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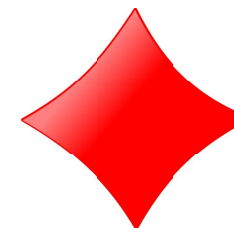
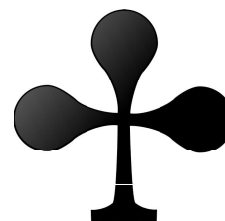
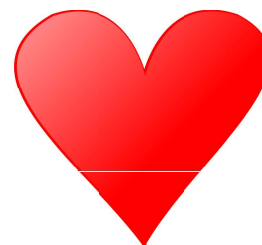
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Club Stratified Sim Pairs



Monday

3rd March 2025

A very warm welcome to the latest 'Club Stratified Simultaneous Pairs'. Our commentator today is Mike Pomfrey, who is an experienced bridge teacher and writer.

I guess you may be asking yourself "How does stratification work?"

There are four groups or strata, determined by reference to the player's Master Point record.:

1. the first group, 'stratum A', comprises all those pairs for whom at least one player is a Tournament Master or above;
2. the second group, 'stratum B', consists of all those pairs for whom at least one player is a Master, but neither is a Tournament Master;
3. 'stratum C' comprises all those pairs for whom at least one player is a District Master but neither is a Master;
4. 'stratum D' comprise all those pairs for whom both players are below District Master.

Blue points and local points will be awarded to the top third of the overall ranking list. In addition the top third of each stratum will get blue points and local points. If you are entitled to overall points and points for your stratum, you will only get the higher of the awards – you won't get two sets of points! As I know you will appreciate, the Master Points cannot be allocated until the event has been finalised, which can take about three weeks. Please keep your scorecard from the event – if there are any unusual scores or other queries we may need to contact the club scorer and the players for clarification.

Full results will be available at www.ebu.co.uk/sims/

Whichever stratum you find yourself in, I hope you find this set of hands enjoyable and challenging.

Very best wishes and good luck,

Adrian Darnell
Chair EBU

♠A8732 ♥Q73 ♦K4 ♣A102 ♠109 ♥K9 ♦AJ98652 ♣J3 ♠4 ♥AJ106542 ♦Q10 ♣KQ6 ♠KQJ65 ♥8 ♦73 ♣98754	Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all West North East South 1NT 3♥ 3♠ 4♥ 4♠ Pass Pass Dbl All pass																																										
<table border="1"> <tr><th colspan="2">HCP</th></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>9</td><td>6</td></tr> </table>	HCP		13	12	9	6	<table border="1"> <tr><th colspan="6">Makeable contracts</th></tr> <tr><th></th><th>♣</th><th>♦</th><th>♥</th><th>♠</th><th>NT</th></tr> <tr><td>N</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>S</td><td>3</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td>-</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	Makeable contracts							♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	N	3	-	-	3	-	S	3	-	-	3	-	E	-	3	4	-	1	W	-	3	4	-	1
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We start with a common problem, whether to open 1NT when you have a five-card major. Some modern players insist that a 5332 hand in your no-trump range should always be opened 1NT. I would rather look at the suit quality, losing trick count and how concentrated your values are. This one for me is a clear weak no trump. That actually makes life a little harder for North-South. East has a respectable jump overcall, which West would raise to game, and South probably has to find a bold competitive bid to get North to save. 4♥ will make if you guess the trumps, and you'll probably get enough evidence to do so. 4♠ is one down; now East-West can only double.																																											

