will support the diamonds, and again, North or South must take a bold view to reach game. Against 4♥, West may lead the ♣7; his ♥A assures that he will get back in quickly. He will get a ruff, but South will take 10 tricks. N/S may score 70% of the matchpoints for +420.

Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

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

South is light in high cards, but he has length in the majors. Though the vulnerability is unfriendly, most Souths will open 1♠. Barring a wild preemptive action by West, North will respond 2♦ (or in some styles, a forcing 1NT). Then East will overcall 2♥, South will pass with his minimum, West will pass from fright, and North, with an opening bid and spade support, won't sense danger and will commit to 4♠. The defense can pick declarer clean: diamond lead ruffed, ♥A, heart ruff, diamond ruff, heart ruff and a high club for down three. N/S could do better at 3NT, down one, and would make that contract if East led a heart. Actually, the only makeable game is 5♣; East could take 11 tricks with crystal-ball play. We think N/S will get a fine matchpoint result if they find a way to go plus.

Board 16West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 10 8 4
♥ K J
♦ A Q 10
♣ J 9 7 2

♠ A 9 5
♥ A 9
♦ 7 6 2
♣ K 10 5 4 3

♠ J 7
♥ 5 2
♦ K J 9 8 4
♣ A Q 8 6

♠ Q 6 3 2
♥ Q 10 8 7 6 4 3
♦ 5 3
♣ —

E/W would doubtless get to 3NT if granted a free run, but “free runs” are increasingly rare. After 1♣-Pass-1♦, South may eye the vulnerability and jump to 3♥. West can’t act over that, and if East tries 4♣ next, the auction will die. West could take 10 tricks despite the 5-0 trump break (East could take nine at diamonds), but how well +130 will score is unclear. Over 3♥, some Easts might reopen with an “action” double, letting West try 3NT, and some pairs will reach 3NT with no interference. If North leads the ♥A and ♥9 against the notrump game, West can win and lead the ♣J, playing North for club length due to South’s preempt. In theory, West could take 11 tricks with any lead for +660. A few Souths may play at 3♥ doubled; N/S may get a fair matchpoint score for minus 300.

Board 17North Deals
None Vul

♠ K Q 5
♥ 10 6 2
♦ A Q 9 4 3
♣ 4 3

♠ J 8
♥ Q J 9 4 3
♦ K 8 2
♣ A Q 9

♠ 9 7 6 4 3 2
♥ —
♦ 7 5
♣ K J 7 5 2

♠ A 10
♥ A K 8 7 5
♦ J 10 6
♣ 10 8 6

Modern competitive bidding is infected with uninhibited preempts, and when North opens 1♥, some Easts will judge that their shapely hand demands action and jump to 2♠, preemptive (but certainly not lead-directing). South can show strength plus heart support with a 3♠ cuebid, and West may bid 4♠. If two passes follow, South will think he is in a forcing situation. Since he has a fifth heart, he may bid 5♥ — a correct judgment as it turns out. E/W will decline to double, having pushed N/S to the five level with their “sacrifice,” but with best defense North will go down two. At other tables, N/S will double 4♠ to their regret: East will wrap up 10 tricks for +590 and a matchpoint top. N/S will score well for minus 100 and will get a top if they are allowed to play at 4♥ for minus 50.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 5 4 2
♥ A K 9 2
♦ A 6 2
♣ J 9

♠ J 8 6
♥ 8
♦ K Q 7
♣ K 10 7 6 3 2

♠ A 10 9 3
♥ 6 4 3
♦ 10 9 3
♣ 8 5 4

♠ K 7
♥ Q J 10 7 5
♦ J 8 5 4
♣ A Q

When South opens 1♥, some Wests will pass. North will respond 1NT, perhaps forcing, and South will rebid 2♦. Then North will have an awkward decision he might resolve by either passing or trying 3♣. The wide range of South’s minimum change-of-suit bid is a weak area of “standard” bidding, and a pass might miss game since South could have as many as 18 points. At other tables, West will double 1♥, hoping East will bid spades. (If instead East “advanced” in clubs, West would have to take his medicine and pass, apologizing when he tabled a dummy with deficient support.) Then North might try 2♣, not forcing, and buy the contract. Souths who play at a diamond partial can be held to nine tricks, but Norths at clubs should take 10 for +130 and a good matchpoint result.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 6
♥ A Q J 10 6 4
♦ Q 3
♣ 10 5 4 3