♠1098642 ♥4 ♦KQ9 ♣J82 ♠Q ♥K985 ♦J732 ♣A953 ♠AK ♥QJ3 ♦A10864 ♣Q104 ♠J753 ♥A10762 ♦5 ♣K76	Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable West North East South 1♦ 1♥ 2♥ Pass 2NT Pass 3NT All pass																																										
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W	2	4	3	-	1																																						
South's is not much of a hand for an overcall, but it changes the whole nature of the auction. East-West are likely to get to 3NT, whose success or failure depends largely on the lead. On a heart lead you can make it if you get the diamonds right; on a spade lead you have no chance. So why has the overcall changed things? Well, without it, West would have responded 1♥, which would strongly tip South towards a spade lead. As the auction has gone, you have no real evidence that either opponent has four hearts. Even so, you might still choose a spade, as partner could have raised hearts with three of them.																																											
♠Q1076 ♥762 ♦1052 ♣J105 ♠54 ♥Q ♦J94 ♣KQ98632 ♠AK ♥AK1093 ♦AKQ76 ♣7 ♠J9832 ♥J854 ♦83 ♣A4	Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all West North East South Pass 3♣ Pass Aarrghh!																																										
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W	6	6	5	2	6																																						
Thanks, pard. 3♣ was just what I wanted to hear. My style is that pre-empts in second seat should be sound, and this one is, but that doesn't help East at all. If you have a slam, it's likely to be in clubs, but only, of course, if the suit plays for one loser opposite a small singleton. That's a big ask, but so is the possibility that West has enough in the red suits to solidify them. Both 6♣ and 6NT are somewhat lucky makes, though when a club is led to the king or queen North must drop an honour to present a losing option. 6♦ is where you want to be, but how on earth do you find that? I'm afraid my choice as East would have been 3NT; even that wouldn't be a certainty without those lovely red honours opposite, but it will surely make most of the time. At teams maybe you could try 3♥, followed by 4♦, settling for 5♣ if partner shows no interest in your suits.																																											
♠754 ♥K9862 ♦A3 ♣K32 ♠AQ3 ♥10 ♦KQ542 ♣J984 ♠K106 ♥43 ♦J986 ♣AQ107 ♠J982 ♥AQJ75 ♦107 ♣65	Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable West North East South 1♦ 1♥ 2♥ ?																																										
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S	-	-	1	-	-																																						
E	5	5	-	1	1																																						
W	5	5	-	1	1																																						
This is quite a difficult situation for South. East has shown a sound raise to at least 3♦. South has huge support for hearts, for sure, but quite a few losers and no defence at all. At the vulnerability it looks unwise to blast to 4♥. Either of two bad things will happen; you'll encourage opponents into a "sacrifice" which may well make, or concede too large a penalty yourself. The best option may be to say nothing for now. West might sign off in 3♦, in which case the winning action is to continue to say nothing. As we see, 5♦ is on nothing more than a successful club finesse. Were South to make one more bid, would East-West chance a game? For several years I played at the Reading bridge club, where this action, re-opening after opponents had stopped in a part score and thereby pushing them into a making game, was rather cruelly named after a local player who had a reputation for perpetrating it.																																											

♠ A63
♥ AQJ105432
♦ -
♣ J2

♠ J95 ♠ 72
♥ 87 ♥ 6
♦ AJ8 ♦ Q9763
♣ K9653 ♣ AQ1074

♠ KQ1084
♥ K9
♦ K10542
♣ 8

HCP	
12	
9	8
11	

Makeable contracts					
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	-	-	6	6	-
S	-	-	6	6	-
E	2	2	-	-	-
W	2	2	-	-	-

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♠

All pass

This one starts fairly quietly. North's hand has fantastic potential but steady as she goes. There seems little point in East getting involved; one of your suits is pretty rubbishy and all you'll achieve is helping opponents place the cards. North splinters on the second round, and South? Your spades are OK, albeit only a five-card suit, and the king of hearts is gold dust. You also have a singleton club, but the king of diamonds is a waste of space opposite shortage. Do you co-operate with 4♥?

Probably you should. North continues with 5♦ and, knowing your club control is now vital, you close your eyes and bid the slam. Well done!

♠ Q85
♥ K1087
♦ K102
♣ A73

♠ KJ4 ♠ 10
♥ 952 ♥ AJ643
♦ 6 ♦ AJ873
♣ KJ10642 ♣ 95

♠ A97632
♥ Q
♦ Q954
♣ Q8

HCP	
12	
8	10
10	

Makeable contracts					
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	-	1	-	2	-
S	-	1	-	2	-
E	3	-	3	-	-
W	3	-	3	-	-

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

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

All pass

I've given a possible Aspro auction but, whatever defence East-West play to 1NT, the implications will be similar. South certainly isn't interested in game but wants to buy the contract in spades as cheaply as possible. It's a moot point whether you are likely to achieve this by bidding first or by waiting to see what West has to say; generally I believe in getting your retaliation in first. West's 3♣ is interesting; as you've passed you can't have huge clubs, so must also have tolerance for something else, probably hearts, as with both minors you could have tried 2NT. So East might have chosen to correct to hearts. It's close whether South should bid on; partner hasn't competed, and your side will have some defence. It's the right decision and no-one is likely to double.

♠ 105
♥ 93
♦ KQ983
♣ Q1083

♠ KQ83 ♠ J96
♥ 1054 ♥ Q876
♦ A ♦ J54
♣ AK754 ♣ 962

♠ A742
♥ AKJ2
♦ 10762
♣ J

HCP	
7	
16	4
13	

Makeable contracts					
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	-	3	1	1	1
S	-	3	1	1	1
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♥
2♣	Pass	Pass	Dbl

All pass

South is sure to open, and chooses the traditional middle of three touching suits, partly because it's what you want partner to lead. West's overcall isn't ideal; you would much prefer a six-card suit for a two-level overcall, but hope to get another chance in the auction.

North has an interesting decision: are you going to play for penalties if partner reopens with a double? You have to decide promptly to avoid compromising partner. South has a minimum opening but does have top tricks and North is highly likely to have a penalty pass.

It's a tight one but the queen of hearts is in the right place for North-South, and they inflict the dreaded "kiss of death", 200 on a part-score hand.

♠ -
♥ A98643
♦ AJ92
♣ 965

♠ K62 ♠ AQJ543
♥ J75 ♥ -
♦ 10864 ♦ K75
♣ 1072 ♣ QJ43

♠ 10987
♥ KQ102
♦ Q3
♣ AK8

HCP	
9	
4	13
14	

Makeable contracts					
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	1	2	6	-	1
S	1	2	6	-	1
E	-	-	-	3	-
W	-	-	-	3	-

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	2♠	4♥
4♠	5♥	All pass	

Some tough decision-making for both sides. South has a good hand, but the shape isn't right for a bid on the first round. North has no issue about bidding. Although East might run into a trump stack, it looks right to bid again, and West is sure to co-operate at this vulnerability.

Again, the vulnerability may tempt North to bid on. You are a little uneasy that partner may have values in spades opposite your aces but, even so, you don't expect to get rich from defending.

Par looks to be for East-West to sacrifice in 6♠ over 6♥, but I don't suppose any auctions will get that high. It's a rare case where the save costs less than an opposing game and is therefore definitely a good idea.

♠ A64
♥ J8
♦ 10853
♣ KJ95

♠ J982 ♠ Q753
♥ 1097 ♥ AK62
♦ AK72 ♦ 9
♣ 102 ♣ Q843

♠ K10
♥ Q543
♦ QJ64
♣ A76

HCP	
9	
8	11
12	

Makeable contracts					
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	2	2	-	-	1
S	2	2	-	-	1
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	?	1NT

It's often a bad idea in principle to allow opponents to play in 1NT, especially if they are non-vulnerable. Even though it's dangerous, I would compete here. Those playing Multi Landy are well placed, with 2♣ to show both majors. Yes, you're expected to have nine cards in the two suits, but the odds are in your favour to improve your score.

Even playing Aspro, it may be worth the risk. I'd bid 2♦, anchoring to your weaker suit with both majors, which works perfectly this time. The best North-South can do is compete in diamonds, one down. If East-West were to double that, it may make little difference to the matchpoint score, as they have done their job by competing. Plus 100 won't beat the 110 they might have made.

♠ A42
♥ K96
♦ K53
♣ 9832

♠ KJ103 ♠ Q87
♥ Q1083 ♥ AJ5
♦ Q62 ♦ J10
♣ 105 ♣ AKJ74

♠ 965
♥ 742
♦ A9874
♣ Q6

HCP	
10	
8	16
6	

Makeable contracts					
♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	2	4	4	2
W	3	2	4	4	2

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

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

?

This hand illustrates a clear difference in philosophy between pairs and teams. As West you know your side has between 23 and 25 points and you have two decent four-card suits. Are you worth a game try?

At teams, vulnerable, the maths is in your favour. If you bid and make game you score 600 against 150 for those in a part score, a gain of 450 or 10 imps. If the game goes off you score minus 100 against plus 120, losing 6 imps.

At pairs you will score a joint top if you bid and make game, and a joint bottom if you fail. Moreover, if there are decisions in the play, should you get it right you'll score some match points even if you stay out of game.

3NT should easily be defeated on the obvious diamond lead. As it happens, game is a lucky make in either major, but that's for the birds.