♠ A K J 8 4
♥ 3
♦ 8 7 6 2
♣ Q J 8

♠ Q 10 3
♥ 9 8 7 5
♦ J 10 5
♣ A 7 2

♠ 9 7 5 2
♥ K 2
♦ A K 9 4
♣ K 9 6

If South opens 1♦, some Wests will overcall 1♥, North will bid 1♠ and East raises to 2♥. Even though the ♥K looks (and is) worthless, South may feel obliged to raise to 2♠ with his four-card support, and then North would have to be craven not to bid 4♠. The defense will collect a trick in each suit, down one. Other Wests will look past the unfavorable vulnerability to jump to 2♥, preemptive, obliging North to bid 2♠. Here, South will be compelled to raise, and North will go on to the losing game. We expect +50 to E/W to be a common result. N/S could stop at a spade partial if, when West overcalled 1♥ and East raised, South discounted the value of his ♥K and passed (or, when West overcalled 2♥, South masterminded by passing North’s forcing 2♠ bid). But what if spades broke 2-2?

Board 20West Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 10 8	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin: 5px 0;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>	♠ A 7 6
♥ 10 6 2		♥ A Q 9 7 3
♦ Q 5		♦ 10 9
♣ 10 7 6 5 3		♣ K 8 4
	♠ K J 9 4 3 2	
	♥ K J 5	
	♦ K 7 2	
	♣ 9	

After Pass-1♦-1♥-1♠, Pass, North can rebid 2♦ to show a minimum hand with six or more diamonds. (Some experts advocate a 2♣ rebid to show the second suit, even with a minimum.) South must look for game; a possible call is a 2♥ cuebid to suggest heart strength but doubt about the best strain, hoping for more information. If North continues with 3♣, South can bid 3♦, and North can pass the buck with 3♥ or bid 3NT. If East leads a heart, dummy's jack wins, and North takes the ♦AK next. He can make an overtrick by running the diamonds, forcing East into awkward discards. But if North leads to the ♣Q next, East can win, cash his aces and exit with a club, leaving North with a club loser. Only a spade opening lead always holds him to nine tricks. N/S can also make 5♦ and 4♠ but may need +630 for a good result.

Board 21North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 9	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin: 5px 0;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>	♠ A 6 5
♥ A 6 5 4		♥ J 10
♦ A 4		♦ 10 8 7 6 3 2
♣ A K 9 7 5 2		♣ Q 8
	♠ K 4 3 2	
	♥ Q 8 7 3 2	
	♦ K Q	
	♣ 10 6	

E/W have nine tricks at 3NT — six clubs plus three side aces — but getting there with 22 ideal high-card points is a tall order. If N/S stay out of the auction due to the adverse vulnerability, West will open 1♣ in fourth seat, East responds 1♦ and West rebids 1♥. If East then bids 1NT, West might jump to 3♣, encouraging game, and East might conceivably shoot it out at 3NT since he has an ace and a working ♣Q. If instead East rebids 2♦ at his second turn, West might pass, raise to 3♦ or bid 3♣, but E/W's chances of reaching game will ebb. They might improve their lot by landing at a diamond partial, where 10 tricks are available, instead of at clubs, where West should win only nine. Pairs who find an inspired sequence to 3NT will win 90% of the matchpoints.