♠K1086
♥Q73
♦75
♣10874

♠A74 ♠J9532
♥A ♥1085
♦AKQJ862 ♦1094
♣Q9 ♣J3

♠Q
♥KJ9642
♦3
♣AK652

HCP	
5	2
20	13

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	-	4	-	-
S	3	-	4	-	-
E	-	4	-	2	2
W	-	4	-	2	2

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West North East South

Pass Pass 1♥
Dbl 2♥ Pass 4♥
?

What a strange hand! The West hand has 3NT virtually cold, unless opponents find an unlikely unblock in clubs. You have no choice but to start with a double, but it all goes pear-shaped. Incidentally, if North is going to bid when partner's third hand opening is doubled, I much prefer a raise in hearts to 1♠, a suit likely to be held by the opponents. South is delighted with the raise and puts on the pressure. Now what? Does West think 4♥ might make? You can't rule it out and, in fact, it's laydown as the cards lie. So you are going to have to "sacrifice" in 5♦! I wonder how often that will happen.

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West North East South

Pass ?
Pass Pass 1NT

The auction on this hand depends on how sophisticated are your methods. Playing a simple style, you can look for a heart fit and, when it doesn't materialise, make a natural, quantitative raise to 4NT, an invitation which South will decline. If you can look for a 4-4 fit in any suit, the clubs will come to light, and you may well bid to 6♣. 6♣ is a better contract than 6NT, with chances of getting a discard even if the clubs don't behave perfectly and the defenders lead a spade. This time virtue will have to be its own reward, with 6NT a doddle and an underserved top for any wild punters. It makes as much sense to be in the equally brazen 7♣.

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West North East South

Pass Pass 1♥ Pass
1NT All pass

Assuming the first three players pass (not a given with some ultra-aggressive players about), what should East say? This hand is a potential banana skin for the weak no trump, especially at pairs. It's rather top-heavy in terms of controls and playing strength. Moreover, should partner also have a balanced hand with a four-card major, 1NT is very likely to be the wrong spot. Sometimes partner may choose to raise on three-card support but that may turn out to be no bad thing. The worst that can happen is that partner bids a new suit at the two level and you find yourself too high. This time it makes no odds what East opens. West has a clear pass over 1NT and a clear 1NT bid over 1♥. In theory you can make eight tricks from either side.

♠A2
♥KQ53
♦AQ5
♣A753

♠KJ9 ♠Q10863
♥10986 ♥J42
♦842 ♦1093
♣1094 ♣Q2

♠754
♥A7
♦KJ76
♣KJ86

HCP	
19	5
4	12

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	7	6	6	3	6
S	7	6	6	3	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

♠1092
♥K1084
♦93
♣AQ106

♠Q87 ♠AK54
♥62 ♥A973
♦KJ87 ♦62
♣J983 ♣K72

♠J63
♥QJ5
♦AQ1054
♣54

HCP	
9	14
7	10

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	1	-	2	2
W	2	1	-	2	2

♠1063
♥K93
♦J1082
♣A74

♠A85 ♠KQJ
♥J852 ♥Q104
♦K6 ♦AQ75
♣K865 ♣1093

♠9742
♥A76
♦943
♣QJ2

HCP	
8	14
11	7

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	2	3	2	2
W	3	2	3	2	3

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West North East South

Pass Pass 1NT All pass

On board 15 I advocated opening 1NT as West on a balanced 11 count and now I'm not even raising partner's opening! This is a far worse hand, however. But partner has a maximum and it looks hard for the defence to prevent nine tricks. The computer can make nine tricks from the West hand but not by East. I can only imagine it's leading the queen of clubs that makes the difference, followed by a spade switch. Otherwise, it should be possible for declarer to establish the hearts and endplay North on the fourth round of diamonds. Making nine tricks should be OK for East-West, even if they don't bid game.

♠854
♥Q7
♦AQ865
♣AK6

♠K6 ♠A109
♥KJ842 ♥109
♦7432 ♦KJ
♣95 ♣QJ7432

♠QJ732
♥A653
♦109
♣108

HCP	
15	11
7	7

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	2	1
S	-	2	-	2	1
E	2	-	-	-	-
W	2	-	1	-	-

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West North East South

Pass 1♦ 2♣ Dbl
Pass 2NT All pass

Once again, a seemingly innocuous intervention makes life difficult for the opening side. It looks as though double is clearly South's best choice; your side may belong in spades, hearts, diamonds or no trumps. If 2♠ were forcing in your methods it would be a gross overbid and, if not, see above. Unfortunately, you can make eight tricks in spades (possibly more if the defenders aren't on the money) and only seven in no trumps – but only if East leads a top club against 2NT, not at all obvious. East's seven just beats declarer's six on the third round of the suit. If East starts with a low club, as would I, declarer must play the ten from dummy as the only chance of a third trick in the suit.

♠Q7543
♥Q62
♦AK
♣J107

♠2 ♠A10
♥A1087543 ♥9
♦94 ♦Q10653
♣KQ3 ♣A9842

♠KJ986
♥KJ
♦J872
♣65

HCP	
12	10
9	9

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	-	2	-
E	5	3	3	-	1
W	5	3	3	-	1

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West North East South

2♥ 3♦ Pass 1♠
4♥? 3♠ 1♣ 3♠

East should open, South should overcall, and West should bid 2♥, whether it's forcing in your style or not. North may wonder how many points there are in this pack but plays the game with a strong raise in spades. East has said enough, South isn't interested, and West? It seems to go against common sense to give up, and what else can you do but repeat your hearts? Barring a major accident, that will be one down, with South's contract not making either. Strange, nobody mentioned the suit in which East-West can make a rather lucky game.

♠Q1073
♥854
♦75
♣QJ86

♠9862 ♠J5
♥AKJ32 ♥Q107
♦KQ10 ♦9432
♣9 ♣K732

♠AK4
♥96
♦AJ86
♣A1054

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
5		N	3	1	-	3	2
13	6	S	3	1	-	3	2
		E	-	-	1	-	-
		W	-	-	1	-	-

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

West North East South

Pass Pass 1♣
1♥ Dbl 2♥ Dbl
Pass 3♣ All pass

This looks fairly normal; I generally prefer to open 1♣ with both minors, just as one opens 1♥ with 4-4 in the majors. If you are planning to rebid in No Trumps, it gives you the best chance to find any fit that exists. West has a normal overcall, North a minimum double and East a normal raise. South's double just shows extra values, denies four spades and implies uncertainty about where we are going.

3♣ is a decent contract but, unluckily, not the highest scoring one. Should South open a strong no trump, West will bid and North-South will do well to compete over 2♥.

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West North East South

Pass Pass 1♣
1NT Pass 2♥ Pass
2♠ All pass

Here's another game we've missed! 4♠ needs little more than a 3-2 trump break but how can you tell? I think the difficulty lies with West's club holding, which is not ideal for a no-trump overcall. East will expect more, probably a couple of stops and therefore less in the other suits. West's three trumps are useful and the honours in the red suits enormous.

Is there a case for West doubling instead of bidding 1NT? I don't think so; it's just one of those things. I'd expect to be in plenty of company.

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West North East South

Pass Pass
Pass 3♣ 3NT All pass

Yes, I do approve of North's opening. We're in third seat, lacking the boss suit, opponents are vulnerable, so we have to be a nuisance. East has an unenviable choice. If you pass it's highly unlikely that partner will have enough to make a protective double, so you'll only collect a few fifties. Maybe you have to bite the bullet.

The only good news for East is that South is likely to lead a club. But when declarer tackles the spades, the bad news arrives, and North will have the opportunity to alert South to the heart position.

♠75
♥9854
♦J964
♣Q96

♠1096 ♠J8432
♥AKJ3 ♥76
♦KQ7 ♦A10832
♣A82 ♣3

♠AKQ
♥Q102
♦5
♣KJ10754

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
3		N	2	-	-	-	-
17	5	S	2	-	-	-	-
		E	-	4	3	4	3
		W	-	4	3	4	3

♠-
♥KJ832
♦84
♣KQ9842

♠K10742 ♠AQJ
♥764 ♥95
♦10963 ♦AK5
♣5 ♣AJ1076

♠98653
♥AQ10
♦QJ72
♣3

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
9		N	1	-	2	-	-
3	19	S	1	-	2	-	-
		E	-	1	-	3	1
		W	-	1	-	3	1

♠1095
♥8
♦KQ9754
♣K54

♠QJ73 ♠A64
♥J97654 ♥K10
♦62 ♦A103
♣7 ♣AJ932

♠K82
♥AQ32
♦J8
♣Q1086

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
8		N	2	2	-	-	1
4	16	S	2	2	-	-	1
		E	-	-	3	1	-
		W	-	-	3	1	-

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

West North East South

Pass 2♦ 2NT Pass
3♦ Pass 3♥ All pass

Sometimes an innocuous looking weak 2♦ can make life difficult for opponents. East has a normal 2NT bid and West would like to investigate a fit in either major. But to use Stayman and then continue would surely be forcing to game in most partnerships, so you have to forego the spades. This time you alight in the right spot.