Board 22East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 3	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin: 5px 0;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>	♠ K J 6 2
♥ Q 10 4		♥ K 6
♦ J 9 7 6 3		♦ K 10 5
♣ 8 6 5 2		♣ K 7 4 3
	♠ 10 8 5 4	
	♥ A J 3	
	♦ A Q 8 4	
	♣ Q J	

We would hold our nose and open 1♣ as East, on a hand bereft in playing tricks. South will often double for takeout even though his ♣QJ may be worthless for offense. Then North will be hard-pressed to stay out of game; a suitable minimum for South such as ♠J1054 ♥AK3 ♦A6543 ♣4 might produce 10 or more tricks. We would expect North to start with a 2♣ cuebid and commit to 4♠ when South bids spades (or bids 2♦, then 2♠ over a 2♥ bid by North). If West leads a club against 4♠, East takes the king and might shift to the ♥K. South can get out for down one if he takes the ♥A, discards a heart on dummy's club winners and plays carefully from there; he may lose two trumps, a heart and a club. Many Souths won't play to best advantage and will go down two. N/Ss who manage a plus score will win a lot of matchpoints.

Board 23South Deals
Both Vul

♠ 8 5	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> NE</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin: 5px 0;"></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; width: 100%;"> WS</div> </div>	♠ A 6 3
♥ K J 9 6 5		♥ 8
♦ K 10 4 2		♦ A Q J 9 8
♣ K 6		♣ A J 4 2
	♠ 9 4 2	
	♥ 7 4 2	
	♦ 7	
	♣ Q 9 8 7 5 3	

When North opens 1♠ and East overcalls 2♦, West can cuebid 2♠ to show a sound raise to 3♦ or perhaps introduce 2♥. If East bids 3♣ next and West returns to 3♦, East should not try 3NT with A-6-3 in spades, but he can go to 5♦. (He might cuebid 3♠ on the way; if West held ♠85 ♥AK965 ♦10742 ♣K6, E/W would have a chance at 6♦.) East can make 5♦ against any defense. If South leads a spade, East can duck, win the spade return and let the ♥8 ride. If North wins with the 10 and shifts to a trump, East wins in dummy and leads the ♥K to ruff out the ace. He has enough dummy entries to take a second ruffing finesse against the ♥Q, winning 11 tricks. Some Easts will come to grief when they adopt the simpler line of trying to ruff clubs in dummy. We think E/W may score at least average for +150.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 9 6 4
♥ 10 9 8 7 5
♦ A K 9 4
♣ —

♠ A 10 8 5 3
♥ A Q 4 3
♦ J 10 8 6
♣ —



♠ K 7
♥ K J 6 2
♦ —
♣ J 10 8 7 5 4 2

♠ J 2
♥ —
♦ Q 7 5 3 2
♣ A K Q 9 6 3

This wild deal, with both West and North void in clubs and everybody void in something, is the type to give your analyst a few more gray hairs. We expect as many different auctions and results as tables in the game. If North opens 1♠, East might overcall 2NT, "Unusual." South will probably pass, and West might jump to 4♦. N/S could double for +300 but may let West play undoubled. N/S may go plus on offense if East overcalls 2♣ and South makes a negative double. Then if North bids 2♥ and plays there, he may take 10 tricks on a crossruff if the defense slips. Other Souths may go for the jugular by passing 2♣, hoping North will reopen with a double. North is so minimum that he might decline to reopen, but if he does double, N/S can be +300 for a fine matchpoint result.

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A K 6 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ Q
♣ 9 8 7 4 2

♠ 4
♥ 6 5 4
♦ A J 8 5
♣ K J 10 5 3



♠ J 9 7 5 3
♥ A K J 10 2
♦ K 4 3
♣ —

♠ Q 10 8
♥ Q 9
♦ 10 9 7 6 2
♣ A Q 6

Though his hearts are chunky and his spades ragged, South should open 1♠, the higher-ranking five-card suit. North responds 1NT. When South rebids 2♥, he could have as many as 18 points, and North has 9 points and some trick-taking potential in the minors, so he might continue with 2NT. Then South should bid 3♥, and North must pass. West, with spade tricks to protect, should lead a trump. South wins, concedes a spade and wins the trump return. He can ruff a spade in dummy and lead the ♣K: ace, ruff, deuce. Then declarer can draw the missing trump and cash the ♦K. He goes to the ♦J, leads the ♣J to ruff out East's queen and returns with the ♦A to cash the ♣10, making four. If West's opening lead is the ♦Q, South can make five! A few pairs will be +420, but N/S should score well for +170.