Were North to stretch to a 3♦ opening, it would surely score a goal. East is pretty well forced to try 3NT and now there's no makeable contract available.

Interestingly, should East-West get a clear run, would you respond to 1♣ as West? I think you should: 1♣ is unlikely to be a good score for your side and you must hope to improve the contract.

♠74
♥AK96542
♦106
♣K9

♠AQJ932 ♠65
♥3 ♥8
♦AK82 ♦QJ74
♣86 ♣AJ7542

♠K108
♥QJ107
♦953
♣Q103

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
10		N	-	-	2	-	-
14	8	S	-	-	2	-	-
		E	4	5	-	5	-
		W	4	5	-	5	-

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

West North East South

1♥ Pass 2♥
3♠ ?

Some close decisions here. How many hearts would you open as North? At favourable vulnerability it's not far off a 4♥ bid (too strong for 3♥) but it's rather flat and has some defence, so 1♥ it is. South has a normal raise, though playing five-card majors you might consider a pre-emptive double raise.

West is far too good for 2♠ and some might think that even 3♠ doesn't do the hand justice. With a singleton heart East should certainly consider a raise; you would certainly do so if North bids game.

If East-West bid game, should North sacrifice? 5♥ doubled costs 500, a decent save, provided that a significant number of East-West's bid game. As it happens, 5♠ is on, but few will accept the push.

♠AQ107
♥10873
♦K10
♣875

♠65 ♠98432
♥95 ♥AQ62
♦J9742 ♦6
♣AKQ10 ♣J96

♠KJ
♥KJ4
♦AQ853
♣432

HCP		Makeable contracts					
		♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
9		N	-	2	1	1	2
10	7	S	-	2	1	1	2
		E	-	-	-	-	-
		W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

West North East South

Pass Pass
Pass Pass ?
Pass Pass 1NT

That's a full-weight weak no trump, with 14 points and a fair five-card suit, but the king-jack combinations are not ideal so I wouldn't consider upgrading it. West and North have nothing to say, but how about East? We are taught not to let opponents play quietly in 1NT, even at this vulnerability.

Personally, except against trigger-happy opponents, I would risk a bid on the East hand, either Aspro or Multi Landy, whatever is your style. But it all goes wrong: either method will get you to 2♠, and North is well placed to wield the axe. I'm afraid it won't stop me trying; so you get a bottom, but conceding 120 wouldn't be a triumph anyway. Remember it was right to compete on board 3. Swings and roundabouts.

♠7654
♥65
♦432
♣Q1087

♠QJ10 ♠AK9
♥A832 ♥KJ97
♦AJ86 ♦109
♣96 ♣K542

♠832
♥Q104
♦KQ75
♣AJ3

HCP	
2	
12	14
12	

Makeable contracts				
	♠	♥	♣	NT
N	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-
E	2	3	4	2
W	2	3	3	2

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all
West North East South
1NT

All pass

So, who gets the No Trumps in first? South may not be enamoured by the sight of dummy but losing 150 could be fine. You set up the thirteenth spade and eventually force an entry to dummy in clubs. Some partnerships shade a double of 1NT in the pass-out seat and now it would be big trouble for North-South. Anything is going to cost you at least 500. This is the time you pray for passive opponents.

Were North-South to play a strong no trump and a short club, West can scrape up a double and now their side should get to 4♥. After a "better minor" 1♦ opening it's perhaps less easy. Played by West, 4♥ goes down on a club lead. East can make it, however: Clear the diamonds, cash your winners, including two top trumps, and endplay South on the third round. It's a plausible line; well done if you found it.

♠AJ95
♥982
♦1073
♣K93

♠KQ4 ♠82
♥Q5 ♥AK64
♦9542 ♦J
♣A1087 ♣QJ6542

♠10763
♥J1073
♦AKQ86
♣-

HCP	
8	
11	11
10	

Makeable contracts				
	♠	♥	♣	NT
N	-	2	-	3
S	-	2	-	3
E	4	-	-	-
W	4	-	-	-

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

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

This is what may happen if everyone shows perfect judgment. Third in hand, at favourable vulnerability, East might consider more aggressive action, but you have some defence, and that club suit is pretty ropery for a pre-empt. South has a minimum, but textbook, double and West shows a sound raise in clubs.

North's king of clubs is a dubious asset so I wouldn't bid at this stage, but you should consider action next time, either 3♠ or a competitive double. After this bidding, East won't fear pushing opponents to a making game so, knowing of a ten-card fit, takes the push. Honour is satisfied all round, but who gets the matchpoints?

♠Q
♥64
♦AKQ1084
♣QJ53

♠A1096 ♠K4
♥AQ103 ♥KJ972
♦J76 ♦952
♣A4 ♣1098

♠J87532
♥85
♦3
♣K762

HCP	
14	
15	7
4	

Makeable contracts				
	♠	♥	♣	NT
N	2	3	-	-
S	2	3	-	-
E	-	-	3	1
W	-	-	3	1

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

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

I don't for a moment suppose that all auctions will follow these lines! But it's all fairly logical. I might be persuaded to overcall as East, more so if my suit were spades so there's more chance of buying the contract. If East passes, South scrapes up a response and West can't get involved yet.

With a five-loser hand, it makes more sense for North to show a modest second suit than to repeat the diamonds, and South is relieved to find a safe spot. West's double shows tolerance for the unbid suit, but also at least one other possible place to play; spades may not be ruled out. North stresses the diamonds, and at last East gets involved.

As an aside, 3♣ can be defeated by a trump promotion, but 3♦ can't.

♠63
♥Q1032
♦962
♣AKQ9

♠K10 ♠AQJ984
♥AK75 ♥9
♦AKQ ♦J743
♣J872 ♣63

♠752
♥J864
♦1085
♣1054

HCP	
11	
20	8
1	

Makeable contracts				
	♠	♥	♣	NT
N	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-
E	2	5	1	5
W	2	5	1	5

Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all
West North East South
3♠ Pass

4♠ All pass

I like a three-level opening as East; it's such a good suit, a bit of extra shape and only seven losers. Is there a case for West to blast a slam? If partner's pre-empts are sound you probably have twelve tricks unless opponents can take two at once. Most auctions will end in 4♠.

South is faced with a completely blind lead. A club gets you two tricks, anything else only the one. I have no idea how you should guess the right one, at least without an outrageous attempt by North to play charades. Obviously the stakes are higher if you are defending a slam. The one thing you mustn't do is lead a trump on the grounds you can't think of a reason to do anything else.

♠K75
♥K10853
♦Q10
♣J53

♠QJ104 ♠A863
♥Q4 ♥A2
♦954 ♦A632
♣AQ106 ♣984

♠92
♥J976
♦KJ87
♣K72

HCP	
9	
11	12
8	

Makeable contracts				
	♠	♥	♣	NT
N	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	1	-
E	3	2	-	3
W	3	2	-	4

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

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

OK, it's only an eleven count, but two good suits, both including a ten, puts this in the range for a weak no trump. After that there's a certain inevitability in the outcome. It's not a good contract, mainly because of the duplication in doubleton heart holdings. However, since North can't attack hearts and both black suits behave, it will roll in.

If West doesn't open, East may become declarer, which is good news for the defence. East will play in a spade part score and likely make only nine tricks on a heart lead.

♠AKQJ975
♥Q3
♦96
♣86

♠632 ♠84
♥K10 ♥96
♦AQJ54 ♦K2
♣K109 ♣AQJ5432

♠10
♥AJ87542
♦10873
♣7

HCP	
12	
13	10
5	

Makeable contracts				
	♠	♥	♣	NT
N	-	-	2	2
S	-	-	2	2
E	4	3	-	-
W	4	3	-	-

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

West North East South
1NT Pass 3NT All pass

Silence is golden, they say. Could you resist bidding on that North hand? Yet it's not so unlikely that you will be on lead to a no-trump contract, which suits you just fine. And if the bidding goes differently, it may not be too late for you to get involved.

You can't blame East for having a pot at game. Most of the time it will work. But not this one.

There's just one possible fly in the ointment. At the vulnerability, might South decide to make a somewhat wild sacrifice in hearts? End of a beautiful relationship.