Board 26East Deals
Both Vul

♠ A K
♥ 8 5
♦ A Q 6 4
♣ K Q 8 4 2

♠ J 6 4
♥ 10 7 6
♦ 9 7 5
♣ A 10 9 3



♠ 9 8 7 5
♥ K Q 4
♦ J 10 3 2
♣ 7 6

♠ Q 10 3 2
♥ A J 9 3 2
♦ K 8
♣ J 5

Every E/W should reach 3NT or perhaps quest up to 4NT when East is willing to open his light hand. If East does not open (we wouldn't), most Wests will treat their hand as worth a "reversing" sequence, so a possible "Standard" auction will be Pass, 1♣-1♥, 2♦-2♠, 2NT-3NT. If North's opening lead is a passive heart, West will duck it to South's queen and win a spade return. Then he can take 10 tricks by conceding a heart or by forcing out the ♣A and dropping North's ♠J. If North's opening lead is a spade, however, it's possible West might end with 11 tricks, since in some play variations he could guess to play for a squeeze against South, who has to guard both red suits. We predict that E/W will score a little below average for +630.

Board 27South Deals
None Vul

♠ 7 4
♥ K Q 8 4 3
♦ A J 8 4
♣ J 9

♠ K J 10 5 3
♥ 9 5
♦ Q 10 5
♣ 7 6 2



♠ Q 9 8 6 2
♥ A 6
♦ 7 2
♣ A Q 8 5

♠ A
♥ J 10 7 2
♦ K 9 6 3
♣ K 10 4 3

We'll find out who the aggressive players are. South has ample defensive values to open and will often start with 1♠, though he would prefer a spade suit of better texture. West is well short of the values for a 2♥ overcall. Many Norths may jump all the way to 4♠, buying the contract for minus 100. Some Norths may be able to issue a preemptive raise to 3♠, and East may be shut out again. Other Norths will raise only to 2♠, and then East can enter with a double. West should bid 4♥, and if he plays there, he will take 10 tricks for +420, off two clubs and the ♥A; dummy's clubs will furnish two diamond discards, so West won't have to rely on a diamond finesse. We expect the par contract — 4♠ doubled by N/S — will be achieved at quite a few tables. N/S may score about average for minus 300.

Board 28West Deals
N-S Vul

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

We might open the grungy West hand if the long suit were a major and we could swap the two queens for an ace, but the actual hand is a sound pass. If East opens 1♦, West responds 2♣, East rebids 2NT and West will usually carry on to 3NT. South's opening lead will tell the tale. If South starts with a passive heart, East can win in his hand, force out the ♣A, win the next heart with the king, run the clubs and take the major-suit aces for nine tricks. A diamond opening lead will be disastrous for the defense, allowing an overtrick, but if South happens to lead a spade, the defense prevails, winning three spades and the minor-suit aces no matter how declarer operates. If West is declarer at 3NT, no opening lead by North beats the contract. We predict that E/W will score 65% of the matchpoints if they are +400.

Board 29North Deals
Both Vul

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

North's hand is awkward to describe, and some may open a skewed 1NT. If South passes, West will show his spades and will score +110 at 2♠, unless the defense is inspired. Other Souths may respond 2♣, and if West then bids 2♠, North will be uncertain whether to bid 3♥. We would not open 1NT as North, promising a balanced hand when we don't have one; we would open 1♦. South's 1♠ response may silence West, and the auction may continue 2♣-3♣, 3♥-5♣. The club game can be made. If East leads a spade, North can win, lead a trump to dummy and return a diamond. If West takes the ace and tries to cash a spade, North can ruff, cash a second trump, cash the ♦K and guess to pass the ♦J, setting up the 9 for the 11th trick. (To duck the first diamond won't help West.) We predict that N/S will score well for +150.

Board 30East Deals
None Vul

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

East has fair defensive values and can open 1♦, South jumps to 2♠ (preemptive) and West makes a negative double. If North passes, East will bid 3♥. West has no reason to go on, and the outcome will rest on whether North competes with 3♠. If he does, E/W must find a penalty double to protect the presumptive plus at their heart partial; they can indeed be +300. If they sell out to 3♠ undoubled, they will be +100 — a poor result since a heart partial would produce +140 or more. A few E/Ws will stretch to 4♥, and East can make it though the play may be complex. If South leads the ♠K and a second spade, forcing dummy to ruff, East can succeed if he never takes a finesse in trumps and instead plays along crossruff lines. E/W will get a top for +420; N/S will get one for a plus score.

Board 31

South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A 10 9
♥ K Q
♦ K Q 4 3
♣ K 7 6 2

♠ K J 5
♥ 10 6 5 3
♦ A J 6 5
♣ 10 9

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 8 7 6 2
♥ 8 7
♦ 10 9 8 2
♣ J 8 3

♠ Q 4 3
♥ A J 9 4 2
♦ 7
♣ A Q 5 4

When South opens 1♥, many Wests will double for takeout instead of overcalling 1NT. North's hand is worth about 10 points in support of hearts — too strong for a single raise; North might jump to 2NT, conventionally showing a limit raise. South's hand is a minimum, and his spade and club holdings are not encouraging — a finesse with the ♣Q may lose to West — so some Souths will sign off at 3♥, and West will do well to go quietly. If West leads the ♦K, South can take dummy's ace and may come to the ♥A next (inferring that West is not void in trumps, since he did not act a second time). South will lose a trump, a club and the ♠A. We expect a few N/Ss to reach game, and a few more will collect a worthwhile penalty when West competes too boldly, so pairs who are +170 may get a poor matchpoint result.

Board 32

West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A K 5
♥ 10 9 6 4 3
♦ J 4
♣ Q J 5

♠ 7 3 2
♥ 5 2
♦ Q 9 8 5 2
♣ K 10 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 8 6
♥ J
♦ A K 10 7 6 3
♣ A 7 6

♠ Q J 10 4
♥ A K Q 8 7
♦ —
♣ 9 4 3 2

This deal will require high-level competitive judgment. East opens 1♥ in third chair, South overcalls 2♦, and West jumps to 3♥ or cuebids 3♦ to show a limit raise. Since the vulnerability is "green-light," North is likely to leap to 5♦ as an "anticipatory sacrifice," leaving E/W to sort out their prospects without a chance to exchange more information. East, with a diamond void, may be tempted to bid 5♥, but even if he passes 5♦ around to West (encouraging him to bid on if he thinks it wise), West may take the push, since he has a fifth heart and a maximum pass with most of his values outside diamonds. As it happens, 5♥ is unbeatable, so E/W can be +650. Pairs who misjudge only slightly by doubling 5♦ will be +500, for not many matchpoints.

Board 33

North Deals
None Vul

♠ 10 7 6 2
♥ 10 7 6 5
♦ 7 2
♣ 10 9 2

♠ 4
♥ J 2
♦ K Q 10 6 4
♣ A Q J 7 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q J 9 8
♥ K Q 9
♦ A J 5 3
♣ 6

♠ K 5 3
♥ A 8 4 3
♦ 9 8
♣ K 8 4 3

N/S can get a good result by bidding and making a slam. When North opens 1♦, we like a strong jump shift to 2♠ by South, planning to support diamonds next. It's better for South to show slam interest immediately, enlisting North's cooperation, than to start with a minimum response and try to catch up later. (See also Board 5.) The auction might be 1♦-2♠, 3♣-3♦, 4♣-4♥, 6♦. Suppose East leads a trump. North wins, forces out the ♥A and wins the trump return. He can try to ruff out the king of both black suits and will succeed when East's spades are K-5-3. (If instead East leads the ♥A and a second heart, North can win 12 tricks by taking one trump, then crossruffing.) We fear that many N/Ss will languish at 3NT. They will score +460 and get more matchpoints than are deserved.

Board 34

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 9 8
♥ A K
♦ K 4 3 2
♣ K Q 8 6

♠ 6 5 2
♥ Q 9 6
♦ A J 10 9 6
♣ J 7



♠ A K 3
♥ J 8 7 5 3 2
♦ Q 7
♣ 10 4

♠ J 10 7 4
♥ 10 4
♦ 8 5
♣ A 9 5 3 2

This board will be prosaic at some tables. After two passes, West will open 1NT, passed out. North will lead the ♦ J, and West will score his king, plus five club tricks and the ♥ AK for +120. At a few tables, South will ignore the vulnerability to back in with a 2♥ bid, and a few Souths will open a reckless 2♥ in second seat. What effect will those actions have? Over a 2♥ opening, West might try 2NT, passed out and down one after a heart lead; but if West doubles 2♥, East will respond 2♠ and play there, making three for +140 with the favorable lie of the cards. If South balances with a 2♥ bid and two passes follow, East might try 2♠ (which West should understand to show only a four-card suit) and play there. And if North goes to 3♥, E/W can double and defend well for +200 and a top.

Board 35

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 10 8 7
♥ A Q 7
♦ —
♣ A K 9 8 7 3

♠ A 5 3
♥ 10 8 6 3
♦ A J 5 3
♣ 10 2



♠ K 9 6
♥ J 5
♦ Q 9 8 7 6 4
♣ Q 4

♠ J 4 2
♥ K 9 4 2
♦ K 10 2
♣ J 6 5

This is a fortunes-of-war deal. If the E/W auction starts 1♣-1♥, 1♠-1NT, some Wests will try 2♥ next. That sequence should show a strong hand; if West held ♠Q1087 ♥AQ7 ♦J5 ♣A873, he would have no reason to think a heart partial would be superior to 1NT. Then East might pass or continue with 2NT or 3♣; E/W might or might not reach game. Other Wests will jump to 3♣ over 1NT; whether East will be inspired to bid 3NT is doubtful. On the actual deal, with the ♣Q falling, E/W can make four different games. Their best spot is 3NT, where 10 tricks are certain and 11 will come in if South leads a diamond to the ace and North returns a diamond. (East can apply the "principle of free choice" to win four tricks in hearts.) Commiserations to pairs who stayed out of game and got a poor result.

Board 36

West Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 10 7 2
♥ 6
♦ A K Q 8 7
♣ 10 9 5

♠ K J 5 3
♥ A K J 8
♦ 10 4 3
♣ 7 6



♠ 9 8
♥ 7 5 3 2
♦ J 9 5
♣ A K 8 2

♠ Q 6 4
♥ Q 10 9 4
♦ 6 2
♣ Q J 4 3

When West opens 1♦, not every North will be willing to double for takeout, vulnerable, with minimum high-card values and no tolerance for clubs. (N/S might make 1♥ if allowed to play there but would be in hot water if they bid any higher.) If North passes, or perhaps even if he doubles, East may bid 1♥, West rebids 1♠ and East will probably try 1NT next, though to pass 1♠ might be a winning action. Against a notrump partial, N/S can do no better than take two high hearts, two high clubs and a spade, and East will be +120. With the help of the 3-3 diamond break and a slip by the defenders, a few Easts will take nine tricks for +150, but E/W tops will go to pairs who double N/S at an ill-fated heart partial and collect +200 or more.